

Final Report of the Residence System Steering Committee

Recommendations to the Chancellor

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I. Introduction

The MIT Residence System -- through its organization and programs, residents and contributors, and physical structures and environment -- offers the most basic link between living and learning at MIT. In conjunction with the breadth of opportunities of the athletics programs, the full slate of student activities and governments, and the wide array of formal and informal learning activities in and around the classrooms and laboratories, the residence system contributes to the fertile ground at MIT for the integrated experiences of community, academics, and research.

The Residence System Steering Committee was appointed by the Chancellor to consider the MIT Residence System in total, and to describe a residence system for MIT that maximizes the opportunity to contribute to the integrated educational experience of its residents. In this real system, there are fundamental constraints that limit and occasionally prescribe nearly every degree of freedom. One such prescription for the committee was the decision by President Vest to house all freshmen on campus, beginning in the fall of 2001. The committee accepted this prescription throughout its 10-month process.

The committee began its work with the expectation that it would address not just the undergraduate residence system, but also that of the graduate students. It did not meet its own expectation, as the intractable nature of many of the challenges before the committee led it to ultimately choose to focus almost entirely on the elements of the residence system that serve the undergraduate students. The committee acknowledges that in narrowing its scope, it has denied the graduate student community the thoughtful and reasoned examination that the graduate residence elements so very much deserve. In a later section, this report calls for an immediate consideration of these critical issues by a new body that is explicitly charged with addressing the residence needs of the graduate students.

II. Report Organization

In this report, we begin with the Task Force's articulation of the attributes of the educated individual, and then identify the particular educational outcomes to be expected from the residence system. We go on to describe the necessary characteristics of a residence system that delivers those outcomes, and identify appropriate measurable indicators to assess our progress toward those standards. We then describe the policies, program, and organization of the residence system that we feel best achieve these objectives, outcomes, and indicators. The report concludes with a summary of the process that the committee used to develop its final recommendation, and a series of acknowledgements to the many people who contributed to this effort.

We present this report, and the significant changes called for herein, with humility. It is not possible to fully anticipate the nature and breadth of change that will result from the shifts in policies and organization that we lay out here. We recommend these changes with a sincere belief in the commitment, creativity, and intelligence of our community

members to respond to these changes with vibrant and rewarding new educational experiences.

We also offer our thoughts with a genuine respect for the sustained contributions of the gifted students, faculty, and staff who developed and maintained our existing system. We recommend here substantive changes to that system, but those changes are motivated more from an awareness of the changing needs and expectations of our students and our society, than from fundamental inadequacies of the system. We regard this report as the beginning of what must become a process of ongoing change, assessment, and improvement. Certainly the current system has been slow to adapt in the face of changing reality in many dimensions for far too long. Among those dimensions are: the demographic profile of our student body; the legal environment in which MIT must function; the difficult Cambridge and Boston housing markets; the set of parental expectations; and, to an increasing extent, the interest of the faculty to incorporate the residence system into the larger educational program.

III. Educational Objective

The Task Force on Student Life and Learning placed before the MIT community a bold set of expectations for the educational experiences of our students. Central to those expectations was the articulation of the attributes of the educated individual.

The educational processes at MIT, featuring an integrated triad of academics, research, and community, should prepare the "educated individual" with the following attributes to make a positive and substantial contribution to society:

- 1) Possesses well-developed faculties of critical and rational reasoning.
- 2) Has a sound foundation of knowledge within a chosen field and has achieved some depth and experience of practice in it.
- 3) Possesses the qualities associated with the best in the human spirit: a well-developed sense of judgement, an aesthetic sensibility, and the flexibility and self-confidence to adapt to major change.

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.

VI. Recommended Policies, Program, and Organization

The policies, program, and organization of the MIT residence system should be aligned with the educational outcomes it is expected to deliver. We present here our recommendations to the Chancellor of the policies we believe can best provide the desired experience for our residents, given the opportunities and constraints of this real residence system.

From its very first days, the residence system at MIT has been built upon a mutually fruitful cooperation between the Institute and independent fraternities, sororities, and independent living groups. That cooperation can and must continue. However, it need not and will not continue in exactly the same form that has developed to date.

Our recommendations center around three primary themes. The first, and most expansive, is the crafting of a more directed experience for our freshmen. We offer recommendations on the process of selection of residence halls by incoming freshmen, the role of upperclasspersons in that selection, the creation of targeted programming in the residence halls for first year students, the timing and nature of the recruitment process by FSILG's ("rush"), and the required renegotiation of an undergraduate's residence between the freshman and sophomore year at MIT.

