Introduction

In the past few weeks, the MIT's system of orientation and residence selection has been called into question. The attention of the media, faculty, and administration has mainly focused on the fraternities. While many upperclass students and alumni feel that living in fraternities, sororities, and independent living groups (FSILGs) has contributed immeasurably to their freshman year experiences and to their overall MIT experience, discussions taking place amongst the administration and faculty include housing all freshmen on campus and moving residence selection to the spring semester or to sophomore year.

The experience of living with a community of choice throughout one's tenure at MIT is a system unique to our institution. This residence system is not without its flaws, however. The InterFraternity Council (IFC) recognizes the need for improvements to our current R/O Week. These changes, however, should not be drastic and should provide solutions to the problems that need to be addressed.

The IFC committee charged with drafting this proposal aimed to address the concerns surrounding orientation and residence selection as expressed by students, parents, faculty members, and administrators. Major concerns addressed in this proposal include:

- Faculty perceptions of R/O as a "lost opportunity" and as an inadequate introduction to MIT.
- Low levels of student-faculty interactions during R/O and throughout the year.
- The perceived absence of an MIT community spirit.
- Parental requests for more objective information regarding residences and better methods of maintaining communication with their sons and daughters.
- Student requests for more time to make residence decisions.
• The questionable safety of students living in off-campus FSILGs as evidenced by the death of a student at Phi Gamma Delta.
• The perceived low levels of interactions between students of different racial and cultural backgrounds.

This document, drafted from the above framework, represents the opinion of the IFC and its constituency of more than 1600 students regarding the current discussions on freshman orientation and residence selection.

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Summary

Appendix A: Sample "Orientation 1998" Schedule
Executive Summary

To address a variety of the concerns students, parents, faculty, and administrators have expressed regarding residence selection, orientation, and the "first-year experience", the IFC has compiled the following recommendation package. The highlights of our proposal include:

Section I: Orientation

A. Increase The Scope and Effectiveness of Orientation

1. "R/O" becomes "Orientation": residence selection will occupy the second and separate portion of a lengthened "MIT Orientation".
2. Mandatory workshops on diversity, harassment/gender issues, and alcohol awareness to educate freshmen along all lines.
3. Presentation on MIT's medical and counseling services and other health-related resources available to students.
4. Create a standing Orientation Advisory Committee comprised of students, faculty, and administrators to provide recommendations to refine Orientation year after year.

B. Promote the Sense of the MIT Community

1. Alumni Panel to discuss their post-graduation experiences and the benefits of an MIT education.
2. Student Panel to introduce the commonalities between MIT students: our traditions (e.g., hacks, brass rats, etc.) and common culture (e.g., individual responsibility, devotion to living group, etc.)

C. Increase the Level of Student-Faculty Interactions
1. Freshman Advising Group/Cluster Dinners during Orientation.
2. Faculty Panel to stimulate intellectual excitement.
3. Use Orientation as a springboard for greater student-faculty interaction throughout the academic year.
4. Promote and revive the living group faculty advisors / House Fellows program.

Section II: Residence

A. Provide More Objective Information to Freshmen and Their Parents

1. Increase the focus placed on residences in Admissions Office mailings to prospective students regarding Winter/Spring campus visitations.
2. Revamp RCA summer mailings to include more objective information that parents most commonly request (e.g., house GPA, cost, etc.) and a parental contact name and number for each FSILG.
3. RCA-sponsored Residence Selection Primer workshop during Orientation.
4. Residence Midway: an Orientation event structured similar to the Activities Midway.

B. Improve the Residence Selection Experience

1. Provide more time for freshmen to make residence decisions.
2. Tone down the intensity of Rush: IFC commitment to evaluate the spending practices on membership recruitment.

C. More Residential Options, Especially For Women

(e.g., co-educational living groups, all-female living groups, and residential sororities).

D. Ensure the Safety of Freshmen Living in Institute-Approved Housing

E. Encourage Diversity in Student Life
Section I: Orientation

Part A: Increasing the Effectiveness and Scope of Orientation

Our current Orientation process is plagued with problems which arise from its blended "R" and "O" format. By changing the structure, improving the programming, and increasing the duration of Freshmen Orientation, students will obtain a more positive and more accurate introduction to MIT.

