

Mu Chapter of Sigma Pi

Annual Report to the Membership

Mu Chapter of Sigma Pi Alumni Board President's Annual Report 2021

It's an honor to report to you as president of the alumni board of directors. The 2020–2021 academic year was very challenging and unprecedented, highlighted by the strict COVID-19 protocols implemented by the university. I am happy to report that the alumni board and undergraduate e-board worked closely together throughout the year to ensure compliance, and safety measures were implemented and adhered to. The undergraduate brotherhood did a fantastic job navigating many of these challenges and successfully recruiting a strong new-members class during this time when recruitment was primarily done in a virtual setting. Despite the challenges, Mu Chapter emerged from the COVID period as resilient as ever and in excellent shape in terms of the brotherhood, alumni engagement, and our financial outlook. The annual report will provide a summary update from the board on the state of the fraternity. Some of the key highlights include:

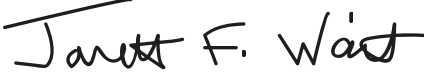
- We successfully completed fundraising for the Dining & Learning campaign, with a special thank you to brother **Kent Sheng '78** for his generous support.
- The undergraduates enjoyed the meal program this past year with the implementation Greek House Chefs as our meal service provider.
- Sigma Pi Giving Day was launched on September 9 in honor of **Dolly Hailstork**, with support from over 125 alumni and parents, raising over \$31,000! Please be on the lookout for this year's annual giving day on September 9.
- The Pi house roof was replaced.
- Alumni Relations Chair **Chris Selland '86** rolled out a series of topical Zoom talks for both undergraduates and alumni.
- The brotherhood had successful undergraduate fall and spring recruitments, despite significant challenges during COVID period.
- The Sigma Pi Educational Foundation under the leadership of **Joe Zanetta '75** continued to thrive and to explore ways to further support the educational and career needs of the fraternity.
- We launched the Diversity and Inclusion Committee, lead by **Salter Goodman'18**.

On the immediate horizon for 2021–2022, the alumni board will be focused on continuing a number of these key initiatives and will addressing new initiatives and issues as well, including:

- Developing a partnership with Cornell's Greek office for additional leadership training for the undergraduate leadership.
- Beginning to develop a much needed plan to raise an endowment for the fraternity to enhance our financial stability.
- Relaunching our career and internship committee now that COVID restrictions lifted (we are in need of volunteers and supporters).
- Transitioning off of the Cornell Bursar system.

The annual meeting of the fraternity will be held on Thursday, September 30, 2021, at 7:00 pm ET. All alumni are encouraged to participate. A zoom link will be e-mailed to all alumni and posted on the Sigma Pi website. We will be holding our annual election of directors as well. All alumni are encouraged to participate by proxy, via e-mail (alumnirecords@sigmapicornell.org), or by mail: Mu Chapter of Sigma Pi Fraternity, Alumni Records Office, PO Box 876, Ithaca, NY 14851. If you would like to speak with me or with other members of the alumni board, please contact me by phone at 212-737-7300 (office) or 917-364-5500 (cell) or by e-mail at jwait@jwaitadv.com.

Fraternally,


Jarett Wait '80

Annual Meeting Mu Chapter of Sigma Pi

September 23, 2021
7:00 pm Eastern Time

JOIN THE ZOOM MEETING:
us02web.zoom.us/j/6172164424

Educational Foundation: Joe Zanetta '75, Foundation President

What a privilege it has been to serve as president of the Mu Chapter of Sigma Pi Educational Foundation, Inc. during the 2020–2021 fiscal year. The objectives of the foundation are to support the goals so eloquently stated in our creed: *To advance trust and justice, to promote scholarship, to encourage chivalry, to diffuse culture, and to develop character, in the service of God and man.*

During the most recent fiscal year, we secured additional funds and supported those educational efforts. The board is composed of volunteer men who generously give of their time and treasure.

At our annual meeting, held on June 30, 2021, We elected three new directors: **John Altmeyer '81**, **Brody Ehrlich '10**, and **Chris Olie '78**. We said farewell to **Jim Franz '77**, **Kurt Rasmussen '80**, and **Nick Wint '15**. We re-elected officers: President **Joe Zanetta '75**, Vice President **Wayne Forman '80**, and Treasurer **Connor Riser '16**. We also welcomed Nick Ornitz '16 to serve as board secretary.