A second theme centers on improving the general undergraduate experience, with attention to the responsibilities and privileges that our students, faculty, staff, and alumni enjoy in creating the experience. A focus here is on establishing the roles the Institute expects each of the various groups to play in the educational experience.

Finally, we acknowledge the lack of substantive attention in this report to the graduate student community. We call on MIT to convene an appropriate body, perhaps similar to the RSSC, to establish appropriate educational outcomes for our graduate students within the residence system, and to recommend an appropriate set of policies.

A. The First Year

The freshman experience at MIT is unique in both the academic and community dimensions of the educational experience. It is a time of extraordinary transition, where freshmen see rapidly expanding opportunities for intellectual pursuit and personal decision-making. It represents the critical first step in the continuous educational process for our undergraduates.

The decision by President Vest to house all freshmen in MIT residence halls, beginning in the fall of 2001, creates a new set of opportunities for a focussed residential experience for our freshmen. It also requires the MIT residence halls and FSILG houses to reconfigure their longstanding and critical cooperation, as well as many of their internal processes which have been built around the current recruitment of freshmen.

1. The First Year Experience

a) Undergraduate Resident Advisors

The active mentoring of freshmen by upperclasspersons is a highly valued experience within the current system for both the freshmen and the upperclasspersons. The FSILG system has been particularly successful in providing this mentoring to its freshmen residents.

In an effort to build upon the best of the FSILG mentoring within the residence halls, we propose adding a set of undergraduate resident advisors to the Housemaster-led residence teams. Each of these upperclasspersons will live among approximately 10 freshmen, and

will have as their primary responsibility the mentoring and coaching of the 10 freshmen in their care. The undergraduate RA's will be a part of the network of assistance provided by the Housemaster, House Manager, and Graduate Resident Tutors and supplemented by the Associate Advisors and MedLinks counselors.

The undergraduate RA will serve in a very specialized role, relative to the much broader responsibilities of the other members of the residence team. MIT's long history of active mentoring by upperclasspersons suggests that this is a role our undergraduates will serve with distinction. We encourage an array of experiments in the selection and training of these RA's, and hope that these efforts will call upon successes within the FSILG's, associate advisor program, and MedLinks efforts, to name a few.

It is not obvious how the RA role will need to be structured to attract the necessary number and quality of upperclasspersons. While financial compensation is one option, it may be more appropriate to instead provide some priority in the housing selection to those persons serving as undergraduate RA's.

It has been suggested to the RSSC by a number of people that restructuring the current role of the GRT might better provide the active mentoring to be provided by the proposed RA. This may be true. It would seem, however, that the upperclassperson/freshman combination is ideal for this mentoring activity. Further, there is reason to believe the RA role is one that many of our undergraduate students would appreciate the opportunity to play.

b) First Year Programs

The decision to house all freshmen within Institute residence halls in 2001 will provide a first opportunity to access all freshmen through residence hall experiences. Those experiences can be both formal and informal, and can be built upon on a remarkable array of formats.

As a simple first step, this fall (September 1999) sees the introduction of a new "Navigating MIT" weekly evening series in Baker dining hall, with a program content aimed primarily at freshmen. The purpose of the series is to provide students the information and support they need to facilitate their transition to the undergraduate experience. A few of the topics this fall will include time management, self-assessment as a first step in career planning, introduction to MIT's many opportunities, and studying for exams.

Similarly, it is possible and appropriate to imagine many of the current "freshman advising seminars" relocating to residence halls for their regular weekly meeting rooms. While a dearth of good meeting spaces exist within the corridors of the "academic" buildings, the residence halls offer many comfortable spaces where freshmen with their advisor and seminar group can begin to explore living and learning within the same physical space. Further, we encourage FSILG's to participate in the programming of the first year in ways that encourage first year students to appreciate the opportunities and advantages of the unique FSILG experience.

Thinking more broadly, the tremendous success of the new Freshman Pre-Orientation Programs suggests that there are many yet untried formats where students, faculty, staff, and alumni can learn from each other in experiences geared toward helping our freshmen adjust to the intellectual and social richness of the MIT environment. A full one-fourth of the entering class of 2003 participated in these programs, which feature subject matter ranging from the strongly academic "Discover Ocean Engineering" to more broadly defined experiences such as the new "Freshman Arts Program".

Finally, we note that this report's call for new educational experiences geared particularly toward freshmen mirrors many other ongoing efforts at MIT. Of particular note are the proposed programs emerging from the Educational Design Project (EDP).

c) First Year Offices

Given the effort to offer directed experiences to freshmen within the residence system, it is reasonable to relocate the traditional freshman services offices to the residence halls. Key offices and professionals for relocation would be those directing Orientation, Freshman Advisor Seminars, freshman counseling, freshman programming, and the Undergraduate RA program.

