

The Design of the New Residence System

Lawrence S. Bacow
Chancellor
December 8, 1999

This report is also available on the web at: <http://web.mit.edu/residence/systemdesign>

Executive Summary

An Overview of the Current Residence System

History: The current residence system consists of ten on-campus dormitories supplemented by 35 residential fraternities, sororities, and independent living groups. Over one third of the Institute's housing stock has been built in the past 30 years. Institute housing has undergone substantial transition during its history, with dormitories shifting from graduate to undergraduate use, and single-sex to co-educational. Individual FSILGs have also come and gone over the years.

The Residence System Today: Upon arrival at the Institute, freshmen are placed in temporary housing in the dorms. Dorm rush and FSILG rush take place during the early part of orientation. Students who do not join one of the FSILGs express preferences in the dormitory lottery and are assigned to a dormitory based on the results of the lottery. The house governments assign rooms within the dormitory system. Faculty play a modest role in the housing system. Housemasters serve in each of the undergraduate residence halls and organize the intellectual life of the dorm. FSILGs have very limited faculty involvement. Graduate residence tutors supplement the work of the Housemasters in the residence halls. Graduate resident advisors also live in each of the FSILGs.

Strengths of the Current System: Students like the current system. They value the degree of choice that it provides, and appreciate the opportunity to explore different styles of living represented by the FSILGs and the dormitories. MIT living groups tend to develop and maintain distinct and unique cultures. The current system not only provides a large degree of choice relative to other university housing systems, it also provides a more diverse set of living options. Students like being able to explore different living group options before committing to a specific residence. They like being able to live in an FSILG as freshmen. The FSILG system provides opportunities for students to develop important leadership and management skills. Self-selection of freshmen among diverse dorm communities also contributes to a very strong living group identity. Freshman rush is also a time for students to get to know the campus and their classmates free from the rigors of classes and homework.

Weaknesses of the Current System: The current system puts pressure on students to make important decisions about where they want to live before they have had a meaningful opportunity to adjust to life at MIT. For some students, their first experience at college is rejection. Because residence selection occurs early, it tends to crowd out other aspects of orientation. Orientation is also longer at MIT than at other institutions because of the need to sort students into living groups. Parents often find the housing selection process frustrating. Because of the imbalance of housing choices between men and women, orientation is a very different experience for men than for women. The changing demographics of MIT also are creating challenges for our all male fraternities who must compete for an increasing share of a declining male enrollment. To the outside world, our residence system is a mystery and not easily understood. On-campus housing tends to be crowded in part because the current system of freshman rush does not provide

the Institute with advance notice of the number of freshmen that must be housed in the dormitory system in any year. Students tend to form intense bonds within their living groups but sometimes at the expense of a stronger sense of campus-wide community. The housing system does not come close to meeting the needs of our graduate students.

The Freshman Housing Decision

The death of Scott Krueger in the fall of 1977 reopened a debate about housing policy. Almost every discussion of the tragedy quickly turned to the issue of freshmen housing. Students and faculty debated the merits of a change in policy in numerous forums including standing committees of the Faculty, Institute Faculty meetings, and the student press. President Vest received numerous e-mail messages and correspondence, and discussed the merits of Institute housing policy at Town Meetings and with parents at Parents' Weekend. The Task Force on Student Life and Learning, the Committee on the First Year, and the Working Group on Dangerous Drinking all suggested a change in policy.

President Vest announced a change in policy in August on 1998. At the time of the announcement, he stated it would be a major step in the Institute's commitment to enhancing the educational community, and to better integrating student life and learning on campus. He pledged to preserve the spirit of choice, variety, and supportive networking among freshmen and upper-class students while also giving freshmen a more consistent initial experience. He envisioned that FSILGs would continue to play an important role at MIT, but in a context that promotes greater integration and spirit of community across the entire housing system. He pledged that the entire community would be involved in the design of the implementation process.

Notwithstanding the discussion that took place prior to President Vest's announcement, many students and alumni criticized the decision due to inadequate consultation and community involvement. To some, the decision appeared to have been rendered autocratically and without meaningful public discussion or debate. With the benefit of hindsight, a more formal process of consultation may have been desirable. However, it is wrong to suggest that the decision was not informed by significant student, faculty, and alumni/ae opinion. Having said this, the Institute has prospered over the years because our traditions of collegiality and involvement have allowed us to tackle tough problems that would test lesser institutions. President Vest noted in his comments to the Faculty following the decision that the process followed in arriving at the decision was exceptional and unusual, and did not signal a change in policy regarding community engagement. Since the decision, the implementation process has been structured to maximize the opportunity for community input.

The Objectives of the Residence System

MIT's residential system should try to support three separate objectives: provide students with adequate, clean, comfortable housing and dining; create a comfortable, welcoming environment – in other words, a home; and promote community by stimulating interaction among students, faculty, staff, administration, and alumni/ae. The Strategic Advisory Committee to the Chancellor summarizes these objectives with the shorthand: house, home, and community. **The Institute should retain its guarantee of four years of housing to all students who want it. Honoring this guarantee should be easier with a system that provides the Institute with more notice of the number of students who must be housed each year than the current system.**

The Design of the New Residence System

MIT's residence system has a character that distinguishes it from housing systems found at most other universities. In order to preserve its strengths while also addressing its weaknesses, we must try to optimize over a number of dimensions. These include:

- Providing meaningful opportunities for freshmen to participate actively in the process of selecting their residence
- Respecting the diversity of cultures that exist throughout the residence system with special attention to the status of the theme houses
- Striking a balance between accommodating the desire of some students who wish to know where they will live immediately upon arrival at MIT, and the desire of others who wish to be able to visit dormitories personally before expressing final preferences
- Ensuring that no student experiences rejection as their initiation to life at MIT
- Respecting the existing house governance systems that match students to rooms, and in the process, help to create functioning communities
- Enhancing the ability of parents and students to communicate during their first few days at MIT

Freshmen will express preferences for residence halls based on information provided to them over the summer. Students who wish to receive a permanent assignment to a room may request one. Students who wish to room with a specific roommate may enter the summer lottery together. At the conclusion of the summer lottery, every student will be assigned a dorm and a room.

Following arrival on campus, students will confirm their summer dormitory assignment by declining to enter the orientation lottery. Students who enter the orientation

lottery will give up their summer lottery assignment and express a new set of preferences based on their exploration of the housing system during orientation. Up to four freshmen may enter this lottery together. Upon completion of the orientation lottery, final room assignments will be made by the house governments following guidelines to be developed in consultation with the Office of Residential Life and Student Life Programs. Students will have the right to remain in the dorms following freshmen year, but each fall and spring a supplemental lottery will be conducted to accommodate students who wish to move within the dormitory system.

Following the suggestion of the IFC, FSILG recruitment will begin during the first weekend in October and will conclude by the end of October. The IFC will work to develop a well-organized spring recruitment period. The IFC will have principle responsibility for developing new rules for recruitment activities in consultation with the Office of Residential Life and Student Life Programs.

FSILG Transition Support

Starting in the fall of 2001, MIT will reimburse a graduate student living in an FSILG 80 percent of the fixed cost of the student's bed. (The FSILG will collect 100 percent of the cost from the student.) FSILGs will have total control over which, if any, graduate students are provided this opportunity. If the FSILG elects to keep a bed empty, MIT will reimburse the FSILG 60 percent of the fixed cost of the bed. This support will decline by 10 percent annually with all support ending in year six. The Institute will establish a schedule of reimbursements for FSILGs to cover the transition period in consultation with the IFC. In addition, the IRDF will provide supplemental support for fraternities that wish to go co-ed.

Providing Resources to Support and Sustain Community

To support and sustain the development of a strong and vibrant residential community on our campus requires significant investment. As part of the capital campaign, the Institute seeks to raise funds to support endowed chairs for housemasters, funding of the Independent Residence Development Fund, Athletics, and general support for initiatives by the Dean of Students and Undergraduate Education. In addition, the Chancellor's Office will support a residence-based, campus-wide events initiative.

Addressing the Capital Needs of the Residence System

The Institute has invested more than \$120 million in capital improvements to the residence system in the past decade. Additional improvements are planned for both the housing system and athletics. We have pressing needs for additional graduate housing.

Management and Implementation of the New Residence System

Dean Kirk Kolenbrander will convene a meeting of the relevant parties to clarify the division of responsibility for the management and operation of the residence system. The Chair of the Faculty, Professor Steven Lerman, will work with the Chair of the Committee on Student Affairs, Professor Candace Royer, to review the suggestions contained in the SAC report to explore redefining the mandate and membership of the Committee on Student Affairs so that it might perform a similar function to the suggested Student Life Council. Dean Kolenbrander will serve as a Special Assistant to the Chancellor for the Residence System on an interim basis. This administrative structure will be reviewed following the appointment of a new Dean for Student Life.

Preface

Designing a new residence system for MIT is not an easy task. In fact, it is enormously challenging, and would not have been possible without the advice, participation, and guidance of many members of our community, notably the Residence System Steering Committee, the Strategic Advisory Committee to the Chancellor, the Intrafraternity Council, the Dormitory Council, the Clay Committee, and innumerable students, faculty, alumni, parents, and staff who have communicated with me in the past 11 months. While it has not always been easy, I have tried to respond to each message and letter I have received. To all of you who have contributed your time and advice, I thank you. Our future residence system will be far better because of your efforts.

While many will recognize their contributions in the pages that follow, I am under no illusions that this report will be greeted with unanimous enthusiasm and praise. I have learned over the past eleven months that MIT students and alumni are passionate about their residence system. Everyone seems to have different ideas about how the system can be improved. However, while people may differ in their opinions, I hope that everyone can agree that we all have the same objective – to ensure that future MIT students have the best possible residential experience that the Institute is capable of providing.

Like others, my own personal experiences have shaped my views of residential life at MIT. When I was an MIT student, I lived in a fraternity. My best friends to this day are three of my pledge brothers. After I joined the faculty, I became an alumni trustee of the house for a number of years. This experience gave me further insight into the challenges of house governance, and an appreciation of the enormous contribution that our alumni make in sustaining residential life in our FSILGs. During my 23 years as a faculty member, I have had the pleasure of visiting almost all of our living groups. I have advised freshmen during most of my career as a faculty member, so I have had an opportunity to learn how we assimilate our newest members into the MIT community. During my term as Faculty Chair, I helped to recruit housemasters, and also spent time working with the Task Force on Student Life and Learning, helping to define the core values of an MIT education. More recently, I have had the pleasure of getting reac-

quainted with our housing system as a parent of an MIT student.¹ And finally, as Chancellor, I have come to appreciate our residential system from the vantage point of a senior officer of the Institute.

From my perspective, I believe that while our residential system has enormous strengths, it also has significant weaknesses. Not only can we do better, I believe we have a moral obligation to do so. One of the great things about MIT is that we never shy away from tough problems. The new system, which is described in the pages that follow, tries to preserve the best elements of our current system, while also addressing some of its fundamental and persistent weaknesses.

