

THE BEAVER SIG

Alpha Theta Chapter of Sigma Chi Fraternity



CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

[HTTP://SIGMACHI.MIT.EDU](http://sigmachl.mit.edu)

MARCH 2011

From the House Corporation

Dear Brothers,

I hope this edition of the *Beaver Sig* finds you and your families well and enjoying the winter months. Despite the heavy snow in Boston, the chapter continues to shine brightly. Our current undergraduates are truly a diverse group; they are engaging in a wide variety of academic, athletic, and other extracurricular endeavors. As an alumnus, I am very proud of our current generation of Alpha Thetas.

It is an honor to step into the role of president of the house corporation board of directors, following eight years of dedicated service by Karl Buttner '87. Karl led the corporation through a very successful 125th reunion, the MIT transition to housing all freshmen on campus, detailed planning for the renovation, fundraising and outreach for the capital campaign, and many other projects. In spite of his small stature, I certainly have big shoes to fill. Thankfully, Karl will remain on the board of directors and continue his work on the capital campaign. I hope you will all join me in thanking Karl for his tremendous service to our fraternity.

For those of you who do not know me personally, you will probably recognize e-mails from me as the corporate clerk over the past six years. Josh Littlefield '81 will continue as our corporate treasurer. Mike Gibson '13 will be filling the position of corporate clerk. While it has been rare for an undergraduate to serve as a house corporation officer, it is not unprecedented, and it is indicative of (continued on page four)

Consul Reports on a Strong Fall Semester

As the Institute entered its 150th year, Alpha Theta continued to embody Sigma Chi traditions and values. Many of our 30 actives lived at 532 Beacon St. over the summer, while others traveled the country and abroad, conducted research, and held internships at various companies and firms—some alongside our alumni brothers. Jeffrey Mekler '10 had considerable success in this year's International Balfour award, being named one of the four candidates. Brotherhood remained strong as the summer came to a close and Work Week transitioned into recruitment.

Work Week 2010, led by this author, included general cleaning and repair of the house as well as the refurbishing of the bar floor, dining room floor, and hallway paint. After some initial confusion about the exact color of the walls, we decided to repaint all the common areas the same color as before. Brother Dave Gailus '80 graciously volunteered his time to overhaul and renew the kitchen dumbwaiter with House Manager Eamon Glackin '12. Our newest brothers eagerly participated in readying the house for their first semester as Boston residents and have since integrated into the house excellently.

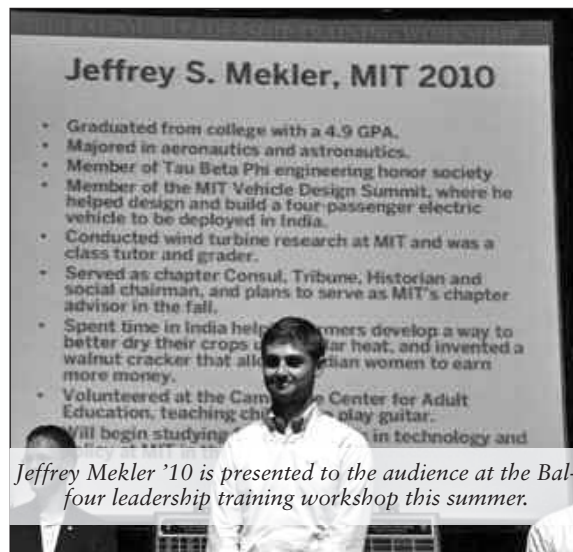
As Work Week came to a close, Rush Chairman Garrett Winther '11 began preparing the brothers for recruitment. Aably assisted by Scott Sundvor '12, Garrett did a commendable job of executing our rush events with the enthusiastic help of the chapter. As a result, we are fortunate to welcome the seven new members of the pledge class of 2010. Alpha Theta is proud of the diverse array of interests, backgrounds, and experiences our pledges bring to the house.

We were excited to begin the semester on the FSILG honor roll, ranking among the top five MIT fraternities academically. This spirit

remained throughout the semester and was evident in the emphasis our members placed on academic achievement. Brothers continued to enroll in many of the same classes, study with one another, and challenge themselves intellectually. There has also been a revival of consul and pro-consul jaunts, which have been a great way to bring the house together in more relaxed settings.