Selecting the residence hall that serves as the location of these offices will obviously require assessing a variety of logistical constraints and concerns. We note that while Ashdown Hall is and should remain a graduate residence hall (see below), it does provide some very attractive spaces for the freshman offices and for programming. Given the strong interest of graduate students (and primarily Ashdown residents) in contributing to some of the residence hall programming efforts, we suggest Ashdown be considered as an appropriate location.

2. Adjusting the Timing of the First Year

a) The Residence Hall/FSILG Cooperation

The direct participation of the FSILG system in providing the residential needs of a large fraction of MIT undergraduates is and always has been a critical element of the MIT residence system. Today, the 36 residential FSILG's provide 1,491 of a total of 4,104 beds (36%) in the complete system, together housing 94% of the undergraduate population.

Neither President Vest's decision to house freshmen on campus, nor the completion of Residence2001 with its approximately 350 undergraduate beds, will change the critically important role of the FSILG's. Just as before, MIT and the FSILG system must work together to meet the residential needs of our students. What will change, however, is when in the undergraduate experience the nature of the close cooperation is most perceptible.

Our current residence system promises a room to all entering freshmen, but it is a promise MIT can only honor through the active involvement of the FSILG's. Freshmen

arrive for Orientation knowing that they can stay on campus, but they also know (and their parents know) that well over 300 of their classmates must elect to live in an FSILG. There simply are not enough beds within the residence halls. It is a promise, however, that has always been kept because the quality of the cooperation between residence halls and FSILG's is rigorously maintained and because crowding of freshmen has been liberally tolerated.

In the fall of 2001, there will be enough beds in the residence halls to house the freshmen on campus. There will not, however, be enough to house the upperclasspersons. The FSILG's must still be actively supplying approximately 1200 beds, or some of those students must leave the system.

The question therefore becomes "Who now assumes the burden that the freshmen have traditionally carried?" Corollary questions are "How will upperclasspersons be attracted to the FSILG's in sufficient quantity to maintain the critical balance?" and "How does residence selection for freshmen change now that their housing truly is guaranteed?"

We propose policies that address these questions. We do so, however, mindful that these three questions -- regarding the movement of students between their freshman and sophomore years, the recruitment of sophomore residents to the FSILG's, and the selection of residences by freshmen -- are all inextricably linked. We therefore present our proposed policies on these matters all under this heading of "Residence Hall/FSILG Cooperation".

We also make our recommendations while acknowledging that these are by far the most difficult for the committee to agree upon. The members of the committee are not unanimous in support of the recommendations in this section. There is, however, a consensus these recommendations, taken together, represent a thoughtful and workable solution to a very difficult problem.

We recommend that the challenge and consequences of maintaining the balance of the residence halls and the FSILG's will fall upon the rising sophomores. We recommend an FSILG recruitment period that is established through consultation of IFC and MIT, but within which the pledging/affiliation activity is bounded by November 1 and March 31 of the freshman year. And we recommend that freshmen establish their residence hall preferences by July 1 in the summer preceding their arrival.

Freshmen arriving at MIT will be housed in the residence halls. By March 31, each freshman (rising sophomore) will have either identified a FSILG where he or she will be living in the fall, will have lotteried into one of the available upperclassperson rooms within the residence halls where he or she will live beginning that fall (for up to three years), or will exit the residence system beginning that fall.

(1) Rising Sophomores: Renegotiating Residences

The residence hall lottery for rising sophomores will be built upon the determination by ODSUE of the total beds in the residence halls (including crowding, as deemed

appropriate) minus the beds to be occupied by incoming freshmen minus the beds presently occupied by rising juniors and seniors. Those rising juniors and seniors may stay in the residence halls they lotteried into prior to their sophomore year.

It is therefore the norm that students will move between their freshman and sophomore years. We do note, however, that it is entirely possible (and, for some residence halls, even probable) that a rising sophomore might lottery into the opportunity to remain in their current residence hall.

It is also possible that a rising sophomore might be shut out of the residence system as the result of the lottery. It is important to note, however, that it is no more possible for this occur than it has been for freshmen to be shut out in years past. The challenge of the residence hall/FSILG cooperation that was always there (if not somewhat hidden) has simply been shifted from freshmen to sophomores.

In the unlikely event that in a given spring the residence hall/FSILG cooperation does not yield enough spaces for rising sophomores within the MIT residence halls, the Institute may choose to implement an off-campus housing plan that provides living space to rising sophomores who would otherwise be shut out of the system. If this were to be necessary, we offer two simple observations: 1) MIT will have approximately five full months of warning (March 31 to August 31) to secure the necessary alternate housing; and 2) the FSILG community will likely want to work with MIT to consider how the necessarily empty beds within the FSILG's might be used as part of this off-campus housing effort.

