President’s Report: “Old Style” Rush Fills The House

Brothers and Friends,

It pleases me that with the familiar sights of fall—fiery trees, my breath in the air—I now anticipate the sounds of a full and boisterous house: conversation and laughter on our Wednesday coffee nights, excited hurrahs after a good IM football game, the tinkering of fine glass at one of our fall Nice Dinners. In my final year as an MIT undergraduate I am, for lack of sophistication, happy.

Heralding our 2004-2005 academic year, I am sure many of you have heard of our record numbers: 15 associate members of Theta Xi, Delta Chapter! Was it nostalgia over a return of “old-style” rush that motivated our house to recruit like never before? Was it energy from a collective Theta Xi pride fueling our 25 undergraduate members? Or perhaps it was the impeccable planning and motivation by our recruitment chair, Sid Puram?

As if an incredible recruitment were not enough, we now have a more beautiful 64 and 66 Bay State Road. With funds from the Bert Forbes challenge last year, we have replaced all the hardwood floors in our commons area. It seems appropriate that the inside of our house so well reflects the current spirit of Delta; both are as renewed and spectacular as ever.

I would like to end with an invitation to all brothers of Theta Xi. This year marks Delta’s 120th anniversary, quite a milestone indeed. Our undergraduate chapter is working hard with our Alumni Corporation to plan a lively and family-friendly celebration on April 29 through Sunday, May 1, 2005, with the celebration banquet on the 30th (while you are here, stop by the house for a great chance to see our renovated brownstones). I hope to see all of you very soon.

Yours In the Bonds,
Hua-Yu Sebastian Cherng ’04, Δ1027

One Chapter — Many Advisors

I’ve experimented with a new practice in my first year as chapter advisor: attending regular house meetings. This is actually an official duty of mine according to Theta Xi’s national bylaws, but Delta’s custom has long differed, as it has in other areas, and as it will continue to do. Of course, in just a few more years this experiment will be a tradition as old and unchanging as the Delta charter. Yes, as old and unchanging as Smitty the cook—ahem, as old and unchanging as Chay himself—um, as old as .... yes, as new and different as our brand new cook, Chef D.

Another task of mine is to help preserve the memory of things that happened A Long Time Ago (which, in fraternity years, means anything prior to 2001) without letting that memory impede healthy, necessary change—and today things are changing rapidly. Young men enter college with different skills and different needs. Running a fraternity—at MIT, in Boston, in 2004—is more complicated. And so, for better or worse, a successful chapter now requires a good deal of alumni guidance—most of it not from me! Occasionally I’m asked for advice, and even more occasionally I can offer something useful. But after a year I still have much to learn.

We all rely on the wisdom of Steve Baker and the other members of the Delta Chapter Corporation Board, on our terrific resident advisor Bryan Adams, and on a host of MIT officials who are dedicated to a thriving fraternity. And ultimately we look to you—for your memories, for your ideas, and should you feel particularly inspired—or foolhardy—for your time.

Chris Williams ’98, Δ965
Chapter Advisor
Eclectic Chefs Bring Brothers Back For Delicious Dinners

Last year the active chapter decided not to renew Marc Campbell’s contract as our chef. The meal quality had degraded to the point that there were few brothers at dinner. Overall service and his dedication to meal preparation were also lacking. Marc was only in the kitchen for a limited time each day, and meals were cooked several hours before they were served.

Over the summer, a small committee decided to hire “The Eclectic Chef” for the coming academic year. The Eclectic Chef is a company run by Derrick Evans. Nicknamed “Chef D,” Derrick and his chefs work with several other MIT fraternities, and we had heard only good things about their services.

Raechel is the member of the Eclectic Chef team who prepares our meals on a daily basis. The meals so far have been great. We always have several options each meal, as well as lots of variety throughout the week. The quality of the food is evident in the number of people at dinner each night. Last year we had one and a half tables full on a good night. This year we have had so many people coming to dinner that we have had to add folding chairs to our three dining room tables at times. I have even heard talk of wanting to buy Raechel flowers.

