



# SIGMA RHO BULLETIN

Beta Theta Pi at the University of Illinois

SPRING 2014

## BUILDING ASSOCIATION OUTLINES GOALS FOR THE FUTURE Alumni Encouraged to Reconnect with Chapter



*Outdated furniture in the living room will be replaced this summer in preparation for the brothers to move back into 202 E. Daniel in August.*



*Old appliances in the kitchen will be updated so we can provide nutritious meals for our brothers living in and out of the house.*



*New dining room furniture is needed to accommodate our brothers so they can share house meals together.*

Welcome to 2014! I trust that you've had a happy and healthy start to the new year and that you're staying warm during this long, cold winter. One of my highlights so far this year was our January alumni event at Medinah Country Club, thanks to **Paul Huebener '81** for sponsoring us. It was great to see so many of you and to have a chance to mingle with some of our new chapter members.

Since last fall I've had the chance to visit Champaign and spend time with our new brothers and particularly with **Jack Kalanik '16**, our colony president. I am incredibly impressed with these men; they are smart, polished, involved on campus, and passionate about Beta. We should all be proud to have them wear our letters and be added to the roll of Sigma Rho. I hope you'll take an opportunity at one of our upcoming events to get to know them.

I want to offer a special thanks to **Mike Langan '82**, who is coordinating our alumni relations. He is working closely with a small group of alumni and the undergraduate alumni relations committee to manage this newsletter and plan events (see details inside). If you'd like to help out by making phone calls, reconnecting with your brothers, or planning events, contact Mike at [mike.langan@bmo.com](mailto:mike.langan@bmo.com) or (920) 980-1713.

Our work this spring is focused on getting our Beta brothers moved back into 202 E. Daniel in August. To that end, we have several renovation projects planned for the summer.

- **Kitchen renovations and equipment:** Our house will offer a full meal plan for the 46 men living in the house and a dinner-only plan for the men living out. We have hired a local kitchen management company to cook on-site and deliver delicious, nutritious meals, but we'll need to upgrade most of our equipment. We're really excited that the chapter will be sharing meals together. We believe this is an important part of building brotherhood.
- **House director suite renovations:** We are in the process of hiring a full-time, live-in house director and, thus, are in dire need of renovating the old "president's room" into a suite with a bedroom, sitting area, and small kitchenette. We believe that our house director will provide day-to-day guidance to our men and will help preserve the investments we're making in the house.
- **Furnishings:** We need to furnish all of the bedrooms, the dining room, the living room, and the study. Instead of using the Craigslist approach, we want to purchase or rent new furniture. Nothing fancy, nothing too expensive, but we want to create a home that our undergraduates and alumni will be proud of.
- **Bathrooms:** Remember those? Our long-term goal is to totally redo the bathrooms, but right now we only have the time (and the money) to do a cosmetic overhaul.

Brothers, we have a committed core group of alumni making sure that Beta is back at Illinois and we would love to have more people on our team. If you'd like to help with the house, reconnect with brothers, be a speaker at a chapter meeting, or help with other duties as assigned, please give me a call. We can find a role to fit around your work and family commitments. Most importantly, our undergraduates need to see and experience what it means to be a Beta for life.

Yours in *\_\_kai\_\_*,  
**Dave McMurray '81**  
President, Building Association  
[dwmcmurray1@gmail.com](mailto:dwmcmurray1@gmail.com)  
(312) 375-0361



*Greg Doidge '14, Yunfei Meng '17, Raim Izhar '16, Kishan Patel '16, Andrew Smith '17, Jaylan Williams '16, and Bradley Berg '16 on campus.*

## The First Semester of the Restart of Sigma Rho

The Founding Father class of Beta Theta Pi has had a remarkable first semester on campus, becoming a strong brotherhood. The group claims numerous academic and campus leaders, but its true success comes from how the members have grown as brothers over the past four months.

The group was recruited in the fall by a four-man recruitment team from the administrative office. Together, we looked for pockets of men on campus who showed high academic records, extraordinary levels of campus involvement, and the ability to be a gentleman and a trustworthy



*New members Felix Boeschen '16 and Raim Izhar '16 are proud to represent Beta's return to U of I.*

brother. With the luck of four strong candidates reaching out to me about Beta, we were able to extend our pool of candidates to over 500 individuals until agreeing upon those chosen for brotherhood. And while it took plenty of time and energy to convince these young minds to join, they could not say no to the high quality of the members that had already joined.

The rest of the semester focused on building the culture of the group. My goal was to bring these men who had been recruited individually into a functioning group where they knew each other and the values of Beta. We spent the semester learning about Beta's history and values, doing activities to learn about one another, and organizing our officer structure. In November, the group became official members during their initiation at the administrative office in Oxford, Ohio.