We appreciate that it is not at all obvious that rising sophomores (rather than juniors or seniors) should be the class that must maintain the delicate residence hall/FSILG balance. One could argue that seniors are most aware of non-MIT housing options, and are most academically stable to accept any changes in their housing situation. This is probably true. It is also true, however, that the residence hall/FSILG balance must have a large movement of rising sophomores for it to remain stable, and our recommendation adds an important incentive to sophomores to consider the FSILG system.

(2) Rising Sophomores: FSILG Recruitment

The recruitment of rising sophomores to the FSILG system is clearly important for both MIT and the FSILG member units, and is central to maintaining the residence hall/FSILG balance. The timing and nature of the recruitment process is discussed below. That process is one where far more time and information may be made available to both the student and the FSILG than is possible in the current late-August format.

(3) Freshman Residence Hall Preferencing

The decoupling of the freshman year residence hall selection from the upperclassperson residence hall selection, combined with the reformatting of FSILG recruitment to match the extended availability of on-campus freshmen, allows a much simpler preferencing of a residence hall by incoming freshman than is currently practiced. By early June, incoming freshmen will be provided comprehensive descriptions of their residence hall options, including descriptions of the various communities within a residence hall. Those

descriptions might take a number of forms, allowing prospective residents to judge the residences from multiple perspectives. They most surely will rely on a series of different printed and electronic formats.

The central focus of the residence hall descriptions will be an articulation by the resident community of the shared values and expectations of the people of that community. This will require that MIT provide the existing residents wide (but not complete) latitude in communicating honestly with rising freshmen about the character of their houses. Incoming freshmen will use the information available to them to submit preferences for their residence hall for the first year. Assignments to a residence hall will be made by July 1, and the student will be notified.

This process will assign an incoming student to a residence hall, but not to a specific room within that hall or to a roommate. Each residence hall will establish a process for making those assignments during Orientation. That process will reflect the guidelines outlined below, and will be reviewed annually by MIT.

As with any residence system, including our current one, the preferencing / room selection process will leave some freshmen in living environments which they determine to be unsuitable. A liberal inter-residence hall transfer policy will exist at the very beginning of the fall semester that will allow these freshmen to each identify several alternate residence halls into which they would like to move. Obviously, the more residence hall options a freshman provides, the greater probability that he or she will be able to move. The timing of this liberal transfer policy will recognize the importance of having all returning upperclass residents in place before freshmen ultimately assess the suitability of their existing room.

b) Orientation

Beginning in the fall of 2001, we recommend that Orientation will no longer be closely coupled with residence selection/assignment. The full focus of the experience can therefore be shifted toward orienting our newest members of the community to the breadth of opportunities available to them across the educational triad of academics, research, and community. The only remaining residence issue to be resolved during Orientation will be the assignment of the freshman to a specific room in the residence hall and, where applicable, to roommates. This process will likely be accomplished over several evenings within the Orientation schedule.

The recent emergence of exciting Freshman Pre-Orientation Programs, and the great successes of the 1998 and 1999 Orientation programs (vs. the Residence/Orientation programs that preceded them) makes it is easy to be optimistic about what can be accomplished through an Orientation that is exclusively targeted toward orientation.

We stress that a more focussed Orientation does not mean a greater emphasis exclusively on academics. In fact, Orientation needs to actively introduce freshmen to the total community of MIT. The tremendous benefits of the current "rush" programs toward helping students meet each other and upperclasspersons, as well as creating an

atmosphere filled with pure fun, should not be lost. Large time blocks may be reserved in the Orientation schedule for essentially social community-building experiences with many of the same outcomes as today's rush programs. These experiences could and should include opportunities to begin to learn about all of the varied MIT residence communities.

c) Residence Hall Policies and Practices for Freshmen

The process by which individual freshmen select the floor and room in which they live for the first year is one which each residence hall can tailor to best suit the shared values and expectations of the people of the residence hall. We offer the following guidelines to which each process shall adhere:

