MIT Sloan Alum Works to Make Convocation More Sustainable

Offers advice on making any event more green

By Sarah Foote

When Carrie Hunter, SF ’84, was writing to her MIT Sloan Fellow classmates to ask them to sign up for this year’s Convocation, she thought she was just notifying them about an upcoming event. At the time, she didn’t realize she would become heavily involved in making the three-day event about sustainability, itself, more sustainable. “At first, I saw this as an opportunity to encourage my classmates to attend Convocation with its theme of sustainability, as a timely event to learn more about this leading edge issue from people who are at the frontlines of this field,” she said.

As the owner of the company Leading Sustainability, Carrie was the perfect choice for the MIT Sloan Fellows program office to work with on the event. Stephen Sacca, Director of the program, asked her to give his team a briefing on what they might consider in terms of making Convocation more sustainable, to align its “walking the talk” with its academic theme. Carrie found them very open to learning more about the three E’s of sustainability: economy, environment, and equity. “They were very receptive and eager to see what they could do to make the event as sustainable as possible and that made working on the event even more fun. The thing with sustainability is that if you have people willing to learn more about it, you just have to take advantage of those moments,” she said. Following the briefing, the Sloan Fellows Program brought her in to assist with the implementation of the ideas she proposed.

The MIT Sloan Fellow Convocation Planning committee, including Susan Allen, the event planner, worked with Carrie to identify the many ways they could “green up the event” and make it more sustainable. Among other steps, vendors were asked for sustainability profiles as part of the RFP process; eco and carbon footprints were considered; and educational opportunities were highlighted.
The Sloan Fellows Program chose to hold the opening reception off campus at the non-profit Artists For Humanity (AFH), a program that embodies and exemplifies sustainable principles. AFH engages at-risk high school youth in future careers that involve the creative arts, including material re-use. AFH occupies Boston’s first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum building—just as important it was one that was also very affordable to build. The planning committee was also able to use mass transit for guests. “It was important that we could get there on the subway, but we also arranged for buses from MIT. On the buses we showed a short DVD about the AFH program, so the people who took the buses arrived informed about the program,” Carrie said. She noted that it was the planning committee’s desire to start off Convocation with a “loud message about sustainability” with a setting that reflected the concept’s three pillars.

The planning committee looked at the supply chain for the event as a starting point. They asked all their food vendors, both on-and-off campus, for their sustainability profile—which included where they source their food, if it was local or organic, if they follow sustainable seafood guidelines, what kind of vehicles they drove, if they recycled the oils they used for cooking, if they compost their food, and if the goods they used included recycled plates and cloth napkins. Carrie said that they also asked caterers if they were socially responsible in their purchases and practices.

At each step in the planning process, Carrie and the committee took every opportunity to incorporate sustainable principles. At registration, the Faculty Club caterer put up signs regarding the ways in which it worked to be more green and sustainable. Carrie noted that the event’s vendors were very happy and eager to participate and provide information in this way. “Many people are already moving in this direction and were excited to help us ‘walk the talk’ but don’t have the opportunity to talk about how they are making their companies more sustainable. When they do get the chance they are very excited about it, all of which helps reinforce the message that sustainability is desirable and very doable,” she said.

The MIT Sloan Fellows Class of 2009 was also engaged in the sustainability theme. At registration, the class helped greet alums and showcased a few sustainable innovations from MIT—including the One Laptop per Child program and the iShoe (which helps people with balance issues.) Also as part of registration, alumni were given a tote bag made of 100 percent recycled plastic bottles, an event binder made of 100 percent recycled paper, and a stainless steel water bottle—as fresh water stations were provided at each event instead of plastic water bottles. Carrie said, “We generate 52 billion plastic water bottles in this country every year—one billion per week—77 percent of which wind up in landfills. That ends up as a billion dollars worth of plastic in landfills in this country.”

