He’s hired! Alumnus named ‘Apprentice’

Trump calls Randal Pinkett a ‘star’

Amy Marcott
MIT Alumni Association

It’s official: A star is hired. Randal Pinkett (S.M., M.B.A. ’98, Ph.D. ’02) triumphed over 17 other contestants on The Apprentice 4 finale Dec. 15 to earn a job with Donald Trump. “Randal’s been a star. He’s got a star education. He’s MIT. He’s a Rhodes Scholar,” Trump said. “Do you know what that means? That’s serious, serious education.” Some 800 students and alumni gathered in Kresge Auditorium to watch the show on live television.

Indeed, Pinkett seemed the clear favorite throughout the 13-week job interview, winning all three tasks he project-managed, earning the respect of fellow cast members, and being quickly snatched up by other competitors when opportunities arose to even the teams.

The win nets Pinkett a six-figure job with “The Donald” overseeing the renovation and expansion of Trump’s three hotels in Atlantic City, N.J. “I see it really as what it’s intended to be, an apprenticeship,” Pinkett said in an interview before the last show aired. “I don’t envision that I will begin a lifelong career at the Trump organization, but I certainly will work hard and seek to learn, and be a sponge. … I believe I have a lot to bring to the Trump organization through my experience as an entrepreneur.”

Typical of reality TV drama, Pinkett’s fate was left in question during the penultimate episode, in which he and challenger Rebecca, a 23-year-old financial journalist, organized large benefits.

IAP offers something for all tastes

Sasha Brown
News Office

The 2006 Independent Activities Period (IAP), which will run from Jan. 9 through Feb. 3, offers everyone at MIT — students, faculty, staff, even alumni — a chance to break away from the routine and try something new. Courses range from Hebrew to knitting and from running to philosophy, so there is something for almost everyone. Many of the classes are for beginners, making this the perfect time to learn a new skill or hone an old one. For a full listing, go to web.mit.edu/iap/. Here are just some of the highlights:

Food and cooking

Old Food: Ancient and Medieval Cooking
Anne McCants, Howard Eisenstat, Margo Collett
Wednesday, Jan. 11, from noon to 5 p.m. Next House. Sign up by Jan. 5. Limit: 25 participants.

Afternoon of good old- (really old) fashioned ancient and medieval cookery. Class will prepare, cook and eat medieval foods from both sides of the Mediterranean Sea. Preparations will involve the use of authentic period recipes from period recipes books. Contact: x8-6669.

Athletics and exercise

Middle Eastern Dance
Loni Butera
Mondays and Wednesdays through January, from 1 to 3 p.m. T-Club Lounge.
Classes consist of warm-ups, exercises focusing on isolation and coordination, plus dance combinations/choreography. Wear a leotard and tights or loose-fitting clothes to class.

Boston and Cambridge

Chocolate Tour of Boston
Rachel Chaney, Chaitra Manjunatha
Saturday, Jan. 21, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Meet in Lobby 7.
Want to know where to get good chocolate? Take this tour! Classes consist of warm-ups, exercises focusing on isolation and coordination, plus dance combinations/choreography. Wear a leotard and tights or loose-fitting clothes to class.

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Students who need someone to talk to can count on Nightline.

MIT hosts middle-school students for a discussion of stem cell research, technology and ethics.
President backs Community Giving campaign

To members of the faculty and staff:

As you walk through campus or the hallways of Lincoln Lab, on most days you probably notice fund-raising efforts on behalf of community service organizations. I certainly do. Immediately following the devastating hurricanes this fall, MIT faculty and students responded with a remarkable outpouring of fund-raising activity, creating a sense of a shared responsibility for the research and service that defines MIT. These are just two examples of the many ways in which the MIT community demonstrates its great generosity and compassion.

The Community Giving at MIT Campaign offers an important opportunity for all of us to help our local community service agencies address poverty, illness, homelessness and other critical issues. I am writing to ask you to consider supporting this Institute-wide fund-raising effort. Our goal this year is to raise $400,000 through broad faculty and staff participation. MIT’s charitable giving campaign is unusually comprehensive, offering the options of giving to the United Way of Massachusetts Bay, the MIT Community Service Fund, or any local health or human services agency.

Dean Robert Redwine, who chairs the campaign steering committee, tells me that colleagues often ask committeemembers and department representatives to explain the benefits of taking part in this campaign. First, the practical: Donors may choose to donate through payroll deductions, a one-step process that makes it possible to spread out contributions over a longer period of time. Second, since most people have a personal association with at least one charity, the campaign allows contributors to select from countless organizations. Donors may give to any local health or human services 501(c)(3) agency, including MIT organizations such as the Public Service Center. Contributors also may choose the MIT Community Service Fund, which supports Cambridge community service organizations in which MIT students, faculty and staff are involved as volunteers.

