

# MIT FSILG ACCREDITATION

## Report of the AILG Accreditation Committee Academic Year 2009-10

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### Abstract

This report describes the Accreditation Program during the 2009-10 academic year, as operated by the Association of Independent Living Groups (AILG). The AILG Accreditation Program is an organized peer review of the living groups within the MIT Fraternity, Sorority, and Independent Living Group (FSILG) community. This was a very active and productive year, and the program's processes have developed to a mature, steady-state operation. The findings of the Visiting Committees are summarized and presented in detail. In particular, there were many “best practices” identified some of which were developed independently by several MIT living groups. Others could consider or benefit by adopting them. The Visiting Committees 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 review as carried out under this program has, we believe, led to an overall improvement in the MIT FSILG community.

### Overview

The program has been under development over several years and has evolved considerably over that time. This was the third year in which the program was operated by the volunteer Accreditation Committee. This group 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 the program assists our members to be stronger and thrive. As our members get better, we continue to raise the bar for all, and we find new areas to evaluate and new problems to solve. As the value of the program becomes more apparent, our member organizations are more willing to participate and cooperate with the process. The interviews by Visiting Committees consist of conversations which 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 20 reviews at 17 different FSILGs were conducted this academic year. During the Fall Semester, 9 reviews were conducted, and during the Spring 11 reviews were conducted. The Spring reviews included second reviews for 3 of the organizations reviewed in the Fall. The year ended with all organizations recommended for accreditation, although in two cases the Visiting Committee expressed “reservations”. These organizations were found to need improvements in areas of governance and oversight. One will be revisited in the Fall, and the second will be revisited next spring, one term longer than usual because it is believed that it will take that long for the necessary improvement to be measurable. One other organization was recommended for accreditation, but a revisit was requested for next year to ensure that the improvements seen between Fall and Spring 2009-10 continue. The assistance of experienced volunteers and MIT staff is being offered to all organizations found to be needing improvement. Our past observation has been that 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 for this year, providing an overview of the review status. Section 4 details the “best practices” of the FSILG community. These practices 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, available only by request to members of the MIT AILG community, contains the full review reports from the 2009-10 Accreditation Program. Any responses to reviews received from the FSILGs are also included in the Appendix.

### Special Mention

During academic year 2009-10, the FSILG Accreditation Program Received National Recognition.

The AILG's flagship alumni-run Accreditation Program is an exceptional example of the deep partnership with the Division of Student Life and strong mutual interest in maintaining a healthy and vital MIT FSILG community. To the best of our knowledge, the structure of the program is unique to our FSILG community, even with our peer institutions and similar fraternity/sorority communities in the country. For this reason, MIT staff and AILG volunteers encouraged its nomination for national recognition. This past December, the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors — the premier professional organization for fraternity and sorority professionals — recognized the MIT Accreditation Program as a finalist for the “Excellence in Programming Award.” We were selected among the top three programs among a rich, diverse national field. MIT alumni and staff were asked to make a detailed presentation at the AFA Annual Meeting in Jacksonville, Florida and found a large amount of audience interest. We are proud of the positive attention this program has garnered and the opportunity it affords for further collaboration.

A copy of the presentation is available at <http://web.mit.edu/covert/ailgreviews/AFApresentation.pdf>.

### 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 2009-10 academic year followed an approach that began with a prototype 5 years ago and has been operational for over 3 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 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 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 Committees during Spring 2008 resulted in returning to 2 hour visits for academic years from 2008-9 onward.

We have also continued using websites which were 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. In the previous academic year, the questionnaire was converted into an online form with item-by-item instructions, allowing members of the FSILG to work as a team, updating the data and finally sending the completed form to the Accreditation Coordinator. The form is constructed as a script permitting continual minor updates to the questions as suggestions are received throughout the year. Organizations are able to import their answers from prior reviews into the current form, which merges the data, even where new questions have been added to the form.

Three to four weeks in advance of the review, reminders are sent to each living group asking them to complete the questionnaire no later than two weeks before the scheduled visit. We emphasize that Alumni and Undergraduates are expected to work together to complete the questionnaire. The online system allows 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 Visiting Committee. The saved form can also be sent back to the FSILG to help start the next review, typically 2 years later. 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 Visiting Committees consist of 3 to 4 AILG members each. We request 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 are usually the officers — president, house manager, or treasurer. The questionnaire responses are 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 along 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 Visiting Committees 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 Visiting Committee only had a single review, the Visiting Committee 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 Visiting Committees 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 2729 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 somewhat more than 600 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 Chair, 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 alumni/ae 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 2009-10 academic year, we spent approximately \$1350 of the meal and minor expense budget, which is about \$200 per review Saturday, essentially the same as spent in previous years. 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 Visiting Committee can (1) recommend accreditation, (2) recommend accreditation with reservations, or (3) not recommend that the living group be accredited. The Visiting Committee should explain any reservations well enough that officers of the living group can take appropriate action before the next review. The Visiting Committee 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", the Dean of Student Life and the FSILG Office schedule an intervention to help the organization improve before its next review.

