

An Extreme Pirate

An MIT students' passion for extreme PE leads him to become an MIT Pirate
9/22/16 by Hallie Shepps

Receiving the Pirate Certificate from MIT's Physical Education Program is one of the most coveted certificates here at MIT. At the 2016 commencement ceremony, the students suggested for Matt Damon to be awarded an "honorary" Pirate certificate. In order to achieve this honor, one must successfully satisfy the Physical Education General Institute Requirement, and complete the following Physical Education courses: Archery, Fencing, Pistol, Sailing, and the Swim requirement.

Joshua Sloane '17 is one of MIT's newest Pirate. He is in course 6-1, electrical engineering, and is looking to become a silicon design engineer, designing chips that go in all modern electronic devices.

Joshua first decided to seek out a Pirate certificate as an opportunity to try out new sports that were not previously available to him. He had minimal experience with sailing and archery, and had never before participated in pistol or fencing. "The Pirate certificate shows that I have an unusual set of skills that most people don't have (and that I was able to wake up at 8am [to register] at MIT at least a few times)," says Joshua. Now that he has learned the fundamental skills and techniques for these sports, he's excited to engage in the activities outside of MIT whenever he has the opportunity to do so, especially sailing and archery.

The Pirate courses also have a strong health and wellness component to them. Pistol instructor Mike Conti often refers to the pistol program as 'meditation with guns.' "The underlying goal of the pistol course," he states, "is to help the students achieve the ability to become calm and center themselves through a variety of techniques in order to perform their best. When you can calm the mind and keep it focus and controlled, you can then minimize or eliminate negative thoughts. Once the students have mastered these techniques, they can utilize them anytime and anywhere."

Joshua found that he is able to incorporate many of these skills into his everyday life. "In pistol, you have to be able to keep your breathing under control to be accurate. It turns out that the breathing exercises we learned in class have helped me to stay more calm and aware in stressful or risky situations," Joshua says. In addition, these exercises help him to take a step back and assess the situation from a more calm and rational place.

Joshua's love for extreme sports cannot be denied. Not only did Joshua complete the 4 required Pirate courses, but he continued on to intermediate pistol, participated in the extreme PE snowboarding course twice, and is a member of the MIT Skydiving club. He sky dives with the club almost every weekend, and jumps 4-5 times each time he goes. Most people never jump out of a plane in their life, and Joshua is doing it multiple times in a row! "Each time I jump I'm practicing a new skill," says Joshua, "It's exciting, but I still experience a small sense of fear before each jump."

Joshua had watched many extreme sports from a young age, but it wasn't until he came to MIT that he was able to get personally involved. Through PE and clubs, Joshua had many more chances to explore

extreme sports, and he found himself taking courses and acquiring new skills he never knew he'd be able to attain.

Joshua has mastered the MIT seas and can now officially call himself an MIT Pirate!