The men are building relationships to last a lifetime and a chapter that can deal with the difficult challenges of fraternities. I am excited to see how they grow as men through this next phase of their fraternal experience.

Yours in \_\_kai\_\_,

**Paul Winterbotham, San Diego '12**

Colony Development Coordinator  
paul.winterbotham@betathetapi.org  
(513) 461-3637

## Refer a Future Beta

If you know an outstanding young man who currently attends or will attend the University of Illinois, please take a moment to refer him to **William Hilger '16**, our recruitment chairman, at [betaillinois@gmail.com](mailto:betaillinois@gmail.com) or (708) 846-9354.

We're looking for men with great high school grades (AP classes, Merit Scholars) who have been involved in the community (Eagle Scout, youth group leader), care about serving others (mission trips, community service), will be leaders on campus (student body officers, club presidents), and who embody Beta's principles and values.

Here's what we'd love to get: full name, contact information (e-mail or cell is fine), hometown, high school, list of achievements and activities (resume would be great), a blurb about why you think he'd make a great Beta, and your contact information. You also can use Beta's online referral tool: <https://my.betathetapi.org/ors/referral.aspx>.

We also want to build a strong high school network, so please let us know if you have contacts with teachers, coaches, principals or guidance counselors. We'll contact them directly to ask about outstanding young men heading to Illinois in the fall (send information to [betaillinois@gmail.com](mailto:betaillinois@gmail.com)).

## Laying the Foundation for Success

Sigma Rho at the University of Illinois has been successfully recolonized and we are working to bring the chapter back to its proper place at 202 E. Daniel. Our chapter is comprised of some of the brightest and most involved individuals on campus.

### Breaking Recruitment Records

With the help of the General Fraternity and the recolonization team of **Paul Winterbotham, UC San Diego '12**, **Nick DeHaas, Maine '10**, **Colin Close, Minnesota '13**, and **Alex Gardner, Puget Sound '11**, we were able to set a campus-wide recruiting record of the largest new member class at Illinois. We recruited 58 outstanding individuals whose passion for Beta Theta Pi is unmatched.

### Academic Excellence

Our members are averaging a 3.4 GPA on campus and continue to excel within the classroom. We are currently ranked second on campus out of 48 fraternities. With the type of men we are recruiting, both socially and academically sound, I expect us to continue to be a contender for top-ranked academic chapter.

### Developing Well-Rounded Men

The undergraduate members of Sigma Rho are extremely involved around campus, in service fraternities, business fraternities, consulting organizations, service trips, honor societies, Orange Krush, Illini Pride, and multicultural clubs. Most members are balancing the rigors of their academic schedules, the commitments of Beta Theta Pi, and multiple other obligations.

### Looking Forward

I am proud to say that we have an extremely impressive group of individuals and I look forward to all that we can accomplish in the next year. We are excited to partner with the Andrew Weishar Foundation to bring WeishFest to the University of Illinois campus and support those families that are struggling with the burden of cancer. We are also beginning to revamp our alumni program and to recognize the amazing successes and history of Sigma Rho with our Beta banquet and Sigma Rho barbecue next year. We will continue to build the foundation for our chapter to thrive.



Yours in \_\_kai\_\_,  
**Jack Kalanik '16**  
Chapter President  
betaillinois@gmail.com



*Jack Kalanik '16, Mike Czmiel '15, Kevin Smith '16, Juan Marquez '17, Clay Wotton '16, Julian Monul '15, and Anushrav Gulati '16 are enjoying their newfound brotherhood.*



*Griffin Charnas '16 takes part in intramural sports.*

## ALUMNI UPDATE

### Chapter Eternal

**Lawrence C. Olson '54** entered Chapter Eternal February 8, 2013. He lived in La Porte, Ind., with his wife, Patricia.

### Alumni News

**Robert W. Edwards '53** says that 1948 to 1953 was a wonderful time for Beta. "I wish you success in bringing Beta back!" He lives in Bloomington, Ind.

