

MIT FSILG ACCREDITATION

Report of the AILG Accreditation Committee Academic Year 2008-9

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Abstract

This report describes the Accreditation effort during the 2008-9 academic year, as operated by the Association of Independent Living Groups (AILG). The AILG Accreditation Program, an organized peer review of the living groups within the MIT Fraternity, Sorority, and Independent Living Group (FSILG) Community, had a very active and productive year, and its processes have developed to a mature, steady-state operation. The findings of the review teams are summarized and presented in detail. In particular, there were many “best practices,” some of which were developed independently by several MIT living groups, which others could consider or benefit from by adopting. The review teams also pointed out areas where our living groups need improvement and have documented lessons learned that living groups should avoid having to learn independently. The process of internal review as carried out under this program is expected to improve the MIT FSILG Community.

Overview

The program has been under development over a span of several years and has evolved considerably over that time. This was the second year in which the program was operated by the volunteer Accreditation Committee which met approximately monthly to plan operations and to advise and direct a part-time Accreditation Coordinator. With this formal structure, the program is considered to be in regular operation. Our processes continue to get more and more robust and assist our members to be stronger and thrive. As our members get better, we continue to raise the bar for all members, and we find new areas to evaluate and new problems to solve. The value of the program is visible, and our organizations are more willing to participate and cooperate with the process. During the interviews by Visiting Committees the conversations are rich and mutually productive, resulting in more information sharing and cooperation between competing organizations. By requiring alumni and undergraduates to work together and by requiring alumni organizations to be truly involved with organizational operations, we have observed greater intergenerational cooperation. By sending both men and women to evaluate sororities, fraternities, and independent living groups, we have created cooperation across genders and better understanding of organizational diversity.

A total of 33 reviews at 29 different FSILGs were conducted this year. During the Fall Semester, 16 reviews were conducted, and during the Spring 17 reviews were conducted. The Spring reviews included second reviews for 4 of the organizations reviewed in the Fall. The year ended with 27 organizations recommended for accreditation, although in the case of 5 of these the Visiting Committees expressed “reservations”. One organization was not recommended for accreditation, and one which had received a recommendation with reservations in the Fall did not meet the requirements for AILG membership and did not receive any evaluation during the Spring. These 7 organizations were found to need improvements in areas of governance and oversight; 6 of them will be revisited next term, and the other will only be revisited if it is able to meet minimum requirements for being a member of the AILG. In the intervening time, the assistance of experienced volunteers and MIT staff is being offered to all organizations found to be needing improvement, and in the case of the organization not recommended for accreditation, the Office of the Dean of Student Life has conducted

an intensive intervention and is requiring this organization to show specific progress at resolving the issues identified during review. In most of the cases where Visiting Committees have expressed reservations or have withheld a recommendation for accreditation, we have seen progress and cooperation between alumni and undergraduates for improvement.

Section 1 of this report outlines the Program Objectives. Section 2 provides an outline of the AILG-organized accreditation review approach. Section 3 summarizes the results of the Accreditation Program, providing an overview of the review status. Section 4 details the “best practices” of the FSILG Community, which are considered to be methods employed which yield good results in a particular area of FSILG operation, such as in governance, recruitment, or member development. Section 5 describes areas of FSILG operation needing improvement and lessons learned from accreditation reviews. Section 6 gives a summary of areas where the Accreditation Program should be improved and provides planning information for next year. The Appendix, only available within the MIT AILG Community, contains the full review reports from the 2008-9 Accreditation Program. Any responses to reviews received from the FSILGs are also included in the Appendix.

1. Program Objectives

There are 2 main objectives of the Accreditation Program:

- Provide a program in which the FSILG undergraduate leaders and the AILG (the alumni leaders of MIT FSILG house corporations and advisory boards), may actively exchange ideas to improve the FSILG Community and support its members by operating the Accreditation Program as peers.
- Provide the MIT administration with a multi-dimensional evaluation of the overall health of each MIT living group that qualifies as a fraternity, sorority, or independent living group.