The first section of this report formally describes our residential system including its history, its strengths, and its weaknesses. The next section reviews President Vest's decision to house all freshmen on campus beginning with the opening of the new undergraduate residence in the fall of 2001. This section addresses a number of questions that have been raised about the degree of community involvement that preceded the decision. The next section describes the objectives of our residence system, followed by a description of the design of the new system including the resources necessary to sustain it. The report concludes with a description of a few organizational changes designed to facilitate implementation.

¹ Lest anyone think that my son's experience has biased my views, he has had an unambiguously positive experience with his living group.

An Overview of the Current Residence System

*A Brief History*²

Our current undergraduate residence system consists of ten on-campus dormitories supplemented by 35 residential fraternities, sororities, and independent living groups. Single graduate students live in four on-campus residences. Married graduate students live in two on-campus apartment complexes.

Our current system has evolved substantially over time. We tend to think of it as quite stable, but in fact, it has undergone substantial change in the recent past. To put this change in context, over one third of the Institute's housing stock has been built in the past 30 years.³

At the time of the Institute's opening in 1865, housing was not provided on campus. Students lived either at home, in rooming houses, or in fraternities. (The oldest MIT fraternity – Sigma Chi – was founded in 1882.) In 1916, the Institute moved from Boston to its current campus in Cambridge. The first residential dormitory – Senior House – also opened in 1916, followed by the East Campus parallels (as they were then described), in 1924 and 1931, respectively. Initially, Senior House was partially occupied by MIT fraternities, and later it was used as graduate housing. In 1937, the Institute purchased the Riverbank Court Hotel and renovated it for use as graduate housing. It was renamed Ashdown House in 1939, at which point graduate students were moved from Senior House to Ashdown, and Senior House was returned to use for undergraduate housing. In 1939, the Institute purchased an apartment building on Massachusetts Avenue and re-

² This section is adapted from "MIT Housing 1916-1997: A chronology of events, reports and other publications" prepared by Helen Samuels and Liz Andrews. This summary can be found on the MIT Libraries Home Page: <http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/housing.html>.

³ Housing built or acquired since 1969 includes MacGregor House, Tang Hall, New House, Next House, Green Hall, Edgerton House, and the new undergraduate residence to be constructed on Vassar Street. In addition, the FSILG system has undergone substantial change over the same period including the founding of WILG, PIKA, Zeta Psi, Epsilon Theta, Sigma Nu, Alpha Phi, Sigma Kappa, Alpha Delta Phi, Fenway House and the closing of Sigma Alpha Mu and Phi Gamma Delta. The future of Sigma Alpha Epsilon is uncertain.

named it Bexley Hall. The Institute purchased its first residence for the exclusive use by women in 1945, at 120 Bay State Road in the Back Bay.

Notwithstanding these acquisitions, from 1916 through 1949, the bulk of MIT undergraduates continued to live off campus. Following publication of the Lewis Commission Report in 1949, the Institute committed to becoming a residential campus, with the goal of consolidating residential life on the West Campus and academic and administrative life on the East Campus. The first manifestation of this commitment was the construction of Baker House in 1949, and the purchase and renovation of the Riverside Apartment Hotel into Burton-Conner in 1950. The expansion of the West campus houses continued with the construction of the first wing of McCormick Hall in 1963. McCormick initially housed both undergraduate and graduate women. Westgate opened for married graduate students in 1963, and Eastgate followed in 1967. The east wing of McCormick opened in 1968. Random Hall was also purchased in 1968 and initially housed both undergraduates and graduate students. MacGregor opened in 1970, Tang in 1973, New House in 1976, Next House in 1980, Green Hall in 1982 (initially as an undergraduate dormitory, later converted to a single graduate women's dormitory), and Edgerton House opened in 1990 as a residence for single graduate students.

As the Institute built more housing for undergraduates, the number of students living in non-affiliated housing declined. As recently as the mid-1970s, approximately 25% of MIT undergraduates lived in non-affiliated housing – typically apartments. With the elimination of rent control and the tightening of the local housing market, fewer and fewer undergraduates live on their own. Today, only six percent of MIT undergraduates live outside the housing system.

When viewed in historical perspective, the Institute's housing system has been in a constant state of transition. MIT has built or acquired lots of housing in the past 50 years. We have also changed the character of much of our housing. Institute residences have sometimes housed fraternities (Senior House). They have been used interchangeably to house graduate and undergraduate students (Senior House, McCormick Hall, Green Hall, Random Hall, Tang Hall, and Ashdown), and they have at various times shifted from all male to co-educational (Burton Connor, Senior House, East Campus, Baker, Bexley, Random, and McGregor.) Fraternities have come and gone, sororities have been

established, and a number of FSILGs have gone co-ed. As we look to the future, we must continue to plan and manage this evolution, and not be limited in our thinking by mistaken notions of tradition, because the only tradition that is truly honored at MIT is change.

The MIT Residence System Today

The Institute currently requires all freshmen to live in Institute affiliated housing (defined as one of the 10 on-campus undergraduate dormitories, or one of the 35 residential fraternities, sororities, or independent living groups). Incoming freshmen currently receive literature from the Dean's Office over the summer preceding their arrival describing their housing options. This literature includes descriptions of both the dormitories and the FSILGs. Many of the FSILGs also conduct a form of "summer rush" in which upperclassmen contact rising freshmen prior to their arrival at MIT to solicit their interest in joining their living group.⁴ Upon arrival on campus, all freshmen receive temporary room assignments in a dorm. Following a few days of general and academic orientation, the formal residential selection process begins. Freshmen use this time to visit both FSILGs and dormitories. FSILGs rush aggressively during this period. Similarly, some dorms have active rushes while others, notably Bexley, do not. After three days of residence selection, freshmen enter the housing lottery where they express preferences for on-campus housing. At approximately the same time, FSILGs begin extending bids to freshmen. Upon completion of the housing lottery, freshmen are assigned dormitory rooms and they either move into the dorms, or move into the FSILG system. This entire process takes about one week.

Each dormitory is governed by a house government that assumes responsibility for allocation of rooms within the dorm. Systems differ from dorm to dorm for determining where individual students will be housed. In most dorms, seniority determines room assignments, with freshmen being assigned rooms through a matching process in which both freshmen and upperclassmen express preferences regarding individual as-

signments. This process is typically managed by a subgroup of the elected house leadership. After receiving a dormitory assignment through the housing lottery, freshmen often spend time on individual floors and entries within the dorm in order to determine where they might best fit in. Upperclassmen often participate in this process, and communicate to the house leadership which freshmen they would like housed within their floor or entry. This matching process produces an extraordinarily stable system in which relatively few students move. In fact, about 80 percent of MIT students reside in the same living group at the time of their graduation as they did during their freshman year.

FSILGs are governed by their elected memberships. Students living within an FSILG assume complete responsibility for managing, operating, and maintaining their house. They prepare budgets, collect house bills, order food, organize major repairs, and maintain their building on a daily basis. Many alumni/ae report that they first learned important management and leadership skills by participating in the management of their FSILG.

With the exception of Housemasters, faculty play only a modest role in the current residence system. We have Housemasters in every one of our undergraduate dorms who provide both adult presence and help organize the intellectual life of the dorm. Two dorms also have Associate Housemasters. Some dorms have experimented with a House Fellows program in which non-resident faculty affiliate with the dorm and also contribute to its intellectual and social life. Faculty presence in the FSILG system is even more limited. Some FSILGs have formal faculty advisors, often alumni/ae of the house who are currently members of the faculty. The degree of engagement of these faculty advisors is mixed.

Every one of the undergraduate dorms also has a system of graduate resident tutors. These tutors live in the dorms and provide modest academic and social support to the dormitory residents. Typically, the GRTs and the Housemasters work as a team to address any problems that arise in the dorm. Last year, the Institute initiated a program to place graduate resident advisors in each of the FSILGs. The GRAs also provide a degree

⁴ In the last two years, this system has been modified so that rising freshmen must indicate their interest in being contacted over the summer before an FSILG or dorm may initiate contact. Previously, FSILGs and dorms could initiate contact on their own.

of adult presence in each of the FSILGs; however, they do not exercise the same authority as does a Housemaster within an Institute residence.

Strengths of the Current System

Students like the current system. In a survey conducted in 1996, 87% reported that they were satisfied with their residential experience, a higher satisfaction rate than for other institutions reporting. In general, students value the degree of choice provided by the current system. They appreciate the opportunity to explore the different styles of living represented by both the FSILGs and the dormitories. Students often characterize this opportunity to actively participate in residential selection as evidence that MIT “treats them like adults.” Because students are not randomly assigned to residences as they are at some other universities, MIT living groups tend to develop and maintain distinct and unique cultures. Thus, not only does the current system provide opportunities for students to exercise far more personal choice than at other schools, the system also offers a far more diverse set of options. For example, we have single sex dormitories, coed dormitories, single sex fraternities and sororities, and co-ed independent living groups. In some living groups, students cook for themselves. In others, they eat communally in dining halls. Some living groups are organized around specific themes (language houses, literary houses, ethnic houses, etc.) while others represent a broad cross-section of the Institute community. Some residences consist largely of single rooms, while others are more communal. Some living groups are noisy and quite social; others are quiet and studious. Some residences are located in Back Bay and Brookline, while others are in Cambridge. Some living groups are laid back and easy going, while others are tightly knit and highly organized. Some living groups embrace decades of tradition, while others are content to redefine themselves on a regular basis. In general, the MIT residence system offers something for just about everyone.

Another aspect of the MIT residence system that is highly valued by students is the opportunity for freshmen personally to explore different living options before committing to a specific residence. Students like being able to see dormitories and FSILGs in person before they have to express preferences in a lottery. A commonly expressed sen-

timent among MIT students is, “I never would have elected to live in my living group if I had not been given the opportunity to see it first hand.”

Students also like being able to live in an FSILG almost immediately upon their arrival at MIT. (At most other universities, freshmen live on campus initially and do not move into fraternities or sororities until later, usually at the start of their sophomore year.) Most FSILGs do a good job of mentoring freshmen, helping them adjust to the rigors of life at MIT. Freshmen who join FSILGs report that they immediately become a member of a community with common ideals, culture, and a commitment to shared responsibility for managing the house. As noted above, the FSILG system provides opportunities for students to develop important leadership and management skills.⁵ Similarly, the self-selection of freshmen among diverse dorm communities produces a very strong living group identity. Indeed, when one encounters an MIT alumnus years after graduation, usually the first question asked is, “Where did you live?” Year and course inevitably come later.

While stressful for some, rush is also a time for students to get to know the campus and their classmates free from the rigors of classes and homework. FSILGs (and some dorms) offer free food, outings to local attractions, and non-stop parties in their effort to attract would-be residents. Students often say that rush is the best part of freshman year. Some wish that it would never end.

Weaknesses of the Current System

Any system looks great if one only looks at its strengths. Ours also has a number of inherent weaknesses.

As noted above, our system puts a lot of pressure on entering freshmen to make decisions about where they want to live well before they have had any meaningful opportunity to adjust to life at MIT. Rush itself represents a highly stylized and artificial view of both dorm and FSILG life. Freshmen have little chance to calibrate their perceptions by developing an independent view of their residential options outside of the week-

long event that constitutes rush. Since they have no experience at MIT (and some have virtually no experience living independently from their parents) the choices they confront are often bewildering, and some decisions may not be well informed. Because residence selection precedes everything else, for a number of our students, their first experience at college is rejection. They may want to join a particular living group (FSILG or floor or entry in a dorm) only to learn that they are not welcome because they “do not fit in.” We often do not want to acknowledge this darker side of our residence system, but it exists.