Plans for our future are centered around an effort to secure an endowment for the foundation and the house. We have been very successful in securing funds for projects, including Dining and Learning for the 21st Century, our COVID-relief internships, and other programs to enhance the education of the brothers. An endowment campaign is different, and plans are being formulated in collaboration with the alumni board. We plan to announce those in the fall. In the meantime, please continue to be generous with the foundation; gifts can be made by going on our website: musigmapifoundation.com.

Thanks for your continued support of the foundation.

Treasurer's Report: John Haggerty, Alumni Treasurer

"Murphy was an optimist"

Overall, the financial condition of Mu Chapter remains strong. We are thankful for the generous support of many of our alumni who make regular contributions via check or credit card through our website (www.sigmapicornell.org). Unrestricted contributions help to provide the cushion needed when rent collections dip (lower occupancy) or maintenance costs spike. Please consider a gift to help make sure Mu Chapter is on track to see a second 100-year celebration!

In addition to the health challenges and social impact of COVID, there were economic effects as well. There were significant increases in expenditures for cleaning, for air cleaners installed in all the common areas of the house, and for disinfection stations and other pandemic-related necessities. The undergraduates also elected to change the operation of the kitchen from an in-house cook (Patrick) to a national meal provider (Greek House Chefs). While budgeting is always a challenge where student appetites are concerned, this change compounded the degree of difficulty. The combination of the two issues, COVID and a process change, resulted in the undergraduate books running a substantial deficit. A change at our accounting firm meant that the two people most likely to see a pending problem (Patrick and our experienced accountant) were gone. By the time we became aware of the problem, the semester was wrapping up. Needless to say, there was a scramble!

To remedy the situation, we asked the vendor (Greek House Chefs) for more time to pay our bills. We then used the Cornell Bursar system (probably for the last time) to bill all those on the meal plan for the actual cost of their food consumption. There were also past-due bills to Sigma Pi International for dues that needed to be cleaned up. All in all, it was a very eventful close to the spring semester!

Anything that can go wrong will! Despite 15 years now as alumni treasurer of Mu Chapter, I still forget that the undergraduate treasurer changes every year (sometimes every semester) and that the "handoff" from one undergraduate to the next is often not complete. In all cases, not just the treasurer, the alumni board member is the "institutional memory" that helps make sure the ship continues to float. But when it came to running the kitchen, I relied on Patrick and our accountant to keep the undergraduate books in order. Rarely is there a single point of failure. In this case, it was a series of unrelated events that conspired to create chaos in the midst of a pandemic!

These troubles are behind us, and the lessons have been learned. With help from **Steve Pirozzi '80**, we will make sure that the kitchen budget is adequate for the post-pandemic semester that we are looking forward to in the fall. All that is left is to navigate our way through the loss of the Cornell Bursar system and the first semester with a new billing system and heightened risk of bad debts and collection issues. Watch for updates!

Brotherhood Committee: Matthew Pens '00

To say this academic year was challenging for the brotherhood would be a gross understatement. An ever-changing sea of rules and regulations on top of the "standard" pandemic stress, trying to keep each other healthy, all while keeping up with studies on campus but more so virtually from the house, is not the school year anyone could have hoped for. The undergraduates were not without a collision with a rule or three under these circumstances, as the pressures of college life, out of house brothers trying to see in house brothers, and keeping track of who had someone visit crossed these new lines, but these infractions were addressed and firmly so. Managing all this did take its toll on our undergraduate leaders, with a change in key positions mid-year as a result.

Amidst all this, the brotherhood showed great resilience and was sure to triumph where it matters most: rush. We all had to be nervous heading into recruitment activities this year, given the challenging environment, severe penalties for any violations, and the lasting impact a significantly down year, or worse what no rush at all could mean for the overall health of Mu Chapter. Virtual smokers, Zoom bids, distanced house meetings, etc. all pointed to what was sure to be extremely low participation. Our chapter met this challenge with strong planning, focus, and execution and, in the end, was able to initiate a total of 23 new members (five in the fall and 18 in the spring). This is a great testament to our leaders, rush chairman, and brotherhood at large, especially considering Cornell rush participation for the last two years combined (2020 and 2021) was down 25% from the two preceding years combined (2019 and 2018).