1. As in the past, the Institute considers it an important part of student self-governance to delegate the process of room assignments to the student governments, so long as the rules promulgated and implemented are consistent with MIT's educational mission and policies.
2. Because cultures and tastes will vary across the houses, room assignment policies will vary across the residences, and rightfully so. Diversity of processes is to be expected and valued.
3. The Institute maintains a set of general standards concerning room assignments that must be maintained, both in the rules and in their implementation. These standards start with MIT's nondiscrimination policy. It is also appropriate for the Institute to articulate other standards that would hold across the system. An example might be a requirement that all freshmen receive a permanent room assignment before the first day of classes. However, the development of these additional standards must be made in consultation with the House governments and should not be made, in normal circumstances, unilaterally or peremptorily.
4. The Houses should regularly publish their room assignment policies and administer them as published. In the normal running of the Houses, the Housemasters, as the Institute's representatives, should be aware of the room assignment rules and how they are implemented, and should serve as the first line of defense against allowing room assignment rules to stray away from Institute policy.
5. "Blackballing" of freshmen in the dormitories cannot be tolerated. However, in those cases where active participation in a community is part and parcel of living there—as in theme houses—the special social contract that defines that community needs to be clearly articulated. Again, in most cases it is appropriate for these rules to be written and implemented locally, with the Housemaster serving as the intermediary between the Institute and the House governments. Only in exceptional cases should the Institute intervene in these local decisions.
6. The floor/hall needs to think critically about how it designates certain rooms for occupancy by freshmen. We have heard from many people, for example, of their concern in a particularly high concentration of freshmen anywhere, and particularly in singles. The floor/hall should also be clear and deliberate in its assignment of certain well-positioned rooms to occupancy by the undergraduate RA's.

7. The existing theme houses (*i.e.*, Chocolate City and the language houses) may conclude internally that the prohibition on freshman "blackballing" or selecting makes it necessary to restrict occupancy of the houses to sophomores, juniors, and seniors only. While we would regretfully accept this conclusion and restriction, we do not believe such a restriction is consistent with the educational outcomes of the MIT residence halls. Therefore, if an existing theme house chooses to deny access to freshmen, then it must also present a plan for moving the theme house out of the MIT residence hall and establishing it as an independent living group. This plan is to be executed in a reasonably timely fashion. This policy underscores the committee's clear distinction between the FSILG member houses and the MIT residence hall communities.

The policies of a given floor should be publicly posted and available, and should be reviewed annually by the floor and by MIT.

We offer additional recommendations on residence hall self-governance in the section below titled "Student Government".

d) FSILG Recruitment

The section above titled "The Residence Hall/FSILG Cooperation" emphasizes our understanding of the critical historical and future importance of a close cooperation between MIT and the FSILG's with the residence system. As the demographic profile of our students changes, and as the needs and expectation of our students and our society shift, we want to maximize the ability of our FSILG member units to respond as they see appropriate to those changes. We therefore propose only the necessary minimum of constraints on the nature of FSILG recruitment in the all freshmen on campus era, and call upon the IFC and MIT to work together to establish a mutually beneficial framework.

Our recommended constraints on the FSILG recruitment process are:

- 1) Bids may be issued no sooner than November 1 of the freshman year of the prospective student.
- 2) No student shall be required to accept a bid less than one week within its issue.
- 3) All bids will have either been accepted or rejected by March 31.

We assume that FSILG member units will use many different formats and venues throughout the freshman year to attract students to their house. Some may simply be great parties, and some activities may be very similar to current "rush" activities. But some may be very different from any activities currently associated with rush. We have every confidence that the residents of the FSILG's will respond to this new recruiting environment with excellence and creativity, and will offer the students (and faculty, staff, and alumni/ae) of MIT wholly new, exciting, and valuable opportunities for community-based learning.

The timing constraints we recommend represent a balance between two forces. First, we appreciate the FSILG's concerns that students must be attracted to the FSILG system

before they become too established in the residence hall environment and culture. We balance this with the clear commitment of MIT to allow incoming freshmen significantly more time, and thereby presumably more information, to consider residential opportunities in the FSILG's.

We do encourage FSILG's to resist in part the temptation to secure a pledge class at the first opportunity, and thereby set pledge acceptance deadlines early in the November - March time window. The required movement of all rising sophomores will be a critical piece of the residence hall/FSILG cooperation, and its influence on the FSILG recruiting process will likely be significant. We hope the IFC, working with MIT, will identify paths that will allow students to make decisions to join individual FSILG's throughout the November - March window.

B. The Undergraduate Experience

1. Roles, Responsibility, and Accountability

The "Characteristics of an Excellent MIT Residence System" that are listed in Section V describe a system that in many respects is very different from the current one. Some of those differences may be addressed through changes such as we have recommended above. But many critical differences ultimately revolve around MIT's expectations regarding the various roles to be played by the students, faculty, staff, and alumni/ae in creating and maintaining the educational experiences within the residence system. That understanding has at its core and at many different levels the questions of "Who is responsible?", "Who has authority?", "Who is accountable?", and "Who has control of the resources for the educational experience we deliver?"