(A) "R/O" Becomes "Orientation"

Lengthening Orientation by 1-2 days and moving the vast majority of orientation-type activities before residence selection would:

1. Allow freshmen more time to settle into their new campus environment before experiencing residence selection.
2. Separate "residence" from "orientation" and thereby eliminate the "Dead Week" attitude and low participation rates that are associated with our current freshmen academic orientation structure.
3. Promote the notion that residence selection is only a subsidiary part of the MIT Orientation process.

(B) Increasing the Effectiveness

Suggested improvements to academic orientation include:

1. Expand upon current programs (e.g. Core Blitz, Meet the Profs, lab tours).
2. Involve more faculty (see section below on student-faculty interactions).
3. Introduce new events (i.e. Faculty Panel) to stimulate intellectual excitement.

(C) Increasing the Scope

During Orientation, the Institute needs to educate incoming freshmen in a broader context so that
they can better adjust socially to the MIT college environment. This can be accomplished through the development of:

1. Workshops on issues facing today's college student (e.g., diversity, harassment, alcohol awareness, etc.).
2. A presentation on the counseling and support services available to students (i.e. MIT Medical, MedLinks, Nightline, Campus Police, etc.).
3. A Deans Panel so that administrators can express their on-going support and availability to students in need.

(D) Student-Faculty-Administration Commitment

Work collaboratively to continually improve the process by which the Institute brings in its newest members by:

1. Soliciting freshmen feedback every year in the form of a post-Orientation survey.
2. Creating a standing Orientation Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from the student body, the faculty, and the administration. This Institute committee's charge will be to refine Orientation year after year by setting the guidelines the student-run Orientation (implementation) Committee will work within.

Part B: Promoting the Sense of the MIT Community

FSILG members are very much a part of the larger campus community. Recent studies have shown that FSILG members, when compared to dorm residents, are just as much involved in the MIT community if not more through their participation on athletic teams, student clubs and associations, and other campus activities.

This proposal aims to further encourage the MIT community spirit, generate more excitement, and elicit more enthusiasm within the freshmen class during Orientation.

(A) Increase the Excitement of Attending a World-Class Institution

Assemble an Alumni Panel of notable MIT graduates each year to discuss with freshmen their post-graduation experiences and the benefits an MIT education affords.

(B) Emphasize Commonalities Between MIT Students

...such as our independence (the responsibilities placed on each individual), our traditions (e.g.,
hacks, brass rats), our common culture and themes (e.g., MIT >>Hahvahd, etc.), and our devotion to and support provided by our living groups, etc. A suggested orientation event would be a Students Panel.

(C) Design Orientation Events That Center Around Multiple Small Group Settings

(MOYA group, advising group, temporary residence assignment group). Repeated contact between freshmen within a small group setting is the best way for them to meet others in their class.

A longer term proposal the Institute should consider is to:

(D) Leverage the success of the Freshmen Leadership Program

The satisfaction ratings of participants in the Freshmen Leaders Program are phenomenal. The Institute should examine the feasibility and desirability of multiple off-campus "Orientation camps" (structured similar to FLP) which would allow all freshmen to experience the effective community-building atmosphere of FLP.

Part C: Greater Student-Faculty Interaction

Meaningful student-faculty interaction requires year-round commitment from both sides. Specific proposals to increase the level of faculty involvement during Orientation include:

(A) Faculty Panel

...to speak on academic/research-related matters so as to stimulate intellectual curiosity and enthusiasm.

(B) Freshman Advising Group/Cluster Dinners

(freshman advisors, associate advisors, and freshman advisees).

(C) Faculty-Student Pairings to Lead MOYA

(ice breakers, team-building exercises, etc.).
(D) Organized Tours

...of MIT labs, research centers, etc. with faculty members serving as tour guides.