2. Review Approach

2.1. Preparation. The reviews held during the 2008-9 academic year adhered to an approach that resulted from prototyping over 4 years. The approach consists of peer reviews by Visiting Committees sent to evaluate the health of each organization in the areas of Governance and Oversight, Financial Condition and Planning, Recruitment and Member Development, Scholarship and Behavior, and the condition of the Physical Plant. An important difference between this program and other similar programs that we are aware of elsewhere is that we focus on the evaluation of the owners, the alumni organizations, and their effectiveness in both operational and social involvement with their undergraduate organizations. The majority of real estate, worth over \$100 million, is owned by MIT alumni groups, and over 200 alumni are actively involved in the operation of the FSILGs. This program is an important part of protecting that significant investment.

The first year of the program, the 2004-5 academic year, was viewed as a trial period. Two FSILGs were reviewed using a question-and-response approach that required several site visits. The scope of the review questionnaire was developed for these reviews. The visit schedule was thought to be overly time-consuming to apply to the entire FSILG Community, even on a 2-year rotating basis, so visits were limited to about 2 hours per house in the 2005-6 academic year. The questionnaire was tightened, with less long-format answers, to reduce the effort to complete to about 8 hours and to be

able to limit reviews to 2 hours. Seven more living groups were reviewed. For the 2006-7 academic year, the questionnaire was recast so that responses could be provided in spreadsheet form but was otherwise unchanged. The visits were shortened to 90 minutes, but feedback from visiting teams during Spring 2008 resulted in returning to 2 hour visits.

For 2008-9 we continued using websites which had been set up during Spring 2008. One of these contains historical information about previous years, and the other is an operational website run by the Accreditation Coordinator. The addresses of these websites are provided in Section 8 of this report (References). As in the previous year, the operational site was used to post current schedules, status, results, and active documents. The major innovation in 2008-9 was the conversion of the questionnaire into an online form with item-by-item instructions. The form allows members of the FSILG to work as a team, updating the data and finally sending the completed form to the Accreditation Coordinator. It is constructed as a script which has allowed continual minor updates to the questions as suggestions are received throughout the year.

Three to four weeks in advance of the review, reminders were sent to each living group asking them to begin work on the questionnaire. We emphasized that Alumni and Undergraduates were expected to work together to complete the questionnaire. The online system allowed the partially completed document to be saved by the person working on it, on their own computer. For privacy reasons no copies are stored in a central location by the web-form system. Alumni and undergraduates can mail the partially completed form to various individuals in the organization until it is completed. Once the FSILG has completed work on the online questionnaire, they email a copy to the Accreditation Coordinator, who makes PDF copies and distributes these to the members of the review team. The saved form can also be sent back to the FSILG to help start the next review, expected to take place in a 2 years or less cycle. The design allows information from identical questions to carry forward and tabular information to flow to previous years, even after changes are made to the form to add or delete questions.

The review teams consisted of 3 to 4 AILG members each. We requested that each FSILG provide at least 2 members of the house corporation or advisory team (and preferably more) and at least 2 active members of the living group (and preferably more for a learning experience) to discuss and clarify the responses. The undergraduate members present were usually the officers — president, house manager, or treasurer. The questionnaire responses were distributed to the reviewers before the review in most cases. While we had some improvement over previous years, there were still a few FSILGs whose work on the form was still incomplete on the day before the review. These were distributed and used anyway with additional data acquired at the review.

2.2. Timetable. Eight Saturdays, one in each month from September through May (excluding January) were selected for reviews. Three to six reviews were held on each Saturday with 2 to 3 teams each conducting 1 or 2 reviews. We successfully completed all 33 of our planned reviews. Based on feedback from earlier years, we increased the contact time during the reviews from 1.5 to 2 hours, and conducted only one morning review and one afternoon review. We began each review day with a 30-45 minute meeting over a full hot breakfast where we briefed each of the Visiting Committees about the schedule and to discuss review procedures to improve uniformity. Breakfast was available at 8:00 AM and we began discussions at 8:15 AM with all reviewers. The first review of the day started at 9:00 AM. After each 2 hour review, an hour was scheduled for the group to organize notes and complete a first draft of their report. Lunch was available as early as 11:00 AM during the discussion, with a

formal lunch break from 12:00 noon until 1:00 PM. If a team only had a single review, the team was dismissed after lunch. Otherwise, a second review was conducted from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM. After the review, as in the morning, an hour was scheduled for work on the draft report. Soft drinks or juices were provided as an afternoon refreshment. We asked teams to submit their reports within 1 to 2 weeks of their visits. We believe that having a dedicated room reserved on campus for each review day to serve as a base of operations and a place where the initial drafts could be completed made for a much more organized and productive day and contributed to significantly more rapid report completion than in the past (see below under “Completion”).

