Undergraduate Residential Life Matters: Process and decisions related to Senior House

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Chancellor

September 20, 2017
**Senior House Decision Process: chancellor.mit.edu/sh-decision-process**

**Turnaround:** “The whole purpose of this effort is to think about a plan for success. This is not a plan for closure.” Modeled on fraternity “receivership.”

**Positive Progress:** “I believe we are on the right trajectory, if continued, to welcome first-year students back to Senior House in the fall.”

**Review Findings:** “Multiple students had engaged in unsafe, illegal behavior on multiple occasions. Importantly, it revealed a prevailing environment that enabled and even encouraged such behavior. We also learned that some students who were troubled by the illegal behavior felt silenced by members of the Senior House community. Together these signs told us that Senior House self-governance was broken.”

**Decisions to reset by MIT’s senior leadership:** “We believe that significant change is needed and have made our decision based on our concern and care for present and future residents of the house.”

**Close to 200 faculty consultations with Chancellor Heads of House & Other Faculty discussed process and next steps**

**Graduation rates among constellation of concerning issues**

**Four subcommittees designed by Senior House student leadership & residents; progress made in each over the summer and through the fall:**

- **Academic and Personal Wellbeing**
  - On-site staffing & hours for S3 & Mental Health; Study space
  - Self-governance
  - Students, alumni design enhanced governance model

- **Community**
  - Art studios; Visiting artist; Alumni mentorship; Steer Roast planning

- **Space**
  - Visiting artist/scholar & AHoH apartments, Community spaces

**Turnaround activities with kickoff event, Steering Committee meetings, 4 Sub-groups with 47 people, including 28 residents. Senior House alumni, Faculty, and Staff meeting regularly to build on the work started over the summer. Student co-chairs of each sub-group.**

**More than 100 Chancellor/Student meetings during turnaround**

**The SH review process paralleled MIT processes (e.g., fraternity membership review).**
- House meeting to inform residents of credible reports of dangerous behavior and overview of fact finding process.
- Resident participation in review process was voluntary; advisors allowed.

**Support for students directly affected:**
- Created dedicated residential support team in Housing & S3 to assist all students affected by decision over the summer and throughout the academic year
- Senior House students who moved on campus – including those who wanted to live with a group of close friends – received their top housing choice

**Going forward:**
- New resources for house teams to support relocated students
- Walker Memorial renovations: café, the Blue Room & Rainbow Lounge will be connected
- New Intercultural Center opening in heart of campus
- Increased collaboration and funding for programming with LBGTQ student organizations
- “Shared Governance at MIT” working group to preserve and improve unique MIT residential life model
Summary

• Our concern:
  • **Student safety** and personal and academic **wellbeing**

• Our approach:
  • Students, faculty, alumni, and staff partner together in a **good faith, multi-year effort** built on **mutual trust**

• Some of our desired outcomes:
  • **Eliminate** behaviors that are unsafe, illegal and detrimental to student wellbeing, but **preserve** (and enhance) positive aspects of Senior House
  • Repair Senior House’s student governance model: **Shared governance + responsibility**
  • Protect **student privacy**
  • Promote **student safety and wellbeing**

• Going forward
  • Support former Senior House residents
  • Engage with community to promote welcoming and inclusive spaces, programs
  • “Shared governance at MIT” working group
    • Process for preserving and improving MIT’s unique model for shared governance