In our many discussions with hundreds of students, faculty, staff, and alumni/ae about our residence system, a fundamental issue is always one of authority, responsibility and accountability. Not only are our students unclear on these matters, so too are our staff and faculty. We would submit that the residence system cannot possibly function well if its contributors do not understand where the various levels of authority, responsibility, accountability, and resource control lie. We further note that the confusion lies not so much in conflicting sets of instructions, but in whole areas where no instruction has been given. This must change.

The community universally looks to the Chancellor, to the Dean of Students and Undergraduate Education, and to the leadership of the Faculty to resolve these issues. We add our call that these matters need to be addressed if MIT is committed to the triad-based educational experience described in the Task Force report.

2. Resource Allocation

The human, financial, and physical resources that are allocated to the MIT residence system are not sufficient. All metrics that we have seen in which MIT is compared to similar institutions offer the same message. MIT is trying to run an excellent system on a shoestring. It is a credit to the resourcefulness of our students, staff, and faculty (particularly our Housemasters) that the system enjoys the successes it does offer. A

review of the indicators in Section V (and particularly the physical structures indicators), however, makes clear that the residence system is woefully underfunded.

As pressing as these resource problems are, however, they can only be resolved in a context in which faculty and staff professionals are personally responsible to produce excellent results within the residence system. Resources tend to flow to those areas upon which professional advancement depends. Where the delivery of an excellent educational product within the residence system becomes a primary metric of advancement, we anticipate additional resources will be made available.

3. Assessment

In this report, we identify a number of issues that need to be addressed, and make concrete recommendations for improving residence life. We list many measurable indicators to reflect our understanding of an excellent residence system.

In this time of change, it is appropriate that we work to develop a baseline of where our system is today, and how it is likely to change in the coming years. We recommend that the implementation of this report include a strong commitment to periodic assessment. The first step will be to administer a survey this spring that both allows comparison of our program to that of other institutions, and that evaluates our residential experience with respect to our desired outcomes.

As the system continues to change, it will be necessary to perform ongoing assessment that measures progress with respect to the set of indicators. We recommend that MIT commit to the use of professional assessment tools and personnel to regularly evaluate the extent to which the residence system delivers the educational experiences necessary to achieve the objectives articulated by the Task Force.

A standing committee should be charged to oversee this assessment process, and to make recommendations for changes to policies, program, and organization in accordance to the results of the assessment activities. That standing committee may be an existing one or may need to be created. It most surely should have a membership that is broadly representative of the students, faculty, staff, and alumni/ae of the MIT community.

4. Student Government

The changing landscape of the MIT residence system may require student governments to reassess their objectives and the services they provide to their constituents. These governments cannot accurately reassess their position, however, without a well articulated set of expectations and limits from MIT. The Institute owes its students a clear set of boundaries, and the real flexibility to craft appropriate experiences within those boundaries.

When MIT has established these boundaries, we invite the student governments to take a thorough look at their organization and constitution. The membership, objectives and outcomes for the residence system itself have changed significantly over the past twenty

years, and we encourage each government to review its structure and its ability to serve its constituency.

5. Transitional Support for the FSILG System

The fall of 2001 will see a major shift in resident recruitment processes for the FSILG member units. MIT should be expected to and has pledged to aid the FSILG's in that transition.

Our recommendations are twofold and both offer a financial support structure that phases out over five years. First, we recommend a financial incentive program to attract MIT graduate students to otherwise vacant beds in the FSILG member unit. Beginning in the fall of 2001, MIT will reimburse a resident graduate student 80% of the fixed cost of that student's bed in an FSILG. (The FSILG will be paid 100% of the fixed cost by the graduate student.) The FSILG has total control over which, if any, graduate students are given this residence opportunity. The subsidy will decline 10% each year, over a period of five years. (That is, Year 1-80%, Year 2-72%, Year 3-65%, Year 4-58%, Year 5-52%, Year 6-0%). The fixed cost of a vacant bed will be established through negotiation of each individual FSILG with MIT.

Alternatively, an FSILG may elect to keep a vacant bed empty. For these empty beds, MIT will reimburse an FSILG 60% of its fixed cost, with a 10% reduction each year for five years.

We note that situations must be avoided in which MIT is subsidizing an FSILG for an empty bed while simultaneously requiring upperclasspersons to leave the system due to an overdemand for beds in the residence halls. Avoiding these situations requires that MIT and the FSILG system work together. There needs to exist a willingness on the part of individual FSILG's to consider how they might house graduate and/or undergraduate members of the MIT community who are not otherwise affiliated with the house.

