

# GRADUATE STUDENT HOUSING WORKING GROUP: ANNUAL UPDATE 2023–2024

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## Introduction

In response to recommendations from the [Graduate Student Housing Working Group's Report to the Chancellor \(August 2018\)](#), Housing & Residential Services (HRS) has continued its work to improve MIT's graduate student residential experience. The Graduate Housing Working Group (GHWG), formed in accordance with the 2018 Report recommendation, continues to bring together stakeholders from across campus to ensure that the Institute is well-positioned to evaluate and respond effectively to the housing needs of MIT's graduate student community.

Tremendous progress has been made in meeting key goals for graduate housing: The 2017 commitment to expand graduate housing capacity by 950 beds has been completed and exceeded. The Institute now has the capacity to house 47% of the current graduate student population. More than 500 graduate students chose to live on campus in AY2025 than in AY2024. In addition, several improvements have been made to services for residents, including:

- Updates to the StarRez housing management system and ServiceNow email ticketing system,
- Redesigned website and marketing materials along with strategic outreach efforts, and
- Targeted staffing improvements to handle peak periods in housing processes.

HRS remains committed to engaging with the GHWG, graduate house leadership, and graduate students to continue meeting the needs of residents.

## Charge

The Graduate Housing Working Group (GHWG) brings together stakeholders from across campus to ensure that the Institute is well-positioned to evaluate and respond effectively to the housing needs of MIT's graduate student community. The aim of the Working Group is to analyze and report on major forces impacting the supply and availability of graduate student housing in the greater Cambridge area while also assessing demand for different types of on-campus housing options. In addition, the Working Group provides advice and insights about long-term and strategic housing priorities, including major on-campus graduate housing projects.

## GHWG Areas of Focus (AY2024)

- Examine ways to optimize occupancy and to identify and address the root cause of vacancies with MIT's graduate housing system
- Graduate Junction graduate housing project and the relationship of a new "MIT-affiliated housing" option on campus
- On-campus housing rate-setting process
- Longer-range needs related to housing undergraduates within graduate housing and planning for Westgate and Tang

## AY24 Membership

### Faculty and Administrators

Suzy Nelson, *Vice Chancellor and Dean for Student Life*  
 Ian Waitz, *Vice Chancellor*  
 Jon Alvarez, *Director of Campus Planning*  
 Brent Ryan, *Vice Provost*  
 Seth Mnookin, *Committee on Campus Planning Chair*  
 Nuria Jane Chimeno, *Associate Head of House, Sidney-Pacific*  
 David Darmofal, *Heads of House Convener*

### Graduate Student Council (GSC) Officer Liaison and Representatives

Mikala Molina, *GSC President*  
 Saleh Khawaled, *GSC Council Representative, Housing*  
 Nick Allen, *GSC Council Representative, Urban Studies and Planning*