I anticipate that our meals will continue to be high quality throughout the year. We are all looking forward to the rush hostess Nice Dinner where Derrick himself will be preparing the meal. If you are ever in town, come experience the new face of dining at Delta Chapter.

John Gardner ’07, Δ1055
Steward

Hold the Date for 6294!
Plan to come by the house to celebrate 6294 and the 120th anniversary of Delta Chapter.
Our banquet will be on April 30, 2005, at the Cambridge Marriott.

House Manager: New Hardwood Floors Brighten The Commons

With the influx of alumni support through the Bert Forbes campaign we have begun several major improvements to the chapter house, including the replacement of our wood floors in all of Commons (the first floor). We contracted Pride Hardwood Floors of Boston to install maple flooring last July. The results are impressive and the house looks better than ever before. Currently we are getting curtains made for the commons area by MIT’s primary curtain contractor. Plans are in place to get new windows to replace old drafty ones and to repair or replace some of our banisters. Additionally we are looking into getting some smaller things for the house such as an ice machine. All in all we have been able to do a lot in the past year thanks to the Bert Forbes fundraiser. Thank you to all who participated; it makes a noticeable difference at the chapter house.

Work week went well this year. In preparation for rush we cleaned the house thoroughly and made minor repairs. We also made improvements to the roof deck in the form of better electrical wiring and lighting. We bought and installed a new pool table light and had the pool table leveled and re-felted. The house continues to look great. I can’t wait to see how it gets better with new major improvements!

Michael Whitaker ’06, Δ1051

Renovations continue from floor to ceiling. Pictured above is 64 Commons at the beginning of the project and, at right, after completion of reflooring this summer.
President Chuck Vest commissioned an 18-member task force in April 2003. He charged the team to “consider the status and future development of the Institute’s 37 Fraternities, Sororities, and Independent Living Groups, which together serve roughly 1,000 current students and inspire the affection and loyalty of tens of thousands of alumni.” The FSILG Task Force delivered their complete recommendations to the MIT community on September 17, 2004 (details at http://web.mit.edu/dsl/aurora/home.html).

The administration recognized early that MIT needed to increase staff to implement the recommendations of the FSILG Task Force, particularly those relating to alumni. The new position of Director of FSILG Alumni Relations was established last April. I accepted the call to fill the role, and now I report to both Dean of Student Life Larry Benedict and Alumni Association Executive Vice President Beth Garvin.

This partnership has already led to fruitful collaborations in a number of areas:

- Planning two IAP courses for undergraduate officers, Treasurer 101 and House Manager 101
- Scheduling three Boston-area seminars for alumni on alcohol education
- Creating and distributing a “living group options fact sheet” for MIT’s 2,500 Educational Counselors.
- Developing an FSILG fund-raising toolkit, leveraging the professional resources of the Alumni Association (and the recent experience of Theta Xi!)

These efforts and others have all happened quite readily, despite perceptions to the contrary, there really is an extraordinary amount of goodwill in the MIT administration toward the FSILGs.

However, my top priority assignment from Beth and Larry has been to work on expanding the Independent Residence Development Fund. The IRDF was created in the 1960s and has been the source of many, many long-term, low-interest loans for all of MIT’s FSILG chapters. In the late 1990s, an IRDF Project grant program was added. Project grants permit special treatment of the “educational area” portion of an FSILG construction project. In practice, however, the educational area calculation proved difficult, requiring detailed legal interpretation that discouraged many applicants.

Attentive (and aggressive) members of the Alumni Corporation of Phi Kappa Sigma pointed out that recent IRS case law allows new options for our tax-deductible IRDF donations, permitting grants for building maintenance of the “educational area” of the structure (prorated mortgage, insurance, utilities, etc.). MIT responded with a new program that should provide considerable relief for the operating budgets of the chapters: the new IRDF Educational Operating Grant program. The potential dollars are clearly smaller than in typical construction projects, but they can recur year after year.

Working with the Treasurer’s Office, we standardized and simplified the area calculations. MIT’s Facilities Department recently conducted a “sweep” of all the FSILGs per the standard methodology approved by MIT’s lawyers. The allowable expenses have been defined and an administrative support structure is largely in place. The program will start accepting applications in November.

