

Mu Chapter of Sigma Pi

Annual Report to the Membership

Mu Chapter of Sigma Pi Alumni Board President's Annual Report 2022

It's an honor to report to you as president of the alumni board of directors. The 2021–2022 academic year proved to be both challenging and exciting as COVID-19 protocols were gradually eased 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 adhered to. The alumni board is excited to welcome a new group of leaders within the chapter who stepped up following elections in May. Despite the challenges, Mu Chapter has proved as resilient as ever and in excellent shape in terms of brotherhood, alumni engagement, and undergraduate leadership. The annual report will provide a summary update from the board on the state of the fraternity. Some of the key highlights include:

- Cornell changed their policy and eliminated the bursar system in the Greek community. Our alumni board had to reassess its increasing position as landlord while engaging with the undergraduate brothers. The alumni board has partnered with CSL property management to effectively manage the landlord-tenant relationship between the alumni and undergraduate chapter. This will remove any potential friction between the landlord and tenant.
- Another by product of the removal of the bursar system was the enhancement of the business center on the Mu Chapter website. The center has been overhauled for the benefit of student members, alumni, and parents.
- The existing lease agreement for undergraduate members was re-evaluated to create a more professional lease related to student life in the house.
- Due to a recruitment violation, the undergraduates were not allowed to participate in the recruitment process in the fall. The spring class consisted of 12 quality new members, and the undergraduate leadership is focused on a successful recruitment process this academic year.
- The alumni board, in partnership with the educational foundation, has been engaged with the undergraduate leadership to discuss ways we can work to remove financial barriers for perspective new members interested in joining Greek life.
- The Sigma Pi Educational Foundation, under the leadership of **Joe Zanetta '75**, continued to thrive and enjoyed one of its best years in terms of gifts received.
- The educational foundation, in partnership with Sigma Pi Fraternity, International, and the alumni board, sponsored two undergraduate members to attend the Sigma Pi Convocation in San Antonio, Texas.
- The alumni chapter enjoyed a successful reunion weekend for the first time since the pandemic, with almost 100 alumni in attendance and entertainment provided by the alumni band, Band of Brothers.

On the immediate horizon for 2022–2023, the alumni board will be focused on continuing a number of these key initiatives and will be addressing new initiatives and issues as well, including:

- Continuing to develop the framework for a scholarship through the educational foundation that will make fraternity life more economically accessible and, thus, help to widen our potential pool of recruitment applicants.
- Relaunching our annual New York City career event, in partnership with the undergraduate leadership, with a tentative date set for November 3–4.
- Relaunching our career and mentorship initiatives through a series of Zoom calls to the undergraduate chapter from successful alumni.
- Developing an ongoing partnership with Cornell's Greek office and Sigma Pi Fraternity, International, for additional leadership training for undergraduate members.
- The facilities committee is continuing to oversee major renovations throughout the Pi house. Their current focus is improving the beach and adding additional insulation in the roof.

The annual meeting of the fraternity will be held on **Thursday, September 29, 2022, 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

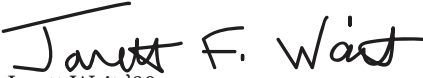
Annual Meeting Mu Chapter of Sigma Pi

September 29, 2022
7:00 pm Eastern Time

JOIN THE ZOOM MEETING:
us02web.zoom.us/j/89955482132

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 917-364-5500 (cell) or by e-mail at jwait@jfwaitadv.com.

Fraternally,


Jarrett Wait '80

Educational Foundation Report: Joe Zanetta '75, Foundation President

The foundation concluded our fiscal year on June 30, 2022. We received approximately \$40,000 in gifts for the year, which was one of our best years. Thanks to all of the brothers who generously supported the foundation.

One of our signature programs is awarding the David Harrop Memorial Scholarship. As a reminder, here is the description of the scholarship:

A scholarship for educational purposes will be awarded by the Mu Chapter of Sigma Pi Educational Foundation annually to the brother who best demonstrates academic excellence and service to Sigma Pi and the greater Cornell and Ithaca communities.

The board has established the following weighting criteria:

- Academic excellence, driven by GPA: 40%
- Service to the community:
 - Sigma Pi participation: 35% Community participation: 25%

This year, we selected Maxim Clouser. Maxim Clouser lived in the house as a junior and is currently a rising senior, in line with our scholarship requirements. We were impressed with Max's leadership in both the house and on campus.

At our annual meeting, we bid farewell to two long-serving board members. **Aaron Klein '14** has been a dedicated member of the board and was our first president. He is an executive with the Chicago Cubs, and recently, he and his wife had their first child. After nearly ten years of service, Aaron has decided to conclude his membership on the board.

