Dear Sigma Xi Members,

In the two years since our revitalization, the chapter has explored different ways in which we can serve our membership and the larger scientific community on campus. We have gained a substantial expertise during this time, and we hope to use this expertise to grow and expand in the coming years. In fact, we were recognized as an outstanding chapter in 2005 by the national Sigma Xi organization. Among other things, we have learned that the roles of secretary and treasurer are best handled by the same person, so we are proposing a minor amendment to our by-laws to reflect this change in our constitution. I hope you will support this revision. We have found that this chapter serves a vital role on campus in two critical niches: We support and encourage young researchers in their earliest years, and we serve the community by bringing together diverse scientific disciplines.

The first role we play is to encourage young scientists early in their careers as student researchers. While there are many opportunities to get involved in undergraduate research on campus, official recognition of this work varies from department to department. In the past two years, we organized or facilitated prize judging for six distinct student research symposia in the biological, marine and mathematical sciences. Last year, we created an undergraduate thesis award to recognize students whose Senior Theses warrant special distinction. When the UD Chapter recognizes a student's achievements with a prize, the chapter also provides a Sigma Xi membership.

The second role the UD Chapter plays is to bring together the myriad scientific disciplines together through a distinguished lecture series. We have brought in one speaker each year to address the general community on a topic covering many areas of scientific research. The Chapter has also been the beneficiary of the support of the College of Arts and Sciences and numerous academic departments at the University in their support for our lecture series. We see the role of our Chapter as a facilitator, bringing departments together around exciting speakers who speak to a general, interdisciplinary audience. Our next speaker will be Eugenie Scott, Executive Director of the National Center for Science Education. She will be giving two talks entitled “Teaching Evolution Better: Problem Concepts in Evolution” and “Why Scientists Accept Evolution and Not Intelligent Design” while visiting campus.

Financially, the UD Chapter of Sigma is healthy. When you maintain your Sigma Xi
membership, a portion of your annual dues go back into your local chapter, and these dues support our activities. To give you a rough idea of our finances, we receive about $500 each year from the national organization. We raised the local dues from $5 to $8 this year, so our local dues will bring roughly $600 each year directly to the chapter. The overwhelming majority of these funds are used for initiation fees for prize-winners at undergraduate symposia or thesis award winners. Executive Board and I consider this investment in the future to be our highest priority.

The health and vitality of our chapter lies within its membership, and the most important asset we have is the time and energy invested by its members in chapter activities. I would like to thank all of those who have served as judges and organizers over the past year, and I would like to especially thank Executive Board members Karen Rosenberg, Mark Stanton and George Watson for their work and dedication to this chapter, and Melinda Duncan who has served for several years as our membership officer. Also, I would like to welcome Ulhas Naik who has agreed to serve as Chairman of our Awards Committee for the coming year. If you are interested in being more involved in the chapter or if you would like to nominate someone for membership, please let me know via email (rossi@math.udel.edu) or phone (831-880). In the coming years, we hope to see our chapter continue to grow both in numbers and activities which serve the scientific community.

Louis Rossi
President, UD Sigma Xi Chapter