Another consequence of placing residence selection first is that it tends to dominate and crowd out other aspects of orientation. Although orientation has been restructured in recent years to de-emphasize residence selection, the reality is that sorting freshmen into living groups remains the dominant activity during orientation. Moreover, because this sorting process takes a fair amount of time, orientation at MIT is significantly longer than at most other schools. This extra time has consequences for students, faculty, and staff each of whom must be on campus earlier than would otherwise be necessary.

Parents also find this schedule frustrating. Many parents bring their freshmen to MIT, drop them off in temporary housing with a suitcase or two, and then return with the balance of their belongings after their freshmen have received permanent room assignments. Parent’s Orientation is structured around this pattern, and thus occurs at the end of orientation week. This schedule is a frequent source of complaints from parents.

Another problem with our current system is that it offers men and women asymmetric choices. Because our FSILG system evolved during a time when MIT was predominantly male, men have many more living options than women. Of the 35 residential FSILGs, 26 are all male, four are all female, and five are co-educational. As a result, rush is a very different experience for men than for women. The overrepresentation of men in the FSILG system is also a problem given the changing demographics of MIT. The proportion of women in the freshmen class is steadily increasing. Women currently constitute 43 percent of the members of the class of 2003. As the number of women continues to increase, male fraternities must capture an increasing share of a declining male enrollment if they are to operate without significant vacancy. In fact, some houses are los-

⁵ Many (but certainly not all) of our successful entrepreneurs are FSILG alumni. What is unclear is whether the FSILG experience produce entrepreneurs, or whether entrepreneurial students are attracted to

ing this battle. Ten fraternities currently operate at less than 80 percent of their approved occupancy.

To the outside world, our unique residence selection system is a mystery. Both parents and prospective students find it confusing. Many parents like to know where their freshmen are going to live prior to departure for college, and they also want to know how they can contact them during their first week at school. Our current system deprives them of either opportunity. Similarly, many of our pre-frosh express anxiety over the housing selection process (although most become enthusiasts once they have been through it.) Our Dean of Admissions, Marilee Jones, reports that on balance, our housing system is a liability in recruiting the very best students to MIT (although clearly some of these same students are attracted to MIT because of the degree of choice the housing system provides.)

Students sometimes complain that on-campus housing is crowded. They are correct. In an average year, about 100 students are assigned to dormitory rooms in which occupancy exceeds design capacity. What some people do not recognize is that the current residence selection process exacerbates crowding. Because freshmen do not have to tell the Institute where they will be living until the middle of orientation, it is very difficult for the Institute to accommodate additional students on campus if the FSILG rush is poor. For example, this year, we did not learn how many students would have to be housed in the dormitory system until September 3, 1999. At that late date, it is impossible to secure additional housing in the market, or to relieve the pressure on the housing system by adjusting class size. Virtually the only short-term alternative is to crowd.

The previous section noted that our housing system creates intense loyalty to one's living group. This loyalty is a product of a system that fractionates each class a few days following arrival on campus. People bond immediately to their living group. However, this loyalty tends to be at the expense of a larger sense of a campus-wide community. To be sure, there may be a trade-off between creating a stronger sense of overall community and a desire for strong living group identity. However if we are cataloging weaknesses of our current system, we must surely note its impact on the larger community.

the independent living represented by an FSILG.

With the exception of Housemasters and a few house fellows, faculty do not play a meaningful role in the residence system. In fact, the housing system tends to function as a refuge for students where they can escape both schoolwork and the faculty. MIT is a sufficiently intense environment that students need a place to go where they can withdraw from the rigors of academic life. The housing system provides this refuge. For faculty who are engaged in the system, we offer relatively few resources to support their role. For example, Housemasters have very modest budgets to support residential life programming in the dormitories. Similarly, large sections of the housing system suffer from deferred maintenance, although the Institute has been investing significant resources to address this problem in recent years.⁶

Finally, no description of the weaknesses of our housing system would be complete without noting that it does not come close to meeting the residential needs of our graduate students. Although the Institute has had a long-standing goal of housing 50 percent of the graduate student population in Institute housing, we have not come close to meeting this objective. (We currently house only about 32 percent of our graduate students.) Although the last two residences built on campus were dedicated to graduate student housing – Green Hall and Edgerton House - our graduate student population has grown faster than the housing built to accommodate them. With the elimination of rent control, graduate students have struggled to find affordable housing. Indeed, the graduate housing problem is becoming so acute that it may be starting to impair our ability to recruit the best graduate students to MIT.

The Freshmen Housing Decision

In late August 1998 President Vest announced that all freshmen would be housed in campus residence halls starting with the opening of a new dormitory in the fall of

⁶ For example, Senior House was completely renovated in 1997 at a cost of \$12M, and Baker House was completely restored this past year at a cost of \$25M. In addition, the Institute has invested \$5M this past

2001. This decision followed almost a year of discussion, correspondence, and debate following the death of Scott Krueger in the fall of 1997. Almost every discussion of this tragedy quickly turned to the issue of freshman housing. In numerous settings, including faculty meetings, student meetings, community forums, faculty committees, and working groups, people debated the wisdom of our housing system. During this period, President Vest received literally hundreds of letters and electronic messages from students, faculty, parents, and alumni/ae on this topic.

In effect, Scott Krueger's death reopened a debate that had been going on for decades. As recently as 1989, a student-faculty committee – the Potter Committee – concluded that MIT would be a better place if all freshmen lived initially in dormitories, and if rush were delayed so that students could adapt to college life before deciding whether they wished to live in an FSILG. The report of the Potter Committee was quite thoughtful, and noted many of the shortcomings of our housing system that are described above. In the debate that followed, many faculty argued that we could preserve the best aspects of our current system – substantial choice in residence selection, a diversity of housing options, and a healthy and vigorous FSILG system -- and at the same time strengthen our overall community if freshmen began their MIT education living on our campus.

Ultimately, the Administration did not adopt the Potter Committee's recommendation for a variety of reasons. Students and some alumni/ae opposed changes to a system that they believed had served MIT well over many years. They feared that requiring freshmen to live on campus would not only deprive these students of the support traditionally provided by the FSILGs, but would also threaten the viability of the FSILG system itself. Neither the Provost nor the Dean of Students acted on the recommendations of the committee.⁷

The death of Scott Krueger put freshmen housing back on the Institute's agenda. It also called attention to the fact that MIT - alone among Boston area schools - permitted first year students to live independently, relatively free from older adult supervision.⁸ But

year to update life safety systems in the on-campus houses as well as to address basic infrastructure needs. Additional investments will be made in future years.

⁷ For a more complete analysis of the history of the Potter report, see Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group to Review Past Reports on Undergraduate Life and Learning, December 15, 1994.

⁸ In the year following Scott Krueger's death, a number of other unfortunate incidents in FSILGs also called public attention to the independence enjoyed by residents of MIT's FSILGs. Whether we like it or not, the

the publicity surrounding Scott Krueger's death is not the only change that has occurred since the publication of the Potter Committee report. The imbalance in housing options for women is even more pronounced today than it was ten years ago. The Task Force on Student Life and Learning called for the Institute to dedicate itself to creating a stronger sense of community on our campus, one that engages the faculty more in the residential and co-curricular lives of our students. This objective is difficult to achieve with one third of our freshmen starting their MIT careers separated geographically from their classmates. And finally, as we enter into a capital campaign, this is an ideal time to re-think the changes necessary to support and sustain community, and to preserve and strengthen the FSILGs through the transition to a new system.

When President Vest announced the housing decision, he stated that it would be a major step in the Institute's commitment to enhancing educational community; better integrating student life and learning; and improving the introduction of its students to MIT.⁹ He noted that this commitment had led, in the two preceding years, to the reorganization and integration of the Office of the Dean of Students and Undergraduate Education, and was the major reason for the appointment of the Task Force on Student Life and Learning. He further indicated that he had been greatly influenced by the intensity of the immediate, spontaneous focus on freshman housing and the nature of Residence/Orientation Week as the Faculty and community struggled with the tragedy, a year earlier, of Scott Krueger's death.

President Vest pledged to preserve the spirit of choice, variety, and supportive networking among freshmen and upper-class members, yet give students a more consistent initial experience on our campus. He specifically envisioned that FSILGs would continue to be important elements of campus life, but in a context that promotes greater integration and spirit of community across the entire housing system. He expressed confidence that students, faculty, alumni and administrators working together over the ensuing three years could design a better experience and system.

irresponsible actions of a few individuals have placed the entire FSILG system in the glare of extreme public scrutiny.

⁹ President Vest's full remarks to the faculty at the September 16, 1998 faculty meeting are reproduced as an appendix to this report.

Indeed, the process of consultation and engagement that began with the Residence System Design Competition last January and concludes with the publication of this report is a direct result of President Vest's commitment to an open, inclusive implementation process.

Notwithstanding the intensity of the discussion that took place in the year prior to President Vest's decision, many students and some alumni/ae continue to criticize the administration for failing to consult them prior to changing the freshmen housing policy. To some, the decision appears to have been rendered autocratically, without meaningful public discussion or debate. While no specific group was formally charged with soliciting input and framing a recommendation to the President, the Faculty on its own initiated debate with a motion filed by Professor Steven Chorover at the Institute Faculty meeting on October 15, 1997.¹⁰ Over the balance of the academic year, as the Institute pondered the consequences of the death of Scott Krueger, a number of standing committees of the Faculty discussed the merits of our housing policies.¹¹ Opinion pieces and articles also appeared in the student press on the same topic. In addition to the Task Force, two additional faculty committees – the Working Group on Dangerous Drinking, and the Committee on the First Year – each recommended that MIT move to a system where all freshmen are housed on campus. This issue was also discussed with parents at Family Weekend, and at a Town Meeting held by the President during the year. Also, Academic Council discussed and unanimously endorsed the President's decision.

With the benefit of hindsight, a more formal process of consultation may have been desirable. However, it is wrong to suggest that President Vest's decision was not informed by significant student, alumni/ae, and faculty opinion. There are times in the leadership of an organization where decisive action is required.

Having said this, the Institute has prospered over the years largely because our traditions of collegiality and involvement have allowed us to tackle tough problems that would test lesser institutions. As President Vest noted in his remarks to the Faculty at the September 16, 1998 meeting, the process followed in arriving at the freshmen housing

¹⁰ In response to Professor Chorover's motion, the Faculty adopted a motion at the next Faculty meeting calling for examination of the entire residential system, including the suitability of undergraduate residences as freshmen housing.

decision was exceptional and unusual, and does not signal a change in policy regarding community engagement. Since the decision, we have tried to structure the implementation process to maximize the opportunity for community input. Indeed, this report has benefited enormously from the wisdom and guidance provided by the Residence System Steering Committee, the Strategic Advisory Committee to the Chancellor, the IFC, and DormCon. The final design described below owes much to their recommendations, and to the input of countless students, alumni/ae, faculty, staff, and parents who have participated in the discussion and design process over the past eleven months.

