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Resident Advisor Working Group Report Recommendations to the Dean for Student Life (April 2009 Draft for Review)

Working group members:

- Phil Bannister, Resident Advisor (Theta Delta Chi)
- Sarika Chandiramani, Panhellenic Association Executive Board
- David Farhi, Living Group Council Speaker
- Kim Hunter, Resident Advisor (Alpha Phi)
- David Hutchings, IFC President
- Sara Pierce, AILG Board Member
- Rich Possemato, AILG Board Member
- Steve Summit, AILG Facilities Committee
- Cesar Toscano, Resident Advisor (Phi Sigma Kappa)
- Craig Wildman, Resident Advisor (Epsilon Theta)
- Lauren Wojtkun, FSILG Office, Chair of Committee

Executive Summary:

The Resident Advisor Working Group (RAWG) was charged by Dean Colombo in December 2008 (Appendix 1) to make recommendations regarding key issues and features of the RA program, specifically addressing potential expectations that the RA position description expand to include facilities oversight. Other key issues included relationships between key stakeholders in the FSILGs, and the shared accountability from Alumni House Corporations and MIT for the RA position.

The Resident Advisor position was created to ensure that FSILG residents are provided with integral support and mentorship from an advisor who resides in the house. The RA job description (Appendix 2) is quite lengthy, and encompasses what the committee agreed were the most important parts of the job: being a mentor, guide, and resource for undergraduate students in FSILGs. The committee concluded the candidates who make good RAs might not also be candidates who would make ideal Facilities Managers. Therefore, the RA job description should not include being a property manager, in order to avoid limiting the candidate pool to those with property management experience or aptitude.

Additional Pertinent Information:

The RAWG committee felt strongly that facilities management was an area where MIT and the AILG had far better defined and developed resources than could possibly be found in potential candidates for the RA position. We found many topics where RAs had to be aware of other resources, but were not expected to have specific skill sets to perform the RA role well. RAs are not expected to be, for example, mental health professionals; however, they are expected to be competent and responsive, and are given tools and resources during RA training that help them recognize emergency situations and know the proper channels of response for each situation. While the RA would not handle a mental health emergency directly by counseling a student, the RA would be properly trained to contact the appropriate people and deal with the immediate situation until emergency response could arrive.

Similarly, the committee believes that RAs would be fully able to function as one more layer of support to the current facilities management structure in each house, as a natural elaboration on the existing role within the RA job description: "RAs will promote health and safety within the chapter house, and

coordinate with chapter House Managers and/or the FSILG Office on safety inspections."

Property management functions of the RAs might include participating in the Safety and Licensing Inspections, routine inspections of the house with the Undergraduate House Manager, and bi-annual meetings to review safety and emergency procedures for the facilities aspect of the building. In this way, the RA would be a layer of support to the Undergraduate and Alumni House Managers, especially in emergency situations, but would not be responsible for the upkeep of the property.

Proposed Actions:

1. We propose an amendment to the RA Job Description & Responsibilities, which is authored by the FSILG Office staff, to include participation with House Corporation volunteers in SLI inspections. Steve Summit of the AILG Facilities Committee is responsible for drafting this work.
2. We propose an addendum to August RA training to include an overview of the AILG Facilities Committee work, including the SLI program implementation. Steve Summit of the AILG Facilities Committee will be responsible for developing a new training module.
3. Committee research revealed that the undergraduate dorms at MIT include both the Director of Housing and the current Housemaster as Facilities Managers for the City of Cambridge "Resident Manager" expectations. The committee recommends that the Cambridge Licenses for FSILGs follow a similar model, including both the president of the Alumni House Corporation and the Resident Advisor as Facilities/Resident Managers.

Resident Advisor Working Group
Charge to Committee

The Resident Advisor (RA) Program at MIT for the Fraternity, Sorority, and Independent Living Group (FSILG) community was created in September 1998. Over the past ten years, the program, job description, and responsibilities of the RA have evolved, and we now need further clarification of the role and responsibilities expected of the RA.