As an institution, MIT seeks to make a difference in the world. Participation in the Community Giving at MIT Campaign is one way we can fulfill that mission — by reaching out to individuals and families in our communities. I hope you will join me in supporting this year’s campaign. You may donate online at web.mit.edu/community-giving/ or request a pledge packet by e-mailing community-giving@mit.edu or calling 6-734.

Sincerely,
Susan Hockfield

DIGITALTALK

IAP with IT twist

ISET is covering new trends in the Information Technolo- gies, and in IAP’s 2006 offer- ings. Sessions include a sneak preview of the Human Resources payroll project; several courses on Linux, math software and geographic information systems; seminars on training with e-mail on usability; and an open house in the Adaptive Technology for Information and Com- munication Education, gratis. For a complete listing of ISET offerings, visit student.mit.edu/iap/ais. html.

Web surveys at MIT

Planning a survey? You can get assistance from the MIT Web Service, run jointly by IS&T and Institutional Research in the Office of the Provost. The service helps MIT groups plan, create and host surveys.

In the last two years, the MIT Web Survey Service administered close to 60 surveys for the community, and close to 80 surveys for members of consortiums to which MIT belongs. Recent survey topics included undergraduate satisfac- tion with campus resources; graduate student assessment of advising; alumni and parent satisfaction; faculty quality of life, commuting habits of students and employees; and feedback to improve pub- lications.

The Office of the Provost maintains a schedule of known MIT surveys in Tech- Time, to help avoid overlap. To view the calendar, log into TechTime and click on “provost as a resource.” You will be able to view the calendar for “Provost’s Office: Surveys.”

To learn more about the service, e-mail surveys@mit.edu or visit web.mit.edu/ surveys/.

E-mail transitions

In consultation with its IT colleagues, IS&T is endorsing the move from Eudora to other e-mail applications. Apple Mail for Mac OS X and Outlook Express or Outlook 2003 for Windows and WebMail. All users are encouraged to move as Internet Mail Access Protocol (IMAP) cli- ents at MIT. IMAP is protocol that IS&T recommends; stores your e-mail on a ser- ver so that you can access it from anywhere connected to the Internet.

As part of this transition, IS&T will discontinue support for Eudora 5.2.1 (Win- dows) and Eudora 4.1 (Mac OS). Eudora 5.2.1 was released on Jan. 31, 2006. Eudora 5.2.1 has a security vul- nerable to e-mail worms, and IS&T will continue to support the current Macintosh version, Eudora 6.2.3.

To assist clients in switching to the rec- ommended e-mail applications, IS&T will offer workshops on how to switch to Apple Mail or Outlook and will also provide documentation and tools. For more information, including class and clinic schedules, visit web.mit.edu/it/ topics/email/migration.html. If you have questions about e-mail migration, you can contact the campus e-mail migration team at e-mail-migration@mit.edu.

Directory access

Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) lets users across the MIT online directory via Outlook Express, Out- look 2003 or Apple Mail. Configuring your e-mail application is very easy: for instructions, go to web.mit.edu/it/serv- ices/networking/docs/2005/docdirectory.html. Individuals who prefer an integrated e-mail/calendar solution should remain with Oracle Con- nector for Outlook.

Digitalk is compiled by Information Services and Technology

Gifts from vendors banned

Diane Shea, director of procurement, has issued the following reminder to department heads, lab directors/account supervisors, administrative officers, requisitioners, procurement personnel and others who are involved in the acquisition process.

Institute and federal policies prohibit the acceptance of gifts from vendors, sub- contractors and contractors (suppliers). The Institute policy is found in Policies and Procedures, section 7.9 (web.mit.edu/ policies/). The text follows:

It is the Institute’s objective to award business to suppliers on the basis of con- siderations such as quality, service, com- petitive pricing and technical abilities. Acceptance of personal gifts or gratuities from suppliers that could be construed as a means of inducing business with the Institute is totally inconsistent with this objective.

Institute policy prohibits employees from soliciting or accepting any of these programs of any kind from suppliers. This includes the use of property or facilities, gift cer- tificates, entertainment or other favors of value extended to employees or their fam- ily members.


HOW TO REACH US

News Office
Telephone: 617-253-2700
E-mail: newsoffice@mit.edu
http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice
Office of the Arts
http://web.mit.edu/arts
Printed on recycled paper
Nightline’s an ear when you need one

For close to 30 years, getting late-night support has been as easy as picking up the phone — the hotline service run entirely by MIT students.

In operation since 1978, Nightline is available every Monday through Thursday during fall and spring semesters, even on Thanksgiving. It is during these critical nighttime hours when the students are the most vulnerable, said the male coordinator for Nightline.

The hotline’s support, however, is not limited to academics. Callers may request either staffer depending on with whom they feel most comfortable.

