The DU Beacon
Newsletter of the Technology Chapter
Delta Upsilon Fraternity

The Quest For More Good Men

Founder's Day on the Sunday before Thanksgiving was a cozy affair. The alumni were represented by Tim Zue '99, Andy Hill '03, Carter Powers '05, and myself. About two dozen undergraduates attended. A dinner for 60 was ably prepared and served by a crew of undergrads led by David Friend. There were plenty of pre-Thanksgiving leftovers.

At the directors meeting following dinner, we heard reports from President Doug Fraser '06 and Treasurer Nathan Douglass '06. The number of men living in the house this fall is down to 28, compared to the maximum of 42 allowed by our occupancy permit. This is the source of several problems, not the least of which is financial pressure. It also makes it difficult to have an effective rush. It is clear that the time has come to make more vigorous efforts to fill the house with good men.

The undergraduates agreed to look seriously at a spring rush, with special attention on upperclassmen who might move in immediately, next fall at the latest. Tim and Carter suggested that recent alumni should get involved in rush next fall. I trust that alumni in the Boston area will pitch in when they get the call towards the end of summer. I proposed that, over the coming weeks and months, we undertake some of the maintenance and repair projects that we have been deferring, with the goal of making the house more presentable and welcoming. Our top priority must be to bring the rest of the study rooms into compliance with the fire codes. After that, we should turn our attention to rehabilitation of the common areas and improvement of the study environment.

The program of grants for operating expenses from the Independent Residence Development Fund (IRDF) is now into its third year. It has been providing more than $10,000 a year to support educational operating expenses. A welcome new aspect of this program supports the purchase of educational equipment: “In addition, for purposes of this Application, an Applicant may treat up to $10,000 per year of expenses for Educational Equipment as operating costs that qualify for a grant. Educational Equipment includes: desks; desk chairs; bookcases; computer stands; desktop computers (not laptops); workstations; printers; network gear (such as switches, routers, etc., but not installation); furnishings for dedicated educational areas; and supplies for any of the foregoing items, which are both (i) used solely for educational purposes and (ii) owned by the ILG (and not the individual students).”

We intend to take full advantage of this new program. And don’t forget that the IRDF granted us more than $17,000 to set up a new educational computing room, which has been very successful. Thus I once again urge you to tick the IRDF box when you donate to MIT. Such donations are tax deductible and go directly to the support of fraternities, including DU.

Yours fraternally,
David W. Latham '61
Alumni President

House Updates Its Fire Suppression System

For those of you paying attention to the news, you may have noticed that there has been a sharp increase in fraternity deaths due to fires over the last five years. Since January 2000, there have been 76 deaths in college dormitory (non-Greek) fires. As the number of incidents has increased, these tragedies have also drawn the attention of the media. More pertinent to the brothers at Delta Upsilon is how this recent phenomenon has attracted the attention of local officials, including those in Boston. A recent non-fatal fire at WPI's Sigma Pi house on August 6, 2004, served to underline the need for stricter regulations in student dormitories.

It's no surprise then that our house was suddenly served with an abatement order from the Boston Fire Department in January 2004 citing lofts that had passed every fire inspection since they were installed in 1989. Fifteen years later, a court order was issued to remove the lofts due to inadequate sprinkler coverage below them.

The lofts in the second fronts were the tip of the iceberg. The stages that we have had throughout the house for at least five years were all deemed unsafe in a January 2005 inspection. Several areas of the house were cited for inadequate sprinkler coverage. Egress from a few rooms was marked as deficient. That our alumni president, David Latham,
Brotherhood Works To Improve Rush Process

Over the past decade, the atmosphere and attitude surrounding fraternities has changed immensely. The largest visible change at MIT has been the moving of all freshmen to campus, allowing them to move into fraternities only at the start of their sophomore year.

In spite of these dramatic changes, our pledge program had not changed substantially in a number of years. Recognizing this problem, the executive committee took it upon itself to examine and update the pledge program to better reflect the current fraternity environment.

We began by determining the goals of the pledge program. We were able to find two: to create Delta Upsilon brothers out of MIT freshmen, and to bring the brotherhood together around the first goal. With these goals in mind, we went over the entire program from start to finish, comparing the activities to the goals. Most of the pledge activities we found to be directly in line with our stated goals. However, we were able to come up with two main areas where improvements could be made.

