

Mu Chapter of Sigma Pi

Annual Report to the Membership

Mu Chapter of Sigma Pi Alumni Board President's Annual Report 2023

It's an honor to report to you as president of the alumni board of directors while Mu Chapter is currently celebrating its 110th anniversary! The 2022–2023 academic year proved to be a positive year for the undergraduate chapter in terms of new recruitment, brotherhood culture, and financial responsibility. The alumni and undergraduate e-board worked closely together throughout the year on several key initiatives, which will be highlighted throughout this annual letter. I am happy to report that the state of the fraternity is stronger in terms of the brotherhood, alumni engagement, undergraduate leadership, and finances. The annual letter will provide a summary from the board on the state of the fraternity.

The Mu Chapter of Sigma Pi Educational Foundation, in collaboration with the alumni board and undergraduate chapter, established the **Greek Affordability Fund**. Since its inception, the fund has raised over **\$110,000** in pledges and direct contributions from dedicated alumni who recognize the need for financial support for brothers facing rising college-tuition costs and inflation. The fund has now expanded to provide financial assistance to new members, covering initial fraternity costs and supporting brothers living in the chapter house. Thus far, the fund has assisted six recipients with \$34,000 in support. Three of these members currently reside in the chapter house and hold leadership positions, while the remaining three were new members who would not have been able to join the chapter without the support of the fund. The alumni board has observed a positive shift in the organization's culture since the fund's implementation, as it has provided much needed support to current brothers and has enabled the chapter to attract individuals who share Sigma Pi's values but might have struggled with the initial costs of joining. The foundation has established a committee, comprising alumni members **Tom Silver '81**, **Brody Ehrlich '13**, and **William Murphy '18**, to oversee the vetting and interviewing of candidates to ensure that each applicant receives sufficient financial assistance.

Sigma Pi launched a **Brotherhood Agreement** this spring, which is a compact signed by all members joining Sigma Pi. Thank you to **Peter Muth '74** for his good efforts on this project. The agreement details the expectations for members living in the house, including financial responsibilities, meal plan requirements, and general house rules. It's important that members are fully aware of their membership obligations when they join the fraternity, and the brotherhood compact agreement helps increase the transparency for potential new members. The alumni board and e-board have already noticed a positive cultural shift within the chapter house. Members are more aware of their responsibilities and the policies in place. Undergrads have been taking better care of common spaces, communicating earlier regarding financial questions and issues, and contributing more as brothers in Sigma Pi. We look forward to seeing these positive trends continue as the brothers continue to take more ownership of the chapter house.

The **Facilities Committee** has begun an important **inventory-management project** for the house in partnership with Breeze-way Solutions. We are hopeful that this will assist us, particularly with problems around room turnover, as well as in the longer term in helping us keep track of the recurring tasks of facilities and inventory daily, weekly, monthly, seasonally, and annually.

The alumni board partnered with CSL property management to effectively manage the landlord-tenant relationship between the alumni corporation and undergraduate chapter. This helped to mitigate potential friction between the landlord and tenant and assisted on collections.

Facilities projects took place throughout the year and through the summer. Please join me in thanking **Liviu Rusiu '99** for his tireless leadership and commitment to our beloved house. This summer, all bedrooms were being painted, the walls were repaired, and 14 beds on cinder blocks were removed from bedrooms and 20 new bed frames and mattresses were installed. The front porch has a leak into the dining room ceiling below. We found the leak in front of the porch door, so Liviu and the team pulled up all the pavers, cleaned and inspect the whole membrane, and patch everywhere.

Ongoing review of a recent proposal to insulate the attic, to install heat pumps, and to have central air-filtration in response to the wildfire smoke sessions we've been having. The Facilities Committee believes this also helps with risk management by

Annual Meeting Mu Chapter of Sigma Pi

September 28, 2023
7:00 pm Eastern Time

JOIN THE ZOOM MEETING:
us02web.zoom.us/j/9998321993

DIAL-IN: 646-931-3860

MEETING ID: 999 832 1993

installing central air conditioning to prevent accidents with window units. An architect is redesigning room 310 to be two singles instead of a double, creating a new bedroom with two extra singles by combining the closet from one room and the mechanical closet from another.