“I really do help people,” the male coordinator said when asked why he applied to work for Nightline. He said that, although he received the two main types of calls.

The first kind of call is informational: What is the number for Domino’s Pizza? When is Safe Ride coming? Who is the number for 911?

The second kind of call is more serious. These are the calls that deal with stress, eating disorders, relationship issues and basically any other problem that a student might face during the college and graduate school years.

“I have seen a co-worker stay on the line for 10 hours,” said the female coordinator.

All the calls that Nightline receives are confidential with no way of being traced, stressed the male staffer.

For many students, anonymity is the crux of the hotline. “We can help the people who don’t necessarily want to turn to their friends with a problem,” said the female coordinator.

Nightline has a space in an undisclosed location on campus. Stocked with beds, a television and a computer, the space feels like home for the students who sleep there. Each stafferupload two nights a month at Nightline.

“All the staffers become really close because we are dealing with such emotional issues,” said the male coordinator.

Rights spent at Nightline can be enjoyable. Staffers order pizza and watch movies together during downtime. But when the phone rings, the fun stops. “We are there for one reason and one reason only,” said the female coordinator.

“Would be staffers must undergo an intense interview and training process.

Applicants must handle mock calls and show that they are capable of building trust with an anonymous caller. “A lot of what we do is listen,” said the female coordinator.

This year, there are 20 Nightline staffers, which is a fairly small staff. The hotline aims for 30 to 35 staffers. Those interested in joining Nightline must have one semester of school under their belt. Call Nightline at x3-8800 for more information.

Over the years, Nightline has become so ingrained in the MIT psyche that the hotline occasionally receives a call from an alumna.

“They still remember the mnemonic,” said the female coordinator with a laugh, referring to 3-4-5-8-9-0-8-0-8-0-8 — the numbers on the phone pad.

Professor Perry gets fellowship for biography of Scottswoman

Sarah H. Wright

Professor Ruth Perry of literature has been awarded a 2006-2007 fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to work on a biography of Anna Gordon Brown, a 18th century Scottswoman renowned among folklorists for her knowledge of the Scottish and English ballads of her time.

Ballads brought forward by Brown (1771-1811) were considered the aesthetic core of “The English and Scottish Popular Ballad.” The collection published in the late 1800s, but little known about her life beyond the fact that she absorbed a lot of traditional ballads in her early youth and sang them to collectors later on, Perry said.

“I am very grateful to the NEH for funding this project and thrilled to be able to start delving on the trail of Anna Gordon Brown,” Perry said.

Perry’s biography of Brown will explore “who she was and how she became the conduit for our common literary and musical heritage. It is this work of a woman’s life during the Scottish enlightenment and the golden age of colonial ballads and songs at the end of the 18th century,” she said.

Perry’s earlier work on Brown’s childhood explored the period when she learned ballads from her aunt and her aunt’s servants and rural workers at a small estate in Braemer, Scotland.

Kenan Sahin Dean of the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences Philip S. Khoury said, “Winning major fellowships is nothing new for Ruth Perry, whose scholarship on the 18th century makes her one of the leading literary critics in the world on both sides of the Atlantic.”

“A ballad-singer and performer herself, Perry is an internationally acclaimed authority on 18th century English literature and a master of a woman’s life during the Scottish enlightenment and the golden age of colonial ballads and songs at the end of the 18th century,” she said.

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Sarah H. Wright

Middle-schoolers ask tough science questions

Panelist Latina Nelsen, director of the Technology Licensing Office, encourages youngsters to weigh the benefits of controversial research following a question by Adam Briscoe, right, at a Dec. 16 debate between scientists and middle school students.

Panelist Latina Nelsen, director of the Technology Licensing Office, encourages youngsters to weigh the benefits of controversial research following a question by Adam Briscoe, right, at a Dec. 16 debate between scientists and middle school students.

But without stem cell research, we’ll never be able to give any other than religious or cultural answers,” he said.

“Scientists sought specifically to understand the role and motivations of mothers, asking, ‘Is it possible to save the embryo after you remove stem cells?’ ‘Can the embryo be returned to the mother?’ ‘Why do women donate spare embryos to research?’”

Nelsen, who earned the B.S. (1984) and M.S. (1986) in chemical engineering and an M.S. in management (1979), all from MIT, said, “Scientists weigh what potentially might result, in alleviating suffering and pain, from destroying that little dot-sized group of cells.

“Scientists weighed the benefits of controversial research following a question by Adam Briscoe, right, at a Dec. 16 debate between scientists and middle school students.

“They’re clearly human; they’re not frogs. They’re clearly alive, so one is killing something. But without stem cell research, we’ll never be able to give any other than religious or cultural answers,” he said.

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“Women weigh this too. There are many embryos in the freezer that are left over from in vitro fertilization — embryos that are not going to be ‘adopted’ or implanted — and it’s the mother who decides to donate them to further research, to help others,” she said.