The first such area was academics. Since the pledges no longer live in the house, it has become far more difficult to know when they are struggling academically and to help them when they are. To account for this, we set out to place more emphasis on the academic mentors program. Each freshman was assigned an academic mentor at the start of the pledge program with whom they would meet weekly to discuss their schoolwork. This mentor is a person to whom they can come for help with any school problems. We will take a look at the impact this program has had at the end of the semester.

The second area of concern was integrating the pledges into the house. When pledges were allowed to live in the house, making them feel they were an integral part of the house was easy. Now that they live on campus, it takes quite a bit of effort. The last two pledge classes seemed to feel that while they were very close to their pledge brothers, they didn’t feel close to the rest of the house until they had moved in.

To help with this issue, we made two changes to the pledge program. The first was an adjustment to the tradition of Sig talks. Rather than completing all Sig talks and then getting a big brother, we decided to have each class take the pledges to dinner and have the big brothers selected based on this shorter interaction. Once big brothers were assigned, they created Sig talk notebooks, which they gave to the pledges. Each notebook contained questions to ask each brother during Sig talks. This helped to encourage the pledges to complete all of the Sig talks and helped to facilitate the talks themselves.

In addition to the notebooks, we decided to hold events every Friday. These events were generally brothers only, and they helped to strengthen both the brotherhood as well as the pledges’ connection to it. The first several such events were the dinners with pledge classes. More recent ones have included Big Brother night, the pledge party, and other small events.

As these changes are all experiments, we will reevaluate their success at the conclusion of the pledge program. We hope our revamped pledge program will enable us to continue the tradition of turning out great men worthy of the Delta Upsilon fraternity.

Chris Child ’06
New Member Educator

A Pledge’s Perspective on Rush

Rushing DU was a great experience. I wasn’t just starting at a new school; I was joining a brotherhood. The brothers were great about making me feel at home. They answered all of my questions and didn’t pressure me to join DU.

Leading up to rush, I was slightly apprehensive about rushing. It seemed that fraternities viewed rush as another intramural competition, trying to outdo each other with bigger and better activities. However, I soon learned that rushing DU wasn’t going to be like that. The emphasis wasn’t on steak or lobster, but on getting to know us and helping us settle into our new lives.

One thing I really enjoyed was the fact that every brother at DU wasn’t obsessed with pledging everyone who rushed at the house. Individual brothers focused on guiding me through the rush process. As a result, I had already made some great connections with the brothers when it came time to pledge. This made my choosing DU infinitely easier.

I know now that DU is the place for me. I am excited to be part of the house, helping my fellow brothers while also learning from them. The next four years will undoubtedly be a challenge, but with DU on my side, I know I can achieve success.

Fraternally,
AJ Recio ’09

Class of 2009 pledge Mike Smith-Bronstein with his new big brother, Quinn Scripter ’08.

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Class of 2009 Pledge Kevin Durand enjoys himself at the rush girls’ semi-formal.

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DU Enjoys Successful Rush

Despite the smallest MIT male freshman class in years and a range of rule changes, DU continued its ongoing rushing success with another large pledge class. Brothers united against these challenges and welcomed 12 new members to the pledge class of 2009.

This year’s rush format continued the gradual slide towards the brief, intense old-style rush by shortening the rush period and instituting the clearinghouse tracking system. Rush took place over 11 days, from September 3-14, and it allowed freshmen to accept bids as soon as one week after rush began. These changes strengthened the need for a prepared rush and motivated brothers.

Brothers Douglas Frasier ’06, David Friend ’07, and Charles Amick ’08 answered this call with their work as pre-orientation leaders. Our numerous members of the varsity water polo team continued their traditionally significant pre-rush contribution by getting to know freshmen during practices and games. Most importantly, various brothers’ work in recruiting unaffiliated upperclassmen during the previous year put DU in a great position heading into the beginning of rush.

Rush began on Saturday with a speech by IFC President Chris Child ’06 and a newly revived “Killian Kickoff.” By hosting an MIT-Wellesley ’09 mixer at the house, complete with lobster and a live band, we were able to meet scores of freshmen on the first night of rush. The night was an incredible success, as the house was filled with freshmen of all kinds. David Friend ’07 successfully supervised the clearinghouse system throughout the chaos of that night and the rest of rush, making sure the rules were always followed.