(E) Help Faculty Gain A Better Understanding Of The Academic Orientation And Residence Selection Processes

...so that they can be better equipped to handle questions regarding not only academics but residence selection as well. This may be attained by:

1. Hosting individual advisor-associate advisor meetings before the start of Orientation.
2. Providing faculty advisors with information regarding residence selection throughout the summer (RCA mailings, etc.).

A vast majority of FSILGs organize faculty dinners throughout the year to which members of the MIT faculty are personally invited. The faculty attendance at these functions, however, is quite low. If the members of the faculty matched the efforts of the students, better student-faculty relations would already exist. To further encourage ongoing student-faculty interaction, we propose the following:

(F) Joint IFC and Faculty Commitment to Revive and Expand the Living Group Faculty Advisor / House Fellows Program

...so that at least one interested faculty member is associated with every living group. Aside from other activities, the faculty advisor/house fellow would:

1. Advise freshmen and upperclassmen residents alike on academic matters as appropriate.
2. Act as a faculty liaison to facilitate the sharing of information and concerns.
3. Contribute to the intellectual and social life of a living group through a variety of activities (i.e. informal dinners at the house, participation in living group sponsored community service events, etc.)
Section II: Residence


During the Winter & Spring

(A) Increase the Focus Placed on MIT Residential Options Earlier in the Year

The winter/spring Admissions Office mailings to prospective students and their parents need to include information that introduces MIT’s unique array of residential options. All applicants/admittees should be specifically invited to visit our campus not only to explore the academic environment, but to get a feel for the residential system as well. The advantages of expanding the Overnight Program are two-fold:

1. FSILGs have the resources and are motivated to ensure that a prefrosh has a meaningful experience and will want to return to MIT as a student.
2. The most accurate impression of a residence may also be obtained through a casual visit during the middle of the term.

To ensure the Overnight Program maintains a high level of quality for all participants, surveys should be filled by all prefroshes following their visit. These surveys will be used to assess each living group's hospitality.

During the Summer

(B) Revamp RCA Summer Mailings

(e.g., MIT Guide to First Year Residences) to increase the amount of objective information about each residential option available to freshmen and their parents. Each living group's entry in the Guide will include the following four components:

1. Fact sheet including house GPA, majors represented, cost/year, meals provided, length of pledge period, hours per week commitment, police incidents within the last 3 years (one-
line summaries), faculty advisor / graduate resident tutor, awards received (MIT or national organization awards), etc.

2. Objective entry written by RCA covering a house's surveyable qualities including, but not limited to, participation in varsity/intramural athletics, campus organization officers, extracurricular activities represented, etc.

3. Subjective entry submitted by the FSILG recruitment chairman.

4. FSILG members' parent contact information (name & phone number). These parents of FSILG members will be individually recruited by the FSILG, and accept the willingness to talk with any freshman parents who may have concerns about a particular living group.

The objective information published in this Guide will provide incentives for FSILGs to compete along positive, constructive lines as well.

(C) Provide Temporary Room Assignment Location and Phone Number to Parents Before Freshmen Arrive on Campus

This will help parents maintain better contact with their sons/daughters during their first few days on campus.

During Orientation

(D) A Comprehensive Residence Selection Primer

This workshop, hosted by RCA, will take place before the start of residence selection each fall. Its purpose will be four-fold:

1. Explain the residence selection system, the schedule, the bid process, and key questions to ask members of a living group.

2. Review IFC and DormCon residence selection rules (i.e. Clearinghouse, no badmouthing, etc.) and how they help freshmen make informed decisions.

3. Inform freshmen of the resources (e.g., Rush Central, JudCom, Rho Chis, etc.) available during residence selection so they know where to direct their questions, and how to report complaints.

4. Inform freshmen of the options they have available to them after residence selection if they are unhappy with their choice (e.g., roommate problems, hazing complaints, etc.)

(E) Residence Midway

(structured similar to the Activities Midway and includes all FSILGs and dormitory living groups who are interested in participating). The Residence Midway will take place at a specified time before the start of residence selection. Each living group would maintain a booth where a freshmen could approach and talk with members of the living group or request printed information. All upperclassmen-freshmen contact at this event would be initiated by the freshmen. The event would help freshmen (especially those who did not benefit from Summer
Rush) get a feel for the various houses in a non-"hectic" environment.