Any FSILG house corporation may apply for an IRDF Educational Operating Grant after the conclusion of its fiscal year. Today the focus is on getting the program off the ground with existing IRDF funding. In future years, donations to the IRDF by a chapter’s alums will likely be a factor in the size of the allowable grant. The IRDF fund is in pretty good shape now, but it will be up to the MIT FSILG alumni base to replenish it. The operating grants alone should account for upwards of $500,000 each year disbursed to the FSILG chapters.

Of course we can always give directly to our chapters. But there are some advantages to giving through the IRDF program. The gifts are tax-deductible, they can be matched by employers, and they are fully recognized and credited by MIT. Giving to the IRDF is as simple as checking a box on MIT’s solicitations. An IRDF donation counts toward your class and reunion totals and ensures the IRDF is properly funded for all its new roles.

In closing, I would like to say how fortunate I am to be in this new position. All the stakeholders are really working together well and many positive things are starting to happen. For example, Steve Immelman was just appointed as the overall leader in implementing the Task Force agenda over the next two years. From my viewpoint, there simply could not be a better choice. As former Dean of Fraternities at MIT, Steve is thoroughly committed to Greek life and, as a veteran of two decades here, he knows MIT inside out and how to get things done. Like us he deeply appreciates the value of the MIT fraternity experience and what it can be for today’s and tomorrow’s students. The bar is set very high because this is MIT. Our unique range of living environments can be, and should be, the best college housing system in the nation.

Bob Ferrara ’67
(Theta Chi)

At left, prospectives sumo wrestle during rush.

At right, signed pledge cans on the pledging fireplace.
Seniors Move Up And Out – And Some Stay Right Here!

Camilo Aladro ’04, Δ1024, is now working in marketing for the sensors department of Rockwell Automation (founded by an MIT alum but not Δ96) in Chelmsford, Massachusetts. He lives in Cambridge with Farney Joseph ‘03, Δ1011, and two AEPis. Camilo still spends time with the active chapter in IM sports and other open events.

David Pritchard ’04, Δ1029, is completing his Course VI master’s degree and has not yet moved out of the house. He plans on continuing to a PhD in math next year, and he aspires eventually to get his own place. Until then he will be teaching 6.001 and working on his thesis in between making more nerdy t-shirts for the MIT undergrad math association.

Martin Jonikas ’04, Δ1031, is in a six-year PhD program at UCSF studying the biochemistry of aging. In his rare spare time he windsurfs, bikes, and takes Jiu-Jitsu classes.

David Ziegler ’04, Δ1032, is still at MIT in the M.Eng program, working in the nice new StaTa Center on a thesis with Frans Kaashoek. He lives right in Kenmore Square with his new wife, Sarah Ziegler (née Poulsen).

Weil Lai ’04, Δ1033, is working as a bioinformatics data analyst at Harvard-Partners Center for Genetics and Genomics. He currently lives at the chapter and is looking to apply to medical school later next year.

David Dopson ’04, Δ1034, is still at MIT finishing his degree in Course 6. He now lives in Allston, Massachusetts, and frequents house social activities.

Miguel Calles ’04, Δ1042, is working at Raytheon in El Segundo as a multi-disciplined engineer. Miguel has also started a sole-proprietorship called Mu Perspectives, which is a web design and photography service company.

Kurt Stiehl ’07, Δ1054

Financial Update: Take Advantage Of Tax-Deductible Option

Things are looking up at Delta Chapter. The house is in the midst of a major cosmetic overhaul. Rush succeeded well beyond expectations this year. And MIT’s FSILG taskforce report marks an important change for the better in the general environment for fraternities at MIT.

Last year Delta’s alums responded in droves to Bert Forbes’ challenge. The funds raised are being put to good use. We hope you will continue to support the house; while the crisis has passed, your financial support allows us to continue to strengthen the corporation in anticipation of more tough times ahead. We stopped saving for a rainy day a few years back. It is time to start again. Renewing your annual gift helps current and future Deltas enjoy our brotherhood as fully as we have.

