

MIT Parents News

A publication of the MIT Parents Association

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Spring 2008

Connect Infinitely: MIT Parents Gain Access to Online Services

Current MIT parents now have access to select online services provided by the MIT Alumni Association through an Infinite Connection account. These services have the potential to draw parents more deeply into the vast and welcoming MIT community, provide a new network of resources, and simplify routine tasks such as information updates and event registrations.

In the past, the Parents Association has often facilitated parent to parent discussions by placing current parents in touch with parent volunteers. Now, parents can join other parents, alumni, and friends on our Discussion Network to address current MIT topics, such as energy, entrepreneurship, and parent-specific interests like the best hotels for Family Weekend and which restaurants near campus students prefer to be taken to by their visiting parents.

parents can quickly register for programs by using their Infinite Connection accounts. Event registration pages pre-populate with name and address information.

Parents concerned that a change of address or email will result in missed newsletters, invitations, letters, or other important MIT documents can update their contact information directly within the Parents Association database through their Infinite Connection accounts.

Another benefit of an Infinite Connection account is the ability of a parent to establish a customized giving account. Once created, parents can explore and customize their giving options and track donations and pledges online.

Registration is easy and takes little time. To begin using these new features, visit <http://alum.mit.edu/parents> and click the "Connect Infinitely" featured link.



Parents looking for more ways to get involved in the MIT community can use an Infinite Connection account to sign up for regional MIT club email lists, which update parents on what MIT activities are happening where they live. Once aware of the many events in their areas,

Catching Up with the Chaplain: An Interview with Robert Randolph

Over 50 years ago, former MIT President James Killian envisioned MIT as an Institute that recognized the place of religion in modern society. Steps were taken toward this goal, but plans for an Institute chaplain were put on hold when Killian left MIT to work for President Eisenhower. The intention finally came to fruition as Robert Randolph, formerly the senior associate dean for student life, assumed the role of chaplain to the Institute in January of 2007.

Randolph has now held this position for over a year, and we were delighted to have a chance to see how the responsibilities of his new role have developed.

Q: Why does a secular school like MIT have a chaplain?

A: It is important to realize that a university is never simply secular. The issues that confront students while they are in university will contain matters that may be religious or spiritual, depending on the circumstances. A school like MIT has a chaplain because it recognizes the multi-dimensionality of the university experience. A chaplain is not an advocate for a particular religious tradition but may be a gatekeeper for the varied religious communities on campus.

Continued on page 2



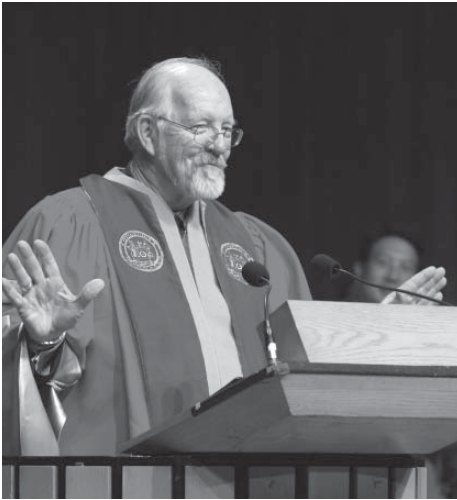
ELLENZWEIG

MIT Breaks Ground for Koch Institute

Building 76, the new home of the Koch Institute, will feature roughly 180,000 square feet of state-of-the-art lab and workspace. The floor plans are specially designed to foster interaction and collaboration among biologists and engineers.

<http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2008/cancer-groundbreak-0308.html>

Catching Up with the Chaplain: An Interview with Robert Randolph *continued*



Above: Randolph addresses a crowd of hundreds during his installation as MIT's first chaplain to the Institute. Photo by Dan Bersak

Q: What percentage of the student body is involved with a faith-based, religious or spiritual group?

A: That is a number that is hard to come by. We have sixteen denominational chaplains supported by religious groups working on our campus. There are nearly forty student religious groups, and they vary in size from a handful to two hundred or more. On any given weekend, three to four hundred students, staff, and faculty members will attend worship services beginning on Friday for prayers, Sabbath observance, study of scripture, a series of Catholic Masses and Protestant worship. During the week, there are also regular prayers for the Muslim community, the Conservative and Orthodox Jewish communities, and the Lutheran/Episcopal ministry.