Schoen added that the benefits of stem cell research are not only the ends — a cure for Parkinson’s, for instance — but also the means, as discoveries are made en route.

“We learn a lot along the way that may have benefits. The process of research generates a lot of information for scientists,” said Schoen.

One teaching moment came when Edelman cleared up a basic vocabulary puzzle, brought on by youth and the cavernous hall.

To the student who asked, “How can you tell the difference between embryos that are more or less valuable?” Edelman replied, “The issue is not whether it’s valuable. It’s whether the embryo is viable. Viable means, strictly, capable of becoming life.”

Surveying the now-restless group of young teens, Edelman offered some advice. “If you choose a career in science, make sure you help people understand what you do. That will always be part of your work,” he said.

Seven- and eighth-grade students from the South Area Solomon Schechter Day School in Stoughton, Mass., engaged a panel of eminent research scientists from MIT and Harvard in a discussion of stem cell research, technology and ethics on Friday, Dec. 16, in Room 54-100.

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Faces have a special place in the brain

Cathryn DeLude
McGovern Institute for Brain Research

Are you tempted to trade in last year’s digital camera for a newer model with higher resolutions? Researchers who make images of the human brain have the same challenge, with increasing their pixel count, which increases the sharpness (or “spatial resolution”) of their images. And improved spatial resolution is happening as fast in brain imaging research as they are in digital camera technology.

Nancy Kanwisher and colleagues at the McGovern Institute for Brain Research at MIT are now using higher-resolution scans to produce much more detailed images of the brain than those available just a couple years ago. Just as “HD” TV shows clearer views of a football game, these finely grained images are providing new answers to some very old questions in brain research.

One such question hinges on whether the brain is comprised of highly specialized parts, each optimized to do a single, very specific function. Or is it instead a general-purpose device that handles many tasks but specializes in none?

Using the higher-resolution scans, the Kanwisher team now provides some of the strongest evidence ever reported for extreme specialization. Their study appeared in the Nov 23 issue of The Journal of Neuroscience.

The study focuses on face recognition, long considered an example of brain specialization. In the 1990s, researchers including Kanwisher identified a region known as the fusiform face area (FFA) as a potential brain center for face recognition. They pointed to evidence from brain-imaging experiments, and to the fact that people with damage to this brain region cannot recognize faces, even those of their own family and closest friends.

However, more recent brain-imaging experiments have challenged this claimed specialization by showing that this region responds strongly when people see images of bodies and body parts, not just faces. The new study now answers this challenge and supports the original specialization theory.

The researchers suspected that the strong response of the face area to both bodies and faces might result from their blurring together of two distinct but neighboring brain regions that are too close together to distinguish at standard scanning resolutions.

To test this idea, they increased the resolution of their images (like increasing the megapixels on a digital camera) ten-fold to get sharper images of brain function. Indeed, at this higher resolution they could clearly distinguish two neighboring regions. One was primarily active when people saw faces (not bodies), and the other when people saw bodies (not faces).

This finding supports the original claim that the face area is in fact dedicated exclusively to face processing. The results demonstrate a similar degree of specialization for the new “body region” next door.

Kanwisher is the Ellen Swallow Richards Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience.

Do you recognize this face? Researchers at the McGovern Institute have made inroads into understanding what happens in the brain when a person recognizes a face. No word on whether a face drawn in the snow counts.

Kanwisher’s colleagues on this work are Rebecca Fox, superintendent of MIT’s Natural Scene Research Laboratory, a graduate student in brain and cognitive sciences, and Christopher Schall, a postdoctoral researcher in the department.

The research was supported by the National Institutes of Health, the National Center for Research Resources, the Mind Institute, and the National Science Foundation’s Graduate Research Fellowship Program.

Course 2.12 sends robots to the rescue

Sarah H. Wright
News Office

Images of men, women and children stranded on rooftops or trapped amid mountains of rubble following natural disasters leave many with a sense of helplessness.

But those same images inspired the designers of mechanical engineering course 2.12 to apply robotics technology to disaster response and rescue missions.

Students in the course demonstrated their robots on Wednesday, Dec. 14, in the d’Arbeloff Lab, Room 1-005.

Each 2.12 robot — a hotel refrigerator-shaped platform guided by an onboard Linux computer — had to navigate a space containing obstacles, climb a flight of stairs and lift, aided by a large magnet attached to each robot’s belly.

Kurt Wade, teaching assistant for 2.12, noted that the rescue robots had to be able to distinguish houses from debris en route to locating casualties, and also that demos of Wednesday’s order fulfilled in suspense.

“A small robot was responsible for the robot fabrication, and for writing the code to get the robot to use sensors,” he said.

But in the d’Arbeloff Lab, the students were responsible for the robot fabrication, and for writing the code that runs the robots. All tasks are programmed into the robot, and have to be completed without any instruction from the builders,” he said.