MIT has also made it easier to support Theta Xi with tax-deductible donations. The new IRDF Operating Grants will help us offset annual operating costs associated with our educational purpose. (See article on page three.)

Please consider earmarking at least part of your annual gift to MIT for the IRDF. Last year 187 Theta Xi alums gave over $180,000 to MIT. Of those, 57 gave a total of just $7,700 to the IRDF. This year we anticipate a grant of around $22,000 from the IRDF, about 10 percent of our overall operating budget. We can only expect this new grant program to endure if the IRDF is continually replenished with alumni donations. Please answer the call when asked by MIT to support the IRDF. Your gift helps the house, and it sends a strong message back to MIT about the importance of supporting fraternities.

Appeal For Summer Jobs

Are you looking for top-notch summer interns?

Know someone who is?

E-mail job descriptions to txi-web@mit.edu.

We’ll happily post openings on our bulletin board!
Rush Report:
15 New Deltas

Our 2004 Rush was by far the most successful rush in recent history. We had 15 guys join the house by the time rush was done. This placed us in a tie for the most pledges of any house on campus. The energy, support, and ever-present “go for it” attitude of the brothers was crucial to this success.

This year’s rush was focused on activities that would allow us to get to know the prospectives well while simultaneously representing the unique characteristics of the house. Some of our most successful events included BASH (Bad Ass Scavenger Hunt), a night trip to the beach, Casino Night, SPEW (the Society for the Promotion of Early Weekends—with root beer), and our opening 19th Hole Carnival Night.

Following the kickoff, there were sumo suits and a giant inflatable boxing ring in the back alley. Brothers in the house also built several mini-golf holes that were themed with different sports; each represented one of the active members. This proved to be a very useful and effective introduction to the active chapter.

By and large, the success of this year’s rush was based on clear organization and important and obvious measures that had not been taken before. For example, everyone who was assigned to organize an event was given all the information needed regarding reservations, the number of expected prospectives, and precise instructions of what to do.

But the preparation did not stop there. There were several brothers actively involved in pre-orientation programs at MIT that really gave the house an edge up on the competition. Such programs allowed brothers to get close with freshman while performing a useful service for the MIT community. These relationships were central to the success of rush.

With a very successful CPW (MIT’s Campus Preview Weekend), Casino Night, and important in-roads prior to the start of rush, the days of formal “rush” were easily successful. Our house has brought in some great guys who will carry on our ideals and improve the chapter’s prosperity and on-campus presence.

Sidharth Puram ’05, ∆1045
ROBERT R. IMSANDE ’42 writes, “My wife, Betty, and I just got back from a 15-day cruise. I’ve now been retired for over 20 years. I keep in touch with one brother from my era—PHIL UMHLTZ ’42. I would like to be back for 6294, but my health limits my travel. Reading the Delta Digest shows how things have changed over the 66 years since I joined ΘΞ. Some changes are better, some worse. I would love to brief the brothers on the differences.” Bob lives at 710 W 13th Ave., #G221, Escondido, CA 92025. Send him e-mail at imsande8@aol.com.

CHARLES P. LOUCKS ’47 has moved to 2100 Bering Dr., #728, Houston, TX 77057.

MATTHEW J. DOYLE ’48, ∆481, lives at 107 Colchis Ct., Cary, NC 27513. He writes, “Well, the good news is I’m still here. The bad news (no, it’s not really bad) is that the “room-a-tis” is goofing up both knees. I’m using a walking stick to keep upright. Still doing the duplicate and tournament bridge and even teaching a class or two. My best to all the brothers.” Keep up with Matt by e-mail at mattdoyle@aol.com.

JEFFREY L. FLEMING ’80 has a new address: 6364 Deerwood Ct., Greenwood, IN 46143. He has a new job at Eli Lily & Co. in Indianapolis.

ROBERT H. BELLIS ’91, ∆885, has moved to 441 Guilford Cir., Marietta, GA 30068. Keep in touch with Robert by e-mail atrbellis@alum.mit.edu.

EDWARD L. MUNNICH ’91, ∆894, has a new address: 2 Townsend St., #4-301, San Francisco, CA 94107.