The Objectives of our Residence System

President Vest's decision to house all freshmen on campus in 2001, while controversial, also has sparked a lively and passionate debate about the meaning of community on our campus. Students, faculty, alumni/ae, and parents have all joined in this discussion. In the long term, only good can come from greater attention to how we create and nurture a stronger residential community at MIT. Three groups, the Working Group on Housing Principles chaired by Associate Provost Philip Clay, the Residence System Steering Committee (RSSC), and the Strategic Advisory Committee to the Chancellor (SAC), have devoted considerable time and thought to a formal articulation of the goals of our residence system. While they differ modestly in their recommendations for how to improve the system, they largely agree on overall objectives. The SAC summarizes these objectives with the simple but elegant shorthand: House, Home, and Community.¹²

House: The first objective of our residence system is to provide students with housing. The housing must meet the basic needs of students including a place to eat, sleep, study, and visit with guests. The SAC notes that in recent years, the Institute has met this goal by guaranteeing four years of housing to all undergraduates who want it. The RSSC observes that the Institute's ability to make good on this guarantee is only

¹¹ These committees included the Committee on the Undergraduate Program, the Committee on Student Affairs, and the Faculty Policy Committee.

¹² See "Unified Proposal for the MIT Residence System," Strategic Advisory Committee to the Chancellor, October 22, 1999, pp. 12-14 (subsequently cited as *SAC Report*.)

possible if a significant number of students continue to participate in the FSILG system. Both statements are factually correct. **The Institute should retain its guarantee of four years of housing to undergraduates who want it. Honoring this guarantee should be easier with a system that provides the Institute with far more notice of the number of students that must be housed each year than does the current system.**

Home: Beyond providing for the basic necessities of food and shelter, the residence system should also create a comfortable, welcoming environment for our students – in other words, a home. This environment is particularly important given the rigors and intensity of life at MIT. The SAC notes that MIT students come from very diverse backgrounds. Thus, one type of home is not likely to suit everyone. The SAC argues persuasively for diversity of living groups, and the need to provide students with the opportunity to exercise a substantial degree of choice among such groups. One of the great strengths of our system is that it provides students with many options, and an opportunity to actively participate in the decision of where they will live. We should try to preserve and enhance such choice to the extent feasible while also recognizing that choice is not the only dimension to be optimized in the system.¹³

Community: Our residential system should promote community by stimulating interaction among students, faculty, staff, administration, and alumni/ae, both within and across groups. Quoting the Task Force on Student Life and Learning, the SAC notes that the purpose of “professional, recreational, and social interaction” is to “build a culture of discovery and learning that distinguishes MIT from other universities.” The SAC goes on to note that the responsibility for nurturing community does not lie within the residence system alone. It is shared by student activities, athletics, academic societies, and supportive research and academic experiences.

¹³ Our current system does not provide students with unfettered choice. For example, we currently require freshmen to live in Institute approved housing. Similarly, our housing guarantee does not provide free movement back and forth between the FSILG system and campus. We try to accommodate upperclassmen who desire to move back into the dormitory system from an FSILG or an apartment, but we do not guarantee such a move. Also, students who elect to live on campus do not get to choose their residence under the current system. They express their preferences in a lottery. Finally, there is one group that has virtually no choice in our current housing system: those students who wish to know where they will live during their freshmen year before they depart for MIT. We currently cannot provide a student or their parents with a known dormitory assignment, room number, and phone number in advance of arrival on our campus. For many incoming students and their parents, this is a major flaw in our current system.

While the three goals of house, home, and community can be mutually supporting, they can also be in tension. In fact, much of the debate over the freshman housing decision can be explained by the willingness of different groups to resolve these tensions differently. For example, those who favor the freshman housing decision typically believe that it will bring about a greater sense of collective community on our campus. Proponents of the decision are willing to defer the opportunity for freshmen to live in FSILGs in order to accomplish this objective. By contrast, those who oppose the decision believe it will unreasonably restrict the choice necessary to sustain the objective of home. They believe that the potential damage to home more than outweighs the likely benefits to community. Unfortunately, this debate is fundamentally unresolvable. Ultimately, it is a debate over how to value competing objectives.

The RSSC suggests useful criteria for measuring progress towards the goals of the residence system. Rather than repeat these criteria here, they are incorporated by reference and reproduced in the appendix to this report.¹⁴

¹⁴ These criteria may be found in Section V of the Final Report of the Residence System Steering Committee, October 6, 1999, pp. 4-8. This report is subsequently cited as the *RSSC Report*.

The Design of the New Residence System

Residence Selection

MIT's residence system has a character that distinguishes it from housing systems found at most other universities. In order to preserve its strengths while also addressing its weaknesses, we must try to optimize over a number of dimensions. These include:

- Providing meaningful opportunities for freshmen to participate actively in the process of selecting their residence
- Respecting the diversity of cultures that exist throughout the residence system with special attention to the status of the theme houses
- Striking a balance between accommodating the desire of some students who wish to know where they will live immediately upon arrival at MIT, and the desire of others who wish to be able to visit dormitories personally before expressing final preferences
- Ensuring that no student experiences rejection as their initiation to life at MIT
- Respecting the existing house governance systems that match students to rooms, and in the process, help to create functioning communities
- Enhancing the ability of parents and students to communicate during their first few days at MIT

Following the recommendation of the SAC, residence selection will be divided into two phases.¹⁵ In phase one, students will express preferences for residence halls based upon information provided to them over the summer. This information will be provided to freshmen by early June. It should be prepared by each residence hall subject to guidelines developed jointly by DormCon and the Dean of Student Life. The information communicated needs to provide a vivid view of life in each residence. Ideally, each description should communicate the shared values and expectations of the members of

¹⁵See SAC report, p. 46.

the community. Each description should also contain a statement by the Housemasters addressing their role within the dorm and their perspective on the culture of their community.¹⁶

Based upon a review of information provided in June, entering freshmen will express preferences for the summer dorm lottery. At this time, students who wish to receive a permanent room assignment may request one. Moreover, students who wish to room with a specific roommate may enter the summer lottery together. At the conclusion of the summer lottery, every student will be assigned to both a dorm and a specific room. For students who have requested a permanent room assignment, they will have the right to stay in their summer lottery room throughout their freshman year.¹⁷ For all other students, their initial room assignment will be temporary and subject to final assignment by the house government. Thus, prior to arrival on campus, every freshman will know where they will be spending their first night. In addition, prior to arriving at MIT they will be provided with the phone number of the room they will occupy initially.¹⁸

Following arrival on campus, freshmen will have an opportunity to confirm their summer dormitory assignment. They will do so by declining to enter the orientation lottery. Students who enter the orientation lottery will give up their summer lottery assignment and express a new set of dormitory preferences based upon their exploration of the housing system during orientation. Following the suggestion of the SAC, up to four freshmen will be allowed to enter the orientation lottery together.¹⁹ Upon the completion of the orientation lottery, final room assignments will be made for all students who were not assigned a permanent room over the summer.

¹⁶ The residences should seriously consider the use of electronic media, especially the web, to communicate with entering freshmen. In this day of digital cameras, streaming video, and chat rooms, it should be possible to give prospective residents a relatively complete picture of life in the dorm. Also, it should be possible to create a database to allow entering freshmen to locate others with similar interests.

¹⁷ The right to stay in a particular room – known in the vernacular of the dorm system as squatting – is more easily accommodated in some dorms than others. In describing their residences to entering freshmen, dorms should indicate whether they can accommodate squatters or not. I recognize that it is impossible to predict the proportion of students that may wish to squat in advance. I hope the DormCon will work closely with RLSLP to accommodate all students who wish a permanent assignment prior to arrival on campus.

¹⁸ In addition to providing all freshmen with the phone number of the room they will be staying in the first night, I urge Information Services to provide every entering freshman with a default e-mail address prior to arrival on campus. These addresses could be changed by students subsequent to their arrival on campus. For parents seeking to stay in touch with their children during orientation, e-mail is often a much more reliable means of communication than a telephone.

Historically, the Institute has delegated the process of assigning individual rooms within dormitories to the house governments. This process works well and should be continued so long as the rules adopted and implemented by each house are consistent with MIT's educational mission and policies. Because cultures and tastes vary across the houses, room assignment policies also vary across residences. Diversity of process is to be expected and valued. The houses should publish their room assignment policies and administer them as published. In the normal operations of the houses, Housemasters should be aware of the room assignment rules and should be the first line of defense against room assignment practices that stray from Institute policy.

Traditionally, upperclassmen have played an active role in influencing individual room assignments. For example, based upon casual interaction during orientation, it is not uncommon for upperclassmen to communicate to the house government their desire to have specific freshmen live on their floor, entry, or suite. In general, such information is helpful in steering freshmen towards floors or entries where they are likely to be most comfortable. However, sometimes upperclassmen also seek to exclude certain freshmen from their entry or floor. Both the SAC and the RSSC agree that this latter type of conduct by upperclassmen cannot be tolerated.²⁰ It runs counter to the notion that MIT is an open, accepting, and diverse community, and will not be permitted in the new residence system selection process. The Office of Residential Life and Student Life Programs will work with DormCon to establish guidelines for internal room allocation processes within the dorms.

For most parts of our residence system, the ability of upperclassmen to exclude freshmen is a non-issue. However, some of our theme houses have traditionally operated more like internal FSILGs with an active rush and bid process. Residents of the theme houses have argued passionately that they should be allowed to retain the right to select freshmen. They base their arguments on the grounds that the success of their living groups is dependent upon a tightly organized community in which each member agrees to abide by the special rules of the house. While it is easy to understand the desire of the theme houses to maintain their coherence, they must operate subject to the same rules as

¹⁹ See SAC report p. 47.

²⁰ See SAC report, p. 47, and the RSSC report, p. 15.

all the other houses. Their desire for coherence can be accomplished without providing upperclassmen the opportunity to exclude specific freshmen. Instead, the theme houses should be quite explicit in stating their expectations for members of their community. Moreover, these houses may wish to require residents to sign pledges to abide by the rules of the house. Any problems that may arise with residents who fail to honor their pledges can be addressed through the common processes employed when residents of a particular floor or entry do not get along with their neighbors.

What should happen following the freshmen year? One of the more controversial recommendations of the RSSC was the adoption of a sophomore housing lottery.²¹ The RSSC recognized that the traditional stability of our housing system might discourage freshmen from seriously considering FSILGs. By introducing some uncertainty into the housing of sophomores, the RSSC hoped to encourage rising freshmen to consider joining an FSILG. The IFC opposed the idea that dormitory residents consciously should be inconvenienced in order to encourage them to consider life in an FSILG. In rejecting this RSSC proposal, the IFC demonstrated great maturity in supporting a position that may not be in the self-interest of its members. Shuffling sophomores runs counter to our objectives of nurturing a sense of home and community.

The SAC has a better idea. They recommend regular fall and spring dormitory lotteries for upperclassmen.²² These lotteries would be extensions of the current housing confirmation process for freshmen. Students would have the option of confirming their current residence choice or entering the lottery to move among available spots in other residence halls. Stapling²³ would be allowed subject to limitations imposed by the house governments. The objective of this regular lottery is to encourage greater mobility within the housing system.²⁴ This regular lottery is a very reasonable suggestion, and will be incorporated into the final system design.

