

# Speaker



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## SP Executive Council

Lucy: sp-president  
Apostolos: sp-vp-info  
Sabrina: sp-vp-reslife  
Obrad: sp-vp-resources  
Daniel: sp-hallchair

## Newsletter Team

Natalija and Daniel  
sp-newsletter-chair

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## Report: SPEC Nominations Dinner

It was an S-P version of the Oscar gala. The style and fashion of this event perhaps only rivaled by the Edgerton's La Fete. But among the well-dressed, the focus was on S-P accomplishments.

With over ~700 residents, S-P offers a most extensive Orientation (SPinfoCD, SPOG, magnets, T-shirts, mugs...), parties like no other dorm, nutritious and (mostly) healthy monthly Brunches, weekly Coffee Hours, and a plethora of hall events. Far from being an entity for itself, S-P is part of the surrounding community, helping out at Rosie's place and CASPAR.

This year, the S-P government has brought us an in-house-pick-up dry cleaning service, Interdorm Olympics, and sound to SPTV among many other accomplishments.

Our residence is now looking for a new set of leaders. The Executive Council applications process is open until 3/22. Applications for all other positions will be accepted from 3/23 to 4/7. The new government will take office 5/2.

SPEC2005, we'll miss you! And to the new candidates: good luck and may the best one win!

## Upcoming Events @ S-P

**SPECIAL EVENT: Stress Less**  
with Zan Barry, Center for Health Promotion & Wellness  
Free Yoga lesson! Learn relaxation techniques that can be done at your desk or lab. Get tips about time management. Get answers to FAQs about sleep, stress, anxiety, or other topics and of course, desserts! (because desserts is stressed spelled backwards).  
**3/15, 8:30pm @ Seminar Room**  
Want to reserve a spot?  
Questions? sp-gsc-rep@mit.edu  
Subject: stress less

**SPECIAL EVENT: Healthy Eating**  
with Julie Banda, Health Educator  
Discussion about foundations and benefits of healthy eating - how it can improve athletic performance, studying, work; improve concentration; prevent chronic disorders; and more...

**3/20, 7:30pm @ Multipurp. Room**

**Community Cooking Class**  
French menu by Aaron Zinman:  
Onion soup, potatoes au gratin, steak w/mushroom wine reduction  
**3/14, 6pm @ SP Kitchen**  
For more information,  
contact: Ernesto Arroyo,  
earroyo@media.mit.edu

## Upcoming Events @ MIT

### This Month @ LSC

Narnia, King Kong, The Squid and the Whale, and MANY MORE -- check out lsc.mit.edu for details!

### Getting There and Getting Started Seminar for Ph.D.'s and Postdocs

Navigating the academic landscape: Choosing an institution to match your career goals - A panel discussion featuring faculty researchers from private and public research universities, a liberal arts college, a hospital, and a private foundation.

**3/10, 2pm @ 46-3310**

For more information, contact: Janet Fischer, 3-0386, jfischer@mit.edu

### IX Latin Conference MIT Sloan

This is a free event, but registration is required. To register, please visit: [www.mitsloanlatinconference.com](http://www.mitsloanlatinconference.com)

**3/10, 2:00p @ E51-Wong Hall**

For more information, contact: Belen Monedero, belenm@mit.edu

### SPECIAL EVENT: "Buffalo Boy"

A FREE screening and discussion with director Nghiem-Minh Nguyen-Vo

**3/11, 7:00pm @ 10-250**



Photo by Jiawen Chen

## Thirsty Ear Pub

It's more than a watering hole

**Monday Trivia Nights, 8-11pm - Bring friends!**

**Karaoke Thursdays, 8-11pm**

**Friday Fiesta, 5-8pm**

**Saturday Hillarium, 9-12pm**

It's funny because it's true!

For more info visit: <http://web.mit.edu/thirsty-ear>

## On-Campus Rents

Recently, an article appeared in the Tech ("On-Campus Rents Set to Increase As Dorms Continue to Run Deficit" March 3, 2006) announcing that rents are going up by 5% next year. The administration's justifications for their decision were quoted several times in the article.

Our committee, the Committee on Graduate Dorm Rents, affiliated with the GSC, but containing many SP residents, collected data from a survey of all MIT graduate students (receiving 2031 responses, or about 1/3 of the entire graduate student body). The results of this survey counter the claims made by the administration.

Claim 1: "MIT dormitories are more than 20 percent cheaper than comparable apartments".

We found this claim to be unsubstantiated. While off-campus listings collected by the housing office do suggest that surrounding apartments are more expensive, they neglect square footage and amenities in the comparison. In fact, it is very difficult to compare apples to apples.

Ashdown doubles have no analog off-campus, and two-bedroom suites at SP don't have living rooms. Our survey asked students who moved off-campus from on-campus dorms (and thus have experienced both living styles) to directly compare their current housing situation relative to their previous situation.

