Committee on Student Life (CSL)
Friday, December 2, 2011
Room 12-196 12pm – 2pm
Minutes taken by Lisa Stagnone

Present: Alex Slocum, Barbara Baker, Andy Barlow, Danielle Guichard-Ashbrook, Katie Vogel, Phuree (Will) Smittinet, Karen Anne Sittig

Guests: Julie Norman (Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education Director, Office of Undergraduate Advising and Academic Programming)

Topic: Orientation Update

Committee on Orientation came into creation as of 2010 as a recommendation by the Chancellor’s office. (http://due.mit.edu/initiatives/review-committee-orientation)

Committee consists of

- Six members who are MIT Faculty, Housemasters, or both (with special consideration for those who serve as faculty Housemasters)
- 6 student representatives (nominated through the UA nominations process and representing the UA, DormCon and FSILGs; in order to have continuity, this will not include current seniors)
- Senior Associate Dean of DUE and Director of the Office of Undergraduate Advising and Academic Programming
- The Associate Dean of New Student Programming
- The Senior Associate Dean for Students
- The Senior Associate Dean for Residential Life and Dining (DSL)

Spring of 2010 is when stakeholders were brought in to discuss, review and assess the needs of the first year student experience. We discussed the mission, reviewed everything, and made recommendations to improve the experience.

Over the summer we broke into five-sub-committees:

Assessment Team: Chair Charles Stuart, Liz Young. They evaluated everything and then surveyed the students at three different times during the process. At the end, they surveyed the entire class. Results gave plenty of valuable data.

Sub-Committee on Programs: Rachel Meyer ’12 (Sr SAS President), Julie Norman and Professor John Essignmann.
Sub-committee on FSILG’s / Rush with Barbara Baker, Kim Sparling and Professor June Matthews.

Sub-committee on Freshman Pre-Orientation Programs, Professor Chris Capazolla, Liz Young and Tim Stumbaugh.

Sub-Committee on REX & Housing led by Nina David Millis, Henry Humphreyes and Patrick Hulin. These were focusing on student input.

The first forum, prior to Thanksgiving, 40 people attended consisting of GRT’s, RA’s Living Groups, Advisors to Sororities and Fraternities and some freshmen. By the second Forum attendance doubled. Rush and recruitment was heavily talked about. Public Service, City Days, FPOPs experience. FPUP urban program value was discussed. A substantial number of alumni attended the second forum. The focus was on Rush recruitment and building communities was highlighted.

Expenses were reviewed. The lack of payment from freshmen and upperclassmen during the month of August was identified as well as staff housing assignments for early returns, REX, student amenities. We need to capture this. It’s a loss of revenue. When you qualify all of this, Orientation is expensive.

We are attempting to look at who is participating in Orientation. Motivation and purpose versus what is happening now is being compared. The last time this was evaluated was in 2002.

How do we build community, build a neighborhood? Five sub reports are expected at the end of December. We anticipate an over arching recommendation. Then it will be reviewed in January by Eric Grimson, Dan Hastings and Chris Colombo. They will decide by February 1st what they need to implement in August. Some may not happen this year but transition after the fact.

Group Discussion:
Karen Sittig ’12 said that students want to know when another forum will be coming up. Do you happen to know when it will be? Students are also happy hearing how RUSH / Recruitment is being approached and feel they are being heard.

Julie Norman stated that it’s hard to say if / when another forum will happen. That will be the decision of the chair, Professor Roe Smith. If it were to happen who would be here December / January for it? The Idea Bank is one way to get your concerns addressed and make suggestions. People feel that things are good and the feedback is positive. There are no glaring problems.

Karen, who lives at East Campus, stated that from what she’s seen students can’t retain all the information provided at once. It’s a challenge because when they arrive here they are given so
much information it’s hard to decide what is critical and essential at that time. She suggested that conversing through living groups may be a way to go.

Will Smittinet, Grad Student, asked how long Orientation went on for. Last year, it began the Sunday after the President’s Convocation and ends when rush starts Saturday morning. Sunday afternoon is the math exam. Monday and Tuesday’s testing. Thursday is advising and registration. Friday is for all the programs that need to get in (Sexual Assault, Alcohol, City Days, Health and Welfare, Residential Activities. That’s in between the Women’s programs, LGBT...). Friday night is big attendance events that drawer 95% attendance. Athletes and International Students arrive earlier that week. By noon on Saturday, everyone needs to be on campus.

Julie stated that all Orientation subject matter is available via a booklet Hitchhiker’s Guide with information and schedules and can be located in the dorms and around campus. MIT does a good job getting everything put out there for the students. Everything is available online.

Karen stated that the system for getting information out there is working. Sometimes it’s difficult to be everywhere. We don’t want programs cancelled due to low attendance. How can that issue be addressed? Julie stated that we don’t want certain events cancelled because students couldn’t attend the event. The community value is considered. We will look at situations to see why attendance was low. We will re-evaluate everything. We realize that everything is important to everyone.

The next CSL Meeting is scheduled for February 17th 2012. The topics are Title IX, Civility and Academic Integrity. Our speakers at this time are Mark DiVincenzo, Office of the General Counsel who will present on Title IX. Ruthy Rosenberg from the Office of Student Citizenship will speak regarding Civility. We will also hear from Danielle Guichard-Ashbrook regarding Academic Integrity/ International and Cultural issues.