Q: What are your goals, and how have you been able to move toward them during your first year as chaplain to the Institute?

A: I have spent a good part of this year asking people what they think the chaplain to the Institute should do, and people have been rather straight forward: be concerned about the core values of MIT, pay attention to the moral and ethical dilemmas that confront us, think about tensions between religious groups, monitor the heartbeat of the community, and be willing to raise uncomfortable questions.

I have been listening and am moving to lay out goals for short term and long term activities. In the short term, I want to have a core group of thinking partners who will be resources to me as we work through the next few years. In the long term, I want to have the resources to support a diverse and productive community in the Religious Activities Center.

Q: You've been at MIT for 28 years and have served as the point of contact for MIT's religious groups for 26 years. How have your responsibilities changed since officially assuming this role?

A: Now that I am no longer on call around-the-clock, I have some reflective time to think and plan, which is a marvelous relief.

I need to be about resource development so that good programs do not disappear for lack of resources. I need to think about the implications of actions in a longer time frame, for example: the state of the Religious Activities Center, the upkeep of the organs in the chapel and in Kresge Auditorium (a.k.a. The Meetinghouse of MIT), the care of the chapel, and support for smaller religious communities including the Bahai and the Jain communities.

Q: In a previous interview, you stated that a chaplain of the Institute should be "a voice for justice, integrity and ethical conduct on campus." How do you reach out to the entire MIT community, which may include non-religious individuals, from a religious role?

A: My commitment is to helping students grow as they explore their own religious tradition or the traditions of others. I am mindful, as well, that some do not have a religious tradition and are seeking to develop a moral/ethical framework that will serve them in all aspects of their life.

I am the Chaplain to the

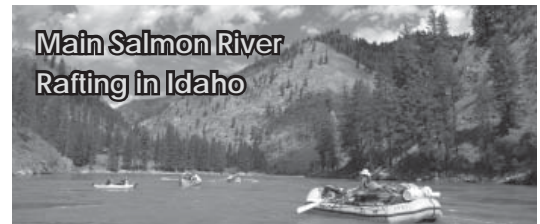
Institute, and that means the whole Institute. I am not a proponent of one tradition over or against others; I am a resource to all communities. It is my job to make sure that I am viewed as an honest broker in the give and take of MIT.

Q: What moral/spiritual issues do MIT students face today?

A: They range from the relational—e.g. how do I treat my boy/girl friend—to the professional—e.g. honesty in research. We learn how to be ethical by watching others. To set a proper example, it is important that faculty give credit to students for work they do and treat them with respect, paying attention to the power disparities that make exploitation possible. There are opportunities to educate the community with regard to these matters, and the chaplaincy may well be an office that can prompt healthy reflection and intervention.

This is a small corner of the moral universe, but it is one that has the potential to do great good. As a student said to me the other day: "I get confused. My girlfriend wants to work in the developing world. I want the newest hardware, a nice apartment, and lots of cultural resources. Is there hope for our relationship?"

"Maybe," I said, "but we need to talk." Welcome to my new world!



Join fellow MIT Community members from **August 15-22, 2008** on a rafting trip on the Main Salmon River, with free-flowing Class III whitewater that's suited to any experience level.

- Explore the river on the rafts
- Embark on leisurely or challenging hikes
- Enjoy fresh hearty meals prepared at preset campsites

For more information about this program or any of our other 40+ trips, visit our Web site at <http://alum.mit.edu/travel>.

Sponsored by the MIT Alumni Travel Program



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Summer Send-Off Events: Hosts Needed

Every summer, the MIT community eagerly awaits the arrival of the incoming freshman class. These students will be the future of MIT. Who are they? What sets these individuals apart? Parents can be among the first to find out by hosting a Summer Send-Off Event.

This community-wide endeavor requires volunteers from all possible sources, including MIT Alumni Club members, Parent Connectors, Educational Counselors, and affinity group participants across the globe.