Q: "Disregarding cost, do you prefer your current residence to your previous residence with respect to space, location, and amenities?"

A: Yes, 82%

Q: "Do you prefer your current residence to your previous residence overall, including cost?"

A: Yes, 82%

**Thus, our data shows that most students are indeed able to find off-campus housing that is more desirable than their previous on-campus residences, both with respect to amenities and price.**

Claim 2: "If expensive dormitories like Sidney-Pacific weren't desirable, they wouldn't have waiting lists."

Supply and demand is a poor argument to make in the presence of asymmetric information. The fact is, many new students have no

choice but to live on-campus their first year. They can't afford to scope out the housing market before they arrive.

Continuing students also fail to look off-campus. Our data shows that 73% of people do not look at listings or market data before entering the lottery. In the past, MIT had a policy of pricing on-campus dorms at 90% of the market rate. Members of the administration still perpetuate the claim that on-campus housing is "more than 20% cheaper than comparable apartments" off-campus.

Hence, it's not surprising that so many people don't look off-campus. It's also not surprising that half of those rejected from the lottery say they later found something off-campus that was better than their lottery first choice.

Our committee intends to meet with the administration in mid-to-late March to go over the survey results. We will continue our pursuit to influence administration in rent decisions moving forward.

Complete graduate student residential survey results can be found online at:

<http://s-p.mit.edu/CGDR/>.

The Committee on Graduate Dorm Rents is looking for motivated individuals to assist in this issue, and can be reached at [cgdr@csail.mit.edu](mailto:cgdr@csail.mit.edu).

• Daniel Abadi and  
Robert Wang

Oscar says what?

## The Glitz

It was Sunday night, and I turned to the ABC channel in search of my usual dose of "Gray's Anatomy." Whoa! I thought the Oscars were next week! Apparently, I live under a rock on the third floor of S-P.

Somewhat reluctantly, I ended up watching the last 90 minutes of Oscars. In an effort to not push the deadline with this issue of the newsletter, I figured I could watch the glitz on TV while typing away and formatting a few pages. By the end of the Oscar ceremony, I realized that this space – yes, this space – is the only empty space left in this newsletter.

Hopefully, most of you don't live under a rock. But if for some reason you missed the Oscars, here's the summary.

**Best Picture:** CRASH

**Best Director:** Ang Lee

**Best Actress:** Reese Witherspoon  
(a long way from Legally Blonde)

**Best Actor:**

Philip Seymour Hoffman

**Best Movie Shown at LSC:**

"Wallace & Grommit in the Curse of the Were-Rabbit" (Ok, I made this one up)

But most importantly, I got a good dose of funny, irreverent and – oh so s-e-x-y – Jon Stewart. • Natalija

Love and Life at MIT

## Speed Dating

And they're on! Half of the contenders are female, the other half are male. The ages vary from 20's to 30's, even 40's; from students to professionals, speed dating attracts many people sick of wasting time or not having time for long disastrous dates. They all sport numbers on their chest (nametag) that identifies them on the other contestants' scorecards.

You get three to five minutes (it was quite arbitrary, that bell would ring whenever it felt like it) to talk about yourself and interrogate your "victim". There's a 20 min break after dealing with 12 racers. The smarter competitors use this time to score some extra minutes with selected candidates. Then the race continues. Twelve more people to go and you're already sick of listening to yourself. You might not even care about the rest of the dates because you might have already talked to the ONE that called your attention. But the excitement [more like torture] continues, and you must finish. Quitting is not an option! (Some people did leave though...)

The game is not as easy as it seems, there are rules to follow: You talk to people, write down their ID numbers on your scorecard and mark Match (you can define match as you please), N/F (network or friend) or NO (you don't want to see this person ever again). Two days later you get an email with contact information (emails and last names) of the people that you marked as Match or N/F as long as they reciprocated.

There are some basic rules. Don't ask for phone numbers or any other contact info. No asking for dates. No begging to be marked as a "match" or friend. And the most important one, MOVE when the bell rings. You're not here to establish a long lasting bond in a couple of minutes; you're here to quickly sample the choices and then decide whom to pursue further (no stalkers please). Oh, and I forgot! BE NICE! Even you feel that you just met the most uninteresting character to ever walk the earth - be nice. The bell will save you... eventually.

• Daniel, Former speed dater

Get some friends together and try the MIT Young Alumni speed dating: <http://www.8minutedating.com/youngalumni>

What is it like to be Asian and gay? Why do women feel like they need support groups? What is transgender? What is intersex?

## Explore the intersections of diversity.

Diversity Peer-to-Peer is a series of peer-lead education forums for MIT students, faculty, and staff aimed at engaging us all in meaningful and productive conversations about diversity issues.