Notable events this past fall included the Sweetheart Formal and pledge camping trip, which is fast becoming a beloved annual tradition. We also had the opportunity to host the province conference, and it was—as it always is—a pleasure meeting Sigma Chis from the nearby U.S. and Canadian chapters. I am proud to report on the impressive state of our chapter and honored to have served as consul in the fall. I look forward to the remainder of the spring semester, as well as the contributions and personal growth of our newly initiated brothers.

In hoc,
Charlie Bernstein '12
Consul (fall 2010)



Jeffrey Mekler '10 is presented to the audience at the Balfour leadership training workshop this summer.

New and Old Traditions Continue to Unite the Chapter

There is no objective right or wrong way of getting through MIT. As I arrived at the end of my fifth semester at the Institute, with my heaviest course load ever, I wondered about the impact of the house in my life, now and in the future.

MIT is difficult, but not impossible; it is still just as much the fire hose as it has always been. In addition to the academic support and community that Sigma Chi provides, it also provides opportunities for brothers to explore areas out of their comfort zone and participate in new activities.

This semester alone, the brothers of the house are involved in various classes, clubs, sports, start-ups, and efforts of every nature. Living within this community, it becomes easy to think of being busy as the standard for all individuals in the chapter, which ensures that no brother is left wishing for more from his four years here. While there is definitely no direct competition,

hearing how well my roommate did on his tests or the success of his club's events prompts me to want to do the same. As a result, our chapter was ranked in the top five fraternities for academic achievement. We balance our academic work with sports and an active social schedule to provide the necessary release from this work, helping to keep our brothers on an even keel and graduate as well-rounded individuals.

Looking back at any given week, it always strikes me how many dinners, sports games, and other events I go to simply because one of my brothers is involved. This is a house of different temperaments, talents, and convictions, and we grow fastest when we supplement our own passions with those of others. In a similar vein, the traditions of the house pull us into exploring more of the opportunities available as part of university life. As the sweetheart chair, I have learned to organize

events and network with a variety of professionals in ways I wouldn't have done otherwise. This year is the 15th year in which we have gone ice skating after the main dinner at the Sweetheart Formal, and it is also the 40th anniversary of Wednesday Tea. Recently, we have begun trawling the historian reports of years gone past for other fun traditions and would welcome suggestions from any alumni who read this. The actives, who enjoy these traditions so much, have begun to think of ways in which we can build new ones for the future, building off of the increasingly popular pledge camping trips and house career nights. I look forward to finding ways to build on the great traditions of the house, which will reach the grand age of 130 years when I graduate.

In hoc,

Ruaridh MacDonald '12

Brother Gabriel Blanchet Blazes a New Trail for Charity

The following article, by Brock Parker, was originally posted January 4, 2011, on Boston.com. The MIT student featured is none other than our own Sigma Chi brother, Gabriel Blanchet '13.

For most MIT students $.01 \times 2,179$ would be a simple math problem. For mechanical engineering student Gabriel Blanchet '13, the numbers represent a grueling challenge. Blanchet, a 19-year old sophomore at MIT, is [taking] a semester off from school this spring to hike the 2,179-mile Appalachian Trail, from Georgia to Maine.

In addition to scratching the hike off of his "bucket list," Blanchet said he's also hoping to raise money along the way for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. However, because he's hiking more than 2,000 miles, asking his cash-poor college friends to pledge \$1 per mile would be asking too much.

So Blanchet came up with the idea of asking his friends to pledge a donation of one penny for every mile he hikes. At a single cent per mile, each pledge will add up to a \$21.79 donation. Half of the money he raises will also go to a charity chosen by the person who donates the most.

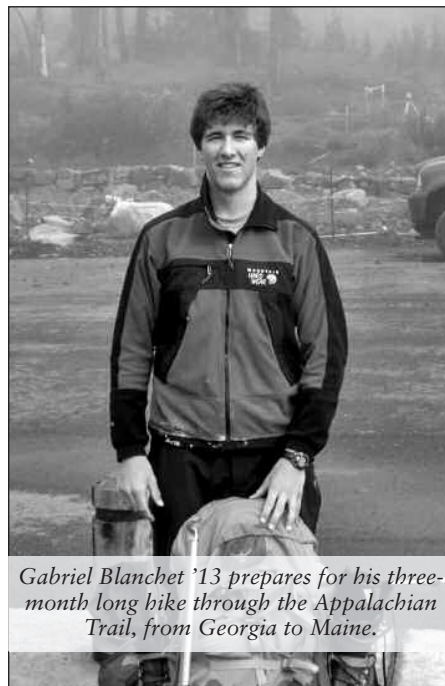
"Hopefully, I'll be able to raise enough so that in my head—or in my journal—I can say that 'ok, I went 20 miles today; that's another \$100 for charity,'" he said.

