November 29, 2010

Dear Students:

I'm writing to present a modified version of the House Dining program, reflecting both ongoing input from students and the accelerated completion of our newest House Dining residence, Fariborz Maseeh Hall.

Dining is a complicated conversation at MIT because of the variety of needs, opinions, and preferences on the topic. Nonetheless, recent student questions and concerns centered on several consistent themes: Students who chose their dorms before this year had different dining expectations and so see the plan as an abrupt change. Whether students see the plan as a good value hinges on both cost and flexibility. And especially at non-dining dorms and FSILGs, some students believe the plan would erode community.

After weighing these concerns and consulting with the House Dining Advisory Group (HDAG), we have modified the House Dining program. As a direct response to several thoughtful, productive ideas put forth by students in House Dining communities, rather than implement the entire program at once, we will phase in the new meal plan over three years, offering current juniors and sophomores in House Dining residences a transitional plan with a lower total cost.

Moreover, Maseeh Hall and its sizeable dining facility at the center of campus will naturally expand the options we can provide to students. The full program now offers a range of meal plans that provide complete flexibility for Maseeh residents—and other students who choose to upgrade or to enroll voluntarily—to eat any meal up to their weekly total as breakfast, brunch, lunch, or dinner.

You may read full details on the House Dining Review website.
http://studentlife.mit.edu/house-dining-program

Over the last 20 years, MIT has repeatedly attempted to improve its dining system; each time, the effort has run aground because the community failed to strike a workable balance among competing priorities such as choice, flexibility, and quality. The time has come for the kind of transformative change that will give House Dining a serious new chance at success. Various communities at MIT take great pride in how their approach to dining helps strengthen their local culture. Along with the students and Housemasters on HDAG, we have the same goal for the House Dining communities, and we're convinced that this new dining program will help achieve that aim.

Sincerely,

Chris Colombo
Dean for Student Life