2.3. Resources and Budget. The amount of volunteer effort is substantial. Each of our 29 reviewers (whose names appear under “Acknowledgments”) contributed 4 to 8 hours of time during one day of reviews, and more than half of these reviewers participated on 2 or more out of the 8 Saturdays (and in some cases represented their own organization on the other side of the table on some other Saturday). 4-6 additional hours were spent examining the questionnaire responses prior to the review and competing the reports for each living group. As a result, individual reviewers spent between 10 and 30 hours on accreditation. In addition, for each of the 11 reviews which did not result a recommendation to accredit without reservations, the AILG board spent 3-6 person-hours reviewing, suggesting changes to, and finally approving each report. This accounts for a rough total of about 610 hours of volunteer review time.

Based on what was learned about this in previous years, at the end of the 2006-7 year, the previous Accreditation Coordinator, Herman Marshall, submitted a proposal to provide some paid assistance to the volunteers. The proposal was implemented with some modifications, and the current model provides a budget for a paid Accreditation Coordinator plus breakfast, lunch, and afternoon refreshments for the volunteer visitors, and minor incidentals, such as taxis between campus and the FSILGs, when needed.

This year's program continued with what appears now to be a successful steady-state operation. We operate with a volunteer Accreditation Committee consisting of 5 alumnus volunteers including chairman Herman Marshall, David Burmaster, Bob Ferrara, Raffaella Wakeman, and Ernie Sabine. This year there was also occasional undergraduate representation by David Farhi and Ryan Andrews. Regular meetings of the committee were held approximately monthly and were attended by a representative from the MIT FSILG office, Kaya Miller, and former volunteer John Covert, who continued in the position of Accreditation Coordinator. John spent approximately 200 hours recruiting volunteers (with significant help from Bob Ferrara identifying and making the first contact with potential volunteers), collecting and distributing materials, organizing the review schedules and meals for the Visiting Committees, documenting policies and procedures, and reporting to the Accreditation Committee, AILG Board, and MIT. During the reviews conducted in the 2008-9 academic year, we spent approximately \$1600 of the meal and minor expense budget, which is about \$200 per review Saturday, essentially the same as spent the previous Spring. The program has contracted with FCI for archival of encrypted data and other miscellaneous services such as arranging meals.

2.4. Execution. A review sheet for use by reviewers developed in the 2006-7 year continued to be used with minor modifications. The 4 basic parts of the review sheet, which also became the main sections of the completed reviews, were:

Overall finding. As in previous years, there are 3 possible findings resulting from the review. The

review team can (1) recommend accreditation, (2) recommend accreditation with reservations, or (3) not recommend that the living group be accredited. The review team should explain any reservations well enough that officers of the living group can take appropriate action before the next review. The review team must enter a detailed explanation if they do not recommend that the living group be accredited. Organizations recommended for accreditation without reservations will be reviewed again in approximately two years. For the other two findings, a revisit is mandatory during the next term. If the finding is “not recommended for accreditation”, an intervention by the Dean of Student Life and the FSILG Office is scheduled to help the organization improve before its next review.

General comments for MIT and AILG members. In this section, the reviewers list the best practices, areas needing improvement, and lessons learned. Any items listed here will also be provided to the MIT Dean of Student Life and publicly distributed to the AILG.

Private comments for the living group. This section, used sparingly by policy, is for items that are of a more sensitive nature. This section allows the reviewers to make comments that reflect the detailed discussion during the review. These may involve sensitive information that was disclosed at the time of the review or in the data provided before the review. Examples are specific suggestions about finances, personnel, or behavior. The level of privacy afforded to these comments continues to be a topic of significant discussion within the Accreditation Committee and with the AILG Board. We adopted the following written policy for these comments: (i) We send private comments with the report to the living group. (ii) When the report is filed, the private comments are maintained separately. (iii) In the event of a "recommend accreditation with reservations" or "not recommended" finding, the private comments will be provided to the next Visiting Committee and the AILG board (via temporary storage on a password-protected web site, and not sent via email). (iv) The private comments are not sent to the Dean's office. (v) The retention period for the private comments is 10 years in the archives.