We also bid farewell to **Connor Riser '16**. Connor has been involved with the foundation since his graduation from Cornell. While attending Georgetown and New York University School of Law, he has been our treasurer. In the fall, he will become an associate with Skadden, Arps in Manhattan. We are grateful to Connor for his years of service.

Both Aaron and Connor demonstrate "service above self" and will remain supports of the foundation. Thank you for your years of leadership.

We elected two new board members to the foundation: **Roger Carroll '76** and **Zachary Gilbert '17**. We will profile both Roger and Zack in our fall newsletter. Roger is a retired attorney from Ohio and a graduate of the University of Virginia Law School. Zack is a second-year MBA student at Duke University. We are energized by bringing men who offer a 40-year perspective of Sigma Pi brotherhood.

Officers were also elected at the annual meeting, with Joe Zanetta continuing as president, Wayne Forman as vice president, Nick Ornitz as secretary, and Chris Ollie as treasurer.

Our assets are approximately \$70,000 and our challenge is to continue to be the worthy recipient of gifts. Over the past several years, we have supported the Learning Commons and provided internships, conference stipends, and scholarships. The only way for us to continue to support these programs is through the generosity of our brothers, so please continue to make your gifts to the foundation.

Treasurer's Report: John Haggerty '78, Alumni Treasurer

As I sit in my office in Ives Hall, I am struck by the transformation of the campus this week. First, the international students arrived, then yesterday, the first-year students and their parents (in many cases), campus maps in hand, could be found in various states of confusion, trying to locate North Campus! I found myself playing tour guide and trying to reassure the parents that this is really a quite manageable campus once you get familiar with the layout. ...and once all the construction detours are removed. While I always enjoy the quiet of the Ithaca summer, the return of students to campus brings the place back to life. Monday is the first day of classes and the normal college rhythms will follow shortly after. To everything there is a season...

The alumni board took a major step over the summer by evaluating and hiring a management company (CSL) to be the primary manager of two major areas of fraternity work. First, CSL will handle the collections issues related to students who do not pay their bills in full, on time, or both. As you know from previous reports, this task severely damaged our relationship with the active brothers and prevented me in particular from fulfilling my obligations as the "faculty advisor" to Sigma Pi. Your president (Jarrett) and I were the bad guys who hounded our brothers for money. Not fun. And second, CSL will do a complete evaluation of the physical structure and begin to build a comprehensive maintenance and capital-improvement plan. This will give us forward visibility on major expenditures, and allow us to make better, more informed decisions about operational budgets and fund raising.

While all that was going on, we undertook the removal and replacement of the flat roof membrane above the west lounge. The old membrane, original to the house reconstruction in 1993, had simply reached the end of its useful life. Frequent leaks were damaging the ceilings below, and patching was no longer an option. Liviu took the lead, and despite the challenge, found a contractor willing to commit to completing the project while the house was empty over the summer. Given the labor market and supply-chain issues post COVID, this was a remarkable achievement!

The good news is that the repair turned out to be a massive improvement over the prior wooden pallets, which needed constant repair and frequently punctured the membrane. The new system has beautiful large-format tiles on risers that protect the membrane underneath. The new membrane extends well up the parapet walls, and new metal flashing was installed above that. This system is fully warrantied by the manufacturer and should result in the elimination of the need to frequently clean out the drains in the roof. And, it looks fantastic! Many of you will remember the beach as a key to successful fall rush and an important gathering place for active brothers and alumni alike!

The bad news is that this repair came in two and a half times over budget at a time when we have been forced to cut into our shallow contingency reserves to keep the house running. Having built a new house during COVID, I completely understand the dynamic. Everything costs more, and if you have labor available, you better move the project along. The board authorized \$60,000, but the total will be closer to \$150,000. But, it is done, the roof is warrantied not to leak, and the pavers look infinitely better and should be much safer (even in stiletto heels). Kudos to Liviu and his team from Hale Roofing.

It is difficult to ask for money for repairs and maintenance. Roofs are not very sexy. But, this is the beach. It is a vital part of the personality and attractiveness of Mu Chapter. We raised \$90,000 10 years ago to build the metal outdoor staircase so that the brothers could continue to use the beach as a social space and to comply with fire code. And, use it they (and lots of you) have! So, I'll ask anyway: contributions to the house corporation (which are not tax deductible) to offset the cost of this roof project would be very much appreciated and timely!