**Robert A. Hall '56** and his wife, Joan, celebrated their 57th wedding anniversary on June 23, 2013. They moved around the world with the U.S. Navy for 30 years while he was a naval aviator in Greece, served on the U.S. NATO delegation in Brussels and Belgium, and taught at the U.S. Naval War College. After the navy, they moved to Ormond Beach, Fla., where Bob was the dean of academics for Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University for 12 years before retiring in 1998. They have one daughter, Laura, and two granddaughters: Christina is an account executive with Google and Julia is a nurse with the U.S. Navy at Walter Reed National Military Hospital. E-mail: rbtahall@aol.com

**Samuel L. Leeper '62** celebrated the class of 1962's 50th anniversary in August 2012. "We had a good, enthusiastic turnout and there was strong support for getting the doors of Sigma Rho open once again, particularly with the Men of Principle approach." E-mail: san@samleeper.net

**Dennis G. Cook '66** and his wife, Phyllis, are enjoying retirement, traveling, and small-town life in Delavan, Wis. They recently sailed to Europe on the Queen Mary. Dennis helped coordinate a reunion of four Sigma Rho classes (1964 to 1967) on Captiva Island, Fla., in February 2014. E-mail: dgcook44@aol.com

**Donald K. Schopfer '71** is retired and enjoys playing golf and reading history. He lives part-time on Hilton Head Island, S.C., and part-time in Chicago. E-mail: dschopfer@rcn.com

**Phillip G. Horn '02** is very excited about the house re-opening. He is in the Champaign area regularly and would be interested in attending any local events or helping out as needed. "It would be great if you organized an alumni golf tournament. We held them when I was an undergraduate with great success. My Beta friends would come back every year for this." E-mail: phil.horn.m2h3@statefarm.com

# THE FRATERNITY BOND BETWEEN A FATHER AND A SON

Spotlight on **John Klein '89** and **Joe Klein, University of Pittsburgh '17**

**Q: Why did you decide to join Beta Theta Pi?**

**John:** Upon matriculating to the University of Illinois, I had hoped Greek life would shrink the school down to a manageable size. When I joined Beta, I was impressed by the diverse group of individuals who had their brotherhood in common. When I was in school, Betas held many of the campus leadership positions, including a strong legacy of Chief Illiniweks (the prestigious school mascot, top student leader). I believed aligning myself with these strong role models would help me to further develop my character and allow me to mature in a positive way.

**Joe:** My father always shared his fond memories of his experiences with Beta Theta Pi. However, I was not sure that Greek life was for me. During my first semester, I was approached by Beta Theta Pi about its colonization at the University of Pittsburgh. After several meetings with their representatives I believed it was a great match for me as the principles of the organization were aligned with my beliefs. I was excited that they would consider me as a freshman to be a founding father of Beta at Pitt. It was also a great feeling knowing that my dad was a Beta, too.

**Q: As you sent your son off to college, were you hoping he would join a fraternity?**

**John:** To be perfectly honest, I was hoping he would join a fraternity but realized the Greek system has changed in many ways, mostly for the better in the last 25 years. I wanted my son to decide for himself and have his college experience be his own. It was much to my delight when he called me after being on campus the first month and informed me that he was approached by some upperclassmen to be one of the founding fathers of Beta Theta Pi at the University of Pittsburgh.

**Q: What made you follow in your father's footsteps?**

**Joe:** I have always admired my dad as a father and a friend and greatly respect his wisdom. I knew he has made many great decisions to be the man he has become. I also knew that if he felt positive that his fraternity experience was impactful on his development as a person, then it was something that I should strongly consider.

**Q: Describe your experience as a founding father. What have been some of your favorite activities or events so far?**

**Joe:** It has been a great experience. We've all put a great deal of effort in to ensure that our fraternity is successful, impactful, and respected on Pitt's campus. Each of our committees has been diligent and effective in their respective areas to establish Beta Theta Pi's name on campus. People are beginning to recognize us for it and because of that it's been a very rewarding experience. Perhaps the best part has been recruiting more great men from Pitt into our prestigious fraternity. It showed me that we are more than capable of attracting men of principle to our organization and building a great fraternity on Pitt's campus for years to come.

**Q: What offices did you hold in the chapter as an undergraduate?**

**John:** I was recruitment chairman my junior year, commissar (kitchen manager) my sophomore year, and helped with various committees each year.

**Q: What offices are you interested in holding?**

**Joe:** I am currently on our Kai committee. I hope to have a senior leadership role in the chapter before I leave the University of Pittsburgh. I was just selected to be a member of Pitt's Blue and Gold society where I will serve as a student ambassador. I will also be a residence advisor next year where I hope to recruit more good men into Beta Theta Pi.

**Q: What advice would you give to undergraduates who are early in their careers?**

**John:** Be responsible and work hard to be the best at whatever your job is—even if it is not so glamorous. I started out working in a laboratory as a plastics engineer and made sure I completed my work more thoroughly and quickly than my peers.

