

Graduate Association of Mechanical Engineers (G.A.M.E.)



Annual Report 2007-2008

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Massachusetts Institute of Technology
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Executive Summary

The following report outlines the activities and initiative taken by the MIT Graduation Association of Mechanical Engineering (GAME) from Fall 2007 to Summer 2008. GAME has organized a variety of activities that facilitate interactions between graduate students and faculty.

The recurring social events that GAME has put on this year include coffee hours, wine and cheeses, barbecues, and Thirsty Ear socials that were held at different times and locations to best increase the involvement of the graduate community. The annual Winter Ball was well publicized and more successful than in years past.

Academic and industry goals were achieved through corporate sponsored social gatherings, lunch seminars, a quals info session, and a medical device competition sponsored by Ethicon Endo-Surgery. The importance of educating graduate students about employment opportunities and creating connections to industry yielded a new chair, Industry Relations. GAME also began to take part in the on campus initiative REFS, which helps mediate student-faculty conflicts.

GAME also did its part to welcome new and prospective students to MIT. Mentorships were formed based on academic interest pairings. Late August and early September will feature a series of orientation events. A new beach trip was created to forge relationships between current and incoming students. GAME will continue to cultivate a sense of community within the department for the rest of the year, and hopefully begin some new initiatives with industry leaders.

Introduction

The Graduate Association of Mechanical Engineers (GAME) represents graduate students (SM, PhD, etc.) within Course II at MIT. One important goal of GAME is to strengthen relationships within the student body as well as those between students and faculty. This goal is achieved through numerous social and academic events hosted by the association with the help of departmental figures, the Graduate Student Council, and numerous sponsors.

Affairs with the Graduate Student Council (GSC)

There were a total of four GSC general meetings in which the GAME GSC representatives participated. Representatives voted on behalf of Mechanical Engineering graduate students on different issues raised by the GSC.

Money was requested from the GSC for Summer and Fall events. We received \$1000 worth for BBQs for July and orientation. The treasurer was responsible for managing the GSC funding reimbursements for IAP and Spring, tracking misplaced funding from GSC and redirecting it towards the GAME account, and preparing the GAME budget for 2008-2009.

Website

The GAME spotlight is now kept up-to-date and updates to the GAME online store are now in progress. A page was created for the REFS program (c.f. Initiatives section). Other miscellaneous updates and changes are performed as needed, such as uploading new photo albums for important social events. A new page will be added over the following year to assist first year graduate students.

Recurring Events

Coffee Hour

GAME hosted a weekly coffee hour in the Miller Room featuring breakfast items and early Friday morning conversations. The coffee hour chairs were responsible for setting and cleaning up, purchasing food and drinks, and publicizing the event to the department. The event drew on average about 50-60 people each week. Occasionally, coffee hours were sponsored by companies looking to gain the attention of MIT graduate mechanical engineers (Medtronix, Chevron, GreenMountain Engineering, SIG, FloaTEC, CDM, etc.). The corporate sponsorships were coordinated by the industry relations chair who was responsible for scheduling sponsorships, receiving and directing payment to the GAME account, receiving



promotional material, and assisting industry visitors. For the events with free giveaways, the total attendance reached as high as 100. Industry sponsorships allowed for more fanciful coffee hours with higher quality baked goods. Coffee hours that were without an industry affiliate were kindly sponsored by the Mechanical Engineering Department and sometimes the Graduate Student Council.

The recent coffee hour chairs made particular contributions to GAME's longstanding tradition of coffee hour. Communication was streamlined with Dunkin' Donuts, including the full specification of GAME's weekly donut order. Donut selection was diversified by responding to attendants' needs, and quality of coffee was improved by obtaining sponsorship with coffeefool.com. They introduced soothing ambient music, giving patrons another layer of sensory stimulation, and held themed coffee hour events including Tropical Coffee Hour and NASA Tribute Coffee Hour. Most importantly, they sent jovial and lighthearted emails in an attempt to liven up the mailboxes of the Mechanical Engineering graduate students.

Thirsty Ear Socials

Thirsty Ear Socials at the Thirsty Ear Pub in Ashdown House attracted a large gathering of graduate students looking for free pizza, beer, and good times. The event welcomes students from all labs and is consistently one of the most well attended events. The St. Patrick's Day social is becoming an annual tradition in which the department warms up to prospective graduate students. Prizes were awarded to the best Irish jigs. With the recent move of the Thirsty Ear Pub to the New Ashdown, it has been discussed whether the happy hour socials should continue in the Thirsty Ear or move to the Muddy Charles, which is closer to the labs. No conclusion has been reached yet.