Hotel Sigma Pi was launched this summer and is off to a strong start! After the first few weeks, our team, lead by Liviu Risiu '99 and RA Zion Sherin, quickly pivoted the business to focus on filling a void in the market as a hostel. Thus, the name going forward will be **The Hostel @ Sigma Pi**. A common definition for a hostel is “a lower-priced inn of sorts that offers basic, shared accommodations. Typically, a hostel features a large room with separate beds, a shared bathroom, and a communal kitchen. Some hostels have private rooms, but the lower-cost ones generally offer bunk beds.”

Lots of work has been done on the needed infrastructure for payment, lease, insurance, registration with Airbnb, and marketing: www.airbnb.com/rooms/924523802613401976.

The summer kicked off with Reunion, having all rooms occupied with daily cleaning service, fresh linens, towels, etc. We had a breakthrough when we secured a two-week reservation with a camp of high-school students attending Cornell—Cornell bailed on their dorm accommodations at the last minute. They rented the entire second floor for two weeks and are also discussing the possibility of renting the house over winter break. As of this publication, we have hosted over 40 different guests, many staying for more than one evening. We even have had some alumni stay at The Hostel. Our new RA, Zion Sherin, started his position in June and has introduced us to a summer renter. If you would like to learn more, volunteer, etc., please contact Liviu Risiu '99.

The alumni chapter enjoyed another successful Reunion weekend, with over 80 alumni in attendance and, for the second year in a row, entertainment provided by the alumni band, Band of Brothers!

The undergraduate dinner speaker series was a big success, with the brothers hosting Jenny Loeffelman, assistant vice president for Student & Campus Life, and Kara Miller, director of Sorority & Fraternity Life, along with other members of Cornell's Greek staff in March.

The alumni board has been discussing ways that the brotherhood can continue to grow and to evolve as college life and the Greek system also continue to change. Liviu and the facilities committee are hard at work on a strategic plan to address mission-critical investments needed to 730 University Ave. The alumni, foundation, and e-boards are partnering on a leadership conference entitled “**Reimagine Sigma Pi**” this fall, sponsored by Mu Chapter of Sigma Pi Educational Foundation, with alumni board member **Slater Goodman '18** as lead facilitator. The meeting is a leadership conference, reflecting on the confidence instilled in the undergraduate chapter by the leadership team and alumni outreach. Brothers will also discuss laying the groundwork beforehand through leadership groups, and there will be breakout group discussions on ways to improve the fraternity's finances and risk management, including incentivizing a “moonshot pitch” competition. Talks will conclude with a discussion on potential activities for the Sigma Pi Fraternity, including a core-value exercise to identify values important to the brotherhood and strategic principles to guide thinking on marketing, new member recruitment, and involvement on campus.

Giving

Last year, the priority fundraising initiative was the Educational Foundation's successful launch of the Greek Affordability Fund, as highlighted by the data below. This year, the focus will be fundraising for mission-critical infrastructure investments we need to continue making in our beloved house. **The campaign, entitled “Reimagine Sigma Pi,” will be launched at this year's Hailstork Annual Giving Day (September 7) in honor of our brother Adolphus C. Hailstork II.** A continued two-fold goal remains to increase overall participation and to identify key alumni partners who might be able to “seed” the campaign. Please reach out to John Haggerty or Jarett Wait if you would like to discuss further.

Sigma Pi Fiscal Year 2022–2023

Total donations to Alumni Corp. and Foundation: \$99,956.60 with 86 donors

Total donations to Alumni Corp.: \$11,033.00 with 26 donors

Total donations to the Foundation: \$88,923.60 with 60 donors

Fiscal Year 2021–2022

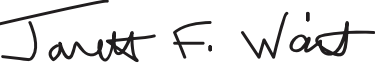
Total donations to Alumni Corp. and Foundation: \$54,028.00 with 96 donors

Total donations to the Alumni Corp.: \$23,298.00 with 58 donors

Total donations to the Foundation: \$30,730.00 with 38 donors

The annual meeting of the fraternity will be held on Thursday, September 28, 2023, at 7:00 pm ET. All alumni are encouraged to participate. The Zoom link (us02web.zoom.us/j/89955482132) 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 917-364-5500 (cell) or by e-mail at jwait@jfwaitadv.com.