With the help from CSL as a replacement for the loss of the use of the Cornell bursar system, we hope to get back to a stronger and more predictable financial (especially cash flow) situation on the alumni side. The undergraduates continue to struggle with budgeting and spending (one exceeds the other), and I will again put out a plea to any brother with financial skills and a bit of time to take on the role of advisor to the undergraduate treasurer. It would be a great opportunity to reconnect with the house, and the help will be extremely valuable to the active brothers.

As always, I will end by saying that, if you find yourself coming back to Ithaca on business or family travel, please reach out to me. I am happy to provide a personal update on the house and to arrange a visit if your time allows. And, if you are in a position to contribute, please do. We are well into our second 100 years, and we continue to provide a home and a brotherhood (for life) to a special group of Cornell students each year!

Alumni Relations Committee Report: Chris Selland '86

First and foremost, while I wasn't able to attend Reunion as planned this year, due to a combination of some family health issues and a last-minute case of COVID, I'm happy to report that it was a great success. More than 100 alumni made it back to Ithaca—finally—in person, and the ongoing enthusiasm from our alumni bode well for the future.

Special thanks to **Steve Pirozzi '80** for organizing the food-and-beverage logistics, to Band of Brothers for the tunes, and of course to Jarett Wait and John Haggerty for their overall leadership.

One of the highlights of Reunion was the tribute to my alumni-relations predecessor, Kurt Rasmussen (Raz), whose weekly "Name That Pi-Man" list continues to go strong and keep the bonds of brotherhood strong across the years. As I hand off the reins of alumni relations, I intend to keep working to keep those bonds intact. I'm not sure anyone can recreate the uniqueness of NTPM, but keep in mind that we do have both Facebook (www.facebook.com/groups/sigmapimu) and LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com/groups/4734302) groups to keep everyone engaged and intact.

I also know from speaking with so many recent grads and undergrads how much those social-media connections are appreciated, especially for intern and career opportunities, as well as for advice and mentoring.

This fall, watch again for an alumni giving day on Dolly's birthday (September 9) and Homecoming a few weeks later (September 23–24). Although I'll be stepping aside in the next few months, I intend to stay involved as our next alumni-relations chair takes over. Please feel free to contact me anytime at cselland@gmail.com.

Brotherhood Committee Report: Matthew Pens '00

The 2022–2023 academic year will need to be focused on recruitment. As you can see in the brotherhood metrics, we have some concerns to address. The brotherhood is currently at its smallest since 2016 but smaller still if you consider those active members graduating in December. Only 25 brothers are living in the house, all in single rooms. Further, the concern is the trend we have seen over the last number of years of our new-member classes having fewer and fewer freshmen in them. This last year, 12 new members were added to our ranks, with seven of the 12 being freshmen. Not helping matters this past year, the undergraduates were not permitted to participate

in fall recruitment at all and took a class of 12 in the spring when we had 23 seniors graduate. We always stress quality over quantity and understand the dynamic when recruiting groups of friends, where so go one so go all, but coming up on the short side on a number of those bids last spring does leave a significant challenge for our undergraduates to meet this academic year. We need to ensure we have all the energy and focus early into fall rush to hopefully add strength to our class of 2025 and to build momentum as we head into what should be the first “return to normal” spring rush since the pandemic started. To date, I remain highly encouraged, having met with the incoming undergraduate leadership and having seen their focus to this end, and this committee will continue to partner with them in any way that can help them be successful.

Mu Chapter Sigma Pi Brotherhood Metrics

August 2021				August 2022			
Recruitment	Bids Extended	Bids Accepted	# Initiated	Recruitment	Bids Extended	Bids Accepted	# Initiated
Fall '20	12	5	5	Fall '21	0	0	0
Spring '21	25	18	18	Spring '22	30	12	12
Total	37	23	23	Total	30	12	12
Spring 2021	Brothers			Spring 2022	Brothers		
New Members	23	Total (Fall + Spring)		New Members	12	Total (Fall + Spring)	
Graduated Sr.s	18			Graduated Sr.s	23		
Net +/(-)	5			Net +/(-)	(11)		
Fall 2021	Actives	Living in House	% Living in	Fall 2022	Actives	Living in House	% Living in
Class of 2021*	3	1	33% Dec '21	Sr. Class of 2022*	7	0	0% *Dec '22
Class of 2022	29	0	0%	Sr Class of 2023	11	0	0%
Class of 2023	12	11	92%	Jnr Class of 2024	21	17	81%
Class of 2024	17	16	94%	Soph Class of 2025	7	7	100%
Total	61	28	46%	Total	46	24	52%
		+ 1 RA				+ 1 RA	
	Room Usage				Room Usage		
Singles	21	Includes RA Room		Singles	25	Includes RA Room	
Doubles	4			Doubles	0		
Triples	0			Triples	0		
Total	25			Total	25		

Facilities Committee Report: Liviu Rusu '98

The beach continues to be the focus of our efforts. If all the details align, we should have a finished beach before the semester starts.