Wine and Cheeses



GAME hosted several wine and cheeses after the success of last year's one event. The event takes place at the Fishbowls and is well attended. The event is intended to provide an informal setting for students and faculty to mingle. Wine and cheeses were held after faculty meetings to increase faculty presence. One special wine and cheese was held in Prof. Rohan

Abeyaratne's honor, to thank him for his service as department head. Individual graduate students provided the large majority of the funds to buy Prof. Abeyaratne a thank you present.

Lunchtime Seminars

Following previous years' tradition, GAME hosted several lunch seminars that featured student research presentations. These seminars are useful practice for quals and other presentations. Pizza is provided for the attendees.



Barbecues

A series of barbecues were held at the Kresge Pits, including a joint barbecue with TPP and Aero-Astro. A multitude of

students were fed with standard barbecue fare: burgers, hot dogs, and vegetarian options. The late afternoon/early evening events were well attended. Barbecues were sponsored by the Graduate Student Council and some of our industry contacts.



GAME Special Events



Winter Party

The holiday themed party, held in Ashdown's Hulsizer Room, had an attendance of about 100 students and 10 professors. Email reminders to faculty as well as handwritten invitations, helped with the attendance boost. Mark Harvey Jazztet played live jazz. Appetizers and desserts were served, and cash bar was tended by Thirsty Ear. The event was generally regarded a success, and

the move to the Hulsizer Room helped achieve last year's goal for a more intimate setting.

Beach Trip

The beach trip was to Crane beach, where GAME had a group of people get together to enjoy some amazing weather before the end of the summer. Attendants played football out in the water and took in the rays for a couple of hours, enjoying drinks and snacks provided by GAME. Overall, it was a great success, and it was encouraging to see students taking advantage of opportunities to go outside of Boston.



Orientation

This year's orientation chairs administered the GAME mentorship program, where incoming graduate students were paired with current ones in the hope of providing some contact points for new students. The chairs also created a schedule of orientation events for late Aug-early Sept (i.e., BBQ, brunch, game night, rock climbing trip, Harbor Islands trip, pub crawl, and a Thirsty Ear social), making orientation a huge success.

Initiatives

Welcoming Prospectives

GAME helped represent the department at the March Open House events. Several officers attended and spoke at the Le Meridien introduction dinner. Even more

participation from the GAME officers came during the faculty club lunch. Furthermore, these prospective students were greeted by current students at a Thirsty Ear social.

REFS Program

The REFS program for Mechanical Engineering is a new initiative that has received good feedback in other departments. It was brought forth by the former Department Chair, Prof. Abeyaratne, with the assistance of the REFS representative Cherry Wan. Mechanical Engineering students are selected to serve as student mediators (REFS) and undergo 32-hour mediation training. Their role is to listen, to help generate solutions to problems, as well as mediate conflicts informally when students are in a difficult situation. They can also provide information on other resources on campus for conflict resolution. Discussions remain confidential, and the program will officially start this coming fall.

Extended Sponsorships

One recurring sponsorship has come from Ethicon Endo-Surgery (EES), a medical device design company, and a division of Johnson & Johnson. They had first hosted a Quiznos sandwich lunch with demos of their devices, where one of their representatives attended. They then met with the GAME executive board to discuss a design competition. EES devised the competition specifications and Anjuli Appapillai recruited one professor and three students as judges. There were seven entries received, and the result was two were tied for first, and there was one third place prize. In total, \$6000 was awarded during an awards ceremony attended by two EES representatives and around 50 spectators. In addition, EES hosted a BBQ the following day. The response to the design challenge was positive and EES wants to continue this competition. Next year, GAME plans on asking teams to describe their background and determine whether their project is from a class or a thesis. There should also be more judges for the next contest.

GAME has a long term sponsorship from FloaTEC, which has decided to sponsor four coffee hours, one social and a portion of next year's Winter Party. This relationship has provided great opportunities for improving our events.

Conclusions

GAME has been able to successfully achieve its social and academic goals, in addition to serving as an advocate for the department in the GSC. The mix of new and incumbent officers on board of GAME has proved to be a good combination that has led to some great collaboration.