Harry Asada, professor of mechanical engineering, and John Leonard, associate professor of mechanical engineering, teach 2.12.

These students stay up all night to get it right. They’ve had just five weeks to do this. If I could give them anything, it would be time,” Leonard said the day before the robots went live as rescue workers.

MIT team analyzes wind energy potential in Northeast

Nancy Stauffer
MIT Laboratory for Economic and the Environment

There’s more to determining the value of wind power than knowing which way the wind blows — or even how much energy it provides. MIT researchers studying winds off the Northeast coast have found that estimating the potential environmental and social benefits of renewable energy technologies requires a detailed understanding of the dynamics of both renewable resources and power systems.

Data show that wind-energy facilities would generate far more electricity in winter, when winds are stronger and less likely to be backed off or turned down, when electricity from wind farms becomes available. Thus, when wind farms operate the most, they reduce the operation of some of New England’s dirtiest conventional plants.

Comparing the solar and wind results highlights the importance of tracking the “mode” in which the power system is operating. In winter, when wind generation peaks, the power system is dominated by older, lower-cost plants burning coal or oil. In summer, when solar generation peaks, the power system includes more natural-gas-burning plants to meet high electricity demand. Because of their higher cost, natural gas plants will be backed off first. But natural gas plants are generally more fuel efficient than plants that burn other fossil fuels. Thus, the emissions reductions per kilowatt-hour will not be as dramatic.

So here’s the research challenge,” said Connors. “Before we can calculate the true environmental benefits of using renewables, we need to be able to figure out the operating mode of the whole electric power system in a particular region and over time.”

The usual static data — annual wind power and annual power plant emissions for example — are insufficient.

The wind power research was supported by the Massachusetts Renewable Energy Trust.
Blood researchers find disease mechanism

Alyssa Knoller
Webhead Institute

Approximately 80,000 to 100,000 people in the United States suffer from myeloproliferative disease, a broad category of ailments characterized by overproduction of different types of blood cells. Often these diseases lead to cancers of blood cells.

Now researchers at MIT, the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research and Brigham and Women’s Hospital have discovered a new and unusual mechanism underlying this condition. Their findings, published online in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, appeared on Dec. 19, could lay the foundation for future drugs that target this mechanism.

As people age, their genes acquire mutations. In a patient with myeloproliferative disease, a mutation occurs in a protein called a kinase, that is, a protein that adds a small phosphate unit to other proteins, in this case proteins involved in blood-cell growth. But the mutation alone will not produce the disease. The mutant kinase, named JAK2V617F, causes the condition only after binding to another molecule. This indirect mechanism for myeloproliferative disease is unusual because many other kinase mutations lead directly to cell proliferation.

"Surprisingly, this mutant kinase is completely dependent on a cell-surface protein for its transforming potential," says MIT biology professor and Whitehead Institute member Harvey Lodish. His lab made the discovery in collaboration with D. Gary Gilliland of Brigham and Women’s. Gilliland is also a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator.

Gilliland’s lab was one of several to identify the precise genetic mutation responsible for myeloproliferative disease when the researchers discovered that the same mutation and Ly517I in another kinase called JAK2 causes a number of distinct disorders that fall under the myeloproliferative disease umbrella. After publishing this finding in Cancer Cell in April, Gilliland and his colleagues are now using this information to develop drugs to treat the disease.

"The involvement of a cytokine receptor explains, in part, why one mutation can produce distinct disorders. Researchers found three different cytokine receptors that interact with the mutant kinase. Thus the mutant kinase is tied to three unrelated diseases, and the receptor which is associated with a specific type of blood cells," says MIT Biology professor and Whitehead Institute member J. Michael Gilliland, who, along with Dr. T., founded the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and Amgen Inc.

"Each disorder might depend on a different receptor and the downstream make-up of the protein complexes that are unique to each disorder. This information could help pharmaceutical companies develop drugs to treat the disorders without having to target the cytokine receptors and blood cell production pathways they are associated with," said Gilliland.

This study was supported by the National Institutes of Health, the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and Amgen Inc.

IAP

Continued from Page 1

chocolate in Boston? Or just want to take a tour around Boston and eat chocolate? Go on a tour of Boston that stops at chocolate-hot spots. You can buy or eat the best chocolate Boston has to offer. Sponsored by the Laboratory for Chocolate Science.

IAP Arts and crafts

Ikebana: The Art of Japanese Flower Arranging
Hiroko Matsuyama
Tuesday, Jan. 24, from 1 to 2:30 p.m. Room E38-714. Advance sign-up required. Limit: 15 participants. $30 materials fee.

Hiroko Matsuyama, an Obara School of Ikebana instructor, will demonstrate the basics of this ancient art. Participants will create their own lower arrangements. Contact x3-5208.