Suggestions about the review process. The reviewers may comment on or make suggestions about the review process itself in order that the process may be improved.

2.5. Completion. Report delivery was significantly improved over prior years, with 20 of the 33 reports sent to the FSILGs within 2 weeks (many in less than one week) and only 3 taking slightly over a month. This year, the Accreditation Coordinator did not have to resort to daily automated email reminders to members of any Visiting Committee, but occasional strong reminders were needed in a few straggling cases. All reports were completed before the end of the academic year. The policy adopted last year, that either the scribe or the committee chair could unilaterally declare a report complete if other committee members were non-responsive, only needed to be applied in one case.

As in the previous year, the scribe or committee chair (at their option) would send the completed reviews directly to the FSILG house corporation or advisors with a request for their comments to be returned within 5 business days. Template cover letters for this purpose were supplied to the visiting committees. In order to avoid a perpetual cycle of comment-revise-comment-revise the visiting committees were not required to revise their reports based on the FSILG comments, but were free to correct any “errors of fact” if the committee agreed with the FSILG that changes were appropriate. Any substantially changed report was returned for an updated set of comments from the FSILG. This only needed to happen in 2 cases.

Those reviews receiving a finding of recommend accreditation (no reservations) together with their

response, if any, were forwarded to the Deans by the Accreditation Coordinator as soon as the comment period had expired. Those where the finding included reservations or did not recommend accreditation were first sent to the AILG Board for their concurrence with the committee's finding, and if the Board concurred, sent to the Deans. In the event the report needed to be sent back to the Visiting Committee for editing, a new response was requested from the FSILG if the changes were substantive.

3. Review Results

We reviewed 29 of the 38 FSILGs which are currently active at MIT. Four of these were reviewed both in the Fall and again in the Spring. The year ended with 27 organizations recommended for accreditation, although in the case of 5 of these the Visiting Committees expressed “reservations”. One organization was not recommended for accreditation, and one which had received a recommendation with reservations in the Fall did not meet the requirements for AILG membership and did not receive any evaluation during the Spring. These 7 organizations were found to need improvements in areas of governance and oversight; 6 of them will be revisited next term, and the other will only be revisited if it is able to meet minimum requirements for being a member of the AILG. Please see the table at the end of this section.

In the case of the 7 organizations where the finding included reservations or did not recommend accreditation, the Visiting Committees listed the reasons for their decision in the findings in their reports (see the Appendix). Of these 7, 3 submitted written responses to their reviews and one had submitted a written response to their review in the fall (these responses are also in the Appendix). Comments were also received from 6 of the organizations which received an unqualified recommendation and “Thanks” from 8 more. These responses, after removal of anything pertaining to the private comments section of the reports, will be kept with the reports, were forwarded together with the reviewers' reports to the MIT administration, and are included in Appendix A of this report.

Six of these organizations will be revisited next term, and the seventh will be visited if it can meet the requirements for AILG membership. In the intervening time, the assistance of MIT volunteers and staff is being offered to all organizations found to be needing improvement. In the case of the one not recommended for accreditation in both the Fall and Spring, MIT has been conducting an active intervention for much of the Spring, require this organization to show specific progress at resolving the issues identified during review. The Spring Visiting Committee found that the intervention had produced many positive results, but was not ready to recommend accreditation until more time had passed and the promises made by the organization were shown to have stood the test of time.

Due to the fact that students transition through each residential living group over a 3 year period (sophomore, junior, and senior years), only one-third or less of the students originally present during a review will be present again for a second review 2 years later. This underscores the need to review every living group every 2 years as well as the urgency of returning the next term to re-review any organization with a finding including reservations or not recommended.

The table on the next page shows all FSILGs active at MIT during the 2008-9 academic year with the dates and results of the most recent reviews and the planned timeframe for the next review. The names of the 29 FSILGs reviewed during the year are in **bold**.

