

Committee on Student Life (CSL)
Friday, April 30, 2010
Minutes taken by Astrid Hansen

Minutes

Present: Barbara Baker, Robin Deits Alex Slocum, Danielle Guichard-Ashbrook, David Singer, Vivek Sakhrani, Muriel Medard, Chris Colombo, Enectali Figueroa-Feliciano

Guests: Kaya Miller - Assistant Dean, FSILG's & Res Life Program

Introductions: Robin Deits is a new UA representative on the committee.

Minutes: An email vote will be called for the approval of these Minutes.

Item 1: Student Representative Attendance at CSL Meetings

Vivek Sakhrani: The GSC wasn't aware that graduate student attendance at CSL meetings was an issue so it came as somewhat of a surprise to see this was a topic in the Minutes. Please explain further.

Muriel Medard: There has been concern about the UA and GSC student attendance at this committee and also for other Institute committees. The base attendance at each CSL meeting should be at least two GSC representatives and two UA representatives. It is understood that due to occasional conflicts this number might not be met for every single meeting, but overall student attendance has not met the base representation. This is no reflection upon the representatives that have been attending the meetings, but overall the attendance has been noticed and the committee would like more student representation. Muriel has spoken with Ulric Ferner (the new GSC President) and Mike Bennie (the current UA President) about representation. Attendance and representation is also an issue that the GSC and UA should review across the board for their participation in all Institute committees.

Item II: Overview of FSILGs with Kaya Miller

Kaya Miller has put together a report on FSILGs. FSILGs are one of the long standing communities at MIT and are something that DSL is proud of and invested in, but FSILGs do occasionally also become a liability on campus.

- FSILGs are primarily an undergraduate community (graduates do compose a small part but they aren't sought out)
- There are currently 39 FSILGs which is the most during MIT's history.
- Alpha Tau Omega did close this past fall which was an unfortunate series of events and we are sorry to have lost them, but their behaviors were not what we expect of our community.
- Recent positive changes in the community include the re-colonization of Sigma Alpha Epsilon and Pi Kappa Alpha, and the founding of Pi Beta Phi sorority.
- Approximately 1,700 students are affiliated with FSILGs a year (43% of the undergraduate population) and this number is going up. Approximately 1,100 of these students live in the FSILG houses.

- FSILGs receive a lot of support from Alumni, and there are over 200 active alumni volunteers who help their organizations in various capacities.
- The DSL FSILG staff members have been recognized by professional associations and peers for contributions to the national fraternity and sorority movement.
- The four main values emphasized by the FSILG community are: Leadership, Scholarship, Citizenship, and Service. Each FSILG does have its own specific values, mission, and selection criteria, but they all share those four common core values.
- FSILGs fall under a self-governance philosophy; DSL staff makes sure everything falls under our parameter and that the whole community is thriving. The student governing bodies are the Interfraternity Council (IFC), Panhellenic Association, and Living Group Council (LGC) which help partner and advance the students' work.
- Partners outside DSL include the student governing bodies, alumni, AILG (Association of Independent Living Groups), and staff and faculty collaborations at MIT.

Discussion:

Do we have a sense of how active FSILG alumni donors are at MIT?

- Kaya has been told that FSILG do have a greater propensity to give back money and time to both FSILGs and the larger MIT.
- Chris Colombo has received feedback from many alumni that they feel very good about where the Institution is going and so they are giving back to FSILGs and the Institute.

Perhaps we should promote more colonization of FSILGs?

- Keep in mind that the dormitories are also communities which have alumni that give back. Baker just had a reunion this past summer which brought back 500 alumni, and Random had a reunion the year before for its 40th anniversary.

Should FSILGs take on more living capacity?

- Most off-campus housing is fraternities and ILGs because about three-fourths of sorority members live on campus. We are currently at about 85% functional living capacity and at about 65% legal capacity.
- AILG is addressing this issue but at this time they are not willing to support freshman living off-campus.
- This question doesn't only relate to freshman; if we market FSILGs it will make students more interested in living in FSILGs after their freshman year.
- One thing to avoid is encouraging a freshman dormitory system.
- In perspective, which is worse: dormitory overcrowding or a freshman dormitory?
- W1 will relieve the issue of overcrowding when it is able to open. Two very large gifts have been given to W1 over the past year (one 20 million gift and one 10 million gift). Almost all of the exterior work is done on the building and no the inside is being demolished to remove all the old systems. The current understanding is that it is a priority for the corporation and administration to put effort into raising money for the campaign for the building, and it is still being decided at what point MIT can complete the financing of the \$90 million project on its own. When completed, the building will be a very nice space with some preserved aspects and some new restorations. The building will include a dining hall (no kitchens) and a dining plan will be mandatory for those who live in the dorm. Three meals will be offered seven days a week because the facility is so close to campus that the goal is to also have staff and faculty eat in the dining hall.