Fraternally,


Jarett Wait '80

Educational Foundation Report: Zachary Gilbert '16, Foundation Secretary

On June 30, 2023, the foundation concluded our fiscal year with one of the best fundraising years to date. We received more than \$90,000 in gifts and would like to thank each and every Pi man who generously supported the foundation.

We'd like to give a special thank you to **Joe Zanetta '75** for his service as president of the foundation. Joe will be stepping down in his role as president but will continue to serve as a member of the board. While Joe leaves behind big shoes to fill, we're excited to have **Wayne Forman '80** taking over as president after previously serving as VP.

In Addition to Wayne, the following officers were also elected at the annual meeting: **Tom Silver '81** as vice president, **Zach Gilbert '16** as secretary, and **Chris Olie '79** as treasurer.

We bid farewell to **Nick Ornitz '16** as a member of the board. Nick has had a busy year running a startup and getting married, so he will be stepping down from his role in the foundation. We thank you for your service; congratulations to you and Caity!

We elected two new board members to the foundation: **Justin Bredahl '17** and **Matthew Blakley '18**. Justin is a second year MBA student at Harvard Business School, and Matthew is 3L at Wake Forest School of Law. We are thrilled to continue to see interest and participation in the foundation from young alumni. This will help us to stay connected with the young men in the house, as well as to ensure the longevity of our initiatives.

This year marked a significant milestone for the educational foundation when we launched the Greek Affordability Fund. Through this program, undergraduates can apply for financial assistance to help pay their dues and fees while living at the Pi house. This was a successful initiative both to increase the number of brothers living at 730 University Ave. and to attract new members during rush. We are proud to announce the continuation of the Greek Affordability Fund in 2023–2024, after selecting several impressive young men to receive scholarships for this upcoming school year.

Additionally, one of our signature programs is the David Harrop Memorial Scholarship, which we plan to award to an undergraduate brother this fall. 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%

Our year-end assets are approximately \$107,000 and reflect the generous donations from our fellow Pi men. We strive for the educational foundation to continue to be the worthy recipient of gifts. These donations have helped us to support the Learning Commons, fund internships, provide conference stipends, and award 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 J. Haggerty '78, Alumni Treasurer

The recently ended fiscal year (July 2022–June 2023) saw significant progress on recovery from the sudden elimination of the Cornell bursar system. Despite that progress, the alumni corporation continued to operate with a deficit. Through April (last figures available), the alumni corporation spent \$36,000 more on operating expenses than we collected from all revenue sources (~\$400,000). For the second consecutive year, our expenses have increased faster than our revenue. The deficit reduces the modest cushion that we were able to accumulate in the five years preceding the Cornell-bursar decision. We are, however, still current on all our bills and are able to provide an outstanding living and learning community for our active undergraduate brothers.

There are two major drivers of the rapid increase of expenses. One is inflation, most notably in our mandatory insurance policies. The market for fraternity insurance is non-competitive. There are only two players. In the last several years, they have been able to raise premiums (price) substantially. The fraternity market is captive and poorly organized. To say we have no leverage is an understatement. The second major driver of increased spending is the necessary ramp-up of additional professional services. Elevate (fundraising and general operation partner) and CSL (facilities and accounts receivable collections partner) are both providing substantial new services to allow us to operate better in a post-bursar, inconsistent-cash-flow world. These services come at a substantial cash cost.

Another cost not captured in the financial statements is the human cost in time and effort. Your board of highly motivated alumni, fully committed to keeping Mu Chapter viable for many future generations of undergraduate brothers, has had to step up dramatically to meet the challenges presented by the bursar change and the continued anti-Greek public and institutional backdrop. I am humbled when many of you thank me personally for my efforts. I trust that you are thanking the other board members with less visible positions as well. But, what we really need is your help.

And, help is two things. First and perhaps easier for many of you in some respects is financial help. While the generosity of those who give regularly is unparalleled, the percentage of all alumni who give is still relatively small. With over 1,100 living members of Mu Chapter, many now entering a phase of life where philanthropy is more important, I hope more of you will consider a significant gift. As you will see from the report of the facilities committee, the appetite (need) for additional spending is large. I am frankly tired of having to moderate the spending based on the need to retain some cushion in the event we cannot operate the fraternity for a short period of time. While we can and do raise rent in lock-step with Cornell's dorm-rate increases, inflation has risen faster in the last two years than rent. And, remember, some of our brothers are struggling to stay current on rent. The second form of help we need is time: your time. Our board needs new blood. A few of us have been at this for more than 15 years. Some of you have increasing time and significant talents. The decisions this board makes in the next few years will determine if Mu Chapter remains a vibrant part of the Cornell University undergraduate-student experience. Please give thought to joining our board and reach out to any of us if you would like to discuss how you can get directly involved.