- Find a strong mentor in your company to show you how to succeed. Don't be shy about asking a senior leader to be your mentor; they probably had a mentor at one time and will be more than happy to return the favor.
- Don't go for the job with the most money; go for the job you like the most. If you like your job, you have a much better chance at being the best at it.
- Dress for the position you want, not the position you have—you'll stand out to those above you.
- Don't be afraid to create a new job in your company that has not existed. If it adds value and helps develop you, you will be amazed at the support most company leaders will provide you.

**Q: Why do you feel it is important for all alumni to reconnect or stay in touch with the chapter?**

**John:** We all owe something to Beta Theta Pi. At a minimum, it was a source of lifetime friendships but also provided leadership development for many of us that benefited us later in life. If you're from the class of 1989, mark September 6 on your calendar for a trip to Champaign to welcome back the rebirth of Sigma Rho and the 25th anniversary of our pledge class.

*John lives in Chagrin Falls, Ohio, with his wife, Amy, and has two younger children, Jack and Julia. John and Joe both enjoy sports. John spends his free time with family and helps coach his kids' sports teams. He also enjoys movies, family, travel, skiing, and golf. Joe enjoys music and spending time playing the guitar and drums. He also enjoys snowboarding with his Beta brothers. John can be reached at [jmklein33@gmail.com](mailto:jmklein33@gmail.com) and Joe can be reached at [joeaklein@gmail.com](mailto:joeaklein@gmail.com).*



## A True Set of Values

### Spotlight on Founding Father Tommy Laabs '16

The first and only member of his family to join a fraternity (a fact all have been excited about), Palatine, Illinois, native and sophomore molecular and cell biology major **Tommy Laabs '16** knew that becoming a founding father at Sigma Rho was an opportunity not to be missed. “Looking at different houses on campus [sophomore year], I liked the values of brotherhood, forming

relationships, and getting to live in the house together. But some places I went to I just wasn't feeling it.”

Those vibes he wasn't feeling were very familiar: he once embodied the kinds of negative stereotypes that can be associated with college fraternities. But once these actions returned disappointing experiences, Tommy realized the need to change and revolutionized himself for the better, becoming a passionate student grounded in his faith who was committed to valuing what's truly important in life. And when this happened, Beta came into the picture.

On a typical August day, Tommy saw the Beta Theta Pi recruitment tent set up on U of I's main quad emblazoned with its main ideology, Man

of Principle. To him, it was a simple yet undeniably important value that he didn't really feel was present in the current generation—or other fraternities in general—and this made him stop by, where he soon was enjoying what he was hearing. It was this enjoyment that eventually led him to becoming a founding father.

“BTP has a true set of values and I can see that acting out in the guys here from nationals [namely **Paul Winterbotham, San Diego '12**, and **Alex Gardner, University of Puget Sound '11**] or who are alumni. I can see they are so passionate about this and I really want to be a part of it. I want to be a man of principle.”

On his way to achieving this goal, Tommy has since become Sigma Rho's lead chorister and has made it a mission to learn the songs for himself and take part in assisting others to learn them. In addition, he continues to develop both his faith and BΘΠ's core values so that he may implement them in the chapter and relationships with his brothers and overall U of I campus to bring back the Beta name.

“Knowing that I became a member of this fraternity and seeing where it goes when we're no longer here anymore means that I'm a part of something bigger than myself. I am a part of an organization that has a long history, a strong presence in the Greek system, and a bright future.”

## Founding Father Hopes to Leave His Mark

### Spotlight on Hunter Claire '17

A founding father with close family ties to Beta Theta Pi (his father and uncle are members from Westminster College in Missouri), Brookfield, Illinois, native and freshman business major **Hunter Claire '17** was originally turned off by the idea of a fraternity.

Based on his own positive experiences, his father had strongly encouraged Hunter to join a chapter upon becoming a student at the U of I. But to Hunter, it was a task that didn't give overall good first impressions or the kinds of beneficial experiences his father had talked about.

“I didn't know much about it, but it didn't seem like something I would be interested in,” Hunter states. “I had checked it out the first week and there were lots of arrogant people; you would go to their parties but they wouldn't get to know you. It was real superficial and cliquy.”

But his thoughts and attitude changed when he found himself talking with the national recruiters from Beta. After initial conversations led to him meet other prospective founding fathers, he realized that these individuals were genuine and that this perhaps could be something to move forward with. After all, his skepticism had already subsided and he was very much enjoying meeting everyone and hanging out together.

“The people that I met really changed my mind. But the deciding factor was definitely the opportunity to build something. You don't get that opportunity very often on a big Greek life campus such as the U of I,

especially one that already has family ties to me.”