Mu Chapter weathered a most challenging year and is stronger for it. Still, a lot of work needs to be done, considering that, even with a net two-member gain for this year, we are due to graduate 50% of our total membership in the spring of 2022. Therefore, achieving another successful year of recruitment will need to be top of mind as we look forward to what hopes to be a far more normal year ahead.

Mu Chapter Sigma Pi Brotherhood Metrics

August 2020				July 2021			
Recruitment	Bids Extended	Bids Accepted	# Initiated	Recruitment	Bids Extended	Bids Accepted	# Initiated
Fall '19	8	8	7	Fall '20	12	5	5
Spring '20	26	14	12	Spring '21	25	18	18
Total	34	22	19	Total	37	23	23
Spring 2020	Brothers			Spring 2021	Brothers		
New Members	19	<i>Total (Fall + Spring)</i>		New Members	23	<i>Total (Fall + Spring)</i>	
Graduated Sr.s	28			Graduated Sr.s	18		
Net +/-	(9)			Net +/-	5		
Fall 2020	Actives	Living in House	% Living in	Fall 2021	Actives	Living in House	% Living in
Class of 2021	22	0	0%	Class of 2021*	3	1	33% <i>Dec '21</i>
Class of 2022	29	23	79%	Class of 2022	29	0	0%
Class of 2023	7	7	100%	Class of 2023	12	11	92%
Total	58	30	52%	Class of 2024	17	16	94%
		+ 1 RA		Total	61	28	46%
						+ 1 RA	
	Room Usage				Room Usage		
Singles	18	<i>Includes RA Room</i>		Singles	21	<i>Includes RA Room</i>	
Doubles	7			Doubles	4		
Triples	0			Triples	0		
Total	25			Total	25		

Alumni Relations Committee: Chris Selland '86

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, I'm happy to say that the Alumni Relations Committee has facilitated a number of gatherings: mostly online, of course, but now moving to live events as the public health environment improves and the economy opens up. Though even a global pandemic could not stop the Procrasticup golf outing.

During the past year, we were able to host a number of Zoom meetings, covering a range of topics from career related to more entertainment oriented. Thank you to all of those alums who made their time and talent(s) available! Career-focused sessions were especially well received by undergrad brothers and recent alums, who have high interest in connecting with those of us more established in our careers and industries.

If you're not already participating, I strongly encourage you to join both our Facebook and LinkedIn group; it's a great way to connect our brotherhood across generations.

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/groups/sigmapimu/

LINKEDIN: www.linkedin.com/groups/4734302

For the year ahead, we're planning to build on the success we had with our online channel, starting with Homecoming, which is relatively early this year, September 17-19, in Ithaca. The Alumni Relations Committee and board have been working with the undergrads to create

a strong calendar of events, including a combined Saturday-night party at the house. I'll be there, and we're hoping to see many of you live. Hotels are already in short supply, so book your reservations soon!

I am also hearing plans to restart other traditional live events, such as the Pagapalooza ski weekend, Boston-based events, including the Cornell-Harvard hockey game, and gatherings at other Cornell events across the country. I've also been in frequent contact with current undergrads who are looking forward to augmenting the online activities with some live ones as well.

And of course, my predecessor, **Kurt Rasmussen '80**, continues his "Name That Pi-Man" weekly e-mail series, containing photos of alumni from their undergrad days, now in its 18th year. Each e-mail also contains an alumni social calendar that lists upcoming alumni events, which are also posted on the chapter website.

Please contact **Chris Selland '86** (cselland@gmail.com) if you would like more information on any of our existing events or would like to make us aware of or start any new ones!

Jevo and see you at Homecoming!

Facilities Committee: Liviu Rusu '98

Each summer, we strive to complete our safety certifications and the larger capital improvement projects on our list. And each summer, we struggle to find available and affordable labor. COVID has magnified that struggle, as well as having slowing down the supply chain to the point that some construction materials are not available this season at any price.

The Siberian Larch that was our first choice for redecking the beach is not being imported this year.

Then again, we found two leaks in the beach membrane before the scheduled redecking and had to address and confirm the seal.

The front door and the west lounge door have received some much needed care from Ruff Maintenance, our local property manager. They sanded down all the wood, stained it darker to hide the uneven weathering, and sealed it with a UV-resistant finish. We have done this process every five years since the house was rebuilt. We have also considered placing awnings above them to limit sun and rain exposure but have ultimately voted against them on the basis of aesthetics and tradition. As **John Morrison '75** says, "We just need to get used to the fact that we'll be refinishing the doors every five years."