And, that is a *big if*. Building-department approval, compliance with an updated energy code, and growing supply-chain constraints are the main hurdles to overcome.

Although all we want is a roof that doesn't leak, the code now requires we add more insulation. Easy, until you can't add more, because the door has to clear.

Oh, and that thinner stone layer we were going to cover it in... we can't get that any more. We *can* source roofing pavers, but they're thicker and will require *less* insulation.

So, we continue to battle windmills, and I remind myself that every construction project *is* finite; we just have to keep putting one foot in front of the other until we cross the finish line.

On other fronts, we are also addressing the state of the house inside. The pool table, piano, and lounge furniture have seen better days. And, so has the house culture.

There's no denying it; it even came up in the RA's exit interview. Through a mix of COVID, quarantine, and the usual “Lord of the Flies phenomenon,” we are finding ourselves in “animal house” territory once again.

It's up to us to remind our younger brothers that, without a house, there is no fraternity.

Kitchen and Dining Committee Report: Steve Pirozzi '80

Every class of Pi men has slightly different desires and likes when it comes to the meal plan. As a result, the process of fine tuning the meal plan to meet these desires is an ongoing process. No one knows these preferences better than the steward, the brotherhood's elected representative, meant to create and implement a plan to meet these preferences. The K&D Committee works with each steward to advise and to help him meet the needs of the brotherhood.

One aspect of the work we do with the steward is refining the role that Greek House Chefs (GHC) fills for the brotherhood and how that role can match the budget the brothers have settled on. The steward is responsible for designing the menus and designating the items that will be available in the grab-and-go. Alexa Bosshardt is one of the K&D Committee members who offers her nutritional expertise, whenever it is requested, to the steward.

As we all know, the physical infrastructure of the Pi house that supports the meal plan was completely overhauled with the completion of the Dining & Learning campaign projects. With close attention to proper maintenance, this infrastructure is functioning well. We did have our first piece of equipment that required replacement during the past academic year. That was the garbage disposal unit. We consulted our facilities maintenance company and found that the failure was not due to any misuse but fell within the expected service life of that equipment.

We continue to look for ways to improve the service to or better meet the needs of the brotherhood. To this end, we are looking for a donor or donors who will fund the purchase of an espresso dispenser for the grab-and-go area. The brothers have expressed an interest in having an espresso machine for times when they are working late to complete projects or study for their prelims and finals. Please, contact me at spirozzi1@nyc.rr.com if you are interested in funding all or part of this purchase.

During this past academic year, the brotherhood and the university took steps to move forward from what we very much hope is the worst of the COVID-19 experience.

It was only the second full academic year during which GHC serviced the Pi house, so some of the details of Sigma Pi's relationship with GHC are still a work in progress. The steward, with the brotherhood and the advice and help of the K&D Committee members, will continue to work diligently to shape all aspects of the relationship with GHC to best meet the Pi house's meal plan requirements, as determined by the brotherhood as a whole.

Insurance Committee Report: 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 \$3,959,363, 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 \$21,774.

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 \$9,429.

Workers Compensation Insurance is provided through the State Insurance Fund.

Director and officer liability coverage of \$2,000,000 is provided by the Great American Insurance Company. The annual premium is \$2,789.

The chapter continues loss-control training for brothers and routine inspections of the rooms and common areas. We look forward to improved loss control in 2022–2023 under the new management company.

Legal Committee Report: Peter A. Muth '74

The prior 2020–2021 year for the Legal Committee was largely spent chasing the ever-changing university rules governing student conduct and, in particular, fraternity and sorority life. For example, what is the Pi House's obligation when university police seek access to the house premises for a "spot check"?

The 2021–2022 year was still impacted by the COVID pandemic but presented more typical legal issues. For instance, in prior years, the method for collecting house rent, dues, and fees was simple. The treasurer calculated the total amount due for the coming year and presented the numbers to Cornell, and the university immediately issued a check. This allowed timely payment of taxes, insurance, utilities, etc. for 730 University Avenue. The brothers, in turn, were billed by the university with little resistance. That has changed. Suddenly, the alumni board became the collector of rent and attendant fees, while the active brothers billed for food, social dues, and related expenses.

This suddenly posed several challenges.