²¹ See RSSC report, pp. 12-13.

²² See SAC report, pp. 51-52.

²³ Stapling involves a number of students entering the lottery “stapled” together so that they will be assigned to the same residence.

²⁴ The SAC notes a number of likely benefits resulting from greater mobility within the housing system: lower barriers to change residence halls, making it much easier for students to experience more than one living environment; greater cross-community interaction as students visit friends in former residence halls; more opportunity for students to find the right place them in our residence system.

Both the SAC and the RSSC observe that the construction of a new 350 bed dorm will provide only enough additional capacity to house freshmen in 2001. To meet the needs of future classes, each year a comparable number of rising sophomores must move out of the dorms into the FSILG system. If rising sophomores fail to move, we will be short dormitory capacity. This conclusion led the RSSC to suggest that the Institute reconsider its pledge of four years of housing for all non-FSILG members. This recommendation is problematic, given our desire to promote a greater sense of campus-wide community. Moreover, the current state of the Boston housing market renders this option particularly unattractive. As the RSSC noted, our current guarantee of four years of housing is dependent upon sufficient numbers of entering freshmen electing to live in FSILGs.²⁵ Our new policy merely shifts this risk to rising sophomores. Also, given that the Institute will have at least six months advance notice of the number of rising sophomores it must accommodate in the dormitory system, it should be easier to meet our housing objectives than under the current system.²⁶

FSILG Recruitment and Selection

Given that all freshmen will be living on campus, FSILG recruitment and selection no longer must be shoehorned into orientation. In discussions with the IFC about the possible timing of the new recruitment and selection period, I have stressed the following principles. First, recruitment and selection should not occur so early in the term that they disrupt the educational objectives of orientation. Similarly, we should give freshmen time to adjust to life at MIT before immediately plunging them into yet another residential decision. Second, recruitment and selection should not occur so late in the academic year that they disrupt the rhythm of the academic calendar. For example, it would be a mistake to delay this process so that it falls during the end of term crunch. Similarly, if recruitment and selection are delayed well into the academic year, potential exists for the entire fall to become a de facto extended rush. Also, if recruitment and selection occur

²⁵ See RSSC report pp. 11-13.

²⁶ Given sufficient advance notice, the Institute can pursue a number of policies to respond to a poor rush including securing additional housing for undergraduates in the open market, adjusting the size of the en-

early enough, FSILGs are still likely to play a meaningful role in helping new members adjust to life at MIT.

One option that surfaced in discussions about the timing of FSILG recruitment and selection was to schedule this activity during IAP. This alternative would be a mistake. For some students, IAP is a time to do research, to partake of the many seminars, lecturers and other offerings of departments, labs and centers, to work at a job or an internship, to do fieldwork, or to recharge. For other students, IAP is a time to immerse themselves totally in an academic subject for credit. Still other students spend significant amounts of time away from campus during IAP. For freshmen, IAP is often the first opportunity they have to really explore MIT and Boston, free from the demands of classes, problem sets, and exams. To locate FSILG recruitment and selection during IAP would fundamentally change the character of this unique MIT institution.

The IFC has prepared a preliminary plan for FSILG recruitment and selection that meets the objectives outlined above. It is attached as an appendix to this report. The preliminary IFC plan provides for an FSILG midway during orientation, but delays the start of recruitment to the first weekend in October. The entire fall term recruitment and selection is completed by the end of October. The plan recognizes that the bulk of the recruitment and selection must not interfere with mid-term examinations. This schedule seems sound and should be pursued and refined in consultation with the Office of Residential Life and Student Life Programs.

In addition, the IFC has indicated its interest in a well-organized and structured spring recruitment period. The IFC is strongly encouraged to develop this concept further. In principle, the entire freshman year represents an opportunity for fraternities, sororities, and independent living groups to recruit new members. One positive consequence of a low-key recruitment process is that it is likely to engage the FSILGs in the life of the dorms, and in the process, build bridges between diverse elements of our community. Students should be able to join an FSILG at any time in accordance with IFC rules and individual house policies.

tering class, offering less housing to transfer students, etc. To address the crowding problem in steady state, the Institute will have to build more undergraduate housing.

Currently, the IFC sets its own rules for recruitment activities. This process has worked well to date. There is no reason to change it. The IFC should work closely with the administration to refine plans for 2001.

FSILG Transition Support

The next several years will be a period of transition for our FSILGs. They will have to adapt from a system in which they house four classes of undergraduates to one where they house only three. Many students and alumni/ae have expressed concern that this change alone will place a number of FSILGs at risk. To be sure, in the short run, the decision to house freshmen on campus will exacerbate the problem of excess capacity within the FSILG system. To address this situation properly, we must do more than merely provide transition financial support for a few years. Without additional changes, this support merely delays the inevitable – the day when the houses will have to bear the burden of excess capacity without Institute assistance.

The Institute must help the FSILGs manage this change while recognizing that not all individual FSILGs may make this transition successfully.²⁷ Our fraternities, sororities, and independent living groups have served us well over the years. They add a richness and diversity to our residential system that should be preserved and enhanced.

In thinking about how to structure transition support, we should be guided by the following principles. First, we must help the FSILGs financially, but not do so in a way that creates financial dependency on the Institute. To do otherwise would compromise the independence that lies at the core of the FSILG system. Second, the transition support should be provided in a form that does not reward houses that recruit badly, or punish houses that recruit well. Third, the transition support should encourage houses to adapt to the changing demographics of MIT. These changes include increasing numbers of women students, and an increasing number of undergraduates pursuing five-year Master of Engineering degrees.²⁸

²⁷ As noted previously, FSILGs have come and gone in the past, and will continue to do so in the future. The Institute does not bear a responsibility to sustain indefinitely each and every FSILG.

²⁸ The recent increase in the graduate student population at MIT is largely attributable to the increase in professional masters programs. M.Eng programs represent both a problem and an opportunity for the

Some have suggested that the Institute should bear the full risk of revenue loss by the FSILGs during their first year. For example, the SAC proposal provides a flat subsidy to FSILGs consisting of 35 percent of their existing full-occupancy housebill, declining linearly over five years to 0.²⁹ This proposal is flawed for a variety of reasons. First, it fails to recognize the distinction between fixed and marginal costs. Clearly, houses will save some money if their occupancy rate falls. How much remains to be determined, but to ask the Institute to support 100 percent of any revenue loss seems unrealistic. Second, the FSILG system consistently has managed to accommodate a fair degree of variance in membership levels. For example, over the past five years, rush has averaged 365 freshmen with a standard deviation of 23. Arguably, transition support should be pegged to the average occupancy of the houses over the past five years, not to the theoretical full occupancy. Third, while it is tempting to argue that the Institute should err on the side of generosity in structuring transition support, we must recognize that there is an opportunity cost associated with these funds. Ultimately, there is one pot of money available to support residential system initiatives. While it is important to be fair, excessive generosity may deprive other parts of the system of necessary resources. Finally, the SAC proposal fails the third test described above. It does relatively little to help FSILGs adapt to changing demographics.³⁰

The RSSC proposal for transition support is more persuasive. The RSSC recommends two types of transition support, both of which phase out over five years.³¹ First, starting in the fall of 2001, the RSSC recommends that MIT reimburse a graduate student living in an FSILG 80 percent of the fixed cost of that student's bed. (The FSILG would collect 100 percent of the cost from the student.) FSILGs would have total control over which, if any, graduate students are provided this opportunity. Alternatively, an FSILG

housing system. They are a problem because they have swelled the demand for housing, but they also represent an opportunity because, among graduate students, five year students are likely to be the most easily accommodated in a reconfigured FSILG system.

²⁹ See SAC report pp. 54-56.

³⁰ The SAC report also urges the Institute to purchase houses for the two non-residential sororities that exist on campus. While this action would increase the housing options available to women, it would do relatively little to redress the gender imbalance in the FSILG system. We would go from our current mix of 28 male and 4 female FSILGs to 28 male and 6 female FSILGs. Male FSILGs would still be competing for a declining share of the male MIT undergraduate population. A better approach is to convert some of the currently all-male FSILGs to co-educational living groups.

³¹ See RSSC report, p. 19.

may elect to keep a bed empty. For these empty beds, the RSSC recommends that MIT reimburse the FSILG 60 percent of the fixed cost of the bed. In each case, the RSSC recommends that this support decline by 10% annually, with all support ending in year six.³² This system seems to place the incentives in the right place. In effect, because the Institute would be reimbursing only 60 percent of the fixed cost of a vacant bed, both the Institute and the FSILGs share the risk of vacancies. This system encourages FSILGs to try to fill their beds. Moreover, they are better off filling them with graduate students than letting them go vacant because they receive full revenue for a graduate student resident rather than only 60 percent reimbursement for a vacancy. Given the large number of M.Eng students seeking housing, this system addresses their needs as well. It provides a significant incentive for graduate students to seek housing in the FSILG system.

There are a few potential problems with this approach. FSILGs currently have no tradition of providing graduate student accommodations. Also, the strength of FSILGs lies in their common approach to community. Clearly, if this approach is to work, FSILGs will need to develop new models for engaging graduate students in their midst. It may be that this system only works for M.Eng students. Nonetheless, if the FSILGs experiment creatively, some interesting solutions are likely to emerge. The Institute will establish, in consultation with the IFC, a schedule of reimbursements for FSILGs to cover the transition period. The Institute will capitalize these transition expenditures into the cost of the new undergraduate residence.

The RSSC recommendations also do not help to address the problem of gender imbalance in the FSILG system. If we were to design the FSILG system from scratch today, we would have far fewer all male FSILGs and many more co-ed living groups. As part of the transition plan, the Institute will provide supplemental support through the IRDF for those fraternities that wish to go co-ed.

The Future of MIT's FSILG System

³² For example, for graduate students, MIT would pay 80% of the fixed cost of a bed in year 1, 72% in year 2, 65% in year 3, 58% in year four and 52% in year 5. No support would be provided in subsequent years. A similar reduction function would be applied to reimbursement for vacant beds.

Over the past year, the FSILG system has been under attack in the media, and under close public scrutiny from the licensing authorities. Some of our Boston based fraternities have felt harassed by neighbors and public officials who they believe are hostile towards the fraternity concept. Unfortunately, the actions of an irresponsible few have cast the entire system in a bad light. Moreover, the media have painted with a very broad brush. Both the print and electronic media have often failed to recognize the positive contributions that our fraternities make to their communities and to the lives of their members.

The students of today are fundamentally no different than the students of previous eras. On the whole, MIT students are responsible young adults, who, like other young adults, like to enjoy themselves. To be sure, there are exceptions, but as a whole, I believe our students are second to none. What has changed in the past 30 years is the environment in which our Boston based FSILGs are located. Thirty years ago, our fraternities' neighbors were largely fellow students living in cheap, rent-controlled apartments. Today's neighbors increasingly consist of people who have paid in excess of \$400 per square foot for their condominiums. They are far less tolerant of student activities than were the neighbors of years past. They vote, and the political process responds to their voice. This situation is not likely to get better. The tide of neighborhood change is working against our FSILGs in Back Bay.