Meanwhile, the parking-lot project has advanced through RFP stage, and we have chosen a contractor and negotiated all relevant details. We are now at the mercy of the weather and its impact on the paving contractor's schedule.

Our hope is that it will happen prior to the undergraduate brothers' return to the house so we don't have to park vehicles on the lawn. **John Haggerty '78**, **John Morrison '75**, and **Steve Pirozzi '80** have been immensely proactive in moving this project forward.

My available bandwidth was professionally constrained, building a West Village store for fellow Sigma Pi, **Morgan Lang '98**, making this the sixth project we have completed together.

On a somber note, the house experienced a break-in earlier this summer. An unlocked dining-room window was the point of entry. We have video footage of the individual wandering through the house, looking through the fridge, and eventually leaving, but the video is not sufficiently clear to identify. It does not appear that anything was stolen. The board was promptly in communication with the RA, Ruff Maintenance, and the police, and we are now evaluating what we can do to increase house security, especially during vacations.

I continue to be amazed and encouraged by each member of this board, as I witness the passion and time being volunteered to keeping Sigma Pi on the hill.

Kitchen and Dining Committee: Steve Pirozzi '80

The Mu Chapter brotherhood faced unprecedented challenges this past school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The brothers rose to the challenges the pandemic posed, both on campus and off campus. In order to maintain the health and safety of the brotherhood, the leadership relied on the guidelines issued by the university and various government agencies. I want to focus on the partnership that developed between Mu Chapter and Greek House Chefs (GHC) to implement the guidelines relating to the meal program.

This was the first full school year during which the brothers employed GHC to provide meals and other services to Mu Chapter. Christian Lippey, the steward during the last school year, worked with other executive board members, GHC, and the brotherhood to fully implement all the guidelines. Implementing the relevant guidelines involved changing most aspects of how the Brothers used the dining room during meal periods and throughout the day. This included tiered dining, proper social spacing at all times, the GHC employees serving each meal item to avoid cross contamination, brothers cleaning the spaces they used after eating, and providing take-out meals when necessary. It also involved almost every aspect of the GHC employee's work.

GHC worked diligently to implement best practices and to modify them as they were updated throughout the year. These best practices included minimal physical interaction between their employees and the brothers and maintaining the highest hygiene standards in the kitchen and grab-and-go area by regularly cleaning of these areas. The collaboration between the brotherhood and GHC proved to be very effective. GHC was able to implement the guidelines while, at the same time, providing meals that exceeded expectations.

Typical of the first year experience with all contractors, this years experience with GHC has provided a great deal of information that will be used by Aaron Angeles, the current steward, to improve the service provided by GHC and to more accurately anticipate the costs incurred by the brotherhood. The feedback, from the brothers, is very positive regarding the quality of the meals served, the ability of GHC to adjust the menus to meet the instructions from the steward, GHC's willingness to adapt the stocking of the grab-and-go as the brothers' needs change, and the attitude of the GHC employees working in the Pi house.

We are happy to report that all areas and features of the kitchen and dining projects continue to function as they were intended to and will head into the upcoming school year in excellent condition. We continue talking to and working with the undergraduate brothers to find ways to improve the facilities so that we can maintain their safety while, at the same time, enhancing their experience.

Insurance Committee: David C. D'Orlando '79

Sigma Pi Mu Chapter insurance policies for property, liability, and excess liability coverage remain in force through Tompkins Insurance Agencies. Inc.

The fraternity house is insured for \$3,959,000, contents are insured for \$565,000, and loss of rents are insured at \$400,000 through Holmes Murphy / RSUI Indemnity Company. The annual premium is \$19,209.

General-liability coverage of \$1,000,000 per occurrence, \$2,000,000 aggregate, and excess-liability coverage of \$1,000,000 per occurrence are provided through Landmark American Insurance Co. and RSUI Indemnity Company, respectively. The annual premium is \$5,029.

Workers Compensation Insurance is provided through the State Insurance Fund.

Directors and officers liability coverage of \$2,000,000 is provided by the Great American Insurance Company. The Annual premium is \$2,708

The Chapter continues loss-control training for brothers and routine inspections of the rooms and common areas.