Last year, the work of these volunteers made it possible for the Parents Association

to coordinate a grand total of 58 events, covering 45 cities and 12 countries. This year, we hope to surpass these numbers and make events available to nearly 100% of the incoming students.

“Together, we hope we’ll further strengthen the **sense of belonging** and **spirit of unity** in the local MIT community.”
— Hosts *Cindy and Timothy Poon P '09, '05*

The Parents Association will provide invitations, decorations, and a planning guide, but it is the parent volunteers who plan and host the

events. Send-Off Events will take place between June 21 and August 11.

Parents interested in hosting should send an email to mykidis@mit.edu or call 617-253-8183 before June 1.

HARTFORD, CT



ITALY



More Ways to Get Involved

ADMITTED STUDENT EVENTS

The first opportunity admitted students have to interact with the MIT community is through Admitted Student Events, which usually take place during spring break for high school students. These events are organized and hosted by Educational Counselors, approximately 2,500 MIT graduates around the world who recruit, interview, and act as a community resource for their regions.

Parent Connectors may be contacted by an Educational Counselor in their area and asked to help with an event by welcoming the students and their parents, participating in question and answer sessions, and sharing their MIT experiences.

CAMPUS PREVIEW WEEKEND

Campus Preview Weekend (CPW) gives newly admitted students the opportunity to visit the MIT campus and plays a vital role in helping prospective students decide whether or not to accept their offer of admission to MIT.

Many of these students are accompanied by their parents, and the initial impressions of the parents play a critical role in a student’s final decision about where to attend college. During the weekend, there will be a number of events and programs designed exclusively for these prospective parents, and it is wonderful to have Parent Connectors on-site as ambassadors for MIT.

Campus Preview Weekend 2008 (CPW) will take place April 10–13, and the Parents Association needs volunteers to share their MIT experiences and answer questions during parent registration, in the hospitality lounge, at the Academic Fair, and during the Parent Reception.

PARENT ORIENTATION

As first-year students arrive on campus, the Parents Association welcomes new MIT parents to the community and provides resources to assist with their transition.

The resource most valuable to the parent of an MIT freshman is the presence of a

Parent Connector, a current MIT parent volunteer available to answer questions with the wisdom of experience.

Parent Orientation will be held Saturday, August 23–Monday, August 25.

FAMILY WEEKEND

Not only does this event offer parents the chance to meet MIT faculty and staff, participate in activities, and attend numerous entertaining and intellectual presentations, it also highlights the strength and depth of the MIT community.

Last year, 45% of attendees were from freshman families, unfamiliar with the campus and with many questions. Knowing that volunteers are waiting in the hospitality room to help them acclimate to the campus and possibly to being a new parent of a college student is a great comfort and well represents what being a part of the MIT community is about: support.

The MIT Parent Connectors are our dedicated volunteers who serve as a resource for both MIT parents and parents of prospective students. If you are interested in becoming a Parent Connector, please call us at 617-253-8183 or send an email to mykidis@mit.edu

Underclassmen Giving Campaign

The Public Service Center's grant program helps members of the MIT community solve real-world problems by funding local, national, and international public service projects. Grants have been awarded for everything from water filtration projects in South America to tutoring programs in Boston and Cambridge.

Last year, in just two weeks, 21% of the freshman, sophomore, and junior classes supported fellow MIT students and the Public Service Center through the Underclassmen Giving Campaign. More than \$3,800 was raised, funding four expedition grants enabling MIT students to travel overseas and do volunteer work

during the winter Independent Activities Period and the summer break.

In the first weeks of the campaign this year, 20.5% of underclassmen contributed more than \$3,500, not quite replenishing the funding to once again offer four complete expeditions.

It's time for the MIT community to unite again to help our students continue making an impact around the world!

For more information about how you can support the Public Service Center's grant program, please visit: <http://web.mit.edu/mitpsc/about/support.html>

Champions for the Fund

The MIT Parents Fund Committee members are hard at work making calls to fellow MIT parents and raising contributions for the priorities of the Parents Fund. Parents who have the chance to speak with a committee member will be able to discuss in detail the opportunities provided by the Parents Association and the areas where support is needed most:

STUDENT LIFE NOW

This fund is comprised of contributions made by parents of MIT students who wish to enhance student life on campus during their student's tenure at the Institute.