On the first day of Convocation, alums were given a tour of the new green buildings and the co-generation plant on campus by Peter Cooper, Manager, Sustainability, Engineering, and Utility Planning from the Department of Facilities. Professor Rick Locke, founder of MIT’s Sloan’s S-Lab was responsible for planning the academic and research-related agenda for the second day of the event, including a session on how MIT Sloan is “walking the sustainability talk.” More MIT sustainability innovations and their student inventors were showcased at the breakfast and through morning breaks that day at Kresge, including the City Car (a foldable, stackable electric car), a solar turbine, and a water project for developing countries, MIT’s 2007 entry for DOE’s Solar Decathlon, and the MIT biodiesel project.
At buffet style meals and breaks, all the cups, plates, and “plastic” ware and left-over foods were compostable. Recycling and composting bins were provided, along with educational signage. “People really got into it. They understand that it’s very doable; it is not hard. And when you give people the knowledge and tools, they do try to do more. Overall, I think we gave them some thoughts about what they could do to become more sustainable in their organizations and in their homes. We tried to use the phrase: ‘refuse, reduce, reuse, renew, and recycle’ as much as we could through the entire event,” Carrie said.

Carrie offers these few pieces of advice to members of the MIT Sloan community interested in becoming more sustainable:

1. You can begin by thinking about your own sustainability footprint and decision making. How do you leverage benefits for each of the pillars (economy, environment, and equity) with a single investment of time, energy, or funds? Think about what you can do to improve your footprint. Approach things from a whole systems perspective; think life cycle (“cradle to cradle”) and natural system services. But don’t get overwhelmed: start small and build from there.

2. An easy place to begin is with your eco-footprint. For instance, can you reduce your consumption of non-renewable resources? Are you energy and carbon footprint conscious? Do you support food co-ops or local/organic farms and buy sustainable yield fish and timber products? Do you turn off lights and running water taps? Are you aware of what you can do to reduce light or nutrient pollution? A few small things to do on campus:

   a. Keep bio-wares in your backpack such bamboo forks, knives, spoons—or a set of chop sticks—and carry a cloth napkin.
   b. Carry your own hot/cold beverage container. Re-use plastic bottles if you need them.
   c. Carry a sustainable seafood card in your wallet, to consult when buying carry-out or at a restaurant.
   d. Ask for fair trade, shade grown teas and coffees.
   e. Walk, bike, or take public transportation whenever you can.
   f. Calculate your carbon footprint and offset where possible.
   g. When buying a new computer, ask where it was built. Is the manufacturer building the computer in green and sustainable ways? Is there a responsible product take-back program? Recycle your old computer or donate it to a local charity.

To become aware of your social-footprint Carrie offers these suggestions:

1. Think through the social life cycle of a product such as a cell phone or laptop, rug, or a garment. It can be very hard to know if something was assembled or disassembled.
with child labor or under sweat shop or unfair labor conditions, but you can begin
with the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) pledge of the manufacturer as
well as a third party report on their CSR performance, if available. Or, are they a
member of organizations such as Ceres, the World Business Council on Sustainable
Development, or similar? If not, ask the company what their policies are before
making a purchase. First steps include:

a. When buying something such as a cell phone or computer, or an engagement
   or wedding ring, find out if the resources used are conflict-free, including
   the coltan, gold or diamonds.

b. Become familiar with the companies that manufacture products you are
   likely to buy and support those that have solid sustainability or CSR
   policies and practices regarding labor, environmental health, community
   involvement, and social and environmental justice.

2. Give back to your community when and where you are able to.

Carrie suggests that everyone at MIT Sloan, faculty and students alike, can participate in
efforts to help lead MIT in a shift toward sustainability whether in terms of the school’s own
performance on campus or in its academic and research agendas. Recently, MIT was given a
B+ in a nation-wide ranking of sustainability efforts among colleges and universities. (Harvard
was given an A-.)

“MIT students can be the drivers for sustainability change at MIT,” Carrie said. As she also
noted, MIT Sloan is full of creative leaders who can provide the sort of innovative thinking
needed to design new growth and development models based on the three E’s of sustainability,
and the tools and strategies to help test and implement sustainable strategies and tools. MIT
Sloan could help integrate the myriad elements and efforts on campus that would, together,
lead to a comprehensive, academic program of sustainability. It could start by designing
principles of sustainability that everyone in the community adopts and signs onto. The process
must be inclusive, participatory, and collaborative, so that everybody has ownership. MIT
Sloan could then share its principles of sustainability with the rest of MIT as an example of a
framework for sustainability decision making.