In a longer term transitional matter, we recommend that MIT work with interested Boston and Brookline-based FSILG members to facilitate their moving across the river to establish on-campus or near-campus Cambridge locations. The significant distances that separate the main campus and cross-river FSILG's make MIT's development of an integrated educational environment of living and learning more difficult. Further, a number of Boston-based FSILG's are experiencing changing neighborhood expectations and are not as welcome as they once were.

We invite the cross-river FSILG's to consider how their long-term viability might be enhanced through a move that allows them to reset their physical facilities in a location more closely aligned with MIT. Of particular interest would be housing systems that allow for the natural changes in population in a given FSILG by creating adjustable boundaries between adjacent FSILG units.

C. The Graduate Student Community

The graduate students of MIT are extraordinary contributors to the residence system. Approximately 32% of registered graduate students live in MIT-affiliated housing, occupying nearly 1500 beds in 6 residence halls and apartment buildings and providing 72 graduate students to act as advisors-in-residence in the undergraduate residence system. The conversations between the members of the RSSC and the residents of Ashdown House (in particular) demonstrated the passion that many graduate students have for contributing to and benefiting from the residence experience.

Regrettably, we were not able to make substantive contributions to improving the graduate student residence experience, as we had hoped. While there are some commonalities between the experience of first year graduate students and freshmen, the overall needs of the graduate and undergraduate populations are too different for the RSSC to speak effectively about graduate student residences.

We therefore recommend that a new group be constituted immediately to evaluate the specific characteristics of the graduate residence system. In particular, this group would be called upon to assess changes in organization, programming, and facilities which are necessary to meet the standard for education of graduate students as articulated by the Task Force. Appointment of this group would be by the Chancellor and would necessarily require strong student, faculty, staff, and alumni/ae involvement. It seems clear that this group would require a broad representation of graduate students in order to recommend substantive changes to address the particularly diverse residence needs of our graduate students.

While the issues surrounding the graduate student residence needs are complex, there do remain some simple and obvious truths. First, new graduate residences must be built for MIT to even approach its goal of housing 50% of the graduate population. Second, existing graduate residences must remain continuously designated as graduate student housing if the Institute is to even hold its current 32% housing position and to have any hope of building and creating lasting graduate communities.

VII. Process

The RSSC conducted a three-phase open process that spanned January - September 1999, with each successive phase designed to build on the output of the previous phase.

1. Phase I: IAP Design Contest

A team-based all-MIT design contest was conducted January 19 - 29, 1999, in which each participating team was charged to develop and present a comprehensive design for the MIT residence system. 11 teams, with a total of over 80 members, presented proposals that featured a remarkable range of ideas and innovations. Students were represented on 8 teams, faculty on 4 teams, staff/administration on 3 teams, and alumni on 6 teams.

A brief sampling of a few of the proposed concepts includes:

- 1) Develop an intentional first year experience, featuring First Year Houses

- Four Freshman Residence Halls
 - Each hall is 75% freshmen
 - Remaining 25% consist of upper-class and graduate student mentors
 - Each hall has dining facilities
 - Residence-based freshman advising
 - Required moves at the end of the first year
- 2) Create Two MIT owned and built communities in Cambridge for all FSILG's
 - One "on-campus" (e.g., Vassar Street)
 - One "off-campus" (e.g., Mass. Ave., near WILG/ADP)
 - Both built for FSILG's, but also integrated mixture of grad students, junior faculty, transitional faculty
 - Balance-sheet neutral
 - 3) Greatly expand Pre-Orientation offerings
 - Add to the current Discover Ocean Engineering, Freshman Leadership Program, and Freshman Service Program opportunities
 - 4) Create a Faculty/Staff Fellows program for the Residence Halls
 - Every faculty and staff member will be affiliated with a residence hall or cluster
 - 5) Establish a comprehensive "Student Development Program"
 - Allow students to self-assess their individual progress toward their development in many dimensions of the "whole student".
 - 6) Develop a series of "Theme Houses"
 - Offer existing FSILG's an opportunity to affiliate as part of the residence hall system
 - 7) Require a "leadership" credit as a GIR, as overseen by a "Leadership Development Office" within the residential system
 - 8) Create a "Cooking Shop" (similar to the present Hobby Shop) where students will be given the tools and instruction for cooking and dining

It is useful to note that a primary theme that was common to nearly every proposal was the call for increased support to and for the residents of the system.