Other changes also have occurred in recent times. One reason men liked to live in Back Bay in the days when MIT was overwhelmingly male was the large number of women students in colleges located on the other side of the river. The arrival of women students in large numbers at MIT has radically changed the social dynamic. Our campus is a far livelier place today than it was when I was a student. Increasingly campus social life is defined by activities going on at MIT, not elsewhere. As the ratio of men to women approaches 50-50, and as we continue to make investments in our campus and community, this trend will also continue.

For most of our fraternities, their location in Back Bay reflects the accidents of history. Some of our houses trace their roots back to the days when MIT was located in Copley Square. When the Institute moved to Cambridge in 1916, our immediate neighbors consisted of old factories and warehouses. It was not a place to locate a fraternity.

Only recently has our neighborhood evolved to where it is now viewed as an attractive place for people to live, work, and learn.

If we are ever to realize our goal of creating a tighter sense of community on the MIT campus, we will some day have to overcome the obstacle represented by the location of one third of our undergraduate students living in another city separated from the campus by a river. The time has come for our FSILGs located in Boston and Brookline to give serious thought to relocation on campus. Once freshmen are living on campus, there will be even greater reason for our FSILGs to be close by. A small group of Back Bay houses are currently working with Steve Immerman, Director of Project Development in the Office of the Executive Vice President, to explore the feasibility of a move to campus. While there are many obstacles to overcome, there are also many opportunities to exploit.³³

FSILGs that offer genuinely supportive environments for students in which members enjoy the benefits of a closely knit community have little to fear from the freshman housing decision. The challenge will be for all houses to adapt to this new system. The Institute has every incentive to help make this transition smooth and seamless. If we all work together, we should emerge with a strengthened FSILG system that is well adapted to the MIT of the future.

Providing Resources to Support and Sustain Community

Both the RSSC and the SAC have observed that we have underinvested in residential life programming. This systematic underinvestment is a legacy of a housing system that traditionally operated outside the Institute resource allocation process. When the bulk of our undergraduates lived in fraternities, MIT looked to the houses and their alumni/ae to provide the social infrastructure necessary to create and sustain community. The resources that created this community did not appear in any Institute budget. As dormitories replaced fraternities as the dominant place for MIT undergraduates to live

³³ Clearly any such move would have to be done with the blessing of the City of Cambridge. Moreover, the City's attitude towards such a move might depend very directly on MIT's degree of involvement in the operation of a group of campus-based houses. This is one of the issues being explored by the working group.

after World War II, we built housing, but did not allocate the resources to build homes and community. Now that all freshmen will be living on campus, we must correct this error. If we are serious about creating a strong and vibrant residential community that addresses the challenge laid out in the report of the Task Force on Student Life and Learning, we must invest significant incremental resources in residential and student life programming.

We have just entered the public phase of a \$1.5 billion capital campaign. Now is the time to raise funds to support the development of community both within the Institute residence halls, and within the FSILG system. In the near future, we will publish a document describing these priorities in detail. \$100 million is earmarked in the campaign to support student life and learning initiatives. Priorities will include raising funds to support the following:

- **Chairs for Housemasters:** These chairs will provide a scholarly allowance to support our Housemasters, and will provide recognition for their service within the scholarly community. However, while the income from other chairs typically goes to support the chairholder's salary, the income from these chairs will be used to support residential life programming in the Institute houses.
- **The Independent Residence Development Fund³⁴:** As noted above, our FSILGs will need to transform themselves to adapt to a changing MIT. We must raise resources to support and sustain this important part of our community.
- **Endowment for Athletics:** Community exists in many places at MIT, but especially on the playing fields. Like our residence system, athletics has been underfunded for years. This fund will underwrite investments in coaching, support for team travel, and women's sports.
- **Dean's initiatives to promote community:** This fund will provide the Dean of Students and Undergraduate Education with resources to seed campus-wide student life initiatives.

The SAC observes that regular campus-wide events maintain and promote campus-wide community. To stimulate such events, they suggest that each living group be responsible for organizing one event per year that is open to the community and held out-

³⁴ The IDRFB provides capital to finance improvements within the independent residence system.

side of the living group.³⁵ While these events need not be large enough to accommodate the entire community, they should be of interest to a variety of students, faculty, staff, and alumni/ae. This suggestion is sound. Moreover, it also seems to be something that we should be able to implement quite quickly. The Chancellor's office will fund such an activity as soon as the living groups, CAC, and RLSLP can agree on a plan.

Addressing the Capital Needs of the Residence System

In its report, the SAC identified a number of major capital needs for the residence system. The senior leadership of the Institute recognizes the need to invest in the physical infrastructure that supports housing, dining, and student life on campus. In fact, we have already committed enormous resources in recent years to upgrade our housing system. These include \$12 million for the renovation of Senior House, \$25 million for the restoration of Baker House, \$15 million for the construction of Edgerton House, \$45 million for the construction of the new undergraduate residence, and \$5 million this year alone for improvements to the life safety systems in the other undergraduate houses. In addition, we are completing a feasibility study for the conversion of Building NW30, currently used as a storage facility, into a graduate residence along the lines of Edgerton House. We estimate the cost of this project to be in the range of \$18 million. Assuming we go forward with the NW30 conversion, the Institute will have spent more than \$120 million on capital improvements to the residence system in the past decade.

The SAC report also argues for capital investment to address other student life needs, especially in athletics.³⁶ Again, the Institute is responding. This past year we replaced the artificial turf field. This summer we will replace the surface of the track in Steinbrenner Stadium, and begin the first phase of the construction that will lead to the new Sports and Fitness Center.³⁷ In addition, there will be new locker rooms, new exer-

³⁵ See SAC report, p. 20.

³⁶ See SAC report, pp. 24-32.

³⁷ This first phase consists of renovation of the DuPont locker rooms which is necessary so that we can tear down the locker rooms in the Briggs Field House in order to start construction on the foundation for the Sports and Fitness Center.

cise rooms, and new paddleball courts constructed adjacent to the Alumni/ae Pool as part of the development of the Stata Center.

Clearly our greatest immediate capital need in the housing and student life area is for additional graduate housing. Some have suggested that because the RSSC focused largely on the undergraduate residence system, we should appoint a new committee to assess the residential needs of graduate students. We do not need another committee. What we need is more graduate student housing. Unfortunately, we cannot commit to another major capital project without additional fundraising. Virtually every capital project that is in the capital plan now (with the exception of the potential for conversion of NW30 to a graduate residence) is being financed largely by gifts. If we could identify a major donor for a new graduate residence, we could move forward. Short of a major gift, we will have to develop other funding models for financing graduate housing off-balance sheet.

Management and Implementation of the New Residence System

Both the SAC and the RSSC have observed that we suffer from lack of clarity regarding authority, responsibility, and accountability for the residence system.³⁸ Part of this problem can be traced to the division of responsibility for various aspects of the system between the Dean's Office, Housemasters, the house governance system, the IFC, and the FSILGs themselves. Following the suggestion of the SAC, Dean Rosalind Williams and I have asked Dean Kirk Kolenbrander to organize a meeting of the relevant parties this spring to clarify the division of responsibility for the management and operation of the many aspects system.

³⁸ See RSSC report, p. 17, and the SAC report, pp. 33-38.

The SAC has also suggested the creation of a new Student Life Council to provide an ongoing forum for discussion of student life and residence system issues. While the idea of such a council has merit, the creation of yet another committee with overlapping jurisdictional responsibilities with existing committees also has the potential to create confusion. Accordingly, I have asked Professor Steven Lerman, the Chair of the Faculty, and Professor Candace Royer, Chair of the Committee on Student Affairs, to review the suggestions contained in the SAC report to explore redefining the mandate and membership of the Committee on Student Affairs so that it might perform a similar function to the suggested Student Life Council.

In the course of implementation of the new residence system, it is inevitable that questions will arise concerning the recommendations contained in this report. The Office of the Dean for Student Life is in a period of transition with the pending retirement of Margaret Bates and the ongoing search for a successor. To bring clarity to the implementation process and to ensure that adequate resources are available to implement the recommendations, I have asked Dean Kirk Kolenbrander to serve as a Special Assistant to the Chancellor for the Residence System on an interim basis. This administrative structure will be reviewed after appointment of a new Dean for Student Life.

Conclusion

In the past eleven months, we have focused enormous attention on fundamental questions about the best way to redesign our residence system. With the publication of this report, we move to a new phase – implementation. I hope that people who have been engaged in this process – especially students – will continue to be engaged in the implementation phase. There are still many decisions left to make that will require creativity and student input. These decisions include the formal process by which campus residences communicate with incoming freshmen about their residential options, the details of the freshmen room assignment process, and the final design of rush. This report provides a framework for the final decisions that will follow. We need your help in refining it. Together, we can create a residential experience that serves the needs of all of our students, one that enhances the overall sense of campus community while preserving the unique culture of our living groups.

APPENDICES

Remarks at the September 1998 Faculty Meeting

President Charles M. Vest's remarks at the Meeting of the Faculty of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, September 16, 1998.

After comments on recent changes in the senior administration and the opening of the academic year, President Vest made the following remarks about his decision on freshman housing and about next steps.

BACKGROUND

This issue has been before us since the 1989 Potter Report; I have consistently referred to it as "unresolved."

The broad issues of student life and residence have been important to me. They have consistently been raised in my meetings with the Faculty Policy Committee, with house masters and in other venues. Over the years, my wife Becky and I have talked with students about their campus experiences in the 125-150 evenings we have spent in campus residence halls and FSILGs, as well as in over sixty dinners we have held in the President's House with members of each year's graduating class.

I believe I have a reasonable grasp of the nature, history, values, and positive features of our unique system ... and of its problems. The quality of students' overall living and learning experience was the primary motivation for the massive reorganization and integration of the Office of the Dean of Students and Undergraduate Education, and was also the major reason for forming the Task Force on Student Life and Learning.

I also have to tell you that I was greatly influenced by the intensity of the immediate, spontaneous focus on freshman housing and the nature of R/O when, as a Faculty and community, we struggled with the tragedy of Scott Krueger's death one year ago.

FRESHMAN HOUSING DECISION

To my mind, there are three elements to the discussions about the freshman housing decision: the substance of the decision, the process, and the specific timing. Good people have differing views on each of these matters.

Substance

I have personal confidence that we have made the right decision to house all freshman students in campus residence halls, starting in the Fall of 2001, when the new undergraduate residence hall will be ready. It is a major step in our commitment to enhancing our educational community; better integrating student life and learning; and to improving the introduction and connection of our students to MIT.

In my vision, FSILGs are and will continue to be important elements of our campus life, but I believe we need a greater integration and spirit of community across our entire system. Indeed, the residence halls have much to learn from our FSILGs.

I want to preserve the spirit of choice, variety, and supportive networking among freshmen and upper-class members, yet give our students a more consistent initial experience on our campus.

And, of course, our standards and expectations of conduct must be the same no matter where a student resides.

As a community - students, faculty, alumni, and administrators - we can design a better experience and system. This is, after all, MIT. It is important to start now - while we have three years to carefully and collectively redesign the system and effect a smooth transition.