UROP

The Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) cultivates and supports research partnerships between MIT undergraduates and faculty.

ATHLETICS

The MIT Department of Athletics, Physical Education, and Recreation (DAPER) stresses not only the physical benefits of athletic activity, but also the critical skills that students develop through sports—self-discipline, leadership, teamwork, and communication.

FINANCIAL AID/SCHOLARSHIPS

MIT's undergraduate financial aid packages must be strengthened to continue to bring the best students to the MIT campus and protect the need-blind admissions policy.

IRDF

For over 40 years, the Independent Residence Development Fund (IRDF) has made long-term loans at favorable rates to independent living groups for the acquisition, improvement, and maintenance of their houses. Today, 36 independent residences house a third of all undergraduates.

UNRESTRICTED GIVING

Unrestricted gifts go directly toward solving the Institute's most pressing needs from providing scholarships to campus maintenance.

The Parents Fund Committee has given over \$20,000 to the programs most important to its members, including Honor with Books, which builds the resources of the MIT Libraries; the Public Service Center, which enriches the educational and life experiences of students through leadership and service opportunities; and the priorities of the Parents Fund.

The Parents Association wishes to thank the members of the Parents Fund Committee for their time and efforts and the generous donors who have helped the Parents Fund attain over 60% of its goals of \$800,000 and 2,600 donors.

To view committee members, donors, and the progress of the Parents Fund, visit <https://giving.mit.edu/liveRoster>

Parent Poll



How often do you talk to your son or daughter at MIT?

- DAILY
- WEEKLY
- MONTHLY
- QUARTERLY

Take less than a minute to answer this and related questions online. The results will be published in the fall edition of Parents News. Visit the site below and click on the survey link:

<http://alum.mit.edu/parents>

HONOR *with* BOOKS



The MIT Parents Association invites you to celebrate your student's achievements at MIT by participating in Honor with Books.

Each \$100 donation will allow the MIT Libraries to purchase a book for their collection. A bookplate bearing the name of your student will be placed inside, and those who see it will know the book was purchased in honor of someone special, whose own quest for knowledge brought him or her to this extraordinary place.

Honor with Books

is an MIT Parents Fund program in support of the MIT Libraries. <http://alum.mit.edu/parents/honor-with-books/>



Supporting Better Z's by Zan Barry

College students are among the most sleep deprived individuals in the country, and those at MIT are no exception. Students from Next House to East Campus chronically pull “all-nighters” the night before psets (a.k.a. problem sets) are due—but to what end? Many studies, including one published in the January 2008 issue of Behavioral Sleep Medicine, find that college students who sleep less perform worse academically.

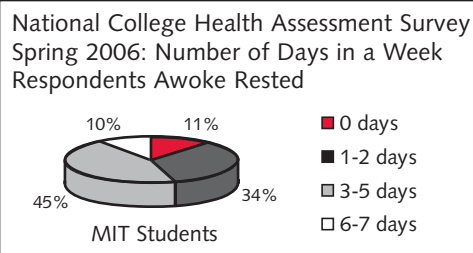
According to Xiaolu Hsi, Ph.D., a psychologist at MIT Medical specializing in psychotherapy and neuropsychology, “Sleep not only helps to rest the brain and consolidate memory and learning, it helps to minimize the damage sleep deprivation readily causes to one's learning, working, and social functions.”

Unfortunately, sleep deprivation can be a matter of “nerd pride” at MIT with students operating under the misguided assumption that being severely sleep deprived is an academic badge of honor. MIT Medical is working to get the truth across to the MIT community: adequate sleepers not only perform better, but they are also healthier.

In recent sleep studies, researchers have identified major weight and diabetes risks associated with inadequate sleep. In the Nurses Health Study, subjects who slept 5 hours per night were 32% percent more likely to gain 33 pounds or greater and 15%

more likely to become obese than subjects who slept 7 hours per night (August 2007). In another study, healthy young adults deprived of slow-wave sleep for just 3 nights developed insulin resistance—associated with increased diabetes risk—comparable to a 20–30 pound weight gain (University of Chicago, December 2007).