Group Name	Last Review	Result at last review	Next review
Alpha Chi Omega	27-Sep-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2010
Alpha Delta Phi	27-Sep-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2010
Alpha Epsilon Phi	27-Sep-2008	Recommend Accreditation with Reservations	Fall 2009
Alpha Epsilon Pi	18-Oct-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2010
Alpha Phi	07-Feb-2009	Recommend Accreditation with Reservations	Fall 2009
Alpha Tau Omega	4-Apr-2009	Not Recommended for Accreditation	Fall 2009
Beta Theta Pi	05-Apr-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2010
Chi Phi	4-Apr-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2011
Delta Kappa Epsilon	09-Feb-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2009
Delta Tau Delta	07-Feb-2009	Recommend Accreditation with Reservations	Fall 2009
Delta Upsilon	07-Mar-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2011
Epsilon Theta	18-Oct-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2010
Fenway House	2-May-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2011
Kappa Alpha Theta	4-Apr-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2011
Kappa Sigma	15-Nov-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2010
Lambda Chi Alpha	07-Mar-2009	Recommend Accreditation with Reservations	Fall 2009
Nu Delta	2-May-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2011
Number 6 Club	07-Feb-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2011
Phi Beta Epsilon	18-Oct-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2010
Phi Delta Theta	27-Sep-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2010
Phi Kappa Sigma	09-Feb-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2010
Phi Kappa Theta	07-Mar-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2011
Phi Sigma Kappa	18-Oct-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2010
Pi Beta Phi		Not yet reviewed	Fall 2009
Pi Lambda Phi	09-Feb-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2009
pika	07-Mar-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2011
Sigma Chi	01-Mar-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2010
Sigma Kappa	07-Mar-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2011
Sigma Nu	18-Oct-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2010
Sigma Phi Epsilon	06-Dec-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2010
Student House	01-Mar-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2010
Tau Epsilon Phi	04-Apr-2009	Recommend Accreditation with Reservations	Fall 2009
Theta Chi	01-Mar-2008	Recommend Accred.	Spring 2010
Theta Delta Chi	2-May-2009	Recommend Accreditation with Reservations	Fall 2009
Theta Xi	06-Dec-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2010
WILG	07-Mar-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2011
Zeta Beta Tau	07-Feb-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2011
Zeta Psi	09-Feb-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2009

4. Best Practices in the MIT FSILG Community

A sampling of the “best practices” identified by the review teams is presented below, edited slightly to not mention specific organizations. (Please recognize that each of these items was extracted from the Visiting Committee reports which were written by dozens authors with different writing styles.) Many of these practices were reported to be in operation at more than one organization. All of the best practices are contained in the full reports in the Appendix, available to any member of the MIT AILG Community. It is important to note that a best practice found in one living group may not necessarily be appropriate for another. This is not a “one size fits all” situation. Rather, the idea is to offer practices for the consideration of each individual living group. Should a group desire more information about any particular item, please contact the Accreditation Coordinator or any member of the Accreditation Committee.

4.1. Governance

- a) Wikis are used to capture, share, and transfer knowledge and news among the undergraduates and the alumni. These can be used to improve communication among members, to coordinate plans and events, and to document standard practices and history.
- b) A large group of recent alumni has been recruited to form an advisory board.
- c) MIT's Chapter Alumni Risk Management Advisors (CARMA) program promotes increased awareness of risk management issues and communication between undergraduates and alumni.
- d) At least one organization has engaged Stewart Howe to maintain its public Web pages.
- e) One alumni corporation has required its undergraduate president to send a short standard template email to the the alumni president each Tuesday with specific topics including (but not limited to) these: "Hits and Misses" (good happenings and difficulties); educational problems; new indications of losing a member; incidents of any kind that were or could have been reported; communications received of a "negative sort"; "Weekly Treasurer's Report" and other topics.
- f) Some of our organizations employ resources from their National to implement a smoothly running administration (accounting, alumni/ae database, etc). Additionally, welcoming alumni/ae from other schools helps organizations learn from different experiences across the country.
- g) Summer boarder policies were reviewed by several organizations this past year together with a joint Institute / FSILG / AILG committee formed to ensure best practices in this area. Several organizations limit boarders to chapter members, relatives of chapter members, and members of the national organization from other schools.
- h) More than one chapter reports using a competitive and selective application process for boarders, elected summer officers (president, house manager, treasurer, steward), and an awareness-training program in which rules are presented and stressed to all summer residents.