“MIT is bursting at the seams with people working on innovations that could and will help
lead us towards finding sustainable ways to live on this planet—which is what we all must
achieve,” Carrie said. “Our world is already being reshaped by sustainability trends; the
current economic crisis gives even greater reason to shift MIT and the U.S. into sustainable
models of growth. I hope the students, faculty, and administration of MIT Sloan will seize this
opportunity and help move us all in this direction; there is no time like the present to do so.”

Carrie Hunter is a 1984 graduate of the MIT Sloan Fellows program and is the Principal at
Leading Sustainability. She can be reached at hunter@sustain101.com. (Her new website
www.leadingsustainability.com will be online soon.)

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**Quote of the Week**

“The less people speak of their greatness, the more we think of it.”

—Sir Francis Bacon
MIT Sloan Professor Talks about How to Manage in Down Economy in *Boston Globe* Article

“It’s during tough times that corporate leaders show what they’re made of. For the Top Places to Work, the *Boston Globe* convened a panel to share views on managing companies and people when conditions are challenging. *Globe 100* editor Michael Warshaw sat down with Jack Clancy, Chief Executive of Enterprise Bancorp of Lowell; John Fish, Chief Executive of Suffolk Construction Company of Boston; and Deborah Ancona, Director of the MIT Sloan Leadership Center, to get their takes.”

For the complete story visit: http://www.boston.com/jobs/news/articles/2008/11/09/crisis_mode/?s_cam

MIT Sloan Professor Honored


CEO of W.L. Gore Gives Speech on Being an Innovative Leader

*By Sarah Foote*

If you don’t already own clothes or shoes made with Gore-Tex, surely last week’s 20-degree temperature on a sunny Monday, or the warm 60-degree, rainy day on Wednesday, would entice you to own some of the protective gear. If not, attending Terri Kelly’s talk on being an innovative leader should have inspired you to at least check it out. Kelly was the last speaker in this fall’s Dean’s Innovative Leader Series.

Terri Kelly, President and CEO of W.L. Gore, spoke to students, faculty, and staff about the innovative culture created at Gore nearly 50 years ago. Kelly joined the company 25 years ago as a Process Engineer and in 2005 was selected by her colleagues to become the next CEO—one of the few positions with a title at the company. At Gore, employees are called associates, and there is no hierarchical ladder. All associates are considered owners of the company, and they become leaders based on their ability to gain the respect of their peers and attract followers. There are no bosses at Gore; instead people play more of a role that a coach would play. It’s an environment that Kelly calls “very competitive” and not one for everyone, but has landed the company on *Forbes’* “Top 100 Best Places to Work” list several years in a row.

But it is also an environment that has created a freer and more innovative work force with seven to nine percent revenue growth and a very low turnover rate—just five percent. While the company is mainly known for Gore-Tex, the “extreme-weather protection that keeps you...”
dry and comfortable from head to toe,” Kelly said that the company is also involved in a variety of other industries including: medical devices, aerospace, computers, energy, and even created Glide dental floss.

Kelly said because the company is so diverse they take a decentralized approach to business and this gives the company’s many divisions autonomy. Associates work in small teams, so there is a feeling of everyone being in the same boat which builds trust. “We believe people with the right tools and the right knowledge will be fundamentally motivated to do the right thing. We spend a lot of time building teams. And we have minimal bureaucracy,” she said. Kelly noted the culture drives business results, and with $2.5 billion in sales, this unique culture is definitely working for W.L. Gore.

Kelly said the hiring process at the company is rigorous and is focused around discussions on core values. Once hired, associates are encouraged to speak their minds because they have ownership in the privately-held company. “We don’t tell our associates what to work on because we want them to follow their passion. There is an incredible expectation for networking and sharing of knowledge within the organization. Everyone has a sponsor, someone who is not your boss, rather someone who has made a personal commitment to your success in Gore. Compensation is based on an associate’s contribution, which is judged by their peers,” she said.

It’s a really tough place to lead, Kelly noted. “You have to earn your leadership every day. You don’t arrive as a leader at Gore. You do it through influence. Once you are in a leadership role, you need to explain your actions and the rationale behind your decisions. It’s a very powerful model at Gore. Associates let you know when you’re not doing your job,” Kelly said.