*General comments for MIT and AILG members.* In this section, the Visiting Committee lists 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 Visiting Committee 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 degree 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 declined over prior years. While 10 (one half) of the reports were sent to the FSILGs within 2 weeks (4 in less than one week) 5 of the reports took more than a month. Two of these required more than 2 months. The Accreditation Coordinator again had to resort to daily automated email reminders to members of one of the Visiting Committees, and strong reminders were needed in several straggling cases. Although all reports were completed before the end of the academic year, one report had not been approved by the AILG Board for forwarding to the Deans until August. The policy that either the scribe or the committee chair could unilaterally declare a report complete if other committee members were non-responsive needed to be applied in two case.

As in previous years, 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 shortly after the comment period had expired. Those where the finding included reservations were first sent to the AILG Board for their concurrence with the committee's finding, and if the Board concurred, sent to the Deans. Our policy is the same for cases where the Visiting Committee did not recommend accreditation, but this did not occur during the 2009-10 academic year. 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

During academic year 2009-10, we reviewed 17 of the 40 FSILGs which are currently active at MIT. Three of these were reviewed both in the Fall and again in the Spring. The year ended with all 17 organizations recommended for accreditation, although in the case of 2 of these the Visiting Committees expressed “reservations”. These organizations were found to need improvements in areas of governance and oversight; one of them will be revisited next term, and the other will be revisited after a full year, because the primary reservation concerns academic results, which will need a full year to be measurable. Please see the table at the end of this section.

In the case of the organizations where the finding included reservations, the Visiting Committees listed the reasons for their decision in the findings in their reports (see the Appendix). Written responses to reviews submitted by organizations, if any, are also included immediately after each report. These responses, after removal of anything pertaining to the private comments section of the reports, will be kept with the reports and have been forwarded together with the reviewers' reports to the MIT administration.

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 was 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 2009-10 academic year with the dates and results of the most recent reviews and the planned timeframe for the next review. The names of the 17 FSILGs reviewed during the year are in **bold**.

<b>Group Name</b>	<b>Last Review</b>	<b>Result at last review</b>	<b>Next review</b>
Alpha Chi Omega	27-Sep-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2010
Alpha Delta Phi	27-Sep-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2010
<b>Alpha Epsilon Phi</b>	09-Mar-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2012
Alpha Epsilon Pi	18-Oct-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2010
<b>Alpha Phi</b>	14-Nov-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2011
<b>Beta Theta Pi</b>	20-Feb-2010	Recommend Accreditation with Reservations	Fall 2010
Chi Phi	4-Apr-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2011
<b>Delta Kappa Epsilon</b>	03-Oct-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2011
<b>Delta Tau Delta</b>	03-Oct-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2010
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
<b>Lambda Chi Alpha</b>	24-Apr-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2011
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
<b>Phi Kappa Sigma</b>	13-Mar-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2012
Phi Kappa Theta	07-Mar-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2011
Phi Sigma Kappa	18-Oct-2008	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2010
<b>Pi Beta Phi</b>	24-Oct-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2011
Pi Kappa Alpha		New Organization	Fall 2011
<b>Pi Lambda Phi</b>	24-Oct-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2011
pika	07-Mar-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2011
Sigma Alpha Epsilon		New Organization	Spring 2011
<b>Sigma Chi</b>	13-Mar-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2012
Sigma Kappa	07-Mar-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2011
<b>Sigma Nu</b>	24-Apr-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2012
<b>Sigma Phi Epsilon</b>	13-Mar-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2012
<b>Student House</b>	13-Mar-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2012
<b>Tau Epsilon Phi</b>	24-Apr-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2012
<b>Theta Chi</b>	20-Feb-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2012
<b>Theta Delta Chi</b>	24-Apr-2010	Recommend Accreditation with Reservations	Spring 2011
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
<b>Zeta Psi</b>	03-Oct-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2011

#### 4. Best Practices in the MIT FSILG community

A sampling of the “best practices” identified by the Visiting Committees is presented below, edited slightly to not mention specific organizations. 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. Please recognize that each of these items was extracted from the Visiting Committee reports which were written by dozens of authors with different writing styles.