4.2. Financial

- a) In order to complete the transition required by "freshmen on campus" from a 4-year to a 3-year system, one organization temporarily rented rooms on their fourth and fifth floors to MIT graduate students. The income from this program allowed them to keep a full-time cook and prevented the hemorrhaging of funds. They now have the resources to reinvigorate rush and recruitment to rebuild the chapter. As the chapter grows, it will reclaim rooms on the fourth floor and eventually the fifth floor.
- b) One organization has created an 'alumni mortgage' as a way to loan money to the corporation with provisions for repayment in case of disbandment.
- c) There are organizations using their National alumni services to build up contact lists and eventually run capital campaigns.

- d) One of our Review Teams was impressed with the level of organizational improvement as a direct result of the Accreditation Program and the assistance recommended from prior reviews. Finances are much better organized, including filing for the appropriate IRS paperwork and using QuickBooks to keep track of all accounts. The review team felt the alumni board is today more organized and engaged with the members than before.

4.3. Recruitment and Member Development

- a) One group has formed a chapter advisory board, distinct from the alumni/ae corporation, with 11 members (not all MIT alumni/ae) providing nearly one-on-one interaction and support to the 13 executive board officers.
- b) Several groups prepare their own "Guide to MIT" for new members with information about majors, sports and clubs on campus.
- c) We are always happy to see an organization which reports alumni/ae "counseling" the undergraduates.
- d) One alumni corporation elects to fill explicit age group requirements, enforcing a diverse age range of members.
- e) At one FSILG, necessary efforts have been made by the chapter president and other officers to create a member development program based around respect, unity, pride and trust in order to move toward a house culture that is focused on core values and building better people, rather than drinking. This values program is also part of the new member education program, in order to set standards and teach new members about safe behavior and risk management.
- f) Executive council meetings are rotated between chapter house and campus to improve connections with on-campus members.
- g) At least one organization issues monthly newsletters electronically to all alumni/ae, with another newsletter going to parents of all current chapter members, both with articles about chapter events and officer/member updates.
- h) An organization re-thought and re-organized its approach to rush and recruitment to good success.
- i) In at least one group, an alumnus makes a presentation to all undergraduate members each semester. Alumni assist in recruitment preparations, especially in training actives in both recruitment skills and in giving out bids. Organizations report that alumni involvement has improved dramatically over the past few years. Examples are alumni events that are attracting significant numbers and a career mentoring program.
- j) One organization encourages development of dorm communities for members living on-campus. Its members eat dinner together before chapter meetings, participate in room swaps between dorms and the chapter house so that members can experience other living group cultures.

- k) Chapter members have opportunities to attend leadership conferences put on by the national organization, and officer training materials are provided to the chapter for major offices. Local chapters which take advantage of participating in these national activities and establishing connections with national officers find that this strengthens the local chapter.
- l) One organization reports that it has extended the national organization's blueprint with several local innovations, and has created a unique training program for new members which does not end with initiation, but has requirements which must be completed each year. The review committee urged this group to find a way to let other FSILGs learn about this innovative program.
- m) In order to encourage positive behaviour, one group has a comprehensive system to determine housing priority. It incorporates seniority, merit, and diversity of class.
- n) MIT encourages the use of the ENTICE program for alcohol and substance abuse education (see <http://cdsa.mit.edu/entice/>).

4.4. Community Relations

- a) At one organization the first hour of annual open house event is specifically geared towards faculty members and their families.

4.5. Scholarship

- a) One organization reports that it encourages good scholarship through room assignments and 'house culture.'

4.6. Physical Plant

- a) Alumni house manager oversees repairs.
- b) One group keeps its house clean by having all residents participate in weekly group cleaning sessions. The house manager keeps track of residents who need to make up a missed session. During Saturday morning sessions small groups of residents take turns working on larger projects for upgrades and repairs. The house manager keeps a list for distributing the assignments.