2. Phase II: Steering Committee Synthesis and Framework Development

Building on the array of outstanding concepts proposed by the 11 IAP design contest teams, the Steering Committee synthesized those ideas and thoughts emerging from committee discussion to form a comprehensive framework. That framework, presented as the "Phase II Status Report" (<http://web.mit.edu/residence/systemdesign/phase2.html>), served as the guide to the community discussion of Phase III.

In assembling the Status Report, the Steering Committee met extensively throughout February, March, and much of April. Emphasis was placed on creating a sufficiently broad and not overly constrained series of policies, procedures, and structures that were consistent with the values set forth in the Task Force report and further articulated by the Steering Committee. These values were stated in Appendix A of the Status Report.

3. Phase III: Community Discussion and Feedback to the Evolving Proposal
May – August 1999 was reserved for community discussion of the Phase II document, and for using that feedback to modify and further develop that framework into this comprehensive proposal to the Chancellor.

The RSSC had seven open community feedback meetings in May (with published minutes), and had meetings over the summer with the five presidents of the major student governments, alumni/ae, the residence hall teams, and representatives of the faculty. In total, we estimate during Phase III we met with personally or heard from in writing from approximately 300 persons.

We also received and published on our web site full alternate proposals from students. Of particular historical significance for MIT was the "Unified Student Response" proposal that carried the signatures of the five presidents of the Undergraduate Association, the Graduate Student Council, the Interfraternity Council, Dormitory Council, and the Association of Student Activities. This is the first time that the presidents of these five organizations have spoken with one voice, and we were grateful for their thoughtful input.

4. Final Recommendation to the Chancellor

The draft release of this document on September 7, 1999 represented the culmination of Phases I - III, and hopefully reflected in part the thoughtful input of the many hundreds of persons with whom we have spoken. Following the release of that draft report, we again held community meetings during September to accept the feedback of community members. We collected and published that feedback, and used it to modify and clarify the draft document to produce this final report, dated October 6, 1999.

We believe that none of our recommendations in this final report have changed significantly from those of the draft document in September. While we certainly considered a range of possible substantial changes to our recommendations that reflected many of the concerns we heard in the past month, the committee chose to further refine the system that was described in September. In this final document, however, we do hope that we have clarified and more completely described certain recommendations or aspects of the draft report that the members of the community had found particularly unclear or incomplete.

We submit this final report and the minutes of our community feedback sessions in September 1999 to the Chancellor. We will ask the Chancellor, in consultation with the Dean of Students and Undergraduate Education, to make prompt decisions regarding the

implementation of our recommendations. We appreciate that our recommendations are certainly controversial for many, but we hope that the openness of our process, and our willingness to repeatedly be public with our thoughts has been helpful.

In submitting this report, we note that a number of recommendations in the Phase II Status Report are not included. Most notably, we make no recommendation for a primarily first year residence hall, and we certainly do not recommend an exchange of Ashdown House and MacGregor Hall as graduate and undergraduate residences. In both cases, we received compelling feedback to convince us that those Phase II recommendations were unwise.

We also note that this report makes no recommendations regarding the partnering of off-campus houses with the residence system to create off-campus "Theme Houses" where freshmen are permitted to live. As we considered this issue, it became increasingly clear that such a partnership between a house and MIT could be negotiated quite independently of this committee, and did not require any change in policy. It would require, however, that a house become in effect a residence hall, and thereby become a fully MIT-administered residence. If houses are interested in such a highly constrained relationship, we invite them to contact the Office of the Dean of Students and Undergraduate Education.

Finally, we note that the list of "Values" upon which we built the Phase II Status Report does not appear here. That list has been subsumed by our characteristics and indicators of an excellent MIT residence system. This current approach provides a more direct connection between the policies we propose and the outcomes we believe will be obtained.

VIII. Acknowledgements

The Residence System Steering Committee had the following membership throughout its 10 months of regular meetings:

Chair	William J. Hecht '61 Executive Vice President MIT Alumni/ae Association
Students	Jennifer Berk '01 Elisha Hopson '00 Eric Liu '00 Abby Pelcyger '01
Alumni/ae	Erin Hester '82 Stephen Stuntz '67

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Karen Gleason '82
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Process Manager

Kirk Kolenbrander
Associate Dean, ODSUE

Each of the members is thanked for their thoughtful and difficult work.

The members of the committee sincerely thank Ms Leda Babin, Administrative Assistant in the MIT Alumni/ae Association, for her tireless and very capable administrative assistance. Her cheerful support of the committee's efforts is gratefully acknowledged.

We also thank the hundreds of MIT community members who took the time to share with us their thoughts and ideas for how the residence system should be crafted. Beginning with the all-MIT design experience in January, this has been a process that has greatly benefited from the constant input from our students, faculty, staff, alumni/ae, and parents. We are grateful.