There are some great ideas about how to encourage student FSILG membership. Although 43% of undergraduate men do join a fraternity in their first six weeks at MIT, the FSILG office is trying to break down the barrier that you have to join your first year: you can still join as a junior or senior and you don't have to live in the fraternity building.

- Students can also be members of two types of fraternities: those that are a chapter through MIT, and those that are a part of a Boston wide chapter. Most people join the Boston wide chapters for a larger cultural activity based reason (you don't rush for these fraternities; there is more of a recruitment process).

What will happen to the ATO house?

- The ATO house doesn't belong to MIT, it belongs to ATO and the Institute is currently in negotiations with the local corporation to see if they will sell us the building or if they will keep it (even though they will be unable to use it). If the negotiations go through, DSL does have a workable solution. We would use the same model used by the old Green Hall (which is now Kappa Alpha Theta) which has a four year renewable contract. DSL would put out a call for proposals for FSILGs which would like to use the house (e.g., sororities might want extra housing, or fraternities across the river might like to move closer to campus), and then one organization would be selected.
- Kaya believes in "fraternal Darwinism": not every FSILG deserves to be part of MIT forever because there is an evolution for FSILGs on campus. However, there should be an open door for ATO to come back to campus in the future if they can become a functioning part of the community (e.g., look at Sigma Alpha Epsilon).

Does being involved in FSILGs impact academic productivity?

- The FSILG office doesn't map FSILGs overall, but the highest GPA for a FSILG last fall was a 4.52 and the lowest was a 3.9. The FSILG office does follow CAP actions (especially withdrawals) and alumni are asked to intervene when necessary. The marketing to parents has increased over the past couple of years to dispel the notion that belonging to a FSILG means that their children are moving into the Animal House.

How many internationals interface with FSILGs?

- The FSILGs are very diverse, but there aren't many internationals involved because FSILGs are a huge cultural jump for most international students. However, Delta Psi does recruit international students.

Sororities have far fewer beds than fraternities and the demand for sorority housing seems to go beyond the supply. Should rebalancing be taken into account at some point or is there a plan for further colonization for sororities?

- Colonization generally happens according to demand. Four of the sororities are at about 120 members and one is at 80 members. Once that last sorority hits the 100 mark we will probably start looking for another sorority. There are only 20 sororities nationally and we already have six, but the selection of a sorority is very similar to an interview process where the groups send in packets and are selected based on how well they fit with MIT.

Is there a faculty advisor program for FSILGs?

- They are currently trying to reestablish and realign goals with the help of Professor Paul Lagassi (who is an advisor to DTD even though he is not a fraternity alumnus). Alumni have also been assisting to see what the objectives would be for such a program. Most likely the faculty advisors wouldn't fulfill a strict academic advising role but would be an overall resource to the FSILG community.

- The FSILG office is currently benchmarking information from schools with similar FSILG communities to see what types of faculty advising programs are being used.

Item III: Comments on Idea Bank

Alex Slocum has suggested that every freshman should get a cast iron pan. Students need to realize that when they graduate from MIT there is no meal plan in the real world. We need to encourage students to take control of their meals by teaching them to cook and encouraging them to want to cook. Students should also be able to go into a dining hall and get recipes for the food that they are being served.

- At the dining halls they do promote recipes that are contributed by the students and then featured as a meal. The students also have great relationships with the individuals working in the kitchens and dining halls.
- There is also a DSL staff member (Victoria Davenport) who does a cooking class on a weekly basis with the East Campus community which focuses upon quick and healthy recipes.
- There could also be a class on culinary arts or a class that combines the teachings of chemistry and cooking.

Upcoming CSL meetings

May 14th will be the last CSL meeting (the May 28th meeting will be cancelled as it is after finals). The CSL committee has traditionally not created reports, but Muriel would like to write a report and circulate it to the faculty (via the faculty meeting and the faculty newsletter). Muriel would like some help with this task over the summer and it could be a good way to begin CSL next year.

Future agenda items:

- Diversity issues: could begin addressing now and continue to discuss next year. There are many diversity organizations in the Institute, some fall under OME (DUE) and some under DSL (e.g., LGBT). It would be good to have Jed Wartman and staff, and/or students in diversity organizations come to a CSL meeting.
- Confidence level: what happens to the confidence level of undergraduates within the first year of classes?
- The role that TA's play in the classroom across the Institute: instructor vs. aid to the instructor.
 - This would be a DUE issue, not DSL.

End of Meeting.