#### 4.1. Governance

- a) Implement officer transition programs including an officer retreat and/or Alumni Advisory Board members attending a goal setting and brainstorming meeting with the outgoing and incoming undergraduate officers. To aid the undergraduates, pair alumni with chapter officers to advise them, with the primary Chapter Advisor coordinating advising efforts and year-to-year continuity. This also promotes good communications between the alumni and undergraduate organizations.
- b) Use wikis, comprehensive training manuals, and cloud services such as DropBox to help with transitions and to maintain all corporate documentation in a centralized location rather than in prior officers' personal email archives, personal computers, or even the chapter server. Key to implementing such best practices: make it a requirement for each officer to place a bible of their position in a centrally accessible location.
- c) Make sure that the Accreditation Review session is well-attended by both alumni and undergrads, and not just current officers.

#### 4.2. Financial

- a) Use written housing contracts and a billing service such as Omega Financial. Housing contracts have been found to improve rent collection and clearly delineate the responsibilities of residents.
- b) Collect house-bills up front, especially during the summer where security deposits are also used. For one organization this led to 100% summer payment, including boarders.
- c) Forge partnerships with resources such as the Society for the Preservation of Greek Housing.
- d) Avoid treating summer residents as "tenants" in a legal sense. Instead, the housing contract gives a license to occupy the building. This may be an important legal distinction which other houses should consider.

#### 4.3. Recruitment and Member Development

- a) Leverage alumni/ae resources to secure internships and jobs. Have alumni/ae conduct interview prep sessions and keep a google doc to track where alumni/ae are employed.
- b) Finding a cook with a high satisfaction rating has been found to contribute to high attendance and a sense of community at dinner times.
- c) A stronger and less stressful rush was achieved by focusing less on large events and developing personal relationships with potential new members.

- d) Implement continuous recruitment rather than focusing only on the defined rush periods.
- e) Use local alumni as a resource to network with other alumni to promote attendance at alumni events. Plan a whole weekend of activities, including (as a specific example) a barbecue and a formal dinner.
- f) Provide continual development for all brothers, not just new members.
- g) Provide a formal structure to use members who choose to live in the dorms as an on campus presence for recruiting.
- h) Provide a free bicycle for each new member to get from Boston to campus.
- i) Hold a weekend retreat each semester. Good attendance was reported by an undergraduate chapter which assigns the job of organizing the retreats each term and typically schedules the retreat for the weekend after the last day of class for the semester. Enough time is available upon return to study for finals. For this chapter the retreats have become established as a regular/expected program, including skiing, camping, etc. It serves as a great bonding event that everyone looks forward to and members typically only miss if an end-of-term final project work gets in the way.
- j) Know the organization's formal values statement and be able to articulate them in relation to recruitment policies.

#### 4.4. Community Relations

- a) Hold a Campus Preview Weekend parents brunch and/or faculty dinner.
- b) Formally create an alumni/ae organization separate from the house corp, focused on activities and outreach to promote close and continuing alumni bonds. Plan weekend and other events, and receive alumni donations for both the social organization and the house corp.
- c) Create a separate alumni advisory board to provide one-on-one advice to chapter officers.
- d) Assign alumni "era" coordinators in approximately 10-year intervals.
- e) Organize family-friendly alumni/ae events such as apple-picking to encourage whole-family turnout.

#### 4.5. Scholarship

- a) Match freshman with upperclassmen with the same major. Increase the number of review sessions. Hold study hours at regularly scheduled times, e.g. Sunday evening.
- b) Create a Google Doc listing of upperclassmen who have volunteered to serve as tutors indicating which classes, so that other members know whom to approach.
- c) Have the new member educator receive grades from freshmen and reports them. Collect early

grade information to estimate house GPA. The accreditation committee recognizes that there is resistance to this area of best practice, but there is strong evidence that more openness about individual academic standing coupled with providing resources to assist struggling members improves academic performance.

#### 4.6. Behaviour

- a) Use the advice given during risk management training to make proper, quick decisions and respond quickly and correctly to incidents.

#### 4.7. Physical Plant

- a) Clean house fully twice a week.

### 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) Communication among alumni/ae corporations, advisory boards and undergraduate chapters needs improvement, such as frequent in-person visits to the house by alumni/ae (as broad a set as possible, rather than just a single individual) on the corporation board and advisory board.
- b) More organizations need to create Alumni Advisory Boards.
- c) State corporation filings should be kept up-to-date. While this isn't nearly as significant as the Federal 990 forms, it is much easier and if it goes too long, the state can decide to stop recognizing the corporation.
- d) More volunteers are needed to prevent excessive reliance on extraordinary service by one (or a few) board member. Load and knowledge needs to be spread across several more people.