Finally, as we "Reimagine Sigma Pi," we experimented this summer with using 730 University Avenue as a short-term rental property. This required significant investment (in money and Liviu's time as he will describe). The results suggest that this can be a way to generate additional revenue when the house is typically unoccupied, but maintaining the house in a constant state of "readiness" for discerning visitors is not easy and will require money, time, and very careful planning so as not to hinder our primary task of providing a place for brothers to live, work, and enjoy their time at Cornell. See Liviu's write-up for a full account of this work.

As always, thank you to those who look for any opportunity to help support Mu Chapter. If you would like to discuss how you can help more, please reach out to me (jjh56@cornell.edu). And, if you find yourself in the Finger Lakes region, let's connect. Unless it is winter, in which case you are far more likely to find me in the Florida Keys!

Alumni Relations Committee Report: Steve Pirozzi '80

Approximately 70 alumni and guests attended Reunion 2023. The Pi house was full of alumni staying with us via Hotel Sigma Pi. We had our annual cocktail hours, along with catered dinners on both Friday and Saturday evenings. Kegs were available on both the front porch and the beach, along with other alcoholic beverages, soda, and water.

The highlight of the weekend was the performance by Band of Brothers. A video of Band of Brothers performing can be seen at www.sigmapicornell.org/150-BandOfBrothers.asp.

The weekend also saw the class of '63 celebrate their 60th reunion with a lunch Saturday in the Memorial Library. The class of '18 and the class of '13 were well represented and led much of the weekend's festivities on the beach.

We continue to encourage any and all Mu Chapter alumni to attend reunion no matter which class they belong to. This year, we had numerous alumni attend reunion whose graduation year was not technically up.

Special thanks goes to **Liviu Rusu '98** for the work he did last summer, designing and then supervising the repair work to and the resurfacing of the beach. Everyone attending commented on the vast improvement that resulted from Liviu's efforts.

See you next year at reunion.

Brotherhood Committee Report: Matthew Pens '00

2023 was very encouraging year, following a challenging 2022. Looking at the numbers last year, we finished the year with a double-digit net-negative overall membership figure. There was a call to answer, and answer this cohort did. With strong dedicated leadership and an activated brotherhood, the recruitment of highest caliber individuals was a clear priority. Coming off a school year where actions brought fall rush to a full stop, this group seized the opportunity and added 11 in the fall alone. A busy and competitive spring brought in another 13 fine men, so that, after graduating 13, we saw an overall net increase in membership of 11, erasing the prior year's deficit.

The brotherhood stands at 51 members heading into the fall, which is still way below our more recent peak of 67 at this time in 2019 (pre-COVID). There are some challenges ahead with a big graduating class (22) and a sophomore class of only 10. Therefore, a strong fall rush to fill the ranks of the class of '26 would be reassuring. All that said, it is not always a numbers game, because we always stress quality over quantity, and from my chair, quality leadership is what we have. We have an experienced and thoughtful senior sage in **Rob De Jesus '24** who is one of two seniors living in the house. We also see the return of the double room, with 10 guys electing to bunk up, taking our total number living in the house up six from last year to 30.

The alumni board overall is taking a good hard look at other ways to get our live-in number up, so they are taking a hard look at room configuration, leases, rent, and more. Also, a huge amount of gratitude and indebtedness goes to our vice president of the alumni board, **Liviu Rusu '98**, who has given an untold number of hours laboring with love over our facility to make it one to be proud of, to want to take care of, and to attract new members. It's been a real solid year with a great outlook for Mu Chapter, but this is no time for complacency; the energy and focus will need to return for fall rush '23 to build on this momentum and positivity.