First, the existing form lease for a room in the Pi house was woefully short of what was needed under the new system. Heretofore, a cursory lease was adequate, merely serving to document the figures being presented to the university. The initial task for the Legal Committee was to create a more “professional” lease, enumerating both the obligations of the board as landlord and elaborating on the obligations of the brothers and the limits on their leasehold rights (e.g., no use of the kitchen, liability for damage to the house and its contents, rules on the presence of alcohol and drugs, etc.). Ultimately, the lease was woven into an online collection of applications related to student life in the house, with each brother required to work their way through the online system, including signing their lease if they were going to reside in the house and prepaying rent by a specified date or be denied entry into the house.

While not exactly a responsibility of the board, with a change from the former Dolly Hailstork single-employee cook method of providing meals, the brotherhood switched to hiring a company, Greek House Chefs, which specialized in providing meals to fraternities and sororities across the county. In fact, it has proved to be very popular with the brothers, although there have been some hiccups. The board undertook the task of reviewing the GHC contract and, largely with the help and advice of Steve Pirozzi, tweaked the contract to make it a better fit for Sigma Pi.

Finally, a new and surprising lack of timely payment of rent bills by a number of brothers necessitated an exhaustive year in which Jarett Wait and John Haggerty were forced to spend untold hours dealing with and cajoling brothers and officers. John Morrison and Liviu Rusu were similar frustrated by the apparent lack of care and respect by the active brothers of the Pi house facility.

This resulted in a shift in the historic brotherly relationship between the active brothers and the alumni, with the alumni board increasingly viewed as obstreperous bullies. The search was on to hire a company able to undertake responsibility for monitoring the condition of the house, managing house maintenance and repairs, collecting student past-due accounts, and completing facility evaluation and routine inspections during the school year. We found and evaluated two companies specializing in this work, with the Legal Committee tasked with reviewing their respective proposals and contracts. Ultimately, the board chose a company called CSL Management out of Tennessee. There is hope that the addition of CSL will lessen any feeling that the alumni board is not working in the best interests of the active brotherhood.

Fortunately, through this entire period, the Legal Committee has not had to engage itself in connection with any active litigation we all fear in connection with college life, with death due to hazing being at the top of the list. Hopefully this good luck will continue.

Nominating Committee Report: Peter A. Muth '74

I will confess that the nominating committee has been rather bereft of activity over the last year. I'll blame COVID—what the hell.

I had hoped to kick start a search for possible new board members during the recent Sigma Pi Reunion weekend, but had to cancel my trip to Ithaca in the face of a gathering of my family's clan after years during which cross-border travel between the American and the Canadian branches was denied. Anyone with a German mother-in-law will understand the futility of trying to argue the importance of a fraternity reunion in the face of an ability to finally gather together with relatives after years of separation. I tried to substitute an e-mail appeal for volunteers to the board, with limited impact.

That said, the upcoming year will need an exerted effort to find alumni willing to serve in various positions. For instance, Jarett Wait excels at keeping in touch with university personnel on behalf of Sigma Pi and is largely responsible for the achievements outlined in the Legal Committee report above. He believes, however, that another person might be best for dealing with the e-board and active brothers. That person is going to take some effort to find. The board will also need additional members who are willing to undertake imparting what might be loosely labeled “Sigma Pi culture” in the undergraduate brothers. There is a sense that a bit of “animal house” has crept in recently, which is not a reflection of Sigma Pi history. Jim Haggarty could well use an additional hand at what has become an enlarged portfolio. Similarly, John Morrison and Liviu Rusu could use additional help. As for the Legal Committee, it is currently staffed by one person, a litigator who is more attuned to the courtroom than to drafting and reviewing contract agreements. Surely there is a corporate attorney who would eagerly donate their time and join up. There are other spots to fill as well. In particular is a need for younger alumni. Frankly, our ranks are looking a bit like the United States Senate, with me, having just passed into my 70s, as an exemplar of the old guard. Any addition of those graduating in the last decade or two would go a long way in establishing a better connection with the current brotherhood. Any thoughts: shoot me an e-mail at pmuth@roadrunner.com.

Diversity and Inclusion Committee Report: Slater Goodman '18

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee remains committed to its mission to improve the fraternity's accessibility, outreach, and support of its underrepresented members and potential new members. To that end, over the past year, the D&I Committee has been working with the undergraduate leadership and the Sigma Pi Educational Foundation to find ways to mitigate the financial burden that students today incur. We are hopeful that our new initiatives will be in place by the fall 2022 semester, and we are excited to build on this momentum and to continue to make Sigma Pi Mu Chapter an even more inclusive and accessible brotherhood.