



Another successful year for the Circle of Hellenic Academics in Boston has come to its end. The Circle bade farewell to 2016, counting a number of activities accomplished.

ACADEMIC KAFENEION

On Friday October 21, the Academic Kafeneion was launched. This initiative is a series of networking events bringing together members of the Circle with postdoctoral and medical researchers who are taking their first steps towards a career in the academia.

The first Academic Kafeneion was held in the Founders Room of Barker Center, Harvard University. Dr. Costis Psimopoulos and Dr. Yiannis Zervantonakis played an instrumental role in organizing this successful event, which attracted 27 researches from different backgrounds, as well as many members of the Circle. The event was also attended by the Rector of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Professor Mitkas, who spoke to us about research opportunities between the Greek diaspora and academics in Greece.



Dr. Mitsialis discussing with researchers attending the Kafeneion (top).

Dr. Koulmanda with Rector Mitkas (right)





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Committee

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NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION

The beginning of every academic year may be a stressful time for all of us and especially for the new students who are taking their first steps towards accomplishing their career and research dreams. The Circle and the General Consulate of Greece worked together to organize a reception-information session for new students and researchers of Greek decent. The General Consul of Greece in Boston Mrs. Ifigenia Kanara, Dr. Christos Georgakis, Dr. Jay Sammons, Dr. Irene Georgoudi, and Dr. Yiannis Zervantonakis spoke to the new students and researchers about the challenges and rewards of the path that lies ahead.



The Best of the New York City Greek Film Festival 2016

For the second year, the Circle helped to organize the Greek Film Festival in Boston. The Hellenic American Chamber of Commerce provided financial support and its Executive Director, Mr. Stamatis Ghikas, was instrumental to the success of the festival. Those involved from the Circle were Prof. Christos Zahopoulos, Prof. Maria Koulmanda and Prof. Philip Serafim. Prof. James DeMetro, the Director of the NYC Greek Film Festival, selected the five most popular films from his festival to be shown in Boston. At the recommendation of Mr. Stamatis Ghikas the opening of the festival with the film "Mythoplasty" (Μυθιάς) took place at the Maliotis Cultural Center on Sunday, November 13. The Hellenic American Chamber of Commerce underwrote all the expenses for this event as a fundraiser for the Maliotis Center. The other four films "Cloudy Sunday", "Silent", "Worlds Apart" and "Journey Through Smyrna" were shown at the Kendall Square Cinema in Cambridge on Wednesday, November 16 and Thursday, November 17. Many people attended including Mrs. Maria Koukoutsis, Vice Consul of Greece in Boston.

The Chem-E-Car Initiative

This year, the Circle left the US borders and expanded its support to students in Greece, through the Chem-E-Car Initiative. Five students from the Department of Chemical Engineering of the National Technical University of Athens and their advisors attended the Chem-E-Car Contest during the 2016 Annual AIChE Meeting in San Francisco this November. The Greek Team finished 12th out of the 42 teams that participated in the contest. The students had the opportunity to meet with many Greek-American Professors of Chemical Engineering, including our member Prof. Gregory Stephanopoulos, current President of the Institute of Chemical Engineers and instigator of the Chem-E-Car Initiative.



Annual General Assembly And Board Elections May 7 2016

On May 7th, members of the Circle, gathered in a Dana Farber Cancer Institute conference room with a magnificent view of Brookline. Many thanks to our member Mike Makrigiorgos who arranged reservations for this great location, for such an important event. We discussed and agreed upon many changes in the path of the Circle, concluding with a refreshed vision and mission for all of us:

- The Thesis Award Process and Nominees were presented by Nicolas Prevelakis. At the suggestion of its doctoral award committee, the Board decided to give two awards this year: to Dr Emma Filippidi (UCSB), and to Dr. Christos Nicolaides (MIT). The prizes were presented at the Circle's Banquet on May 14th.
- The Chem-E-Car fundraising initiative was presented and applauded by all members present at the General Assembly.
- The updated bylaws were approved.
- The General Assembly discussed rules for member participation and future events.
- The General Assembly elected the Circle's new Board.

Annual Circle Banquet May 14 2016

This year's annual banquet was held at the Boston Marriot in Newton. Mrs. Ifigenia Kanara, the Consul General of Greece in Boston, gave an enlightening talk about one of the most crucial topics for Greece and the rest of the world. Her talk "Greece at the Front Line of Europe's Refugee Crisis" gave us a complete picture of the situation and sparked an interesting discussion.