Process

Last fall, I believed that we should not rush to judgment during an intensely emotional period. But now, the decision has been informed by nearly a year of study, correspondence, discussion, and debate in numerous settings, including faculty meetings, student meetings, community forums, committees, working groups, and the opinions of my colleagues in the administration.

The Working Group on Dangerous Drinking, the Committee on the Freshman Year, and finally the Task Force on Student Life and Learning, while each addressed a number of issues, all recommended that first year students reside in campus residences. The work of these groups was the most recent manifestation of an issue that has remained unresolved since the Potter Report recommended this change in 1989.

Over the past year, I listened to all the arguments, consulted with the various constituencies involved, and reviewed the faculty and student reports over the years. I have also taken into account the intense public scrutiny and broader community concerns on this matter. That includes my testifying in a criminal hearing before the Suffolk County Grand Jury, where this topic was an explicit part of the questioning and line of inquiry.

Candidly, I believe that every step we have taken to deal specifically with issues of dangerous drinking - and to improve campus experience in general - should and will be viewed favorably by the District Attorney and the public. Thus it was prudent to keep up momentum and announcements prior to the conclusion of the Grand Jury's investigation. Our attorneys believed that conclusion would likely occur prior to the anniversary of Scott Krueger's death.

However, there was and is no agreement that the Grand Jury would, or would not, take any specific action in exchange for decisions about freshman housing or dealing with dangerous drinking or any other matter.

Specific Timing

As to the specific timing of this decision, I have to tell you that it was for me a gut wrenching experience. But, in my view, it was one of those important moments when the proverbial "buck stops here."

And, frankly, one of my motivations on timing was that if anyone had asked me in the several weeks before the start of the term if I had arrived at a decision, I would have had to reply "Yes."

This decision was not made lightly or without regard to the possible impact on Rush or on relations with students and faculty.

There were many rumors flying around 3 weeks ago - many based on wrong information and assumptions about intentions. To give you some idea of the intensity of activity on this topic, there was one day when I, Roz Williams, Larry Bacow and others were receiving on the order of 50 e-mails an hour.

I did not think we should prolong the obvious uncertainty and anxiety during Orientation Week. I believed, and still believe, that Rush might be calmer if it were not taking place in the context of a heated, renewed debate.

Just as important, I hoped (and still do) that campus discussion this fall could be centered on the broad tone and recommendations of the Task Force report, and not focus on revisiting the specific matter of freshman housing.

We are moving rapidly on the design of the new residence hall and there is a need for clarity of purpose and a clear sense of who the clients are.

So on August 25, I sought and received the unanimous - and I must say enthusiastic - endorsement by the Academic Council to house all first year students on campus, beginning in 2001, when the new residence hall will be ready.

GOVERNANCE

The timing in this case is not indicative of any change in the way I intend to interact with the faculty. Frankly, I hope never again to have to be in a position to make a decision that will be viewed by respected colleagues as being insufficiently consultative with faculty and students.

I was well aware of this risk at the time I made the decision and weighed the consequences to the best of my ability, but I did see it not as something done on the spur of the moment but as the culmination of a year of work and discussion.

These were extraordinary circumstances.

I will not pretend that external factors played no part. They did. Because of MIT's stature, we are under a spotlight, and that has been a motivation over the last several months to move expeditiously and make our decisions visible. But the decision itself was made for one and only one reason: I believed it to be right for MIT in the future.

Having said that, I want to repeat that this is not how I see our governance operating under normal circumstances. The special nature of the relations between faculty and administration at MIT is something to be cherished. There are very few institutions where the chair of the faculty then takes on senior positions in the administration: Walter Rosenblith, Art Smith, Sheila Widnall, and now Larry Bacow are obvious examples. Indeed, much of my rationale for bringing Larry Bacow into the senior administration was my belief that the position of Chancellor would help us do much more to integrate issues and build consensus within the Institute as we plan for our future. And I firmly believe that Larry is just the right person for this job.

PLANNING FOR THE NEW RESIDENCE AND NEW RESIDENCE SYSTEM

I am looking to Larry and Roz Williams to lead the planning for new residential system, and specifically the new undergraduate residence hall. Roz, Larry, Bill Mitchell, staff in the Planning Office and others are meeting regularly on this.

We will rely on the broad involvement of faculty and students in designing the process as well as the actual planning of the new residential system, and are already beginning to nucleate that. Paul Gray and Ed Crawley have agreed to join a faculty advisory group for this process. We will also have a student advisory group that includes representatives from the Task Force, the Undergraduate Association the Interfraternity Council, and others. And we have already begun discussions with the Alumni IFC, working with their president, Steve Stuntz.

These issues will undoubtedly be discussed at the Alumni Leadership Conference this Saturday, and on Thursday evening, September 24, there is an open meeting regarding the design and programming of the new residence hall. We are even thinking of holding a student design competition during IAP.

As we move forward, I hope we can all work together to create a more integrated residential system - one that fosters a mutually supportive, academically oriented environment for all our students.

At this point, I want to reiterate that fraternities, sororities, and independent living groups are and will be important elements of our campus life. We do not expect all the houses to go through this transition without some help, financial and otherwise, from the Institute. This is not a guarantee that every house will survive as it currently exists, but it is not at all clear that they would if we continued with the current system unchanged.

We need to create a much clearer vision of what a new residential system might be - and to be really creative about envisioning alternatives. The planning process will determine the details of the new residence system, but I would like to make one personal observation. As we look to the future, I have heard much concern about two specific issues: random assignment of freshmen to campus residences, and the creation of freshman residence halls. Personally I do not support either of these concepts, and it certainly is not what I have heard the community asking for during the last year. I hope we can have a more substantive report on the planning process at the October faculty meeting.

TASK FORCE ON STUDENT LIFE AND LEARNING

These design and planning activities need to be carried out in the context of the report on Housing Principles prepared last year under the leadership of Associate Provost Phil Clay. And they also need to be carried out in the context of the Task Force on Student Life and Learning.

At the same time, it is critical that the discussion of the Task Force report be comprehensive - and not focus primarily on the issue of freshman housing. The Task Force, under the leadership of Professors John Hansman and Bob Silbey, has done an extraordinary job of identifying what is special about an MIT education - in its broadest sense, and more: They have created a set of principles and a vision of what we could be...the very best of learning communities.

I am very grateful to Bob, John and all the faculty and students who have devoted so much to this project over the past two years. It is now up to the faculty more broadly to take up the charge.

Final Report of the Residence System Steering Committee

Recommendations to the Chancellor

Released in Draft Form: September 7, 1999
Published in this Final Form: October 6, 1999

I. Introduction	2
II. Report Organization	2
III. Educational Objective	3
IV. Outcomes for the Residence System	3
V. Characteristics of an Excellent MIT Residence System	4
<i>A. Organization and Program</i>	4
<i>B. Residents and Contributors</i>	6
<i>C. Physical Structures and Environment</i>	7
VI. Recommended Policies, Program, and Organization	8
<i>A. The First Year</i>	9
1. The First Year Experience.....	9
a) Undergraduate Resident Advisors	9
b) First Year Programs	10
c) First Year Offices	11
2. Adjusting the Timing of the First Year	11
a) The Residence Hall/FSILG Cooperation.....	11
(1) Rising Sophomores: Renegotiating Residences	12
(2) Rising Sophomores: FSILG Recruitment.....	13
(3) Freshman Residence Hall Preferencing.....	13
b) Orientation.....	14
c) Residence Hall Policies and Practices for Freshmen	15
d) FSILG Recruitment	16
<i>B. The Undergraduate Experience</i>	17
1. Roles, Responsibility, and Accountability.....	17
2. Resource Allocation	17
3. Assessment	18
4. Student Government.....	18
5. Transitional Support for the FSILG System.....	19
<i>C. The Graduate Student Community</i>	20
VII. Process	20
1. Phase I: IAP Design Contest	20
2. Phase II: Steering Committee Synthesis and Framework Development	21
3. Phase III: Community Discussion and Feedback to the Evolving Proposal.....	22
4. Final Recommendation to the Chancellor	22
VIII. Acknowledgements	23

IV. Outcomes for the Residence System

Given this educational objective and MIT's strongly rearticulated commitment to the residential experience within the research university environment, it is appropriate to expect the residence system to play an integral role in the development of its residents as "educated individuals". That role should provide educational outcomes for its residents, such that each person:

- has an understanding of the spectrum of human culture and value systems;
- combines this understanding and a sense of judgment to think critically about moral and ethical issues;
- communicates clearly and effectively in working well with others;
- understands the impact of technological, societal, and environmental solutions in a human, global context;
- possesses a knowledge of contemporary issues;
- has a well-developed sense of self;
- is able to function on and contribute to multi-disciplinary teams; and
- has a recognition of the need for, and an ability to engage in life-long learning.

A residence system that affords these outcomes is one in which each resident can identify educational experiences to which they have access that provide:

- an enrichment in the arts and humanities;
- an exploration of leadership ability, personal skills, and career options;
- a meaningful exposure to people of diverse interests and backgrounds;
- a series of mentoring advisorship and peer support activities;
- a participation in team activities and self-governance; and
- an exploration of principles of citizenship, stewardship, and integrity.

V. Characteristics of an Excellent MIT Residence System

These aggressive educational objectives and outcomes require a residence system that has been appropriately tailored. Such a system is defined by characteristics in its organization and program, residents and contributors, and physical structures and environment. Numbered below are necessary characteristics of such a system, with indicators for achieving those characteristics appearing as bullets.

A. Organization and Program

1. The residence system provides opportunities that are integral to, and integrated within, the complete educational experience.

Indicators

- Residents perceive and report a routine practice of learning while living. The intensity of that learning is a matter of choice and can vary. The perception that "learning" is an activity from which one needs to "recover" is diminished.
 - Academic, research, and community experiences of different and sometimes unique formats are offered within the physical spaces of the residence system.
 - Residents routinely cannot classify a given educational experience as "academic", "research", or "community", and must instead rely on two or even all three terms to describe the experience.
 - There is one location – be it physical, printed, or on-line – that uniformly describes the current academic, research, and community-based learning opportunities at the Institute.
 - Relationships between students, faculty, staff, and alumni/ae exist to an extent such that every graduating senior could write a character reference for three faculty, three staff, three graduate students, three undergraduate students, and three alumni/ae.
2. The organization and program of the residence system takes advantage of the expertise that exists within the faculty, staff, alumni/ae, and student body.

Indicators

- A sustained dialog between staff, faculty, and participating alumni/ae results in a shared understanding and articulation of the authorities and responsibilities within the residence system.
 - The Housemaster system is fully functioning, well supported by the Institute, and yields an educationally coherent program.
 - Additional programs exist in which staff, faculty, and alumni/ae serve jointly in leadership positions.
 - Each individual member of the students, faculty, participating members of the alumni/ae, and all levels of staff can describe the contributory role that he or she plays in maintaining and building the community of MIT.
3. Responsibilities for designing and implementing the community dimension of the educational experience are clearly defined for both faculty and staff. Individual performance is evaluated with respect to those responsibilities. For students, house governance is evaluated with respect to articulated responsibilities and expectations.

