The MIT Pappalardo Fellowships in Physics, a leading postdoctoral fellowship program of the international physics community, completed its 15th annual competition in January 2014 with the acceptance of three fellows for the 2014–2017 appointment cycle. Arriving this fall are Benjamin Safdi (high energy theoretical physics), a 2014 PhD from Princeton University; Inti Sodemann (hard condensed matter theory), a 2014 PhD from the University of Texas, Austin; and Taritree Wongjirad (experimental nuclear and particle physics), a 2014 PhD from Duke University.

The Pappalardo Fellowships Executive Committee tasked with selecting the 2014–2017 fellows was led by Prof. Janet Conrad, Chair, and included professors Scott Hughes, Pablo Jarillo-Herrero, Mehran Kardar, Leonid Levitov, Hong Liu, Rob Simcoe, and Iain Stewart, with Department Head Peter Fisher, ex officio, and Carol Breen, Administrator.

Detailed biographies, including research descriptions and selected publications for all Pappalardo Fellows (present, incoming and former), are available at web.mit.edu/physics/research/pappalardo/index.html.

The MIT Pappalardo Fellowships in Physics program was initiated, and is sustained, by funds generously provided by Neil and Jane Pappalardo. (C. B.)
The Department celebrated its ninth annual Patrons of Physics Fellows Dinner on April 11, 2014. Over 70 guests gathered for a dinner and reception in the Green Center’s Pappalardo Community Room.

Peter Fisher, Physics Department Head, started the evening with remarks about the Department and how important fellowship support is. Fellowship support allows the Department to attract top students and gives them freedom to try different research areas. William Lunden, 2013–2014 Whiteman Fellow; Nick Rodd, 2013–2014 Kerman Fellow; and Scott Skirlo, 2013–2014 Frank Fellow, were student presenters. The students spoke about their interest in physics, and how the fellowship has given them the flexibility to try different research groups in their first year. They thanked their donors and all donors who are members of the Patrons of Physics Fellows Society for making fellowship support possible. The annual dinner is a great opportunity for the students to get to know the donors that are supporting them. Patron donors who attended were Hale Bradt, Tom Cardello, Tom Frank, Bill Ladd, Curt Marble, and Howard and Colleen Messing. (E. M.)

(From left) Alex Hastings, Tom Cardello, Tom Frank and Frank Fellow Scott Skirlo.

Bill Ladd (center) with Professor Emeritus Lee Grodzins and Lulu Grodzins.

Colleen Messing (left) with Messing Fellow Katherine Deck.

Kerman Fellow Nick Rodd gives a talk at the Patrons dinner.

(From left) Curt Marble, Prof. Emeriti Hale Bradt and Arthur Kerman, Department Head Peter Fisher.
On April 11, 2014, the Physics Department held the first Robert H. Meservey Memorial Lecture. Robert Meservey, an MIT research physicist who was a co-discoverer of spin-dependent tunneling, and winner of the Oliver E. Buckley Prize, died on June 18, 2013, in Cambridge, Mass., at the age of 92.

The lectureship was established by family and friends in memory of Robert H. Meservey. The lectureship brings in speakers in the field of experimental and theoretical condensed matter physics for the Physics Department, as well as providing support for research and educational activities in the fields of condensed matter and atomic physics.

Professor Peter Fulde, Max Planck Institute for the Physics of Complex Systems, Dresden, was the inaugural speaker. Professor Fulde’s talk was titled, “Robert Meservey and the Early Years of Spintronic.”

In addition to being a physicist, Robert was also a talented photographer. At the reception there was a photographic exhibition of the pictures he took throughout the years. (E. M.)
The Department’s flagship postdoctoral fellowship program, the Pappalardo Fellowships in Physics, held its 13th annual symposium as the semester’s finale on May 16, 2014. Five of its gifted young physicists presented carefully crafted “mini” lectures on their research to a broad cross section of members and friends of the MIT physics community.

The talks were launched with opening remarks by new Department Head Peter Fisher, a member of the inaugural Pappalardo Fellowships executive committee. Dr. Robert Penna (“Spinning Black Holes”) led the Fellows, followed by Dr. Jeongwan Haah (“Protecting Quantum Information”), Dr. Inna Vishik (“Adventures in Unconventional Superconductivity”), Dr. Guy Bunin (“From Symmetries to Probabilities”), and Dr. Joshua Spitz (“Testing Einstein with Neutrinos”) closed the symposium with a flourish.

Joining a full house in the Pappalardo Community Room were program founders and benefactors Neil and Jane Pappalardo with their eldest daughter Sheila Lemke and husband Todd; alumnus and Meditech, Inc., CEO Howard Messing and his wife Colleen; and longstanding Department friend and supporter alumnus Curt Marble.

Videos of this and prior Pappalardo Fellowships symposia are available online at web.mit.edu/physics/research/pappalardo/videos.html. For more information on the Pappalardo Fellowships in Physics program, its Fellows, and founders A. Neil and Jane Pappalardo, please visit web.mit.edu/physics/research/pappalardo/index.html. (C. B.)