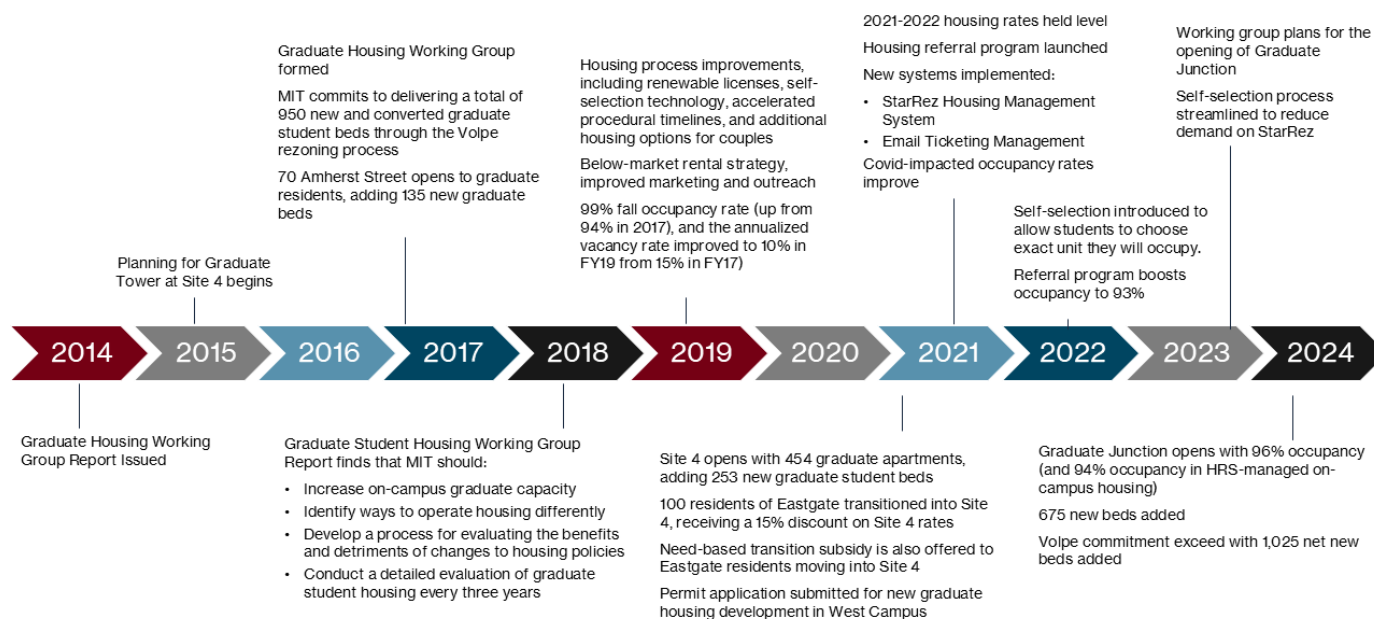
### Conveners

David Friedrich, *Senior Associate Dean for Housing & Residential Services*  
 Yue Zhi Russ Chua, *GSC HCA Chair*  
 Nicholas King, *GSC HCA Chair*

### Staff to the Committee

Peter Cummings, *Executive Director for Administration, Division of Student Life*  
 Rich Hilton, *Associate Dean & Director of Residential Services & Operations, Housing & Residential Services*  
 Paul Villemaire, *Associate Director of Residential Services, Housing & Residential Services*

## Graduate Housing Timeline (2014-Present)



# Graduate Housing Development

## Graduate Junction

(previously known as the West Campus Graduate Housing Development)

In December 2020, MIT entered into an agreement with American Campus Communities (ACC) to develop and manage the West Campus Graduate Housing Development. With this unique partnership providing a different model for managing on-campus residences at the Institute, the Graduate Housing Working Group evaluated student impacts and guided the integration of the new MIT-affiliated housing option into the overall graduate housing system.

[Graduate Junction](#) adds approximately 675 additional beds to the MIT graduate housing system, which helps the Institute exceed the original 950-bed commitment in the Volpe Agreement with the City of Cambridge. The residence features 350 apartments, with a mix of studios, one-bedroom, two-bedroom, and four-bedroom units for graduate students, including those with children.

## Construction

Construction activities at Graduate Junction continued throughout the 2023-2024 reporting period. While the most disruptive site preparation activities were largely completed before this reporting period, HRS continued to work with ACC and the construction team to anticipate impacts on the neighboring residential communities close to the development site and respond to resident concerns. The GHWG received regular updates on construction timelines and progress and toured the construction site to view completed units.

## Building Management

The working group was introduced to Graduate Junction's General Manager, Kendra Lowery, who provided an overview of ACC's approach to student outreach and community management. The GHWG was briefed on the roundtable exercises held with ACC and MIT partners to simulate and prepare for various scenarios related to student support and emergency management.

## Licensing Process

ACC and HRS worked closely to coordinate a timeline for marketing and licensing to ensure alignment rather than competition. The approach prioritized the student experience by offering a timeline that allowed students to make informed decisions on a timetable that allowed them to opt into either existing on-campus housing or Graduate Junction. The renewal and termination process for existing on-campus graduate student residents was moved up to March. The Graduate Junction licensing period for current graduate students was opened in February to encourage off-campus students to move to the new building. Priority was given to graduate students and then also offered to postdocs and other eligible visitors.