During Residence Selection

(F) Combine and Expand the Functions of R/O Central and Rush Central

Effective and well-publicized resources must be made available to freshmen in one central location to assist them during the residence selection process. Proposals to expand the role and increase the effectiveness of a residence selection advisory center include:

- Greater publicity of the advisory services before and during residence selection.
- Mandate that it be staffed by one RCA/Orientation administrator, one FSILG member, and one dormitory resident at all times.
- Point of contact for parents wanting to locate their sons/daughters (universal utilization of Clearinghouse or alternative contact/messaging system).
- Provide freshmen with FSILG and dormitory contact information, Rush event schedules, maps & directions, general advice about residence selection, etc.
- Provide freshmen with information regarding non-residence-related events and activities around MIT and in Boston/Cambridge.
- Point of contact for freshmen wanting to speak or file complaints with the IFC Judicial Committee.

After Residence Selection

(G) Increase Level of Upperclassmen-Freshman Parent Interaction

The IFC commits itself to help alleviate parental concerns immediately following Rush each year by meeting and speaking with parents first-hand.

1. RCA can improve the effectiveness of Greek 101 by mandating the participation of at least one representative from each fraternity and sorority.
2. The IFC will strongly urge all FSILGs to host Freshmen Parents Receptions/Dinners at their residences during Parents Weekend.

Part B: Improving the Residence Selection Experience

Placing the interests of freshmen as the top priority, the IFC will aim to tone down the intensity and hectic nature of FSILG Rush and will continue to take measures to ensure that the residence selection process is as positive an experience as possible for all parties involved.
(A) Expand Residence Selection by 2 Days

Lengthen the time that FSILGs may extend bids to Monday and the time that a bid may be accepted to Wednesday. This would provide a freshman one more full day to "shop around" and one more full day to seriously consider a particular FSILG which has extended him/her an invitation to join. Another argument for clear separation of "O" and "R" activities is that Rush has traditionally ended at the point where "O" activities start up again.

(B) IFC Commitment to Evaluate Spending Practices on Membership Recruitment

In order to effectively tone down the intensity of Rush, the IFC realizes the need to evaluate current spending practices. This initiative will be further examined by the IFC Rush Chairs Council.

(C) Eliminate Hard Flushing

IFC has taken significant measures over the years to ensure that individual FSILGs treat each freshman with respect. Toward that end the IFC has implemented many initiatives to curb the mostly archaic practice of "flushing." These initiatives include the drafting of an IFC Policy on Referrals, the yearly compilation of a Referrals Guide, and mandating that every FSILG retain a Referral Chair during Rush whose sole responsibility is to match freshmen up with more compatible houses. To continue to ensure that "flushing" practices are effectively removed from our system, a post-residence selection survey should be administered to all freshmen (within their advising seminars) that specifically prompts for (1) the name of the house which practiced questionable treatment of a freshman and (2) a detailed description of the incident.

Part C: Increasing Residence Options

Even though there are less residence options available to females, women have generally responded more favorably than men when asked about their R/O experiences. This statistic should not preclude the Institute, through RCA, to facilitate the process of bringing more residential options for females to campus in order to "level the playing field". These options would be in the form of more co-ed living groups, all-female living groups and dormitories, and residential sororities.

Part D: Ensuring the Safety of Freshmen Living in Institute-Approved Housing
All FSILGs housing freshmen must be recognized as Institute-approved housing. Redefining and expanding the criteria that a residential FSILG must pass in order to attain Institute-approved housing status will help ensure the safety of students living in FSILGs. The set of criteria should be publicized to concerned parents and faculty members as well. Sample criteria would include:

1. Obtaining annual lodging house license & egress inspection certificates to ensure the safety of the physical plant of residences (fire safety, etc.).
2. Compliance with Massachusetts laws and MIT and IFC policies forbidding hazing.
3. Compliance with MIT and IFC risk management policies, including the new policy mandating that all FSILG new member activities will be alcohol-free.