Blanchet said he got the idea to hike the trail for juvenile diabetes from his mom, who is a doctor, and so far everyone in the Sigma Chi Fraternity with him at MIT has made a pledge.

"The catch line I use for kids my age

who are hesitant about donating [is]: 'Think about how far a mile is and imagine you're standing at the end of a mile and all you have to do is hand me a penny,'" Blanchet said.

However, fundraising probably won't be the biggest challenge he will face along the way. As an athlete on the hockey and lacrosse teams at MIT, Blanchet likes to challenge himself. He will be pushing himself to complete the hike in about three months. That means he'll have to walk 20 to 30 miles a day.



Gabriel Blanchet '13 prepares for his three-month long hike through the Appalachian Trail, from Georgia to Maine.

"I think I'm in pretty good shape, but hiking 20 to 30 miles every day is still going to be a daunting challenge," he said. "I'm trying to do it super fast. Three months is sort of pushing the limits, but I want to do that."

He's already begun training for the trip and mapping out locations along the way, where he can pick up food supplies shipped by family and friends. Blanchet said he plans to travel light, taking a tarp instead of a tent and carrying only a minimal change of clothes in case he gets wet. He'll take three pairs of socks in an effort to avoid getting "swamp foot" from having wet feet, and he'll pack a pad of paper so he can write about his journey along the way.

At the request of his parents, he might take a cell phone in case of an emergency. However, Blanchet said if he had his way, he wouldn't take a phone or any other electrical devices.

"I'd hate to sort of feel lonely and just reach out to my cell phone so I could text my girlfriend or call my parents," Blanchet said. "I want it to be a more personal look-inside-myself journey."

Even so, when he can stop in a town along the trail, Blanchet said he's hoping to have the opportunity to blog about his experiences. He's already set up a webpage about his trip: gabehikestheat.tumblr.com.

He's still taking pledges for his hike and is planning to begin the Appalachian Trail at its southern starting point in the North Georgia Mountains, around February 26, and trekking all the way to Mount Katahdin in Maine.

"I want to be back in Boston by summer," he said.

Welcome the Newest Pledge Class: the Sigma Chi Class of 2014

This year, Alpha Theta was fortunate enough to welcome seven new members into the chapter. Already, they have shown great enthusiasm for the traditions and ethos of the house through the pledge program, run by Magister Andrew Pierson '12. We look forward to seeing them grow and thrive at MIT and Sigma Chi over the next four years.

Michael Klinker: Mike hails from New Hampshire and was quickly adopted into the 'Shire line in the house. He has been working hard as a recruit for the MIT heavyweight freshman crew team. The Charles hosts some fantastic events in the rowing world, none less so than the Head of the Charles. He is also a keen skier.

David Christoph: David has become so enamored with the dinner and atmosphere at the house that he even invested in a moped so that his tired legs wouldn't have to drag him across the bridge after practice. In addition to doing well in the classroom, David has made an impact on the football team at MIT, managing some starts for the defense this past semester before an unfortunate collarbone fracture ended his season.

William "Colby" Dunn: Massachusetts native Colby, the newest swimmer in house, has impressed all with his enthusiasm for MIT life. Colby made a strong start to the season and looks forward to competing for

the cardinal and gray in the near future. He celebrated his birthday with Sigma Chi and friends from home. It is great to see the pledges feel comfortable and integrated here.

Max Ramundo: A native of Detroit, but schooled in Virginia, Max is a busy man. As well as putting forth his best effort in the classroom and adapting to MIT's pace of work, Max is a member of the U.S. Air Force ROTC program, which can be a big commitment, especially freshman year. Regardless, he still found time to come over to do work in the evenings and did very well in the pledge program.