## Outreach Efforts

In preparation for the building's opening in August 2024, the GHWG was briefed on the planned outreach activities by American Campus Communities. These activities included:

- The opening of the Graduate Junction Licensing Center on the first floor of the Stratton Student Center (W20).
- An email to all graduate students introducing Graduate Junction as a housing option and alerting

students of future communications from American Campus Communities.

- Participation in HRS yearly outreach to graduate administrators and newly admitted graduate students.

## Enhancements to Graduate Housing

### Self-selection Dates and Process

Coordination between HRS and ACC on licensing dates and deadlines aimed to provide earlier timelines for graduate housing selection to help maximize time to fill the expanded capacity of the housing system. The GHWG provided input on the timeline, which moved the renewal and termination process for existing graduate students into March and opened the licensing period to current Graduate students in late April.

### Self-selection Application and Lottery

As part of an ongoing effort to improve MIT's residential system, HRS continued working with house teams and student leaders to enhance graduate housing processes and technology. With StarRez and the self-selection processes implemented, improvements were tested and launched in the spring 2024 to ensure system stability and a positive user experience.

In previous years, the demand for graduate housing during early self-selection windows caused the StarRez portal to reach the limit of consecutive users and resulted in student frustration. With input from the GHWG and graduate student leaders, HRS implemented an application and lottery system for the 2024-2025 housing process cycle to first gauge the demand for housing and then lottery time slots to manage the flow of students through the self-selection process. The application asked about family status and encouraged individual students to complete a roommate profile. It was available to students after the April 15 new student response deadline and remained open for two weeks. Once the deadline passed, students were entered into a lottery and randomly assigned a date and time window for self-selection participation. This change to the process successfully reduced the number of concurrent users in the StarRez portal and allowed for a smoother process for all involved. The StarRez portal performed extremely well for the 2024-2025 housing selection, and there were no system-related concerns reported by students looking for housing.

### Customer Service Improvements

HRS receives a high volume of telephone calls and emails, particularly regarding the self-selection process. Following feedback regarding concerns about response times for resident emails, HRS onboarded two temporary staff members to triage and answer more than 4,500 self-selection-related housing questions received during the peak housing period in the spring of 2024. The assignments team also continued to offer "Ask HRS" drop-in sessions two times a week. The additional staffing improved response times and avoided the significant backlog of emails experienced in prior years.

### Communications and Marketing

The GHWG provided input and guidance on the announcement of Graduate Junction to graduate students and the wider campus community, as well as outreach to current and new graduate students about this new MIT-affiliated housing option.

Working with Stantec, HRS overhauled the graduate housing marketing content to provide graduate students with a comparable experience when deciding between the ACC-managed Graduate Junction and existing on-campus housing stock. The [Graduate Residences](#) website was expanded to feature comprehensive information about each residence, including floor plans and pricing, photos, 3-D immersive imaging, renewal policies, construction riders, and links out to individual house-based webpages managed by student executive teams for each residence. Housing eligibility, family housing information, and self-selection instructions were moved from the Division of Student Life website to the Graduate Residence website.

HRS partnered with the Office of Graduate Education (OGE) to promote on-campus housing options to new incoming graduate students. Using the new Slate platform, messages were sent on a regular basis directly to new students with information about housing options, processes, and timelines. Slate’s emails became one of the largest drivers of traffic to the Graduate Housing website, accounting for over 15% of referred traffic.

## Referral Credit Housing Incentive

HRS developed an incentive program for Fall 2021 that offers current residents the opportunity to refer new residents and receive a financial benefit if the new residents move into housing. The referrer receives a \$250 rental credit for each successful referral. The referral also receives \$250. The program worked well and has been offered since. HRS evaluates the program year-to-year and determines whether it will be offered. Given the expansion of the system and the importance of attracting more students to live on campus, the program was implemented for 2024-2025.