The RA Program will continue as an integral support for our students and for all FSILG houses. It is and will continue to be an important criterion for Institute recognition of an FSILG as an approved housing option at MIT. However, the responsibilities must be adapted to meet expectations from city inspectional agencies for facility oversight that compliment our undergraduate and alumni leadership for facility maintenance.

Thus, the charge to the RA Working Group is to determine what modifications, if any, should be made to the existing program regarding the role and job description of the RA, the scope of the facility maintenance and repair responsibilities, and the structure of the program to provide service and support to the FSILG community.

Specifically, I expect the RA Working Group to make recommendations regarding key issues and features of the RA program, such as:

- Expectations from City Licensing Agencies for the RA position to include facilities oversight and/or management and how that shift will work with our current program.
- Relationships between the RA, Alumni House Corporations, Advisory Boards, the Undergraduate Chapter Leadership, and MIT.
- Accountability from the Alumni Corporation and MIT, who jointly supervise the activities of the RA.
- Support for RA candidates to address concerns prior to emergencies.
- Identification of any other key issues that need to be addressed regarding the RA program.

Please review documents such as the RA position description, the RA manual, as well as facility maintenance expectations as outlined by Boston, Cambridge, and Brookline municipal codes, and the Cambridge Resident Manager policy. Your working group process needs to incorporate consultation with all of the key stakeholders. The resources of the FSILG Office and MIT Housing/Residential Life are available to you for your work.

Please submit your recommendations to me in a written report no later than May 1, 2009. Thank you for your willingness to serve and for your commitment to the FSILG community and the RA Program.

Costantino Colombo
December 2008

RA JOB DESCRIPTION AND DUTIES

The responsibilities and expectations of the RA include, but are not limited to the following:

- Participate in meetings and training programs sponsored by FSILG office staff. Attendance at MIT sponsored RA trainings is required of all resident advisors.
- Foster an effective relationship with FSILG chapter executive officers and Alumni/ae Board/House Corporation. Attend chapter and alumni/ae board meetings as scheduled.
- Maintain effective working relationship and, when necessary, communication with all areas of the Division of Student Life, the MIT Medical Department and other Institute offices, departments and officials as necessary.
- Be a resource for residents by becoming knowledgeable about Institute resources such as those available through MIT's Medical Department, Safety Office, Facilities, Campus Police and the FSILG Office.
- Be knowledgeable of and make students aware of MIT and any applicable Inter/National fraternity and sorority policies and regulations, in particular those regarding facility rules and standards of safety, alcohol, drugs, and risk management.
- Facilitate conflict resolution when requested and guide students away from behaviors that could lead to conflict.
- Provide transition assistance when possible with special attention given to new members. Provide assistance to the New Member Educator if applicable.
- Provide appropriate counseling and referral services for the academic and personal needs of students. Utilize the resources available through the Student Support Services office (SSS) and the Undergraduate Advising and Academic Programs Office (UAAP), or applicable academic department.
- Promote health and safety within the chapter house. Coordinate with chapter House Managers and Alumni House Corporations *for* safety inspections.
- RAs are expected to abide by the terms of the housing contract used by their organization. This should be read and signed by the RA as any other resident would do.
- Meet and communicate regularly with the Assistant Dean of FSILGs and/or other members of the FSILG staff as needed.
- Assist in providing a positive developmental living experience for FSILG residents.
- Develop chapter/organizational educational, cultural, social and recreational programs.
- Establish a rapport and personal connection with students in your chapter.
- Identify and respond to student needs for information, especially about MIT resources, or for assistance with personal problems.
- Interact regularly with each officer and understand their various roles and responsibilities.
- Be the "go to" person during a crisis or when problems arise.
- Be available to answer questions when approached by city agencies and inspectors.
- Be knowledgeable of, and have on hand, contact information of current officers.
- Act as liaison to the Office of Community Development and Substance Abuse. Be aware of chapter requirements regarding CAAB attendance, Server Training, etc.
- Other duties as agreed upon by the Alumni/ae House Corporation, the FSILG office, or in conjunction with the undergraduate chapter.