Obinna Okwodu: Our second new member from Nigeria, Obinna has also lived in London, ensuring that he will bring another touch of refined foreign charm to the house. He was very involved with the recent 50th anniversary of Nigeria's independence. Obinna is often to be found working in the new computer room, but has also found plenty of time to woo us with his guitar skills, thankfully drowning out some of the brothers who are more hopeful than talented in their own playing.

Joseph Perricone: Another Massachusetts resident, Joey

rounds out the musical talent in the pledge class. He ably led our efforts at a talent contest this past semester, run by Sigma Kappa. Joey has also begun to work at the MIT Lincoln Labs. He is thoroughly enjoying the opportunity to apply his new knowledge from classes to practical projects, getting to research straight away in his MIT career.

Kenneth Siebert: Kenny shares many characteristics of his big brother in the house, Patrick Vatterott '13. A native of St. Louis, Missouri, he is also our newest volleyball recruit and inconsiderately tall (the author being a mere six feet tall). Aware of the rigors of MIT's education, Kenny has been working hard to establish good habits before grades begin to be counted. We wish him success on the court and in the classroom.



The '14s joke around after formal pledging: David Christoph, Obinna Okwodu, Michael Klinker, Ken Siebert, William Dunn, Max Ramundo, and Joseph Perricone.

Sigma Chi Brothers Bond Through Adventures Off Campus

In late August, John Walton '11, Peter Britton '13, current Chapter Adviser Jeff Mekler '10, and I drove up to northern Maine to explore Lake Mooselookmeguntic. John proposed that we approach the situation as less of a camping trip and more of a "Bear Grylls" expedition. We threw on T-shirts and shorts and carried only knives, water bottles, and two fishing hooks. After a quick stopover at a watering hole (with cliffs 20-feet tall from which to jump!), we parked and trekked a mile or two into the wilderness.

Upon arriving, we assigned tasks: John and Peter were to assemble a raft and engineer fishing rods, while Jeff and I were in charge of building a shelter. Using skills garnered from our respective Course 2 and 16 classes, Jeff and I decided to build a skeleton frame, using driftwood, and then filled in gaps with pine needles. We finished our shelter as the sun began to dip below the distant shoreline. Gazing out, I spotted John's head bobbing up and down 300 yards from shore. He and Peter each had one arm draped over a gigantic log—not quite the elaborate raft I had in mind—and were both

using twigs to extend shoelaces into the murky depths. Using the last of daylight we scrambled to find some birch bark, nature's lighter fluid, to build a fire. The last rays of light peaked over the horizon as the fire began cracking. John and Peter were not in sight and, fearful of having to explain a reduction in the number of dues-paying brothers, Jeff and I left our fire and jogged along the beach. Around a small bend, we found our friends struggling to pull the huge log onto shore with a grinning John declaring, "No luck. Maybe tomorrow."

We walked back to our new camp and sat by the fire in an effort to dry ourselves. Huddling in the shelter, it was easy to reflect on the lifestyle that we take for granted in the city. Much of the night was spent chatting about the school year we had left behind and the one about to commence. Jeff Mekler was about to begin his master's in policy, having completed his bachelor's degree in aeronautical engineering. We reflected on the settling influence the house provides in all these periods of change; we also wondered about the kind of pledges we would acquire and their possible contributions to the house.

After a sleepless night, we made an effort to gather food in the morning, principally throwing a pointed stick. We were unsuccessful and commiserated on how unfortunate it was that our chef, Jerry, had not come with us. We strolled back to John's car, having decided not to spend another cold and hungry night. As we sank into the seats, John looked up and saw me in the rear view mirror. Providing another careful analysis of our expedition, he summarized: "No luck. Minimal skill. Great time."

The trip was a great opportunity to get away from the hubbub of MIT life and relax in simple surroundings. However, perhaps the surroundings were a little too simple. The long fireside talks were a great opportunity for the four of us to discuss the coming year. With such a range of ages present, I felt we were really drawing on the greater collective experience of the house, which is something I look forward to sharing with new brothers and pledges in the semesters to come.

*In hoc,
Gabriel Blanchet '13*

Alumni Send News From Far And Near



"I am enjoying part-time work at my advanced age," writes **Howard E. "Howie" Hendershott Jr. '49**. "I still remember the glorious days at 532 Beacon St. with super-jock **James 'the fly' Veras '49**. Some of my favorite memories include ones of the first 'wide receivers' in history. Ray, so glad to hear you are enjoying life! Keep going and you'll beat Olympian Jim and 'closed door' goalie Howie (alias: Hotshott). Best wishes to all our classmates and their families." Keep in touch with Howie at 401 Cutler Ln., Hudson, OH 44236; hnanapops@windstream.net.