MATTHEW S. WARREN ’93 writes, “I’ve moved to Manhattan and accepted a faculty position as a pediatrician in the division of Neonatology at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center. Feel free to e-mail and drop by.” Keep in touch with Matthew at 861 Riverside Dr., #3, New York, NY 10032; mswarren@alum.mit.edu.

AARON R. PRAZAN ’98 has moved to 51 65th St., West New York, NJ 07093. He bought this, his first house, with his fiancée, Amber. They were to be married this July in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Congratulate Aaron by e-mail at prazana@coned.com.

MOSTAFA H. SABET ’00 has a new address: 3676 S. Barrington Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90066.

ANDREW D. BERKHEIMER ’01 has moved to 10 Sixth St., #1, Cambridge, MA 02141. Send Andrew e-mail at andydb@alum.mit.edu.

DECEASED

We regret to report the death of the following alumni:

FREDERICK F. ASSMANN ’36
WADSWORTH L. HINDS ’38
JOHN E. SLIFER ’44

History Update

Several undergraduates are currently trying to update Delta of Theta Xi: An Historical Sketch.

Please send any stories about your pledge class and your time at the house to txi-history@mit.edu, especially if you were in a class after 1970.

A current version of the Sketch can be found at:

Photos Wanted!

Help us liven up the next Delta Digest. Send us your photos to include. Your stories about “the good old days” are welcome as well.
Alex Bagley, the pledge class president, is both a scholar and an athlete (he excels at both). Whether it’s the basketball court or the classroom, the word “can’t” does not enter this gentleman’s mind. I’d guess he’s about 8’ 30”. At any rate, he is much taller than me. Eyes generally move to him in a room and he has no problem handling the spotlight. Alex makes an outstanding leader, even without all the helpful growth that Theta Xi provides. Needham, Massachusetts, must be missing him.

Evan Gerard, is he the pledge class vice president? Yes. Smooth as ice? Yes. Does he have the strength to lead this class into the annals of Delta, nay, Theta Xi history? Yes. This gentleman has the composure of a veteran United States Navy pilot just out of Miramar. Shall we call him Iceman? Well, I’ll get back to you after I’ve checked the IFC hazing policy on nicknames. But know that his unshakeable, cool demeanor will add much to Delta Chapter.

Rishi Puram writes like a Harvard student but can bang away a problem set from MIT with the best of them. To say he’s multi-talented is an understatement. This guy has it all, a great personality, he’s gracious, and he obviously got all the looks in the Puram family. Some people say he could do a great job filling his older brother’s shoes here at Delta. Me…I’m just going to sit back and watch Rishi blaze his own trail, and mark my words, he will.

Sean Morton spends the time and puts in the extra effort without being asked. He is clean, courteous, and always walks with his head held high. Need I go on? Well he’s not an officer in the pledge class but he’s undoubtedly a leader. He is conscious of his environment (he’ll be leading Delta Chapter in its philanthropic event this year). Still not ringing any bells for you older guys? Try dusting off that old Quest of yours and take a look at the first page, this kid is already hitting all seven purposes. All Delta has to do is point and aim, this guy is going to take off on his own.
Jack Styczynski is trouble. I can see myself employing all of my spare time watching Jack’s antics. When he pledged, Jack was found at the Top of the Hub restaurant convincingly dressed as a woman. Wow! Having Jack at Theta Xi is like adding comic relief to one of the *Ace Ventura* movies. When Jack puts his head down, however, things get done. From the first—well after the cross-dressing incident—I saw in Jack a special sense of dedication that is affirmed by his close family ties. He’s already on his way to building those bonds with us and once he has, we’ll all be in fine shape.

**Steve Whittaker**, this guy is a live wire. With a year of MIT already under his belt he knows what he’s doing. Here is yet another leader in the pledge class. It’s rare to see a pledge who is so at ease with the upperclassmen. In just a few weeks he’s become comfortable enough to sit at the bar and hear about two hours worth of old U.S. Navy jokes. This pledge already feels like one of us, he’s one to watch.