Indicators

- A list of competencies is established, and individual and departmental reports (e.g., the Report to the President) are presented in the context of those competencies
- *Policies and Procedures* explicitly describe the responsibilities of the faculty and staff in the context of the educational triad
- Annual evaluation mechanisms (e.g., Annual Personnel Records) include entries for individuals to record participation in educational experiences within the residence system.

4. Faculty, staff, students, and alumni/ae who create and deliver educational experiences within the residence system are recognized.

Indicators

- Every member of the MIT community can articulate the educational goals and can sketch the general ongoing educational activities of the residence system.
 - Salary and promotion decisions for faculty and staff may be explicitly linked in part to activity within the residence system.
 - Explicit recognition is provided to students who design and carry out educational opportunities within the residence system. That recognition can take many forms, including academic credit, transcript notation, and payment.
 - Members of the entire community demonstrate mutual respect for the efforts of others to further the educational triad, and the value of these efforts is widely understood.
5. Formal and informal opportunities that are particularly targeted to the unique needs of freshmen pervade the first year experience.

Indicators

- A faculty committee establishes educational goals for the freshmen year, and outcomes for freshmen in the residence system are identified.
 - Freshmen can identify an array of resources and opportunities available to them to aid in their academic and social transition.
6. Residents are expected to play a significant role in selecting and designing their educational experiences.

Indicators

- Mechanisms exist and are practiced within the student governance system for residents to shape the educational experiences within a given residence hall or house.
- Alumni/ae understand that choosing to be part of the MIT community as students gives them the opportunity to be active, contributing alumni/ae members of the community for a lifetime.

B. Residents and Contributors

7. It is assumed, unless proved otherwise, that all persons are responsible for their actions, and must be held accountable for them. Furthermore, the residence system provides opportunities that help all persons to assume responsibility for those around them.

Indicators

- Policies reflect an assumption of individual responsibility.
- Residents can identify educational experiences in which individual and community responsibility was fostered.

- Graduating students accept, demonstrate, and report a high sense of responsibility for themselves and for the members of their communities.
8. All persons shall be held accountable to the rules of MIT, and to the laws of the city, state, and nation. Further, they shall develop an awareness that certain values tend to transcend many different kinds of communities, and they shall evaluate the importance of those values in their lives.

Indicators

- Graduating students, faculty, and staff can articulate a personal value system that simultaneously and self-consistently guides their behavior in the research, academic, and community environments.
- Educational experiences exist to prepare students to identify and develop a personal value system.
- The constitutions of the residence units and governments are formally revisited to ensure that they reflect the changing roles of students, faculty, staff, and alumni/ae.

C. Physical Structures and Environment

9. The physical and emotional safety of residents is ensured.

Indicators

- All residence units comply with all relevant building codes and licensing requirements.
 - Regular inspections are conducted to ensure that building codes are met.
 - Mechanisms exist for residents to report unsafe building problems.
 - Detected code violations are repaired immediately.
 - Policies for safe building use (e.g., roof access) are uniformly enforced. These policies reflect the national and state regulations and laws that apply.
 - Residents report the presence of an emotionally safe environment within the residence system that permits exploration and appropriate risk-taking.
10. Both short-term (operational) and long-term (capital repair and maintenance) activities are planned, scheduled, and reviewed.

Indicators

- Preventive maintenance is conducted according to a rigorous and fully articulated schedule.
- Capital repairs are made so that each building adheres to the schedule assumed in the preventive maintenance.
- MIT recognizes that lengthy capital repair projects must be periodically performed for each residence building. Space is available to house students while those scheduled capital repairs take place.

11. Spaces for quiet study, informal student and faculty/student interaction, group study, programs, dining, and recreation are available.

Indicators

- Each resident has residential access to spaces for programs, dining, and recreation, as well as quiet study, interaction, and group study.

12. Crowding is not permitted, and policies are adjusted accordingly.

Indicators

- MIT, in cooperation with the FSILG system, provides living space in quantities that reflect its long-articulated commitments to housing 95% of the undergraduate population (but 100% of the freshmen) and 50% of the graduate population.
- Living spaces are used as designed and as intended for the undergraduate and graduate populations.
- Policies explicitly reflect a commitment to the as-designed use of space.

13. The existence and maintenance of physical spaces is motivated by educational program.

Indicators

- The design of all community spaces in new residences is driven by programming needs. Commitments to create such spaces are thereby followed by resource commitments to deliver programming in those spaces.

14. Living spaces for undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, staff, and alumni/ae are available and organized in a manner that is clearly articulated by the MIT faculty and administration.

Indicators

- A plan exists and is available to community members that describes the Institute's long-term housing plans for each segment of the MIT community.

15. All structures are in reasonable proximity and mechanisms are available to enhance the proximity.

Indicators

- Well-developed mechanisms exist to allow individual FSILG's to move to on-campus or near-campus locations.
- A transportation mechanism, such as the current SafeRide shuttle, runs regularly between the academic buildings and all MIT residence halls and FSILG's.

IFC 2001 Transition Planning Committee
MIT Interfraternity Council
Rm. W20-549
October 29, 1999

Chancellor Larry Bacow
Office of the Chancellor
Rm. 10-200

Dear Chancellor Bacow,

Here is a summary of the IFC's most recent thoughts regarding FSILG Rush in and beyond 2001. Additional details will be worked out in the coming year and a half through a joint effort of the 2001 Transition Planning Committee and the present and future Rush Chairs. Also attached is *one possible* schedule for the fall of 2001, following the general guidelines outlined in the document.

If you have any additional questions at this time, please contact one of us at the email addresses listed below.

Sincerely,
Matthew D. Hancher
IFC 2001 Transition Planning Committee

William R. Dichtel
IFC 2001 Transition Planning Committee
wdichtel@mit.edu

Matthew D. Hancher
IFC 2001 Transition Planning Committee
mdh@mit.edu

Michael V. Trupiano
IFC President
trup@mit.edu

Summary of IFC 2001 Transition Planning Committee Thoughts on Rush, as of October 29, 1999

For the past year the IFC has been considering issues surrounding the recruitment of new members given the constraint of first year students living on campus. We have considered a wide range of Rush scenarios, and have attempted to design a system in consideration of MIT's educational mission, the needs of freshmen, and the needs of the IFC and its constituents. This document contains a brief summary of our thoughts in light of the recent RSSC and SAC proposals. The only thing that we can say for certain is that the IFC will want to have some sort of Rush in early fall. The exact nature of that rush is slowly starting to take shape, and included here is a snapshot of our most recent thoughts. Outside Fall Rush we can only be very speculative at this time. More details will be worked out in the coming year and a half, through a joint effort of this Committee and the current and future IFC Rush Chairs.

Given that IFC houses will no longer be able to house freshmen residentially, it will not make sense for IFC rush and dorm rush/selection to be concurrent. The IFC will respect the educational goals of orientation and avoid adding stress to freshmen already overwhelmed with other possible choices of residence, academics, athletics, and other extracurricular activities. However, the IFC believes that Orientation should include time for an introduction to the structure and benefits of the FSILG system, perhaps in the form of a midway, much as is provided for other groups and organizations. Still, it is best for all parties to move the bulk of Fall FSILG rush to a time substantially removed from Orientation.

On the other hand, the IFC believes that its member organizations do provide an important service in helping freshmen adjust to the Institute as a whole. The merits of membership in any of the variety of FSILGs have been often discussed, and so need not be repeated here. But for those reasons, as well as others outlined below, the IFC believes that a bid date of November 1, as suggested in the RSSC proposal, is too late. It does not allow interested freshman to join their chosen FSILG community in time for it to provide them with support while they are still settling into the Institute during the first term, a time when additional support is often most needed.

There are additional logistical troubles associated with a Rush so far delayed. If bids were to go out at the beginning of November, then the bulk of Rush would likely be scheduled during the second half of October, to avoid over-extending the process. The second half of October is midterms, and scheduling Rush then would cause several problems. Freshmen would be less likely to participate, and those that did would be inappropriately distracted from their work at that critical juncture. Upperclassmen involved in either side of recruitment would be similarly distracted, and might also elect not to participate.

We expect the IFC to propose a slightly earlier schedule. The other key date to plan around in October is Columbus Day weekend, near October 12. That weekend many students choose to travel home or elsewhere, and so it is a poor choice for large activities. Thus, the IFC will probably want to kick off its Rush the weekend prior to Columbus Day, during the first weekend in October. The weekend of Columbus Day will still be available for rush events for those still on campus, and bids might be allowed to

go out that weekend or over the course of the following weekend, on a day near October 20. The IFC would most likely require freshmen to wait one week before accepting a bid, and would probably require that bids be good for at least two weeks from the date issued. Of course, an FSILG would be free to extend that deadline at its discretion. This schedule is only a week and a half earlier than that proposed by the RSSC, but it allows freshmen to make a connection with an FSILG, if desired, prior to the mid-term crunch, and it moves the bulk of the events to before that crunch.

The RSSC proposal suggests having a date in March before which bids must be accepted. We feel that this is inappropriate: students should retain the right to join an FSILG at any time, in accordance with the individual house's policies and the IFC Rush rules. Members of the RSSC have suggested that the wording in the document was poor, and that it should be interpreted instead simply as a statement of the fact that freshmen will need to have told the Institute *something about* where they intend to live by the time a spring lottery is run. We hope that any new policies reflect that interpretation. Also, processes should exist to allow upperclassmen to move into FSILGs with as much flexibility as possible, even if they make their decision after such notification deadlines.

We also expect that the IFC will organize a Spring Rush, to attract students who are considering moving the following term. It is our belief that the FSILG system will not be able to keep its occupancy rate at its current level in a freshman-nonresidential system without such a program. However, because such a Spring Rush has only been undertaken on a limited scale as needed by individual FSILGS, it is difficult to predict what form it would optimally take. In one scenario, it would occur during the lull between spring mid-terms and finals, and be two or three weeks long like the Fall rush discussed above. We are recommending that the IFC study this idea in much greater detail, including actually running recruitment in the spring for the next two years to learn the optimal timing and structure of such an undertaking.

The IFC's main concern regarding recruitment is that it retain its autonomy and self-regulation. The IFC has done a good job in recent years to provide an equal opportunity for its member houses to recruit new members. It is unlikely that MIT would want to commit the time and energy to intervene in the enforcement of IFC rush rules except in cases of very serious violations. Furthermore, if it becomes clear that a different schedule or structure of recruitment is optimal, the IFC should be allowed to adapt its rush accordingly, as long as such a change does not dramatically clash with MIT's educational goals. As a result, in redesigning the residence system, hard arbitrary dates of recruitment should be avoided. Instead, the IFC should work each year with the administration and/or the SAC's proposed Student Life Council to make recruitment periods fit well within the MIT calendar.

One Possible Schedule for FSILG 2001 Fall Rush

Aug 26	27	28	29 Orientation Begins?	30	31	Sep 1
2	3 FSILG Midway	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11 Registration Day?	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	8	29
30	Oct 1	2	3	4	5 Kickoff Rush	6
7	8	9	10	11	12 Columbus Day	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20 Bids can go out
21	22	23	24	25	26	27 Bids can be accepted
28	29	30	31	Nov 1 RSSC Proposed Bid Date	2	3