Housing Strategy Group
December 12, 2010, 11am-12pm, 4-110

In attendance: vrajesh (VM), brianjm (BM), tgearty (TG), spatocco (BS), colins (DC), ecolmbo (CC), humphrhe (HH), crj226 (CJ), tschenk (TS), arayo (AR), jdsy (JS), rgmark (RM)

An asterisk followed by parentheses in the notes below indicate editors’ notes and are included to clarify the meaning of sections that may otherwise be confusing or ambiguous. Minutes were taken by Vrajesh Modi, edited by Vrajesh Modi and Henry Humphreys, and reviewed by the committee.

Summer 2010 RA Program Results
• DC: We have Brian Morrison, RLA, who took care of RAs this past summer; helpful to see how productive it was for students.
• BM: Have handout – I was the RLA who supervised RA program last summer.
• CC: For public consumption?
• BM: Yes.
• TG: Please send electronically.
• BM: Will do.
• CC: Vrajesh has agreed to take minutes – will send out to committee to review, will give a deadline, and then we’ll get them posted.
• BM: Three primary points that we focused on, plus results of end of summer survey; (1) Changed recruitment and selection process – this year, saw it important to give every summer resident opportunity, so considered application, interview process, and houseteam recommendations; 170 applications, 35 students offered interviewed; hired 18 summer RAs; (2) able to bring much more programmatic focus, rather than just risk management.
• AR: Official responsibilities of RAs?
• BM: 3rd point – consists of 5-10 hours per week on average; majority of focus was on first 4-6 weeks – social events where people could develop common interests; afterwards, became self-sustaining thing. Pages 2-3 … end of summer results – 174 responses (37% of summer residents); on 9 of 10 questions about satisfaction, students generally responded positively; in the last part of the handout, tried to summarize short-answer feedback; on the second page, ranked the total of each of the questions, in terms of positive response – most positive w.r.t. RA’s ability to communicate rules and expectations; any questions?
• TG: New vs. Returning?
• BM: Student who did not live in that dorm during the previous semester.
• BS: Anything surprising or unexpected?
• BM: Communication of rules and expectations at the top – expected more resistance, especially in East Campus, but went well.
• BS: Neutral considered as positive?
• BM: No.
• CC: Data on what people are doing over the summer?
• BM: No, but people have to pick one of three things: UROP, working, or other involvement in MIT, can’t remember specific.
• BS: Non-MIT students allowed?
BM: No, all MIT students; not necessarily spring, but eligible for housing in fall.
TG: 28 days program?
BM: Week-by-week checklist to build community – learn first and last names, come up with list of standards posted, risk management, emergency exits, fire extinguishers … basically a step-by-step checklist of how to build community.
BS: Send out?
BM: Sure – to committee.
CC: GRTs?
DC: Off for summer.
CC: Can think about whether we want to incorporate; some of GRTs have come and asked about whether they can be involved, especially since they know the buildings and the community; has to be voluntary.
BM: Had several GRTs who were involved informally.
DC: You’ll notice that compared to past summers, reduced the number of RAs, down from 24.
BM: Ratio this year was 1:40.
VM: How many RAs?
DC: 18.
VM: Also fewer students this summer, though.
DC: By consolidating, we were able to make placement of RAs more efficiently.
BM: RAs used to have risk manager role.
CC: Sure that Dennis and Henry will look at this as they develop programs for next summer.