She then outlined the key components needed to be a leader at Gore.

1. You should be comfortable leading without assumed authority or control
2. You must trust individuals
3. You need to explain the rationale behind decisions and actions
4. You must drive decisions through knowledgeable associates
5. You must manage ambiguities and be comfortable in that space
6. You need to resist adding bureaucracy
7. You should invest time in making the right environment work

At the end of her talk, Kelly admitted that she was experimenting with a new leadership tool – cultural surveys, because how the culture works at Gore is critically important. She wanted to have a tool to see how leaders were working and behaving. “I wanted a tool to see if they were creating an environment of trust. Leaders must ask themselves—‘Is there a fear of retribution?’ Are they as leaders really approachable? Do they value diverse perspectives? These are core behaviors that we are trying to drive,” she said. “If you create the right environment, and you spend time on the values and foundation [of the company], that’s what allows us to attract the talent and the passion of our associates, and that’s what creates the innovative products that creates shareholder value for us.”
MIT Sloan/LFM Team Places First in CMU Case Competition

By Lois Slavin, LFM-SDM Communications Director

For the second year in a row, an MIT Sloan team consisting of LFM and MBA students has won first place in Carnegie Mellon University’s (CMU) annual International Operations Case Competition. Members of this year’s winning team included LFM ’10s Chad Sailer, David Follette, Paul Witinski, and Chris Lin, plus Michael Irwin, MBA ’10.

This marks the fourth year that the MIT Sloan team, which has always included LFM’s, has taken first place. Others won in 2000 (tied for first place), 2003, and 2007. Another team placed second in 2002.

The CMU International Operations Case Competition brings together teams from top-tier schools around the world to present their strategy on operational issues outlined in the case. A panel of judges from industry evaluates each team on the basis of sound reasoning, problem analysis, and strong business assessment.

After this year’s competition was announced, MIT Sloan’s Operations Management Club held a tryout competition in early October, which resulted in the selection of team members to represent MIT Sloan. LFM’s Paul Witinski was named team captain. The five students immediately tapped into the experience of past winning teams. Members of these previous teams shared several best practices, such as the importance of focusing on the narrative – i.e., telling a story about customers – in their presentation and not just on the numbers.

The team also presented a practice case to Don Rosenfield, Director of the LFM Program, who provided invaluable feedback. “Don reminded us to always keep the strategic context in mind, and that all of our operational recommendations should connect back to the big picture strategy,” said Chris Lin.

By the time they arrived in Pittsburgh, the team was well prepared. After a short cocktail/networking session in the early evening with the judges and other contestants, each team received a copy of the case and guidelines for making their presentation the next day.

At the suggestion of the MIT Sloan winners who had preceded them, the team optimized the five hours available to finalize their presentation by dividing up the responsibilities so that members worked in parallel with each other on specific sections and tasks. They strove to incorporate specific learnings they acquired in Brad Morrison’s Introduction to Operations Management class and Professor John Hauser’s Marketing Management course, such as inventory safety stock levels and clear articulation of how customer needs would be met by their proposal. At midnight, each team handed in their PowerPoint slides and returned to the hotel to work out the presentation delivery before heading to bed.

The next morning, after the first round of presentations, the MIT Sloan team was named one of four finalists. “One judge, who had taken an operations workshop with Don Rosenfield last summer, told us that our level of operations knowledge was very apparent,” said Chad Sailer. The team later won the final round and received the first prize of $8,000.

In fact, the team received much positive feedback, particularly on their synergy and comprehensive approach. One judge remarked that he had almost no questions to ask after their presentation because “you already answered them all.”
The LFM members of the team gave significant credit to their summer semester, in which they were in class “overwhelmed with information and with work.” Dave Follette explained, “We had to learn how to quickly distill what’s important and to go after it.”

Chris Lin concluded by saying, “We’d like to give a shout out to the faculty – especially Don Rosenfield, Jeremie Gallien, and Steve Graves – as well as to the MIT Sloan Operations Management Club. And we’re looking forward to creating a list of best practices to share with MIT Sloan-LFM teams in upcoming years.”

MBA Merchants

A handful of MBA students are learning by doing – running SloanGear

By Amy MacMillan

This holiday season – and during any season for that matter – the MIT community can truly “shop local” at SloanGear, the MIT Sloan student-run company that sells Sloan brand apparel and gifts.