*Program term for 2024-2025: “Referrers”* must have already signed a 2024-2025 graduate housing license agreement at the time of the referral for both the referrer and the referral to be eligible for the rental credits. “Referrals” must sign a 2024-2025 license agreement, occupy their housing assignment, and adhere to all conditions of their housing license agreement for a minimum of three months for both the referrer and the referral to be eligible for the rental credits. Rental credit amounts cannot be adjusted or prorated, and there is a maximum rental credit award of \$3,750 for referrers.

Year	# of Referrers	# of Referrals	Total # of Participants
2021–2022	110	255	365
2022–2023	136	285	421
2023-2024	No referral program offered		
2024-2025	49	115	164

## Graduate Student Experience with Housing

### Graduate Housing Rates

MIT’s approach to rate-setting is informed by the GHWG and current housing market conditions in Boston and Cambridge. A key priority for graduate housing is to provide a range of housing options and price points—single rooms, efficiencies, one-bedroom, and multi-bedroom units—so students can make choices that best fit their circumstances. The Institute has continued its implementation of a process that is aware of the area market in order to consistently keep rates below the market while also

ensuring that MIT can operate a quality and financially sustainable housing system. As is the case with any housing system, rate increases are necessary to cover annual increases in operational costs—including livable wages for the hundreds of staff members who help keep 24/7 housing operations running.

MIT continues to make differentiated adjustments to unit types to more consistently meet below-market targets across all unit types. Adjustments are being made over the long term to moderate increases and endeavor to mitigate any significant changes that may occur in the area market.

## **FY25 Graduate Housing Rate Increases**

Announced January 2024

	Weighted Average % Increase	Weighted Average Rent	% Increase range
FY21	3.7%	\$1,574	3% to 5.5%
FY22	0%	\$1,574	N/A
FY23	3%	\$1,620	1.5% to 5%
FY24	3.5%	\$1,677	1% to 4.75%
FY25	4.75%	\$1,757	2% to 5.35%

MIT understands that housing costs make up the largest single portion of graduate students' budgets, whether they live on or off campus. DSL and OVC continue to work closely together to respond to the needs of graduate students as they navigate their MIT experience. MIT provides students with a [variety of additional financial resources](#) such as short- and long-term funding, and grants for graduate students with children.

## Appendix

Table 1: Graduate Housing Occupancy Data

<b>Year (Oct 15)</b>	<b>Graduate Housing Capacity</b>	<b>Total Occupancy</b>	<b>Graduate Students</b>	<b>UG Students</b>	<b>Non-Students (PostDocs/ Visitors, etc.)</b>
2024	2,700	2,543 94%	2,224 87%	148 6%	171 7%
2023	2,698	2,597 96%	2,311 89%	150 6%	136 5%
2022	2,705	2,507 93%	2,239 89%	54 2%	214 9%
2021	2,705	2,152 80%	1,987 92%	103 5%	62 3%
2020	2,705	1,333 49%	1,300 98%	7 <1%	26 1%
2019	2,453	2,428 99%	2,312 95%	71 3%	45 2%
2018	2,453	2,390 97%	2,190 92%	67 3%	133 5%
2017	2,453	2,310 94%	2,114 92%	98 4%	98 4%

Table 1 a: Graduate Junction Housing Occupancy Data

<b>Year (Oct 15)</b>	<b>Graduate Housing Capacity</b>	<b>Total Occupancy</b>	<b>Graduate Students</b>	<b>UG Students</b>	<b>Non-Students (PostDocs/ Visitors, etc.)</b>
2024	675	652 96%	584 90%	0 0%	68 10%



Table 2: Fall 2024 Graduate Assignments

Fall 2024 Graduate Assignments (as of October 15, 2024)	
Type	2024 Count
Graduate Student Renewal	1,053
Graduate Student Self-Selection	1,171
Visiting Scholar/Post-Doc Renewal	21
Visiting Scholar/Post-Doc Self-Selection	150
Undergraduates in Graduate Housing	148
<b>Total Occupancy</b>	<b>2,543</b>
<b>% of Occupancy Design (AY25)</b>	<b>94%</b>