5. Areas of the MIT FSILG Community Needing Improvement and Lessons Learned

Below are some of the areas where individual organizations needed improvement and some lessons learned. As with the previous section, these items were often reported at more than one FSILG and have been somewhat generalized. The reports in the Appendix contain all of the specific results reported by the committees.

5.1. Governance

- a) Officer transitions are an area which some chapters handle well, but which many chapters need to improve. A well functioning organization can turn into a disaster in as little as 2 years

if the knowledge of how to run the chapter is not transmitted forward. Our review committees have encouraged the alumni and undergraduates at those chapters which do not already have formalized transition procedures to develop a 'Wiki' (with a section for each major office) so that current officers can write suggestions to future officers about standard operating procedures and the results of different policies and experiments.

- b) Some organizations need to be more diligent about keeping the alumni/ae corporate filings with the Secretary of the Commonwealth up to date each year.

5.2. Financial

- a) There are organizations which have not yet made use of IRDF grant money.
- b) One organization learned the hard way to collect rents from summer boarders prior to occupancy in order to avoid losing the income if the boarders disappear to far-flung and unknown reaches during or at the end of the summer.

5.3. Recruitment and Member Development

- a) We encourage more undergraduates and alumni to register for -- and take full advantage of -- the several Short Courses sponsored by the AILG during IAP. Although only 2 organizations completely ignored the IAP courses, many organizations could benefit from sending more. These courses offer opportunities to learn tools to address the challenges facing all of the independent living groups.
- b) Rush retention for at least one group was down this year compared to other years. The Chapter hopes that emphasis on quality over quantity and setting expectations to ensure that freshmen move in to the house as sophomores will help improve in this area in the future. More attention is needed to ensure these goals are met.
- c) One of our committees reported that there was only one undergraduate at the review meeting who could only stay for 30 minutes of the meeting. It would have been helpful to have more undergraduates involved in the meeting, as their viewpoint is invaluable to the process. Other living groups have found these Accreditation visits to be a very valuable learning opportunity, not only about their own living group, but others at MIT as well.

5.4. Community Relations

- a) We encourage every organization which does not have one (and at the present time most do not) to recruit a Faculty Advisor soon. Having more faculty directly involved with our organizations is an important way of getting the good news about our organizations out and improving our relationship with all of MIT's faculty.
- b) Several organizations have a critical need for specific action, and all organizations need to do more outreach to MIT, the Cities of Cambridge and Boston and Town of Brookline, and the rest of the AILG Community to improve the image of their own organizations and of the system as a whole.

5.5. Behaviour

- a) Risk management is an area where many of our organizations need to be more pro-active about making sure that members and guests are aware of risk management standards and that these standards are clear and enforceable.
- b) Each member of the Community needs to work with its neighbors in the Community to reinforce positive behavior. This is necessary because the behavior of one fraternity is often painted with the same brush as its neighboring fraternity in the eyes of non-MIT neighbors. Every organization bears some of the responsibility for the system as a whole.

5.6. Physical Plant

- a) We encourage all our members to work with the Building Safety Facilitator to make sure that all permits and inspections have been properly secured, especially for roof access (and any 'deck' thereon), as defined in municipal ordinance and regulation.
- b) There were maintenance issues identified in a few of the reports. While cleanliness is a known issue, Visiting Committees were reluctant to provide written criticism in this area.

6. Areas of Accreditation that Need Improvement and Other Plans for Next Year

While we believe we have a successful operational model which does not require major changes, carefully considered changes will continue to improve the program. In this section are some of the areas which we are considering for implementation next year.

Expanded Volunteer Base. While we have a large enough volunteer pool that volunteer burnout is being avoided, and we have increased the participation by women FSILG alumnae, we still need more participation by women. In addition, our 29 Visiting Committee members this year were drawn from only 18 of our 38 organizations – less than half. We want to improve both of these areas. Potential volunteers are asked to contact the Accreditation Coordinator or the Committee.