Consul General of Greece in Boston Ifigenia Kanara and some of the officers of The Circle of Hellenic Academics in Boston. From left to right: Philip E. Serafim, Greg Stephanopoulos, Helen Christou, Roselita Fragoudakis, Ifigenia Kanara, Christos Georgakis, Maria Koulmanda, Alex Mitsialis, Nicolas Prevelakis.

2016 Doctoral Awards

The Circle of Hellenic Academics in Boston gave two awards for best recent doctoral theses by individuals of Greek descent. Our aim was to reserve one of these prizes for the Humanities and Social Sciences. We had, however, no candidates in these fields. As a result, we were able to award two prizes in the Natural and Physical sciences.

The Circle's doctoral award committee was comprised of Christos Georgakis (Tufts University), Efthimios Kaxiras (Harvard), Christos Cassandras (Boston University), Michael Triantafyllou (MIT), and Nicolas Prevelakis (Harvard, chair).



2016 Circle Doctoral Awardee: Dr. Emma Filippidi.

Dr. Filippidi grew up in Athens where she graduated from Athens College in 2001. She then came to Boston to pursue her undergraduate studies at Harvard College where she studied biomedical engineering focusing on protein preservation. During that time, she was also treasurer and then president of the Harvard Hellenic Society. She continued her studies as a Master's student at Boston University working on silk and then moved to NYU where she completed her Ph.D. in Physics, in 2014. After an interlude in the R&D of Unilever in Holland where she worked with food emulsions, she is now a postdoctoral researcher at the University of California - Santa Barbara, where she explores how marine mussels stick to wet surfaces, as opposed to human-made glues, which fail to do so. She one day hopes to make new medical glues and new porous materials.

Her doctoral thesis title was Random Organization. Out-of-Equilibrium Phase Transitions in Periodically Driven Suspensions. It examines how driven systems of randomly placed particles (such as toothpaste or wet sand) self-organize and achieve a particular kind of order when sheared back and forth. Throughout her research career, Dr. Filippidi's work has focused on self-organization, exploring systems in the interface of biology and physics. It has appeared in such journals as Physical Review letters, Soft matter, and the Royal Society's Interface; and presented at such media as the BBC radio.

Dr. Filippidi's recommenders stressed the importance of her results for the academia as well as for the industry and referred to her as an « outstanding candidate. » As one of her recommenders pointed out, « the key breakthrough in Emmanouela's thesis work is that it lays the foundation for showing how initial reversible and irreversible behaviors and scaling can be extended to a much broader range of systems.»

2016 Circle Doctoral Awardee: Dr. Christos Nicolaides

Dr. Nicolaides is originally from Paphos, Cyprus. He graduated from the department of physics at the University of Thessaloniki first of his class with a GPA 9.88/10. After spending a year at Imperial College London for his master degree he moved to MIT for his PhD., which he completed in 2014, at the department of Civil and Environmental Engineering.

His PhD thesis title is Dynamic Processes on Complex Networks: from Disease Spreading to Neural Activity. It focuses on how dynamical processes behave on top of complex networks. The main application of his research is to make realistic predictions on how an infectious disease can spread globally using human mobility and transportation data. This research appears in three publications in top interdisciplinary journals, such as the Journal of the Royal Society Interface, Nature Scientific Reports and PLoS ONE. His work has been featured twice at the MIT homepage spotlight and has been broadcasted by top tier news sites like CNN and NPR. He is currently working as a Postdoctoral Fellow at MIT Sloan School of Management to understand if exercise is contagious.



One of Dr. Nicolaides' recommenders described his thesis as an intellectual « tour de force », which will « lead to radical advances in our understanding of dynamical processes in complex environments.» Another one stressed his «outstanding creativity and bright potential,» as well as his commitment to « research underpinned by rigor and deep knowledge of the field, and driven by questions with broad social and technical implications.»

New Members

This year the Circle is proud to welcome among its members four academics from the Boston Area:



Dr. Pantel Vokonas



Dr. Loren J. Samons II



Dr. Joanna Christodoulou



Dr. George Alogoskoufis

Membership News

Dear Members

The recent General Assembly voted to lower our Annual Dues to \$100 per member. Most importantly, the Assembly voted to accept the new rates retroactively, and valid towards dues in arrears.

This means that those few members of the Circle who may not had an opportunity to become current in 2015 may now fulfill their obligations and remain in good standing.

In an era of diminishing venues for Hellenic interests in the Boston area, supporting the Circle's activities and participating in them is of primary importance for the future of our academic community. The involvement of all is essential.

To pay for the membership of the current year visit <http://www.hellenic-academics.org/?membership>. There you will find a way to pay for accounts in arrears. An alternative is to contribute past amount with a donation onto the scholarship fund.

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info@Hellenic-Academics.org