"After 13 years as founding managing director (title for life!) of the MIT Entrepreneurship Center," writes **Kenneth**

P. "Ken" Morse '68, "I handed the reins to my friend, Bill Anlet, so Laura and I could have more fun and work with entrepreneurs in Barcelona, Scotland, and New Zealand. We still sail on *Mandarin*, our 50-plus year-old wooden boat, with our grandchildren." Catch up with Ken at his new address: 212 Quissett Ave., Woods Hole, MA 02543; kenmorse2@aol.com.

Reconnect with **John R. Ciminski '85** at 7241 Spring Creek Circle, Longmont, CO 80503; jrciminski@gmail.com.

Benjamin Hellweg '97 has a new address! Check in with Ben at 25 Murray St. #6N, New York, NY 10007; or e-mail him at bigbenprop@aol.com.

"My wife, April (sweetheart '03), and I welcomed our first child, Lily Victoria Sither, on April 3, 2010," writes **Matthew C. Sither '04**. "Everyone is healthy, and we really enjoy being parents." Send congratulations to Matt at 36 Barnstable St., Swampscott, MA 01907; sither@mit.edu.

DECEASED

We regret to announce the deaths of:

Robert G. Wilson '54

June 13, 2009

Sydney E. Foscatto Jr. '56

May 23, 2009

From the House Corporation

(continued from cover page)

the unusually close relationship between our alumni corporation and the active chapter.

As we move forward, there are so many things to do; we need to continue the capital campaign and renovation efforts, host the 130th reunion in April 2012, and manage the ongoing maintenance of the house. As always, we invite all alumni to participate in the corporation in roles large or small.

I look forward to serving this great fraternity of ours and hope to leave it even stronger than I found it. If you have any thoughts, suggestions, or ideas, please do not hesitate to write to me.

I wish you and your families a warm and safe winter season.

In hoc,
Daniel R. Craig '03
Corporation Board President
drcraig@alum.mit.edu

Honoring Bob Swanson '69

On Friday, March 4, 2011, MIT dedicated the Swanson Biotechnology Center (SBC) as part of the Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research. Named for the late biotechnology pioneer, **Robert A. Swanson '69**, the SBC will consist of three contiguous floors of the Koch Institute and house a suite of highly sophisticated equipment and expert researchers.

On Saturday, March 5, 2011, Judy and Erica Swanson, along with Bob's pledge brothers **Rolf Brauchler '69** and **Jim Black '69**, hosted a reception at 532 Beacon St. to celebrate Bob's life as an Alpha Theta and name the zero-floor game room/bar in his honor. Look for a full report of the event in the next *Beaver Sig*.



Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research

ΣΧ at the MIT Museum

This year, 2011, marks MIT's 150th anniversary. As part of the sesquicentennial celebrations, the MIT Museum selected 150 artifacts to represent various aspects of MIT's history. The museum selected one of our antique oak dining-room chairs to be part of the exhibition, representing the FSILG system, as a nod to our status as the oldest continuously operating fraternity at the Institute (operating at MIT since 1882).

This chair will go on display on April 1, 2011, in the Compton Gallery, behind Lobby 10. To see all items in the MIT 150 Exhibit, visit <http://museum.mit.edu/150/>

130th Sigma Chi Reunion

Alpha Theta will be reaching another milestone next year, celebrating 130 years of brotherhood in 2012. Pending confirmation of no conflicts with MIT events, the reunion will take place in Boston on **Friday, April 27, through Sunday, April 29, 2012**. More details will be available as the event nears. If you are interested in helping coordinate the reunion, please contact Daniel Craig at drcraig@alum.mit.edu.

The Beaver Sig

is published regularly by the Alpha Theta Chapter of Sigma Chi Fraternity at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for its friends and members. News and photos should be sent to: Alumni Records Office, Alpha Theta Chapter of Sigma Chi Fraternity Inc., P.O. Box 390528, Cambridge, MA 02139-0006.

How Can We E-mail You?

Please visit the alumni section of the Alpha Theta website to make sure we have your most recent e-mail address: <http://sigmach.mit.edu/alumni>.