Legal Committee Report: Peter A. Muth '74

With the departure last year of **Dennis McNamara '83** from the committee after many years of service, the Legal Committee of the board of directors of Mu Chapter of Sigma Pi is composed of and chaired by **Peter Muth '74**. Additional committee members would be most welcome.

During the past year, the committee continues to help the Executive Committee and the board with questions as the alumni corporation works with the Educational Foundation in structuring a method for fundraising. At the same time, the foundation begins its establishment of a major endowment, with the potential for income from the endowment to help cover some of the educational expenses of the house. The committee also attempts to keep apprised of the ever-complex and ever-evolving regulations of Cornell University and its expanding control over the interactions of the undergraduate brothers as they occupy the Pi house in their daily lives and to evaluate some of the university's claims of authority (for instance, the right of university police to demand access to the house at any time to determine if violations of the student code of conduct are occurring). The committee earlier engaged an outside law firm to provide training to the undergraduates on several topics, including sexual and other forms of harassment, as well as various conduct policies from Cornell. Since March 2020 and the implementation of COVID-19 pandemic protocols at the university, and the on-again, off-again presence of university students on campus, the committee has been involved in advising the board on various topics of the impacts of COVID-19.

Nominating Committee: Peter A. Muth '74

The Nominating Committee of the board of directors of Mu Chapter of Sigma Pi is composed of **Peter A. Muth '74** and **Matt Pens '00**.

The Nominating Committee is purposed with identifying and recommending candidates for the alumni board. The committee generates discussions with current board members, members of the alumni, and the active brothers, in seeking recommendations for additions to the board or replacement of board members who might have, after years of service, decided to step away and open opportunities for successors. The board is currently comprises 17 members (including four officers), living in states ranging from Massachusetts to California. (The board previously authorized 20 director positions.) Meetings are generally held via Zoom, largely on a monthly basis and more frequently if needed (e.g., a recent break-in, albeit without any serious damage but sufficient to raise questions about access to the house in the summer and the sufficiency of the security measures in place, prompted a quickly organized meeting).

Frankly, the evolving protocols necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic have overshadowed the committee's continuing search over the past year for additional directors, although the aim remains in structuring a board with as many different decades as possible to ensure a broad range of professional experience. Last September, the committee submitted the names of **Jon Fordin '80**, **Chris Selland '86**, **Yordi Goshu '18**, and **Will Murphy '18** to the board as nominees to stand for election at the annual meeting of the alumni corporation. As structured, the board has worked extremely well over the past year (**VanNess D. Robinson '57**, **Kurt Rasmussen '80**, **Dennis McNamara '83**, and **Stephen M. Ryan '77** remain as emeritus members). At this point, it is believed all current members intend to and are willing to remain "onboard." LOL.

That said, anyone interested in recommending someone to the committee to be reviewed as a potential director should contact either Peter A. Muth (pmuth@roadrunner.com) or Matt Pens (Matt.Pens@pepsico.com).

Diversity & Inclusion: Slater Goodman '18, Yordanos Goshu '18, & Will Murphy '18

Over the past year, the Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Committee has identified key areas in which the fraternity can improve its accessibility, outreach, and support for members of underrepresented identities. These identities include race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and sexual orientation. For the 2021–2022 academic year, we aim to improve recruitment and the support of underrepresented brothers and to create educational programming and opportunities for D&I activism and engagement. Our goals this year include hosting three D&I-focused events, creating a five-year action plan to make the Sigma Pi brotherhood racially representative of the Cornell population at large, and producing an annual D&I report to track progress.

History Committee: John Morrison '75

You might be aware that many of our composites are available to view on the Sigma Pi website. However, we do not have copies of many years, and most of the years we do have are low quality (small file size) such that one is unable to zoom in clearly enough to read the names. The History Committee is attempting to recover as many of the composites as possible in high-quality digital format, as well as "personal" hard copies for as many years as possible to be entered in the Cornell Library.

Vantine, the company that produces the composites, has copies for sale of all since 1979, except for 2008 (reason unknown). We have no composites from before 1971, except for poor quality digital copies of 1961 and 1963.

We are also interested in compiling digital and hard copies of the party pictures.

Any brother who has a personal copy and is willing to donate or to have it scanned into digital format is asked to contact **John Morrison '75** at johnmorrison236@comcast.net.