The Diversity Peer-to-Peer program will provide two mediators and dinner for the participants. Contact us to schedule a Diversity Peer-to-Peer session:

**To learn more about DP2P, please contact:**

**Abigail Francis, [afra@mit.edu](mailto:afra@mit.edu) or (617) 253-5440**

Brought to you by: LBGT@MIT, Graduate Students Office, Black Student Union, Latino Cultural Center, Campus Committee on Race Relations, and Women's Studies



Guest Column:

## Piece of Mind

I started to panic. "What if I don't find where to live next year?" So I went to look for an apartment where any rational person would: Craigslist. After all, if I had an apartment to rent, I would definitely post it there.

Oh well, there were at least two hundred postings... only counting today's. Including all of this week's, there were easily a thousand. "This is great!" I thought. "I will find something, for sure."

Well, when you look a bit closer, you see why there are two hundred postings: there's so much junk. And I'm not saying they're junk because the apartments had no washer/dryer, or because the kitchen was small, or because they don't allow pets... The postings are junk because they are useless.

Half of them are listed twice or three times. Many are just links to real estate websites. But most surprisingly, many are not even in Massachusetts, for God's sake!! I guess I don't understand the way people look for a new place.

Maybe some people go to Craigslist Los Angeles, they look for apartments there, but if they find an apartment in Fort Lauderdale, Florida with the specs they want, they are willing to move. That is, quit their jobs, forget their friends, maybe even divorce their spouses if they don't want to join them. All because this other apartment in Florida has hardwood floors.

Actually, while I was looking for an apartment I saw one that fits my description of a perfect place, except that it is in San Diego, California. Is that within walking distance?! • *Daniel Klein* (Mexican correspondent)



Ioannis Bertsatos, S-P Trustee & mystery man

Get to know...

## Ioannis Bertsatos

S-P Trustee

### What aspects of being a trustee do you expect to enjoy the most?

I am glad I will get the opportunity to be, once more, involved in matters concerning S-P, and to interact with all the people that help make S-P the greatest dorm in the country!

### In what ways have you grown since becoming a trustee?

I am hoping to further improve on my mediation skills.

### What is your neighborhood restaurant?

Miracle of Science for lunch or dinner, but Sunny's for weekend brunch!

### Name one person you know who has influenced your life. Why and how?

Kind of a personal question, hmm... can I get away with not answering? The greatest influence on my life has definitely been my family.

### What was your favorite vacation ever and why?

My favorite vacation ever was during the summer of 1998. I had just graduated from high school and was admitted into Cambridge University in the UK. I had 4 months before I left to study abroad for the first time in my life. I spent the whole summer in good company, with friends and relatives, either island hopping in the Aegean, or simply relaxing at my countryhouse in western Peloponnese. I have very fond memories from that period in my life, plus, it was the longest vacation I've ever managed to take since finishing high school.

### The video game I play the most is...

Oh, now you hit the spot! Video games are going to be my demise. I simply play too much of them. My favorite one would have to be Football Manager 2006. Anybody care for network play?

Ioannis has been recently elected a trustee of S-P. The Board of Trustees acts as a residential judiciary committee, administers elections, and advises the House Council. The Trustees can be reached at [sp-trustees@mit.edu](mailto:sp-trustees@mit.edu)  
• *Natalija*

This Month...

## St. Patrick's Day

March 17th is known in some parts of the world as St. Patrick's day. In the United States, this involves a lot of people drinking beer (let's hope it's Guinness) and wearing green T-shirts proclaiming "Kiss me, I'm Irish!"

Just who was St. Patrick and what is the original meaning of this day? We turned to Padraig Cantillon-Murphy, an MIT graduate student and a native of Ireland.

The interesting part of St. Patrick's story begins with a life-changing event. "Born somewhere in the UK, he was brought to Ireland as a captured slave around the year 400AD by Irish pirates. After spending his teenage years tending sheep on the Ulster countryside, he escaped back home with the help of an angel."

But it wasn't long before St. Patrick felt the need to return to Ireland. "After becoming a priest, he began having dreams in which the people of Ireland were calling him back. So he returned and began catechizing the pagan Irish. He died on "St. Patrick's Day", March 17th, after founding numerous monasteries and schools, and converting thousands to Christianity."

A legend has it that St. Patrick also drove snakes away from the Emerald Isle. But Ireland hasn't had snakes since the last ice age. So, just what did he drive out of Ireland? Sometimes, this legend is interpreted to mean that St. Patrick's efforts at Christianization of the Irish diminished the local influence of Pagan Druids, who often used snakes in their symbols.

St. Patrick is often depicted holding a three-leaf clover – a shamrock. According to a legend, he used the shamrock to teach the Irish about the concept of the Holy Trinity by showing people the shamrock, using it to highlight the dogma of western Christianity that there are 'three divine persons in the one God'.