Mu Chapter Sigma Pi Brotherhood Metrics

July 2022					July 2023				
Recruitment					Recruitment				
		Bids Extended	Bids Accepted	# Initiated			Bids Extended	Bids Accepted	# Initiated
Fall '21		0	0	0	Fall '22		20	11	11
Spring '22		30	12	12	Spring '23		30	15	13
Total		30	12	12	Total		50	26	24
Spring 2022					Spring 2023				
		Brothers					Brothers		
New Members		12	Total (Fall + Spring)		New Members class of '26		11	Total (Fall + Spring)	
Graduated Srs		23			New Members class of '25		12	Total (Fall + Spring)	
Net +/-		(11)			New Members class of '24		1	Total (Fall + Spring)	
					Graduated Srs		13		
					Net +/-		11		
Fall 2022					Fall 2023				
		Actives	Living in House	% Living in			Actives	Living in House	% Living in
S Sr. Class of 2022*		7	0	0%	Sup Sr Class of 2023*		0	0	0%
Sr Class of 2023		11	0	0%	Sr Class of 2024		22	2	9%
Jnr Class of 2024		21	17	81%	Jnr Class of 2025		19	18	95%
Soph Class of 2025		7	7	100%	Soph Class of 2026		10	10	100%
Total		46	24	52%	Total		51	30	59%
			+ 1 RA					+ 1 RA	
Room Usage					Room Usage				
		Room Usage					Room Usage		
Singles		25	Includes RA Room		Singles		18	Includes RA Room	
Doubles		0			Doubles		5		
Triples		0			Triples		0		
Total		25			Total		23		

Facilities Committee Report: Liviu Rusu '98

I've been at the house for almost two months. I suppose it's incumbent upon me to update you, though frankly, there are so many moving pieces that my update might be outdated by the time of publication. We've gone through three rounds of pushing forward but focused on different deadlines.

First was preparing the house for graduation and for parents of graduating seniors staying at the house or visiting. Though move-out this year left the house in generally better condition than our previous COVID years, I was a bit ashamed to receive our prior sage's (Lev) mother on the first night. We pushed forward, and I had lots of help. Pristine Cleaning and Max Clouser, our interim RA, covering the period when our last departed and our next arrived, was amazing in his help, as was his dad Mike, who stayed at the house, even beyond Max's departure, and has been continuing to help hands on. The house was "passable" for graduation.

Our second push was to prepare the house for Reunion weekend and the full house of alumni from '18, '13, and back to '83 that were staying at the house, as well as the much anticipated Band of Brothers concert. As we attempted to set up each room, we realized how short our assumptions were between work expected and work required. Beds consisted of broken box springs on cinder blocks. It's clear why brothers had been complaining last semester. We ordered 20 new beds and mattresses, keeping only the few beds that prior brothers had purchased out of presumed desperation. We focused on at least providing a proper bed for each returning alum, with most having air conditioning as well: nothing sexy, standard ugly window units that are impossible to properly seal, that damage the window to mount, and that we've had fall from windows in prior years.

We also found many rooms with damaged walls and improper paint jobs, broken outlets, missing closet doors, and broken bedroom doors and locks. There really wasn't any specific recent brother to hold accountable for it. Our "system of keeping track" had failed us, because it required too much manual input and updating.

We stayed focused on our core deliverables and the Reunion deadline, and we found more help from **Jarrett Wait '80** and **Steve Pirozzi '80**. We also focused on finding, framing, and displaying all the composites we still have, with a few from the '80s and '90s and all thereafter, notable exceptions being '38, '47, '48, '54, and '57.

All in all, the house looked pretty darn good and worked pretty darn well for everyone during Reunion '23. I'd give it a B-. It was great to be able to give some house tours personally and to show the house and the challenges we currently face to some of you.

Now, we're on to round three. Our current push is to generate revenue from the house during the summer. We have an amazing location and some amazing lodging capabilities, at least for a market that's willing to forego some "bathroom privacy." So, we're trying what's

available, and some of it is working. We have two summer students finishing up for a few weeks on the third floor. We have a two-week summer camp for kids on the second floor, which is also making use of our common spaces and loving the house. The four bedrooms on the first floor are set up as a four bedroom suite, sharing a bathroom, and the two bedrooms in the basement are set up as a suite, sharing one bathroom and having a private entrance. They're listed on Airbnb, and we have started to get some traction. We did have a rough start and did not meet the expectations of our first guest, but we learned and continue to learn from each guest. That's what led us to the early pivot of listing suites rather than just rooms in the two instances we could.