Finance and economics

Searching for a Mate: Evidence From Speed Dating Experiments?
Ray Fisman of Columbia University
Tuesday, Jan. 24, from 4 to 8 p.m. Building W11 – Small Room. Also on tap: the basics of this ancient art. Participants will practice strategies that will help you during those all-too-familiar dating situations. Contact: x3-3971.

IAP IAP Tech Talk

Economists don’t believe in survey results. They call it “cheap talk.” This applies to an even more evident in reali...

IAP Literature

The poetry series meets weekdays through Feb. 3.

The poetry series meets weekdays through Feb. 3. Are you a poet? Or does reading poetry give you a sense of accomplishment? Then consider reading a poem for the class. If you’re interested in reading for the class, please e-mail Julie Saunders at julie@mit.edu.

IAP History and Mystery of the Tarot

Sarah Schwartz
News Office

Now in its ninth consecutive season, the IAP series called Pleasures of Poetry offers a varied literary feast each year, with poetry by classic figures such as Milton, Keats and Trumppos, a sampling of Vietnamese poetry, contemporary work by John Ashbery and Jack Gilbert, biblical songs of liberation and the Kaddish for reading and discussion.

Literature Professor David Thornburg, director of the MIT Communications Forum, is the series founder and organizer.

"I'm always surprised and inspired by the diversity and aesthetic energy of the poems our moderators choose. We're all volunteers, and each discussion leader selects poems that are personal favorites. This year the range of contemporary poetry is especially notable, but there is also a good selection of canonical English poems, as well as several provocative, unexpected texts. Our audiences are always a wonderful mix of students, faculty and staff from all parts of the Institute. I love the core message this activity sends every January: Poetry thrives at MIT," Thornburg said.

Mary Fuller, co-founder of Pleasures of literature, will open the series on Jan. 9 with a reading and discussion of the first 73 lines of "Paradise Lost" by John Milton.

Noting with enthusiasm the "density of Milton’s style and the rigor of his thinking," Fuller said of her selection, "Behind the fall of humanity from paradise, Milton finds a cause in the prior fall of Satan and by line 75 we are within Satan’s mind, looking out at hell. Who could resist?"

The poetry series meets weekdays through IAP for one-hour sessions. All are free and open to the public; they are held in Room 14E304 from 1 to 2 p.m. through Feb. 3.

In the first week of IAP, Fuller’s session on Milton will be followed by sessions led by literature faculty Shabtai Eizen, on John Keats’s “Ode to Melancholy” (Jan. 10); Stephen Tappan, on works by Robert Lowell and Elizabeth Bishop (Jan. 11); Lyn Kelley of Oberlin and Jonathan Swift (Jan. 12); and James Bazzard leading a session on Milton’s "Paradise Lost" and on Milton’s poems, "Ulysses" and "Tithonus" (Jan. 13).

Literature faculty set to moderate other sessions include Torbrown on works by Hermann Hesse (Jan. 17); John Blienspirle on Billy Collins (Jan. 24); Anthony Lioi on Galway Kinnell (Jan. 26); and James Cain on Italian sonnets (Feb. 2).

For more information or to receive a packet of the poems, please e-mail Julie Saunders at julie@mit.edu.

IAP Tech Talk

Economists don’t believe in survey results. They call it “cheap talk.” This applies to an even more evident in reali...
Resource center’s ‘spa’ helps students relax

Sasha Brown
News Office

For years, at the end of each semester, tired and stressed-out students have had a place to decompress right in Building 7. On the last two days of classes, just before finals, the Academic Resource Center transforms into a space for students to nosh, chat and mingle before semester's end begins. Last week, the event was offered on Dec. 15 and Dec. 16 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Known as MIT Spa in the fall semester and Infini Oasis in the spring, the end-of-semester celebration has varied offerings depending on the season.

MIT Spa features hot teas, hot chocolate and other warm drinks, while the Infinity Oasis offers summer drinks: lemonade, iced tea and various juices. Regardless of the season, MIT students flock to the event each year. Assistant dean of new student programming Young said, "It is just something different," said Young. "The place is always packed."

In addition to offering various "kiddy" snacks like fruit chews, granola bars, Goldfish crackers and juice boxes, Academic Resources also has educators from the Center for Health Promotion and Wellness on hand to discuss stress management. Chief among the recommendations for stressed students is sleep, followed by healthy eating. The educators also encourage list-making to tackle mounting to-do lists.

Starting last spring, the event also features massage therapist who gives students a 15-minute chair massages for two hours each day. "Like Gillis up immediately," said Young, laughing. Since most people carry their tension in the neck and shoulders, the therapist focuses her work there.

Although the MIT Spa is open just a few days a year, the Academic Resource Center is open to students year-round. "We are always a very loud, stop-in kind of place," Young said about her office. "It is a nice place to be."