Today, when it comes to celebrating St. Patrick, things aren't much different between Ireland and the US. "Unfortunately, in recent years, the feast-day has turned into a nationwide drinking binge, with widespread street disturbances in the major cities. However, in the country, the routine of the 17th invariably involves morning mass



Statue of St. Patrick at Hill of Tara, Ireland.  
(Photosource: Wikipedia)

(St. Patrick's Day is a holy day of obligation for Irish Catholics), a good hearty dinner and spending the afternoon at a Gaelic football or hurling match. The parade is also an integral part of the day for city-dwellers, particularly for those with small children."

A Wikipedia curiosity (admittedly unverified): "St. Patrick is also patron of Nigeria, which was evangelized primarily by Irish clergy, especially priests from Saint Patrick's Missionary Society (also known as the Kiltegan Missionaries)."

This year, the Boston St. Patrick Day Parade will be held on March 19, starting at 1pm. Check out the details at: <http://www.southbostononline.com/>

Nowadays St. Patrick's Day seems to be mostly a time for drinking and all things green. But it's still a great opportunity to learn more about various the Irish customs and have a good time with friends.

So, put on a green shirt and head out for some social time. *Sláinte!*

• *Natalija*

Yes, we jumped on the bandwagon...

## Sudoku Puzzles

Easy:

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   | 9 | 4 |   | 8 |   |   |   | 1 |
| 8 | 7 | 3 |   | 1 | 2 |   | 4 |   |
|   |   | 5 | 9 | 6 |   | 8 |   | 7 |
|   |   |   | 7 |   |   |   |   |   |
|   |   | 7 |   | 3 |   | 6 |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   | 5 |   |   |   |
| 2 |   | 9 |   | 5 | 8 | 4 |   |   |
|   | 2 |   | 6 | 4 |   | 2 | 5 | 8 |
| 5 |   |   |   | 7 |   | 1 | 6 |   |

Medium:

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   |   | 6 | 3 |   |   |   |   | 7 |
|   |   | 3 | 6 | 8 | 2 |   |   |   |
| 1 |   | 9 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|   |   | 8 | 4 | 2 |   |   |   |   |
| 9 | 2 | 4 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 | 1 |
|   |   |   |   | 7 | 6 | 4 |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   | 7 |   | 5 |
|   |   |   | 2 | 9 | 5 | 8 |   |   |
| 3 |   |   |   |   | 8 | 9 |   |   |

Hard:

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   |   | 6 | 1 |   | 3 |   |   | 5 |
|   |   |   |   |   |   | 2 | 3 |   |
|   | 4 |   | 8 | 2 |   |   |   |   |
|   | 2 |   |   |   | 9 |   | 4 |   |
| 5 |   |   | 4 |   | 1 |   |   | 2 |
|   | 8 |   | 7 |   |   |   | 6 |   |
|   |   |   |   | 5 | 7 |   | 2 |   |
|   | 3 | 1 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 4 |   |   | 6 |   | 8 | 3 |   |   |

Easy:

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 |   | 9 |   | 4 | 2 | 3 |   |   |
| 2 | 6 |   | 5 |   |   |   |   | 8 |
|   | 4 |   |   | 3 | 7 |   | 2 |   |
|   | 9 | 2 | 3 |   |   | 6 |   |   |
|   |   | 1 |   |   |   | 8 |   |   |
|   |   | 4 |   |   | 5 | 1 | 7 |   |
|   | 1 |   | 2 | 6 |   |   | 3 |   |
| 9 |   |   |   |   | 4 |   | 8 | 6 |
|   |   | 6 | 7 | 8 |   | 5 |   | 9 |

Source: [www.websudoku.com](http://www.websudoku.com)

## Chuck Norris Can Divide by Zero!

10. Chuck Norris CAN believe it's not butter.
9. Chuck Norris knows the last digit of pi.
8. Chuck Norris has counted to infinity. Twice.
- 7.5. Chuck Norris has a double room in S&P all to himself.
7. Chuck Norris doesn't go to the gym, he's already there.
6. Chuck Norris is the reason why Waldo is hiding.
- 5.5. Chuck Norris doesn't read books, he stares at them until he gets the information he needs.
5. There is no evolution theory, just a list of creatures Chuck Norris allows to live.
4. Guns don't kill people, Chuck Norris kills pictures.
3. If a Google search returns no results, ask Chuck Norris, he knows.
2. The fastest way to a man's heart is Chuck Norris' fist.
1. **Chuck Norris took all the GoogleEarth pictures with a disposable camera from 7-11.**

Had a good laugh? Send in your Chuck Norris quotes (only the funny ones) to [sp-newsletter-chair@mit.edu](mailto:sp-newsletter-chair@mit.edu)