Before we could reach the point of being able to photograph and list spaces, we were doing a lot of work to the first- and second-floor hallways and rooms 103, 104, 203, 204, and 205. We're starting to reap the results of that work, both as revenue accrues this summer and as we look forward to future summers. We're positioned for a much better summer in '24, not just considering Airbnb revenue but other streams we've identified, like the summer business-school program. Not only could we provide ideal housing for such students, but given that networking is part of the benefit package of the business school, I'm not sure there's a better networking opportunity than what Sigma Pi could provide them. I'm proud to say **Max Clouser '23** came up with that idea. Students know their acceptance status in early spring, and we plan to make them aware of this opportunity early. In an ideal scenario, this would give us a steady, budgetable income stream with low maintenance.

But, the house needs more work. Being here an extended period of time, I've notice the things that are broken beneath the surface: the leaking faucets, broken bathroom exhaust fans, squeaky door closer, slamming door, sagging hallway floor, etc. It's not glamorous, but it is essential that we repair them. However, we currently don't have a budget to address it. We spent those funds as efficiently as we could on higher urgency items.

We're now at a solid B, and we're on the lower-urgency items but still on the high-importance list, and we still have a short to-do list to pass our upcoming multiple-residence occupancy permit. We also have rooms like 206 and 306, which I've temporarily abandoned, because they're so big and have so much work required that I've focused on smaller and less input intensive rooms.

John Morrison '75 and I have tried over the years to maintain a working list of capital improvements and maintenance. Keeping this list updated has been an exercise in futility. I joke that it's "our ever growing list," but then, to butcher Chaucer: "the biggest truths are said in jest." So, there's much room for improvement on two related fronts: our room check-in and check-out process and our general "house lists" for maintenance and improvements.

Enter Breezeway. Thankfully, Jarrett has spearheaded this effort, and all I had to do was sit in on a few presentations and be delightfully impressed. Breezeway is software as a service, with a \$150-per-month subscription, that databases *all* the areas of the house and keeps us *all* on the same page. After a monthlong process of investigation and deliberation, we have voted as a board to proceed and are embarking on the on-boarding process of creating and populating the initial database and creating user profiles. We have high hopes that this system will raise accountability and awareness among brothers and allow us to be more efficient in our management responsibilities, as well as in executing our ongoing capital improvements. This initiative integrates with the "Re-imagine Sigma Pi" brainstorming process that is happening at each level of the organization: undergrad, alumni, and educational foundation.

Which brings me to round four, for I dare to dream and re-imagine. We have two main themes. One we encounter year after year in our urging to have a full house of undergraduate brothers, including seniors: the desire for singles rather than doubles. I know what you're going to say, and I agree; doubles are frankly fun, but please don't shoot the messenger.

So, being that as it is, I've given this more thought and re-evaluated a similar assessment we conducted years back. The conclusion is rather indisputable and somewhat bleak. There are only three doubles in the house that could relatively easily be restructrued to be two singles each: 310, 210, and 19 (in the basement). I've started the planning process, so we might get estimates for construction and inch this forward into reality.

The second theme, another recurring and growing one, is air conditioning. Yep, those ugly inefficient window units that come with a big falling liability are a mold hazard and a storage nuisance. They're everywhere, except in 204 and 304, which are right above the entrance, because I cannot aesthetically bring myself to stoop that low, even in July. So, those rooms sit hot and empty, at least during summer.

I've explored options, including properly insulating the attic rafters with spray-in foam and adding a radiant barrier. These would drastically reduce the cooling load during the summer and the heating load during winter. Additionally, I've explored installing central HVAC units in the attic for the third and second floors and in the basement for the first and ground floors. There's lots of good news here and some bad news. We'll start with the bad; there's a price tag: \$25K for the insulation and \$40K each for the three units handling the four floors.

There's some related bad news. Our existing heating system requires an immediate \$2K replacement of the remote temperature sensors throughout the house and of the four gas boilers that provide heat and hot water. One is on it's last legs, two are marginally better, and only one has an expected service life greater than five years. That number happens to be key, because by recent Ithaca law, no new gas lines will be installed, effective now, and no existing gas appliances can be replaced after five years. That brings us to a fork in the road. Do we replace our current boilers for \$8K each and stick it out with gas as long as we can, or do we live up to Dave Lefevé's famous words from 1996 after the police raid on the house and us having to face the IFC: "Well... when you're being run out of town... on a rail... with a little bit of style... you can make it look like you're leading the parade!" The HVAC units would be powered by electric heat pumps, allowing for cooling in summer, heating in winter, and air filtration year round. That's actually a big one, bigger than I initially expected, because this is one dusty house, and only the common areas get dusted.