Summer 2011 Dormitory Closings
DC: Second piece – recommendations for next summer – East Campus on east side, and MacGregor on west side; conferences for halves in Burton Conner and McCormick, because with Maseeh opening this fall, having east tower of McCormick open may be problematic; in Burton Conner, will open Conner side, so we will still have cost savings; in MacGregor, it’s almost all singles, which is something that students are often looking for; also kitchens in MacGregor. Buildings that we’re doing primary construction – New House getting a new fire alarm system, sprinkler upgrades, new emergency generator; A/C system needs to be replaced; since Next House is going to be closed, will go back into 28 bathrooms and finish them, bring them up to the state that they need to be in. In other buildings, do some good cleaning, painting, carpet replacement; in Senior House, will replace furniture – desks and desk chairs – manager has been working with students in that building; on the agenda, we also have moving and storage …
CC: Recommendations for students … any concerns?
CJ: Main concern was from Senior House – wants desk workers in dorms for safety issues; we explained that it’s preferential treatment.
DC: Can’t do it just for Senior House, would have to do it for everyone; did not completely fill Senior House last summer, but intention is to fill it this summer; last summer, a lot of their desk workers lived in Boston; we may need to look into what are the services.
AR: Understand the point about preferential treatment; but there is an alternative – say that we will consider reasonable proposals from any dorm, if people can satisfy certain conditions – space that wouldn’t be used for guests, anyway, and not cost university extra.
• DC: In long-term, will be marketing to fill building; can’t give up right to an RA, because they’re there for a risk-management purpose as well.
• AR: Thinking that this would take that into account – when there isn’t additional space, proposals are turned down.
• DC: Their recommendation was that desk captain be trained; don’t think that it’s fair.
• HH: Was talking to Dormcon – as a general procedure, never put students with conference groups, in particular, different expectations about noise levels and access to space; to avoid conflicts, better to keep them separated; older groups don’t want that, and not fair to students to tell them to lower music and TV at 10pm.
• CC: Other concerns?
• DC: Next step on the agenda – moving and storage – will need to be figured out once students get back in February
• TG: When we did Cookies and Conversation, we got a few questions about summer housing closures; when can we announce these closings?
• DC: Our concern was that it’s so late on the semester.
• CC: perhaps make announcement in early February.
• VM: If we’ve made a decision, we should announce it – understand that it’s right before finals, but alternative is to wait on announcing a decision that’s already made.
• CC: Would rather have whole package including information about moving and storage.
• VM: I think people would rather know whether their dorm will be closed sooner rather than later.
• CJ: Want to be sure that when we announce to students, we have the whole package.
• CC: Other issues?
• CJ: When Senior House brought proposal to Dormcon, East Campus supported it.
• CC: Other presidents?
• CJ: No comment.
• CC: Want committee to think about it; anything else?
• VM: I don’t think the subcommittee agreed on, in the future, how rigidly we should separate students and conference groups, versus being more flexible.
• CJ: I’m under the impression that this is the way that things are going to be, going forward.
• HH: As a policy, this is how it should be; based on experience of running summer conference programs.
• CC: Vrajesh, your point is that it should be discussed every year.
• VM: Yes, special cases should be considered.
• DC: We’ll be rotating where buildings are closed.
• HH: Important to give buildings a rest – if buildings are constantly used, they wear out more quickly and it reduces their lifetime.

New Business
Fines
• BS: Rumors – changes in billing procedures?
• DC: SidPac and the Warehouse – desk fines – talked about it at the Housemaster breakfast; if we can’t resolve it, we’ll try to come up with something internal.
• DC: Student leaders brought up concerns about having to micromanage.
Furnishings

- TS: Recently, questions about furnishings for people that are here for a short amount of time; having to purchase furniture; don’t know whether there’s possibility of rental of family units. *(this section pertains to furnishings for family units in particular. There are already many singles dorms for grad students with furniture.)*
- DC: We don’t furnish Eastgate, Westgate, and Edgerton; decided to furnish Tang in ‘90s; had talked years ago, but huge expense.
- TS: Even if it’s a small subset, I think it’d be acceptable.
- CC: Probably what Dennis and Henry should discuss is what cost would be to students, and then also take into consideration what the expectations are; I know furnishing is expensive, and once Institute starts buying, all kinds of restrictions.
- RM: If you have that kind of a turnover, should set up a system where you put stuff in storage, and then when you get stuff back from storage, you can also select furniture.
- DC: Students sell among themselves — constantly seeing that going on in family housing.
- HH: Basically, what you’re taking about is where they could rent furniture for a period of time?
- TS: Yes; but people don’t want to spend a lot of money; people end up going to Ikea.
- HH: There are companies in Boston that do corporate rental, but if we could get good terms for graduate students, e.g. Cort.
- CC: Suspect that you want to look at this, talk to students in family housing, and see if you can come up with proposal to address concerns; any other new business?

Phoenix Group / New Ashdown

- BS: Phoenix Group moving out of Ashdown – repurposing of former space?
- DC: Will begin talking with students about it next week.
- BS: Open spaces?
- DC: We took bedrooms and turned them into lounges; they will go back.

Safety in Northwest Corridor

- CC: What else?
- JS: Safety in Northwest Corridor; something that has come up has been lighting along Albany Street, and railway crossing; all those buildings are owned by MIT.
- DC: Roger brought up at Housemasters’ coffee; Cheryl Vossmer measured lights and had them fixed; also need to look at what is code, versus what is needed.
- CC: Since there is information being gathered, once they complete that report, we can bring in people from facilities.
- AR: Had a chat with [John DiFava] about this issue – putting in police posts, etc.
- BS: We are meeting with police and DiFava, so would recommend that it be an agenda item; student survey almost complete.

Railroad Crossing

- DC: Looks like crossing along railroad will start probably in March, and take 3 months – going across railroad, landscaping, etc.
- BS: Noise?
- DC: Not worse than now.
HH: Who will be overseeing?
DC: Dick Amster’s group.
CC: To clarify, authority will be with Dick Amster’s group; I want commitment from someone else, not from Dennis; important to hear from people who have responsibility; agree that work shouldn’t start at 7am. Anything else? Thank you for your hard work; happy holidays.