Uniform Evaluation Criteria. The committee has wrestled with the tension between subjective and objective evaluation and has not reached a final conclusion. We are not at all in favor of requiring Visiting Committees to use a set of numeric metrics in their reports. We do not wish to select the resulting overall findings from a table of ranges. Our findings are recommendations, and the subjective feelings by the Visiting Committees are important. However, over time we have developed certain specific items that, depending on their severity, should give rise to “reservations” or an inability to recommend accreditation. The first of these which we “codified” was failure to have submitted the IRS form 990s. Even though it might seem that this is a simple: “yes or no”, one of the first committees to have to consider this particular “metric” pointed out that an organization might have a long history of doing this correctly, may have just missed a single year, and may already have plans in place to file as soon as possible. Now that we have several years of specific reasons for not giving a full recommendation, we can provide a generalized list of these reasons as “things to look for.” Committees would still have the subjective task of determining whether the specific severity each of these criteria actually justifies influencing the overall finding.

Updates to the Basic Data Form. The basic data form was reviewed by sorority members who

proposed a number of questions relevant to their organizations and modified others. Changes to the organization of the BDF were proposed. One particular proposed change creates an initial section composed entirely of contact information which, unlike the rest of the document, will not be confidential and can be extracted and used to update records at the AILG and at MIT's FSILG office. The Accreditation Coordinator will be implementing these changes in time for the first set of reviews in the Fall.

Schedule. To continue with our 2-year planned review cycle and our next term revisitation schedule, we must review 9 organizations next year which have not been reviewed since the 2007-8 academic year (including one new Sorority which has not yet been reviewed), and revisit the 6 organizations identified above as needing improvement. We may also begin an accreditation process for alumni organizations of chapters without current undergraduate operations, to provide an evaluation of their readiness to recognize at MIT. Our preliminary schedule for next year has us reviewing 10-11 FSILGs during Fall Term. During the Spring Term we have planned reviews at 5 FSILGs, plus the alumni organizations mentioned, any revisits in Spring Term required as a result of findings returned from the Fall Term reviews, and possibly 1 or 2 groups not due until Fall 2010 in order to even out the schedule. There are fewer reviews on the schedule than in 2008-9, which will allow time for the other work mentioned in this section.

7. Acknowledgments

We extend our warmest thanks to all the volunteers who have participated in this program. We thank the house corporation members and undergraduates who, in the process of being reviewed, have put many hours into preparing data and in contributing to the future success of MIT's FSILG Community. We especially thank the Visiting Committee members who participated in the reviews and helped write the reports during this period: Dave Burmaster, Karl Buttner, Twiggy Chan, John Covert, Sherri Davidoff, Joye Dickens, Dan Dunn, Bob Ferrara, Tom Hoover, Alicia Hunt, Jim Janosky, Alice Leung, Jeff Lobo, Jan-Willem Maessen, Herman Marshall, Dan Moon, Herb Mower, Marleigh Norton, Bryan Owens, Sara Pierce, Rich Possemato, Roy Russell, Ernie Sabine, Bob Steininger, Steve Summit, Lisa Tatterson, Raffaella Wakeman, Aaron Wippold, Yumi Yasutake. And we thank all the participants in previous years who helped to develop a successful, working program.

A great deal of thanks is also due to the MIT staff in the office of the Dean of Student Life who supported this program, especially Deans Kaya Miller and Karen Nilsson, whose intervention with and guidance to those FSILGs identified by their Visiting Committees as needing outside help has had proven results in guaranteeing that this program produces improvement in those organizations most in need.

8. References

AILG Historical Website, accreditation main page (past documents):
mitailg.org/accreditation/accreditation.html

Accreditation Coordinator's operational website (current documents, results, and policies):
web.mit.edu/covert/ailgreviews/

Appendix: FSILG Review Reports

In the “full version” of this report, the accreditation reviews as well as the responses from the reviewed organizations appear after this introductory page. They are organized in alphabetical order by organization on pages numbered A-1 through A-100.

Because it is the policy of the Accreditation Committee to share the full reports only within the MIT AILG Community, posted versions and other widely circulated copies of the summary report do not include the individual reviews. Any member of the MIT AILG Community may obtain copies of any or all of the reports by contacting the Accreditation Coordinator or the FSILG Cooperative. Members will be provided copies of the reports for their own organizations in electronic form. Other reports or the entire Appendix will be printed and mailed upon request.