The rest of rush featured a mix of traditional DU jaunts supplemented with new events based on input from the 2008 class. We took a trip to Boston Billiards on Sunday night and entertained a number of freshmen. Afterwards we took the chance to relax with freshmen at the house and got to know them better.

There was no school on Monday, so we took the opportunity to visit Crane’s Beach. Despite the fact that three other fraternities planned identical trips, tens of rush women and freshmen turned out for a beautiful day at the beach. A day filled with football, soccer, and relaxing was capped off with a great meal at the house by our chef Dave Zeno.

Only a handful of brothers and freshmen were able to attend paint-balling on Tuesday due to registration. However, many people got a chance to enjoy our yacht cruise on Wednesday evening. Fifty brothers, rush women, and freshmen packed the ship and enjoyed a three-hour tour around Boston Harbor. This event, new to DU, was incredibly popular and sure to be repeated in following years. The rest of rush featured similarly successful events like football, bowling, and meals that allowed brothers and freshmen to get to know each other.

Bids were given out on Friday morning and quickly accepted the following Saturday. The bidees were eager to join the house, as many of them pledged within the halls of DU soon after they were allowed to make a decision. In all, 12 freshmen and unaffiliated upperclassmen accepted their bids and joined the ranks of DU in what proved to be a very successful DU rush.

House Updates Its Fire Suppression System

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had an inspection from a second independent contractor shows how shocked we were.

Latham has been very safety conscious. It’s a pleasure to work with him. “Is it safe? No, then how can we make it safe?” He had safeguards installed on our sprinklers to protect against water pressure failure three years before they became mandatory for new sprinkler installations. He ensured that the mattresses the undergrads bought were fireproof by agreeing to pay for them. He remains attentive to details like the bushes in front of the emergency exit from the basement and whether I’ve conducted a fire drill for the semester. Don’t tell him I said this, but I think he was a little more than miffed at the failure of the January 2005 inspection.

In the last six months, Dave Latham and I have spent over $10,000 to outfit the house with better sprinklers and other safety features. To enumerate, starting in the basement: fire-resistant hallway ceiling tiles were replaced where they had been damaged; two additional sprinkler heads were added in the basement bedroom (the risk of drowning in a fire is now comparable to the risk of being burned); the sprinkler system on the second floor was completely redone to allow for an additional five sprinkler heads in the front bedrooms; stages on the third and fourth floors are in the process of being replaced with lofts; and every smoke detector in the house has been replaced with those with more reliable detection technology.

While we ultimately cannot prevent a fire from starting, we have done everything possible to ensure that brothers have safe passage out of the house if one should occur. Together with behavioral safeguards, such as not allowing smoking in the house (almost all dormitory fires were caused by the presence of an open flame, either cigarette or candle) and conducting semester fire drills, Dave Latham and I are confident that our brothers are safe. I’m almost looking forward to the January 2006 inspection.

Fraternally yours,
David Friend ’07
House Manager
Brothers and Alumni Celebrate Chef Dave Zeno

After honoring Chef Dave Zeno for his 10 outstanding years of service and friendship to the brothers of Delta Upsilon last year, alumni and undergrads decided that one celebration wasn’t enough. This year, to the credit of some very dedicated alumni, Boston will be holding its first ever ZenoFest in tribute to our beloved chef.

The event is to start at Suffolk Downs and eventually make its way to DU’s second home, Crossroads. Beyond just celebration, the goal is to also fundraise for a thank-you gift to Dave as he begins to think about moving on from the Hallowed Halls.

Kevin Amendt ’07
Steward

CONGRATULATIONS TO DU’S 2009 PLEDGE CLASS!

Eric Lanser from Wayland, MA
Harrison Hall from Ashland, KY
Deke Hu from Petaluma, CA
Mike Smith-Bronstein from Mercer Island, WA
Alberto Recio from Dorado Beach, PR
St. Julien Rosemond from Miami, FL
Dallas Chase from Coronado, CA
Tai Conley from Honolulu, HI
Kalvin Kao from Santa Monica, CA
Kevin Durand from Mesa, AZ
Matthew Marshall from Irving, TX
Forrest Funnell from Palos Verdes, CA

The DU Beacon is published regularly by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Chapter of Delta Upsilon. News contributions, changes of address, and photographs are welcome and should be sent to Alumni Records Office, Delta Upsilon Fraternity, P.O. Box 390528, Cambridge, MA 02139-0006.