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MIT Campus Sustainability — Challenges and Responses

Sasha Brown

Tuesday, Jan. 10, from noon to 1 p.m. Room 36-114. Sign up by Jan. 6. Limit: 60 participants

Presentation and discussion on MIT’s campus environmental challenges and on programs and activities to minimize its impact. Includes special presentation on the recent solar panel initiative. Moderated by Steven Lanou, program manager for sustainability initiatives (Environmental Pro- grams Office). Contact: mbayoc@mit.edu.

Philosophy

Philosophy Trivia Quiz
Heintze de Bree

Friday, Feb. 3, from 2 to 4 p.m. Room 32-8900.

Put your capacity for abstract thought against that of the professionals, at what promises to be the most "philosophically trivial" event this IAP! Which famous philosopher rescued Naomi Campbell from the clutches of Mike Tyson with the words, "I suggest we talk about this like rational men"? What is Karl Marx's favorite drink? What did Jude Law want to be when he was a child? "Metaphysics" was a man's enemy. What does an "interior designer" do for a living? "Ethics" is about what? What is the做工 of life, anyway? All this and more! MIT Philosophy: If it's deep, we've thought it. Come get yourself some of the action. Contact: x8-8684.

Politics and social science

U.S. Special Operations Forces Roles and Missions
Umar Khayyam

Monday, Jan. 30, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Room 32-155A. No limit on 200 participants.

The use of U.S. Special Operations Forces has figured prominently in the responses to both recent and earlier terrorist operations in the Middle East. Consequently, much has been written regarding their roles, training and recent operations. This class is designed to familiarize you with the actual charter of these unconventional forces. All are encouraged to apply. Contact: x8-5782.

...continued from Page 1

decisions — he dragged all of his employees to a party store for supplies and did not have a contingency plan for what would happen if his softball game were rained out. "It is just something different," said Pinkett, citing LFM's leadership activities and exercises as important to his training. "All those skills that have to do with being a leader and leading people I think I applied and applied effectively on the show."

Pinkett did face some troublesome moments: learning of his grandmother's death in episode one, missing a typo on his resume and dealing with Pinkett's final competitor could simply not top his academic credentials and business acumen. Pinkett, 34, holds degrees, including one from Oxford earned on a Rhodes Scholarship and three from MIT: a master's in electrical engineering, an M.B.A. in the Leaders for Manufacturing (LFM) Program, and a Ph.D. from the Media Laboratory. He's also founded five companies, the latest of which is Newark, N.J.-based BCT Partners, a management, technology and policy consulting firm.

"There’s no question that a lot of the organizational development and strategy and communication skills that I honed at MIT were applied on the show," said Pinkett, citing LFM’s leadership activities and exercises as important to his training. "All those skills that have to do with being a leader and leading people I think I applied and applied effectively on the show."

No utilities, no smoking, no pets. $1600, avail. immediately. Call 617-389-5093. folding beds, iron, washer & dryer, dishes, pots & pans.

Students that make a one year commitment will develop & implement their own program, w/ needs of the community in mind. Must have interest in learning more about the Asian community in Boston, Students that speak mandarin or cantonese encouraged to apply. Contact Daniel Stolkowski, daniel@mit.edu.

STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

Dollars and Sense Magazine, which educates the public about economic issues in non-technical language, seeks a detail oriented, meticulous, capable writer and editor to work on business & phone work. Job tasks include: Assisting the book editor, book manager & development director, plus mailings, data entry, filing & faxing. Training & oversight provided. Office hours required. Half-year to one-year position available. Pay: $12.00/hr. Contact Eileen.ramsay@mitt.edu.

AWARDS & HONORS

Members of the MIT community may submit one classified ad per issue. Ads can be resubmitted, but not two weeks in a row. Ads should be 30 words maximum; they will be edited. Submit online at the MIT Commissary, or by e-mail to classifieds@mit.edu, or by phone at 617-452-6516. Items must be in our hands Wednesday the week before publication.

FOR SALE


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How does someone who made his professional debut as a classical harpsichordist at Carnegie Recital Hall at age 15 take up the academic and performance worlds later in life and also be a harpsichord accompa- nist on the international folk dance scene?

Tom Paxton, who, in a creative career spanning more than 50 years, worked on maintaining a flourishing and prolific musical career, works full time at MIT's Publishing Services Bureau as a publishing advisor. Paxton, who will be performing with his Pinewoods Band at the Folk Arts Center of New England's New Year's Eve party, picked up the harpichord when relatively young, but says, “I knew it was my instrument.” He has since founded three dance bands and become an expert in Romanian, Scottish and Cajun music.

Paxton's roots in music go back to his childhood in a progressive Quaker household in Philadelphia. He was introduced to the harpsichord at the Germantown Friends School at age 7 and spent a year in Morocco with his family through the American Friends Service Committee, the international Quaker organization that sponsors projects around the world.