**Part E: Student Exposure to Diversity**

The IFC is proud of its diversity among and within its affiliations. According to the 1989 Potter Report, "diversity" is already present within FSILGs. In the eight years since this report was released, the diversity profile of FSILGs along ethnic, cultural, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds has only improved.

To further address issues regarding diversity, however, the IFC urges the faculty and administration to evaluate methods to promote mutual understanding and social learning in the classroom environment and in the out-of-class settings of extracurricular activities. Leave the good friendships, the sense of community, and the willing and available upperclass student support that are provided by our families away from homeour living groupsintact.
Summary

MIT's fall residence selection is a process that works as evidenced by the high satisfaction rates expressed by students both past and present. The concerns expressed by students, parents, faculty, and administrators, however, point to several shortcomings in the system as well. As such, it is evident that the fall orientation and residence selection system only requires minor refinements and not major overhauls.

When considering what programs will provide students with the most positive introduction and on-going learning experience during their first-year and beyond, the IFC urges the faculty and administration to focus on expanding the scope and effectiveness of Orientation and year-round academic programs and support services to achieve its objectives.

With the reforms proposed in this document in place, the Institute will have a solid foundation from which future refinements to Orientation can be built upon. The desires of students, faculty, and administrators can be mutually compatible when all parties commit to work together and share their concerns. Only in a collaborative engagement will the vision of an "MIT Orientation" that reflects the interests of the entire MIT community at large - especially those of its newest members - be fulfilled.
Appendix A

Sample "Orientation 1998" Schedule

A Freshmen Orientation schedule following the above recommendations would look something like this (additional consideration for the scheduling of Interphase, FLP, and International/Transfer Students Orientation must be taken into account).

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Monday (Day 1: General)

Afternoon

- President's Welcome Convocation (Administration & Faculty speakers)
- "Where You're Headed: Life after MIT" (Alumni speakers/panel)
- Project MOYA (Faculty-Student pairings as Orientation Counselors)

Evening

- Freshmen class BBQ
- Freshmen class social event

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Tuesday (Day 2: Social)

Morning
• Diversity/gender/harassment issues workshops
• Alcohol awareness/social policy workshop
• Medical/counseling services presentation (MedLinks, Nightline, etc.)

Afternoon

• MIT culture/traditions/spirit (Student and/or Alumni speakers)
• (Deans Panel)

Evening

• Dinner with Freshmen Advising Group/Cluster
• Activities Midway
• Freshmen class dance party/social event

Wednesday (Day 3: Academic)

Morning

• Freshmen Essay Evaluation
• Pre-Calculus Math Diagnostic

Afternoon

• Academic Orientation presentation (UROP, academic support, tutoring, etc.)
• Core Blitz presentation
• "Meet the Profs" (Faculty Panel)
• Freshmen Advising Group/Cluster Meeting
• Athletics Gateway

Thursday (Day 4: Residence)

Morning

• Residence Selection Primer workshop (hosted by RCA)
• "Life & Living @MIT" (Student Panel)
Afternoon

- ID Pictures/Swim Test
- Concourse/ESG/ISP Open Houses - Part 1
- Tours of MIT's labs, research centers, etc. (lead by faculty & staff)

Evening

- Residence Midway
- Thursday Night Dinners

Friday (Day 5)

Morning

- ID Pictures/Swim Test
- Concourse/ESG/ISP Open Houses - Part 2
- Advance Standing Exam (18.01)
- Survival Session (with MOYA group)

Afternoon

- Freshmen Picnic
- Killian Kick-Off

Saturday (Day 6)

Sunday (Day 7)

- Event programming (sponsored by student activity groups) begins for students who have already decided on a residence of choice.