SloanGear (www.sloangear.com) is a time-honored tradition which is handed down from MBA second-years each spring to the next graduating class. The business, which is registered as a limited liability company (LLC), goes up for auction each spring, and incoming second-years who are divided into teams bid on the business. The winning team takes it over May 1 each year.

The students who bid invest their own money in SloanGear, and the profit goes back into the company. And at the end of the year, they get their money back, based on how much they sell it to the next team for. It’s an incentive for the current team to improve the company each year, as well as develop individual sales and marketing skills, said Shintaro Okuno, CEO, and one of 10 members who is administering SloanGear this year.

Shintaro said SloanGear is a great opportunity for students to run a business while still in school. Each year, the SloanGear team tweaks the business slightly, but does not radically change it. SloanGear sells logo sweatshirts, T-shirts, track jackets, baby bibs, hats, vests, tote bags, photo albums, stuffed animals, mugs, etc. SloanGear also has an exclusive partnership with TUMI, the high-end luggage company, offering a 20 percent discount on any product through SloanGear, although logos are not available on the TUMI products.

“We want to make it bigger in a ‘controlled’ sort of way. It’s a balancing act, because it’s a for-profit business, but it does have aspects of a club,” explained Damian Wisniewski, Custom Sales Manager for SloanGear. “We may have more sales, more partnerships, and more products, but we focus mainly on keeping the business sound.” This year the team has made a couple of changes from years past, such as doubling the frequency of the lobby sales and forging an exclusive partnership with Tiffany & Co., to offer 10 percent discounts on gift certificates at the luxury jewelry store. Last year’s SloanGear’s revenues were around
According to Damian and Shintaro, "We obviously want to exceed that, and we are on track to exceed that. But, we are only halfway through the year," Damian said.

The lobby sales in E51’s lobby, particularly the ones prior to the holidays and at the end of the school year are the biggest sales opportunities for SloanGear, Shintaro said. SloanGear stands apart from other retailers selling MIT apparel since the store keeps its prices lower than the Coop, and sells only “high-quality” apparel. “The Coop doesn’t really have a lot of Sloan stuff anyway,” he added.

By far the most popular items for sale at SloanGear are the colorful track jackets, which are manufactured by American Apparel, and cost $48. The in-style colors are black, red, and navy. “We usually cycle through different colors for each lobby sale since they are so popular,” Damian said.

Shintaro, who is originally from Tokyo and has no retail experience, formerly worked as a consultant for a wide variety of industries at Bain & Company, Inc. He pursued SloanGear because he wanted a real learning opportunity and the chance to lead a business. “Since running a company as management is my career goal, this experience – running a real business as CEO with very diversified partners – definitely gives me the opportunity for training and simulation for the future.” He chose MIT Sloan for his MBA because of the “good size” of the student community and MIT’s motto of mens et manus (mind and hand), which he believes is consistent with his endeavor in SloanGear. Shintaro said the Organizational Processes (OP) Core class has proven to be helpful in running the business. He will return to Bain next year after graduation. “Now I have the experience of running a company, and that will give me a deeper perspective to work with my clients and team members,” he said.

The SloanGear enterprise is entirely student-run, although the previous owners’ team gave some advice after the ownership handover and they are connected via a Facebook page, Shintaro said. The faculty does not get involved, he added.

Damian did not have any direct retail experience, but his last job was at Oracle Corporation doing markdown optimization for stores such as the Gap, Old Navy, and JCPenney. “I actually knew quite a bit about certain aspects of the business, but it’s interesting to run an entire retail operation,” he said. Once he graduates, Damian has plans to move to San Francisco, and hopes to be employed in a full-time sales endeavor. Although he is also involved in the School’s Sales Club, he recognized that SloanGear offers valuable practice. “SloanGear has given me excellent hands-on sales experience,” he said.