I'd rather not put into words the dust bunny ecosystems I found under some beds. Also factor in this summer's Canadian wildfire smoke and the fact that we had Airbnb reservations cancel because of air-quality concerns, and factor in all the HEPA filtration investment we made during COVID, which has slowly made its way to the dumpster. Then there's the mitigated risk of window air-conditioning units falling out of windows as they have in prior years. We dodged that bullet, and we tried to implement a system whereby only Ruff Maintenance installed and removed the units—they just had to be informed, and we've learned that's a consistent failure point. I don't see a better way to permanently mitigate it. So, I'm all in for heat-pump central HVAC, and there's one big cherry; it raises the bar on what we're offering year round.

Concurrently, we'd look at dividing the three doubles into six singles, which include adding three windows. We do not yet have professional estimates, but the anticipate a cost is \$100K. In total, we're looking at a \$250K project, the value of which immediately translates to increased occupancy both in the academic year and in the summer.

As we all know by now, the value of a property is a function of its positive cash flow and an annual multiplier that's market dependent. Therefore, these projects are not just expenses; they are genuine investments in both the tangible and intangible value of the house. So, in honor of **Dave LeFeve '60**, who dutifully served as this board's vice president and often came to the house, worked on it with me, and gave so much of his time and wisdom to us that I am honored to serve in his shoes 30 years later, I hereby launch—drum roll—The Re-imagine Sigma Pi Fundraising Campaign.

Kitchen and Dining Committee Report: Steve Pirozzi '80

The Mu Chapter meal plan continues to evolve and adapt to best meet the needs of the brothers. The evaluation is achieved through ongoing discussions between the alumni association and the undergraduate e-board, supplemented by a regular survey of the brothers. The steward is constantly working with the brotherhood to improve the menu and the items available in the grab-and-go. Last year, the discussions resulted in the seniors exclusively being able to opt for a dinner-only meal plan. This worked well, and the dinner-only meal plan will continue to be offered to seniors.

Greek House Chefs (GHC) has provided Mu Chapter's meals for several years. Evaluation of GHC's performance is an ongoing process. All agreed-upon changes are implemented during the academic year or are implemented during contract negotiations. Additionally, alternative plans for providing Mu Chapter brothers their meals are discussed and evaluated as they are submitted to the e-board and the alumni association.

The alumni association has worked with the steward and other e-board members to formalize the process by which brothers can request exemption from the Mu Chapter meal plan due to a medical condition and have their requests considered.

The kitchen equipment continues to function well. Since the completion of the K&D project, we have only had to replace a single garbage disposal.

I'd like to thank **Liviu Rusu '98** for all the work he did to sand and then resurface the dining room tables. He has given the tables a second life. They look *great!*

The Mu Chapter heads into the upcoming academic year on good footing with respect to the provision of meals and the 24/7 availability of snacks.

Insurance Committee Report: David C. D'Orlando '79

Mu Chapter of Sigma Pi's 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 \$24,729.

General liability coverage of \$1,000,000 per occurrence or \$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 \$18,053.

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 \$2,789

The chapter continues loss-control training for brothers and routine inspections of the rooms and common areas. A prospective inventory-control program will help eliminate the annual shrinkage of contents.

Legal Committee Report: Peter A. Muth '74

Compared to last year, the 2022–2023 year for the Legal Committee has been benign. As people might recall last year, we had a recent, dramatic change in having to direct bill undergraduate brothers for rent, replacing an easy historic process by which Sigma Pi forwarded its billings to the university bursar. The bursar, in turn, immediately paid the fraternity and, in turn, billed the brothers. Unless someone

suddenly changed their future scholastic plans and left Cornell, the university had few problems collecting those bills. In addition, alumni were no longer allowed to visit Cornell or the Pi house during the COVID pandemic. As a result, bereft of long-standing historic supervision, some of the undergraduate brothers responded less urgently to being billed by the alumni board for their room occupancy and, apparently, being billed by the undergraduate treasurer for their meal plans and other dues.