Monday (Day 8)
• FSILG may begin to extend bids
• Residence Hall Preference Selection begins

Tuesday (Day 9)

Wednesday (Day 10)

• Freshmen may begin to accept bids from FSILGs
• Residence Hall Assignments available

Thursday (Day 11)

• Freshmen Advisor/Advisee Meetings
• Advance Standing Exams (18.02 & 8.01)
• Temporary Residence Hall Assignment Check Out
• Permanent Residence Hall Assignment Check In
• Freshmen Registration Material Due
• Residence Hall Orientation

Friday (Day 12)

• CityDays Festival
• Advance Standing Exams (8.02 & 7.012)
• Parents Weekend begins

Saturday

• Greek 101
• Freshmen Parents receptions/dinners at individual FSILGs
Sunday

Monday - Labor Day

Tuesday

- Fall Term Registration
- Advanced Standing Exam (5.11/3.091)

Wednesday

- First day of classes
Appendix B

Educational Proposal for Orientation

Purpose

The purpose of this proposal is to provide a comprehensive program that may be used to educate freshmen on the topics that they need to know as college students.

Recommendation for Implementation

We would like to recommend that, with the exception of a few topics that take more exposure to MIT to appreciate, all of this program be given during Orientation. Most of the topics that we suggest are immediately applicable, even necessary. We would ask that this program be given at least a total of three hours during Orientation to cover the basics. However, to preserve the continuity it would be ideal if a total of six hours, as well as the seven hour First Aid program were given during Orientation. For those topics that should definitely be covered during the term, we estimate a total of three hours within the first three weeks should be adequate. Additionally, the program should be given in groups of no more than 25; this should allow the freshmen ample opportunity to get to know the people in their group, as well as allow for further questions and discussion. The groups could be led by the MOYA leaders, if such a program will still exist, but a group leader should go through at least four hours of training specifically for this program. We do not expect that all freshmen will retain all the information presented. It would thus be most helpful if a kind of reference book based on the topics covered in the program was distributed, and that this would also be available on the web. Many existing programs and resources have expressed a willingness to help with the details and implementation of this program; we hope that their input will be accepted and utilized.

Listing of Topics
This list is what we feel would be a good ordering for the topics. Additional topics may be added if it is felt to be beneficial; however, this is what we consider to be a minimum listing. Following each topic in parentheses is a partial listing of resources that address the topic, estimated minimum time to be spent on the topic, and when the topic should be covered (during the Term or Orientation).

I. Interpersonal Skills

b. Dating Practices at MIT (Anyone, 5 min., Orientation)
c. Gender Sensitivity (Women’s Collective and Genderworks, 15 min. to 1 hour, either Orientation or Term)
d. Race Relations (Committee on Race Relations, 15 min. to 1 hour, either time)
e. Sexuality Awareness (GAMIT, 15 min. to 1 hour, either time)
f. Peer Pressure (Anyone, 15 min., Orientation)

II. Health

a. Diet (MedCenter, 5 min., Term)
b. Stress Management (MedCenter, 5 min., Term)
c. Exercise (MedCenter and Athletic Dept., 5 min., Term)
d. Depression/Mental Health (MedCenter and Deans, 10 min., Orientation)
e. Sleep/Time Management (MedCenter, 10 min., Orientation)

III. Emergency Options

a. 911, x100, and Memorial Drive Call Boxes (CPs, 5 min., Orientation)
b. CPR and First Aid (Red Cross, 7 hours, Orientation or Term)
c. Emergencies with Substances (CPs and MedCenter, 30 min., Term)
d. Fire (CPs and Fire Department, 5 min., Term)

IV. Risk Behaviors

a. Safe Sex Practices (MedCenter, 5 min., Orientation)
b. Alcohol

i. Safe Drinking Practices (CPs and MedCenter, 5 min., should be both Orientation AND Term)
ii. Effects of Drinking (same as above)
iii. Warning Signals (same as above)
iv. Determining Limits (same as above)
v. Binge Drinking (same as above)
vi. Alcoholism (same as above)
c. Drugs

   i. Illegal (CPs and MedCenter, Term)
   ii. Legal: Caffeine, Tobacco, etc. (same as above)

V. Legal Responsibilities

   These should all be covered during the Term, and possibly just the packet given to the freshmen.

   a. Voting, Residency, Jury Duty
   b. Misdemeanors and Felonies
   c. Taxes
   d. MIT Policies for Students
   e. Hazing