#### 5.2. Financial

- a) Better clarity concerning corporate status and tax exempt status is needed.
- b) In some cases the house-bill has not increased much in the past few years, often quite a bit less than the dorm rent increases, leading to potential operational difficulties. Chapters need to consider implementing a system of incremental increases to ensure that their future cash position remains strong. Organizations should consult the house-bill survey done in Spring 2008 to make informed decisions.
- c) When necessary, organizations need to have the resolve to take prompt action to collect large outstanding debts owed to the house by any individuals. If necessary retain the services of a

collection agency for former students no longer attending MIT, and use the policies and procedures available to block registration and/or graduation of current MIT students. More organizations should consider using Omega Financial or GreekBill on a permanent basis. In some cases a culture change is needed for organizations to expect and insist on full payment by all students on time with no exceptions. Establish internal financial review boards if necessary. Send house-bills to parents.

- d) In many organizations, IRS Form 990s for the alumni and undergraduate organizations continue to be an issue. If necessary, seek the consultation of an accountant. Systems need to be developed to ensure these documents are filed on time.
- e) Some organizations need more clarity about the employment status of their cook (contractor vs employee).
- f) Long-term capital planning is generally lacking.

### 5.3. Recruitment and Member Development

- a) Better attendance at AILG training sessions is required, and the AILG may need to consider offering sessions at times other than during IAP.
- b) Some organizations rely too heavily on recruiting from specific sports teams and need to diversify their recruitment efforts.
- c) Some organizations need to increase their recruitment efforts; concentrating on year-round recruitment or at least participating in Spring recruitment would be an improvement.
- d) Some organizations need to shorten their new member training period to comply with the policies of their national organizations, the national IFC, and the Institute.
- e) Many alumni/ae organizations operate largely through the efforts of a particularly small group of key individuals. We need to increase the breadth and depth of experience, avoid overburdening key individuals, and reach out to additional alumni -- both young and older MIT alumni and perhaps non-MIT alumni to help serve our organizations.
- f) Organizations with low recruitment and/or retention, or low move-in rates must find creative solutions to this problems.
- g) There need to be more formal opportunities for alumni/ae and undergraduates to interact, allowing alumni to stay more in-touch with current activities and to be able to more pro-actively and formally advise undergraduates.

### 5.4. Community Relations

- a) The faculty advisor program needs to be expanded and invigorated.
- b) Improved representation in the AILG, including participation on the Accreditation and other committees, could give many of our organizations some useful perspectives.

### 5.5. Scholarship

- a) There is not sufficient openness about scholarship and individual grades, preventing organizations from adopting effective scholarship improvement programs.
- b) Some organizations need to expand study hours, and implement a "quiet time" every night.

### 5.6. Behaviour

- a) There will always be room for improvement in Risk Management programs at all of our organizations, but a few organizations continue to have specific problems.
- b) Not all chapters have specifically identified a CARMA advisor in addition to already overburdened alumni advisors. This is particularly important for organizations which have been identified with specific problems.

### 5.7. Physical Plant

- a) Cleanliness problems and deferred maintenance issues need to be resolved.

## 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 27 Visiting Committee members this year were drawn from only 20 of our 40 organizations – just half. As soon as practical, we want to expand the pool of volunteers to include one alumnus or alumna from each FSILG alumni/ae organization. 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 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 to the Dean, 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 (BDF) 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 as well, and the form was reorganized into new sections. One particular proposed change created 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. As a result of these changes, there have been complaints that the form has become too long, and work is planned for the summer of 2010 to determine what changes could be made.

Schedule. To continue with our 2-year planned review cycle and our next term revisitation schedule, we must review 24 organizations next year which have not been reviewed since the 2008-9 academic year (including two newly colonized fraternities which have not yet been reviewed), and revisit 2 organizations identified above as needing improvement or requiring a revisit in less than two years. Our preliminary schedule for next year has us reviewing 12 FSILGs during Fall Term. During the Spring Term we have planned reviews at 13 FSILGs, plus any revisits in Spring Term required as a result of findings returned from the Fall Term reviews.

## 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 Büttner, Twiggy Chan, Joye Dickens, Dan Dunn, Ash Dyer, Bob Ferrara, Mike Garcia, Alicia Hunt, David Hutchings, Alice Leung, LeAnn Lindsey, Jeff Lobo, Herman Marshall, Herb Mower, Marleigh Norton, Bryan Owens, Rich Possemato, Roy Russell, Ernie Sabine, Cynthia Scott, Bob Steininger, Steve Summit, Cesar Toscano, Sara Pierce Wilmer, 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](http://mitailg.org/accreditation/accreditation.html)

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