Research has reinforced that inadequate sleep impairs cognition and productivity, impairs mental health, increases feelings of stress and anxiety, and depresses the immune system. Sleep researchers indicate that 17–19 hours without sleep results in slower reaction time, word recall, and judgment to the same degree as having a Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) of .05. 24 hours without sleep has the effects of a more than .10 BAC, which is legally drunk in all 50 states.



In the spring of 2006, MIT students completed the National College Health Assessment survey, which included the question “On how many of the past 7 days did you get enough sleep so that you felt rested when you woke up in the morning?” Nearly half of students (45%) felt rested no

more than 2 days in the previous week.

What can parents do to support better Z's?

- Students often live in crowded, bustling environments. Healthy sleep patterns can be supported by comfortable bedding, earplugs, sleep masks, and other light and noise cancellers.
- Notice the time stamps on the emails and voicemails you receive from your son or daughter. If you know they have a 10 am class and are emailing you at 4 am, remind them of the importance of sleep for physical, academic, and emotional wellbeing.
- Students need to remember that caffeine and sugar are not a substitute for rest. If you want to send them a care package during a stressful time of the semester, consider healthful foods that provide sustained energy (such as whole grains) or a gift certificate for a massage at the Zesiger Sports and Fitness Center: <http://mitrecsports.com/massage-therapy/registration-procedures>
- Recommended Reading: *The Promise of Sleep* by William C. Dement; *Power Sleep* by James B. Maas



Zan Barry is Health Educator for Stress Management and Resiliency at the Center for Health Promotion and Wellness at MIT Medical. She can be reached at bars@med.mit.edu

Commencement: June 6, 2008

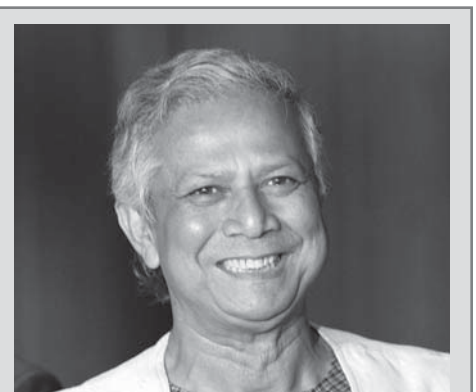
Commencement is fast approaching, and parents of graduating seniors are busy making arrangements for travel, accommodations, and post-ceremony celebrations.

With so much to do, it's easy to overlook something. To make sure everything is in order, Parents can access the Graduation Checklist, the official Commencement Web site, information on diploma frames, and more at <http://alum.mit.edu/parents/senior-parents.html>

Killian Court will open at 7:30 am for guests to begin seating. Please note that

doors will close from 9:45 am–10:15 am for the Procession. One ticket per guest is required for admission, including children three years of age and older. Each graduate is allotted **four** tickets.

The MIT Coop at Kendall Square offers personalized graduation announcements and manages the rental of regalia to graduating students. Orders for regalia will be taken in April, and orders for announcements may be placed at the store or online. For more information, contact the MIT Coop in Kendall Square at 617-499-3200 or visit their Web site at <http://web.mit.edu/thecoop/>



Muhammad Yunus, winner of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize, will deliver MIT's 2008 Commencement address on June 6. Photo courtesy of MIT News Office



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 Cambridge, MA 02139-4307

SPRING 2008

March

24-28 Spring Vacation

April

10-13 Campus Preview Weekend
 21, 22 Patriots Day-Vacation

May

15 Last day of classes
 19-23 Final Exams

June

6 Commencement

Send-Off Events

June 21-August 10

Inside This Issue:

Connect Infinitely: New Online Services 1
 Catching Up with the Chaplain..... 1
 Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities3
 Underclassmen Giving Campaign4
 Champions for the Fund4
 MIT Medical: Supporting Better Z's..... 5
 Commencement 20085

POINT OF PRIDE:

MIT Professor Is First Recipient of Science Prize

For the full story, visit:
<http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2008/weinberg-prize-0131.html>



Family Weekend

Friday, October 17-Sunday, October 19 **2008**

<http://alum.mit.edu/parents/family-weekend>