In addition to his classwork, Damian spends about 10-to-20 hours a week on SloanGear, where he’s in charge of the custom sales for clubs and special events. “I spend a lot of time just knowing what’s going on on campus. We do padfolios for the Sales Club, business card holders for the VCPE, and jackets for the Dean’s Advisory Council. It’s tricky, because I have to keep tabs on what supplier is best for what kind of order. I spend a lot of time just putting together quotes. It’s an intense process, but it’s a lot of fun,” he said. Damian works with five different suppliers, and anyone looking for T-shirts for events for clubs and C-Functions should contact him directly. Creative Director Hajime Watanabe can advise with design ideas, exclusive of textile choice and shape of clothing.

Elizabeth Magruder serves as a Merchandising Manager, and joined SloanGear because she was interested in the idea of an entrepreneurial challenge that fulfills the needs of the student body. “As one of the last people brought into the team, I was really excited about who was
Continued from page 9

already involved,” she said. “It was a truly diverse group of fun, smart Sloan students, many of whom I had never worked with before, but had heard great things about. I also liked the idea of taking ownership of this piece of the MIT Sloan brand.”

Elizabeth and fellow Merchandising Manager Weng Kee Ng are both responsible for the decisions surrounding the lobby sales, and coordinate what products will be available and how they will be priced. “We also manage the organization and staffing for the sale since one of our biggest challenges is how we present ourselves to the MIT Sloan community. Many people find shopping our lobby sales to be very challenging, given the space limitations. We also brainstorm about new products that we think Sloan students would like to have on sale.” She said one of the most useful classes she has taken has been 15.821, *Listening to the Customer*, where she and two others used SloanGear as a project as a way to look into how to improve the store’s services.

She also did not have a retail background, but will be working in Brand Management at Procter & Gamble when she graduates. She expects her SloanGear experience will enhance her career. “I think many of the things I am learning through SloanGear will be very helpful when working on how to best present my brand, as well as when approaching a marketing problem from the retailer’s point of view,” she said.

And, if you are still searching for that perfect holiday gift, Damian had a suggestion: “MIT Sloan beavers. They are my favorite by far.”

(The next lobby sale will be held the second week of February.)

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Robots & Beyond: Exploring Artificial Intelligence at MIT

A multimedia excursion into the world of artificial intelligence is showing at the MIT Museum Main Gallery. This event will take place Monday, December 15, 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., in N52 -200, and is open to the general public.

For more information contact Beth Nakamura, 617-258-9109, or museum@mit.edu, or visit: http://web.mit.edu/museum/exhibitions/robots.html.
Holiday Parade

This event takes place Sunday, December 21, from 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., in Harvard Square, Cambridge. Featuring visits from Santa and his friends and a holiday parade around the Square.

Sales Training Series: Sales Skills Basics

Learn the fundamentals of the sales process. We’ll discuss how to get info on competitors and how to know your customers. You’ll learn to effectively handle objections, ask the right questions and successfully close the sale.

This class will take place Wednesday, January 28, 2009, 6:00 - 7:30 p.m. at the Boston Center for Adult Education, Boston. For more information visit: http://www.bcae.org/

From the Calendar section of the Boston Globe.

Green Rides to Logan

Flying home for the holidays? Be sure to consider PlanetTran’s service to local airports, including Logan. MIT members get a discount when they use their MIT ID for this environmentally-friendly taxi service. PlanetTran bills itself as the world’s first public auto service to use only ultra-fuel efficient hybrid vehicles like the Toyota Prius. The flat round-trip rate is competitively priced at $69 and includes tips and tolls.

PlanetTran is primarily available in the Greater Boston area and the San Francisco Bay area. Reservations can be made online at https://secure.planettran.com/reservations/ptRes/index.php or by calling 1-888-756-8876.

For more information on other green transportation options visit: http://web.mit.edu/wgmitway/.
End of Semester Scenes

Sunset on the Charles (by Sarah Foote)

E62 as seen from E52 (by Sarah Foote)

Director of MBA Student Affairs Catherine Gamon and Assistant Director of MBA Student Affairs Paul Buckley (sporting his beard!) at the MBA Thanksgiving Dinner. (by Dawn Peters, MBA Student Affairs Office)

Paul then shaved his beard to raise more than $500 for the Mediterranean Ocean at the MBA Charity Auctions. (by Sarah Foote)

This is the last issue of News@MIT Sloan for the fall 2008 semester. News@MIT Sloan will return in February. Happy holidays and good luck on finals. —Sarah and Amy