**Yang Su**. Yung Su? He’s such a nice guy that he doesn’t even care which one you call him. Yang (his real name) is a great visual artist. It’s not Blacklight where he’ll prove this to all of us, but on a large white wall somewhere in the house. Deltas will be enjoying his permanent work for years to come and you can quote me on that.

Rene De Santiago is a self-proclaimed hard worker, not a prodigy. While he may live up to at least the former portion of this title, there is still a lot more to this Californian than that. Rene has a deeply spiritual mind that is uncommon, to say the least, at MIT. Just ask anyone he’s interviewed, the questions he asks are not at all what you’d expect. Not only can you see him looking right through you when you answer, but you’ll end up finding out things about yourself that you would probably never have found on your own. Oh, and if you’d like to know what his questions are then you’ll just have to pull the ole Badge out of the cigar box and come pay us a visit, no donation necessary. [But warmly accepted—Ed.]

**Jim Wilberger** is always smiling; guys like this one are the life-blood of Theta Xi. He loves spending time at this house and already loves Theta Xi. His spirit is indomitable and must be made out of gold. Personalities like his always have a great understanding of brotherhood. With Jim in the house I truly believe that the basic happiness of Theta Xi is secure for the next four years.

**Brian Hack** has the “no quit” attitude that gets things done. Once he takes hold of something he keeps hold until it is his. As soon as he has seen enough time to become an officer in this house we can all rest assured that he will make whatever sacrifice is necessary to get any job tasked to him done, and still get his homework turned in on time. I’m thinking all-time great house manager. Come meet him and decide for yourself.

**Sean Kruzel** has an uncanny ability to move between “types” of groups with unbelievable ease. He is the definition of a people person. No house could have cliques with a fellow like this around. He has already made friends with every active in the house. I expect to see a massive impact on the house as soon as he has earned a roster number. As he is sincere in all the friendships he’s created, don’t be surprised if house politics goes the way of the dodo, gentlemen. I know what you’re saying, “no one can end house politics.” Yeah, well just come and see Sean in action, no more miscommunication.

**Colin Hill** shows daily that he already respects our traditions. From the very first day he has done everything asked of him with a quiet zeal that any membership educator would love to see. Never the show off, still he is always prepared. He has given the house a show of blind trust at every turn. He learns and practices every custom taught to him, and then comes to an understanding of it because of his open trust in our Brotherhood. Needless to say he is light years ahead of what most of us were like when we were pledges.

**Brett Warne** has persevered through more hardship this semester than most any pledge I’ve seen. Everyone has a full load when they first get to MIT. Brett however is really doing it. He has balanced an extreme amount of work (even for MIT), and pledging Theta Xi Fraternity. As trying as all this has been, he refuses to quit on either. Still have your *Quest* out? That’s right, he’s displaying number Seven, which is probably the most difficult out of all the Purposes to actually practice. I doubt I need to explain how a person like Brett can help us all support our Fraternity. Hardcore dedication...enough said.

**Matt Ciborowski** has a man’s mind for someone so young. When things don’t go his way the last thing you would see him do is complain. He is always calm no matter what cards he’s dealt. As he is so calm in all situations he has the presence of mind to step back and understand the root of the problems he is faced with. How many chapter meetings do you remember in which everyone became so animated that the meeting ended in deadlock? If Matt continues to grow as he is, then we will all be able to look to him for a voice of reason. Matt is a far more impressive person than he gives himself credit for, but humility is a virtue.

**Quinn Vollmert** is a leader among his pledge brothers at all times, but during the IM football games he leads the active chapter as well. Quinn can best be described as the total package. Some might say he is quiet at times. However, I know for a fact that he is a courteous, not quiet (and that’s a big difference) gentleman. With all that Mr. Vollmert has, the only thing stopping him in all that he wishes to do in life, is how far he wishes to take his endeavors. Keep an eye on this one.

This is an outstanding pledge class. Even individually they all have a wealth of talent for Delta Chapter to draw upon in future years. Together, however, I believe they will positively affect Theta Xi Fraternity as a whole and Delta Chapter itself for far more years than just their active ones. All Delta Chapter alumni who don’t come to meet the members of this pledge class will only be missing out. So don’t wait for a personal invitation, just come over.