Paxton became a professional harpsichordist, released four solo recordings on that instrument and actually built 18 harpsichords, which he sold. Then, when he was 30, he decided that the harpsichord was a “self-indulgent and obscure way to communicate music with an audience.” It was also, he said, “not a career that would support my family in any consistent way.”

So, in 1984, he and his wife, Barbara, who had been teaching piano, left their musical careers to delve into another, more poten- tially lucrative branch of the arts. She became a decorative artist; he developed his skills in graphic arts.

But Paxton found he just couldn't stay too far from music. One of the first projects he tackled in his new job was a songbook for the Cambridge Christmas Revels, an organization that Paxton would later join as performing musician.

The ex-harpist heralds this first day of a month with unexpected chunks of free time. The Paxtons will begin to attend Boston-area folk dances where they were introduced to ethnic dance music such as New England contra, Balkan, folk and traditional Scottish music.

When a friend heard Paxton pick out the dance melodies on his harpsichord, she suggested he try an accordion as an addition. He took it up and performed early in the 1990s on a show at the Harp, a West Roxbury venue. He eventually changed his mind and returned to harpsichord.

In 1992, Paxton founded Flying Tomatoes, an ensemble devoted to providing live music for international folk dancing. That same year, the Folk Arts Center of New England asked Paxton to organize the music for their folk dance camps. Under his leadership, the Pinewoods Band was reformed to play for all the dance sessions, and the band has since become legendary.

It was the first international folk folk dance band ever to perform at festivals throughout the United States and Canada.

It was natural to Paxton to start his own ensembles. “I had my own strong ideas about how the music should be interpreted and how live music would be integrated into existing dance events that used recordings,” he says. He also observes that the recre- ational dance community includes many former classical musi- cians, ripe for recruitment in groups where they can perform in his groups and now plays double bass, santouri, flute, violin, accordion and pandeito in addition to the piano. His careers have united again.

Paxton says that playing for dances is a lot of fun. “It's an inter- active sport, where the musicians connect musically with each other and with the dancers, and the dancers in turn transmit their energy, if they are appropriately inspired, back to the musicians,” he says. “It's a very rewarding kind of performance art.”

Dancers can interact with Paxton and his Pinewoods Band at the Folk Arts Center of New England's party on Dec. 31 from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. at the Trinity Episcopal Church (11 Homer St., Newton Center). Admission is $12. SIF for PMC members, $10 students, free children under 6. For more information, call 781- 662-7475 or visit www.facone.org.

For more information on Tom Paxton, visit www.paxton.org/.
2005: The year in pictures

The MIT News Office had a busy year in 2005, which started with a January blizzard. President Susan Hockfield’s inauguration was the big news in May, followed quickly by Commencement on a beautiful June day. Professor Richard R. Schrock was awarded the Nobel Prize in chemistry in October. And just this month, the extraordinary Brain and Cognitive Sciences Complex opened. Although there were too many stories to sum up here, enjoy this glimpse of 2005 as seen through the lens of a camera.

Please note: This is the last Tech Talk issue of this year. Tech Talk will resume publication on Jan. 25. But you don’t have to miss any MIT news. The MIT News Office web site continually publishes new stories at web.mit.edu/newsoffice/.

DECEMBER: MIT dedicates the new Brain and Cognitive Sciences Complex, the largest neuroscience center in the world.

OCTOBER: Professor Richard R. Schrock learned he’d won the Nobel Prize in chemistry on Oct. 5. He received the prize, above, on Dec. 10 in Sweden.

SEPTEMBER: Construction began this summer on a major expansion of the main group, creating an ‘infill’ building in the Building 6 courtyard. Obvious to anyone who walks the Infinite Corridor, work on this project (photographed in September) is still under way.

AUGUST: Members of the MIT Campus Police Honor Guard took the field at Fenway Park on Aug. 30 to present the flag before a game.

FEBRUARY: MIT researchers reported their work on the ‘Robo-Toddler.’ The news was picked up around the world.

JUNE: It was sunny and warm for MIT’s 139th Commencement on June 3. Irwin Jacobs, the co-founder and CEO of Qualcomm, gave the main address.

JANUARY: Thirty inches of snow fell the weekend of Jan. 22, keeping MIT Ground Services working around the clock. It was no time for biking.

MAY: MIT marked the inauguration of President Susan Hockfield with a weeklong celebration. On May 6, the big day, she shared a moment with her husband, Dr. Thomas Byrne, and their daughter, Elizabeth Byrne.

OCTOBER: The Bayou Bash brought New Orleans musicians to campus Oct. 30 in one of many initiatives on campus spurred by Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the Gulf Coast on Aug. 29. Hurricane Rita hit Sept. 26.