After the creation of a more “professional” binding agreement, which required students’ parents to cosign their sons’ fiscal obligations, and after intense work by **Jarett Wait ’80** and **John Haggerty ’78** in explaining to and cajoling brothers on those responsibilities, and Herculean work by **John Morrison ’75** and **Liviu Rusu ’98** in emphasizing the standard of care and respect the active brothers needed to give the Pi-house facility, things began to change. The newer classes began to “get it.” Ultimately, a newly drafted brotherhood agreement with a lease component 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.

The remainder of the year provided relatively modest chores. A creative search for non-typical revenue led us to seek people not associated with Sigma Pi who might be interested in leasing a parking spot from the fraternity for the school year. Naturally, a lease agreement and waiver needed to be implemented. The house has also been offered this summer in the form of an Airbnb (i.e., “Hotel Sigma Pi”), which, with Liviu’s involvement, has had significant positive response in its introductory year. (Whether a similar agreement and waiver is called for in connection with a relatively short-term rental is being evaluated). A similar simple agreement also needs to be crafted to address situations in which brothers are provided exemptions from the mandatory meal-plan participation, whether the exemption is based upon religious requirements or health reasons (e.g., an exemption from the meal plan doesn’t mean that an Instapot can suddenly appear in their room).

Finally, as the board engages outside help in handling numerous aspects of operating Sigma Pi, including the production of *The Muse*, in contacting brothers in connection with various charitable giving campaigns, in making certain that the physical condition of the house is kept at a high standard and that the contents of the house are kept in place (there is apparently an unbelievable potential for broken beds and couches and damage to rooms as they are vacated at the end of the spring term), and in making certain that the undergraduate brothers don’t enter into any contractual arrangements that can come back to bite them (with special thanks to **Steve Perrozi ’80** in keeping an eye on the kitchen operations), there seems to always be another contract to review and approve. But, as in past years, the Legal Committee has not had the misfortune of having to face the type of 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: Peter A. Muth ’74

I will again confess that the Nominating Committee has been rather bereft of activity over the last year. This year, I can’t even blame COVID-19.

As before, this upcoming year will need an exerted effort to find alumni willing to serve. We are blessed that **Jarett Wait ’80** continues to be the “face of Sigma Pi” and excels at keeping in touch with university personnel, but he could often use more help. **Jim Haggerty ’78**, as treasurer, could well use an additional hand at what has become an enlarged portfolio. Similarly, **John Morrison ’75** and **Liviu Rusu ’98** do yeoman’s work keeping the lights on and a roof over the heads of the undergraduate brothers. While our flock of alumni is undoubtedly heavy with wealth of captains of industry, there must be some “hands on guys” for whom evaluation of outdoor-lighting systems or air-conditioning options would be enjoyable tasks. And, as noted last year, the Legal Committee is currently staffed by one person, a litigator who is more attuned to oral argument in the courtroom than to drafting and reviewing contract agreements. Surely, there is another attorney who would eagerly donate their time and join up. I again emphasize the need for younger alumni, while gratefully admitting that some recent additions have helped. But, the addition of even more brothers who have graduated in the last decade or two would go a long way in establishing a better connection with the current brotherhood. I often say that my relationship with the current brothers is akin to my receiving advice from, when I was at Sigma Pi, a brother who had graduated from Cornell during the Harding administration. Any thoughts: shoot me an e-mail at pmuth@roadrunner.com.

Diversity & Inclusion Committee Report: Slater Goodman ’18

Over the past year, the Diversity & Inclusion Committee of Sigma Pi Fraternity has been actively engaged in fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment for all members. Most notably, the committee formed a strategic partnership with the educational foundation to establish the Greek Affordability Fund (GAF). This joint effort aimed to address financial barriers and to enhance accessibility within Sigma Pi. The committee played a crucial role in developing the criteria for the GAF, including economic need and contribution to both the fraternity and Cornell community. Furthermore, we worked with the educational foundation to assess applications and to select the first recipients of the GAF. The GAF has been a fantastic success and has strengthened our commitment to enabling students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to participate fully in the fraternity experience at Cornell.

In the next year, we will work to collaborate further with undergraduate brothers to implement various initiatives aimed at creating an inclusive atmosphere within the fraternity. Through workshops, trainings, and open discussions, we aim to raise awareness about diversity-related issues, promote cultural understanding, and ensure that every brother feels valued and respected.