Welcome Chancellor Grimson. As background information, this is the Committee on Student Life’s third meeting for this year. We wanted to invite you to address us, as we have some returning members and some new members. We’d like to get your view on CSL to help us understand where the institute would like us to go. We have the charge to the committee, and we met last year and discussed a range of issues. What else can we do? We’d like to hear it from top management. How do you view us? What topics would you like us to see us discuss?

Chancellor Grimson explained his view of the structure of the committee and then listed some things we can do:

- **Key goal of committee is to have informed discussions about topics of concern for student life.** We have several standing committees that deal with student issues and sometimes the subject matter will crossover from one committee to another. Need effectiveness in bringing issues to the attention of faculty. You’ll need to figure out which issues fall under your concerns. Sometimes things fall under two committees together such as CUP (Committee on the Undergraduate Program) and CSL. For example freshmen advising: Is it serving its purpose? Could this be improved. Would encourage you to talk to departments, student groups to get sense of effectiveness of advising? Do we need to change this? While some issues are challenging, in the past, the faculty have acted to make significant changes, e.g., pass no record. Would encourage you to consider all aspects of student life, and to bring critical issues to me.

- **Generic request: Keep your ears to the ground.** You will hear of important topics from student groups, from student reps, from interactions with other faculty. Please bring things to us that you think are important.

- **We may come to YOU with things we want discussed.**
  - Example: Advising
    
    Think about advising. In Many departments advising works well, but it is not uniform. And for freshman, advising may vary greatly. It’s hard to ask for faculty to do more. However 70% of freshmen are mentored by advisors who are not faculty. Many of these staff do a great job, but when it comes to advising and fostering intellectual life of students as
they make decisions for their futures, we need faculty involved. CUP is already looking at this issue, but CSL could help.

One option is to look at best practices across departments: How many graduate students have an academic advisor who is not their research advisor? Should students have more than one faculty member to whom they can turn for advice? How can we encourage departments to initiate this?

- Example: Student Activities. This is a great asset of MIT’s student life, but it is often loosely governed. We have roughly 500 clubs; how well are they being monitored? Do they need to be monitored? Most activities don’t have a faculty liaison or someone they can bring questions to. Should they?

One thing I’d like to draw to your attention is the program that was rolled out yesterday, *MIT Together*. This came out of a task force looking at students’ difficulties and student support services. We have created a website [http://together.mit.edu/](http://together.mit.edu/) that is a single portal to all support options for students, with subpages for undergrads, grads, parents, faculty. We are pursuing a publicity campaign to draw attention to the issues of student support, and this website: we have posters around campus, door hangers on student rooms. We want this to be visible to students. Please take a look at it and give me your feedback later in the term. We want to educate students on all of the resources available, and welcome advice on how to do this.

**Questions:**

**Chancellor was asked about MITx and edX: what can you tell us?**

This is a major opportunity for MIT, and its partners in Harvard and Berkeley. We have the chance to shape and drive the future of higher education. There are three goals for us:

- Strengthen residential experience for our students, by enabling faculty to use online tools for a better educational experience.
- Use our open-source platform to create a unique opportunity to let learners around the world experience an MIT quality educational experience
- Learn about learning. Mine the wealth of data obtained from online subjects to learn how students learn, and use that knowledge to improve how we teach both on campus and online

We expect faculty to try a range of options: Flipped classroom model, blended models, and modules in courses. Not only should this let students personalize how they learn, it will also make it easier when students are away (due to personal reasons or for academic opportunities) to stay connected with a subject. If this is available for them to use, it helps.

**You are a good teacher in the classroom. This new way of teaching is different. Will there be limitations on some courses? What’s the bigger scope? How do we break it down? Automate it?**
We need to separate the MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) from the experience of a student here on campus. It takes a lot of work to capture the lectures effectively and to be sure that assignments can be put into a form conducive for online delivery. Some subjects will fit well with this model; others won’t. Faculty need to remember that not everything needs to be converted to an online form, especially when we focus on the experience of our residential based students.

I can see students turn in problem sets. It gets returned in two weeks. Students may or may not look at it. This is a place where online tools can really help. A problem with standard problem sets is that students don’t get quick feedback, and by the time they get the problem set returned, they have lost the context in which they did the work. Online is instant. You get immediate feedback. So this will be potentially very valuable for faculty members and students.

It seems like MIT faculty are in an arms race to get the attention of students. If they don’t give enough problems, the students don’t have an interest to get it done. It’s a competition to get their interest to actually do the work assigned. Everyone’s handing out a lot of work. It always seems that students are working all the time. How much can you learn? Flipped classrooms – are they lowering the workload? They still have problem sets to do and look at videos. I’d like to do something about this.

I agree. Administration has to take a role, together with CSL and CUP. We need to remind faculty about expectations in classes, and about ensuring that workload matches the subject description.

Take for example physics. Students need to do the labs. The flipped classes concern me. We have lectures and experiments. Lectures have proven not effective for students, although hands on labs are. How can we improve the teaching in these subjects? We can provide funding and links to staff with experience in this domain. Resources are available to faculty through my office. Tell us what your needs are. If you don’t know, we will work with you.

I have general concerns as to development with MOOCs, which makes it so professors aren’t updating problem sets. And, after talking to professors, hands-on work has decreased in lab. They are going to digital and virtual. At what point do we refocus on labs? OEIT (The Office of Educational Innovation and Technology) has provided DUE with tools and resources to help with this. As far as updating course material, we are working with departments on this issue. In general, we need to preserve a hands-on experience whenever it makes sense. We expect that departments will have expertise in determining how best to balance hands on experiences with online simulations and experiments.

We need to focus on learning. How it’s accomplished. One advantage of the online tools is that we can use them to help identify better teaching practices. We should be able to mine the online data to isolate areas of confusion common to students; and we should be able to use the data to identify what guidance works best in
clarifying concepts. We can also use the data to isolate key concepts in the material, which will help guide the improvement in how we teach and how we present material to students.

I understand the charge of the committee. I’ve been on the committee for a couple of years now. I’m thinking, what is MIT getting out of this time? Is it being used right? The students are important to me. I like what I’m hearing from you. Having feedback from you is important. Knowing what’s on your mind is good. Have we implemented changes? Figuring out our relationship with your office would be helpful.

I need to bring topics to you. You need to bring me topics and concerns as well. What are you hearing that is concerning to students? What impacts them? By collaborating, my office can work effectively with the faculty committees to identify key opportunities and to improve the system.

From what I see, a key part of our committee is general oversight of student life. We are checks and balances in the system. We can check in with other committees to provide oversight. Groups will come to us, as with GSC, in the past, to check in with topics and then, later present the topic. We review things and offer insight. We’ve had other committees come to us.

Lizhong can take things that are important to you, to the faculty as a whole, through the faculty Chair. By coordinating topics with other relevant committees, CSL can serve as a funnel for monitoring and improving student life at MIT.