Fast forward through the fall semester, Hunter has become very involved with the organization and his brothers. As a recruitment chairman and unofficial social chairman, he finds himself wanting to bring back the Beta name with gusto while also finding great prospective new members who can enjoy the experience just as he has. And while philanthropy and doing whatever he can for the good of the organization are also goals he is working on, his ultimate Beta ambition is to one day serve as president.

When asked about being a founding father and what his favorite parts have been thus far, he said the initial “ups and downs” the founding father class had successfully conquered first came to mind. And although that built and strengthened the bond the group had, it was still the overall opportunity that to him has been the finest aspect.

“Being a Beta is an experience to build something that can stand on this campus for hundreds of years and allow me to leave my mark. Trying to restart this house and pay homage to all of those who came before us is just an awesome opportunity as well.”



# Mark Your Calendar

Alumni Golf Outing  
Saturday, July 12  
Lake Bluff Golf Club  
Lake Bluff, Illinois

Fighting Illini  
Football Game  
Saturday, September 20  
Against Texas State

Join us for a reception at the Beta house before or after the game (depending on game time). For more information or to help plan these or other alumni events, please contact **Mike Langan '82** at [mike.langan@bmo.com](mailto:mike.langan@bmo.com) or (920) 980-1713.



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Beta Theta Pi at the University of Illinois

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## Welcome, New Members

**Ali Afridi '16** ★ Urbana, Ill.

**Shubham Agarwal '14** ★ India

**Harvey Anderson '16** ★ Portland, Ore.

**Bradley Berg '16** ★ Glenview, Ill.

**Helom Berhane '16** ★ Lombard, Ill.

**Brandon Birkhead '15** ★ Troy, Ill.

**Felix Boeschen '16** ★ Naperville, Ill.

**Mazin Bokhari '17** ★ Chicago, Ill.

**Griffin Charnas '16** ★ Darien, Ill.

**Hunter Claire '17** ★ Brookfield, Ill.

**Adam Corazzi '16** ★ Mokena, Ill.

**Michael Czmil '15** ★ Schaumburg, Ill.

**Kemp DeMarais '16** ★ Geneva, Ill.

**Gregory Doidge '14** ★ West Windsor, N.J.

**J.R. Domalewski '16** ★ Mokena, Ill.

**Troy Farsakian '16** ★ Glenview, Ill.

**Gino Giannetti '16** ★ Champaign, Ill.

**Rishi Girish '15** ★ India

**Jose Gonzalez '15** ★ Cicero, Ill.

**Anushrav Gulati '16** ★ India

**Matthew Harris '15** ★ Saint Charles, Ill.

**Bill Hilger '16** ★ Oak Forest, Ill.

**Raim Izhar '16** ★ Livingston, N.J.

**Jack Kalanik '16** ★ Chicago, Ill.

**Muhammad Khan '16** ★ Grayslake, Ill.

**Tommy Laabs '16** ★ Palatine, Ill.

**Akshay Malik '14** ★ Champaign, Ill.

**Pranay Marella '17** ★ Springfield, Ill.

**Juan Marquez '17** ★ Chicago, Ill.

**Nihreer Matani '16** ★ Glenview, Ill.

**Timothy Mayer '16** ★ Oak Forest, Ill.

**Yunfei Meng '17** ★ Springfield, Ill.

**Karim Mohammadali '16** ★ Hoffman Estates, Ill.

**Matthew Monte '16** ★ Homer Glen, Ill.

**Julian Monul '15** ★ Palantine, Ill.

**Connor Murray '16** ★ Vienna, Austria

**Zain Nayani '16** ★ Carol Stream, Ill.

**Mark Panno '16** ★ Pontiac, Ill.

**Kishan Patel '16** ★ Carol Stream, Ill.

**Daniel Payan '16** ★ Chicago, Ill.

**Travis Pollitt '16** ★ Athens, Ill.

**Aaron Reinsbach '17** ★ Naperville, Ill.

**Matthew Rhee '17** ★ Dunlap, Ill.

**Andrew Ross '16** ★ Libertyville, Ill.

**Gerson Santizo '16** ★ Chicago, Ill.

**Jay Shah '16** ★ Northbrook, Ill.

**Andrew Smith '17** ★ Wheaton, Ill.

**Kevin Smith '16** ★ Roselle, Ill.

**Krishna Somayajula '16** ★ Portland, Ore.

**Jeffrey Tsai '17** ★ Urbana, Ill.

**Philip Vanduyne '16** ★ Roselle, Ill.

**Jaylan Williams '16** ★ Dolton, Ill.

**Clay Wotton '16** ★ Pontiac, Ill.

**Craig Zavesky '17** ★ Flossmoor, Ill.