

# MIT FSILG ACCREDITATION

Report of the AILG Accreditation Committee  
Academic Year 2010-11

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#### Abstract

This report describes the Accreditation Program during the 2010-11 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 the body of this report. In particular, there were many “best practices” identified, some of which were developed independently by several living groups. 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. We believe The process of review as carried out under this program has led to an overall improvement in the FSILG community.

#### Overview

The program has been under development over several years and has evolved considerably over that time. This was the fourth year in which the program was operated by the volunteer Accreditation Committee. This group met monthly to plan operations and to advise and direct the part-time Accreditation Coordinator. With this formal structure, the program is considered to be in regular operation. Our processes continue to evolve to become more and more robust, and the program assists our members to thrive and become stronger. As our members improve, 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 in and cooperate with the process. The interviews by Visiting Committees consist of conversations which are rich and mutually beneficial, resulting in more information sharing and cooperation between sometimes 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 inter-generational cooperation. By sending both men and women to evaluate FSILGs we have created cooperation across genders and better understanding of organizational diversity.

A total of 27 reviews at 25 different FSILGs were conducted this academic year. During the Fall Term, 10 reviews were conducted, and during the Spring Term, 17 reviews were conducted. The Spring reviews included second reviews for two of the organizations reviewed in the Fall. The year ended with all organizations recommended for accreditation, although in four cases the Visiting Committee expressed “reservations.” These four organizations were found to need improvements in areas of governance and oversight. Three of these will be revisited in the Fall, but in the case of one organization, the situation continued to deteriorate, and the alumni

organization decided to close the chapter temporarily and to reorganize in the future. Two organizations recommended for accreditation will be invited for one-year reviews, in one case to ensure that improvements over the past years continue; in the other case to provide additional assistance, recommendations, and oversight to one of MIT's newest organizations. 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.

The balance of the report is organized as follows. Section 1 provides some of the highlights of the 2010-11 academic year that distinguish it from our previous years. Section 2 outlines the Program Objectives. Section 3 provides an outline of the AILG-organized accreditation review approach. Section 4 summarizes the results of the Accreditation Program for this year, providing an overview of the review status. Section 5 gives a summary of areas where the Accreditation Program can and should be improved, and provides planning information for next year. Section 6 acknowledges everyone who gave time and resources over the 2010-11 year to the Accreditation Program. Section 7 provides references to online resources to find more information about the AILG and the Accreditation Program for readers so inclined.

Appendices A, B, and C summarize the results and observations documented by the Visiting Committees this past academic year.

The Compendium, which is available only by request to members of the MIT AILG community, contains the review reports from each of the 27 reviews run in the 2010-11 Accreditation Program. Any responses to reviews received from the FSILGs are also included in the Compendium.

## 1. Highlights of the 2010-11 Academic Year

The 2010-11 academic year saw several major highlights for the Accreditation Program that deserve special mention in this report. First is the notice that the Accreditation Program received the MIT Alumni Association's Great Dome Award in at the Alumni Leadership Conference in September 2011. Second, a pilot program was launched in Spring 2011 to conduct additional off-cycle reviews of organizations that were recommended for accreditation in Spring 2010 using only the Basic Data Form (BDF). Finally is the first review of Sigma Alpha Epsilon in Spring 2011.

1.1. Great Dome Award. Recall that in the 2009-10 academic year the Accreditation Program was recognized on the national stage by the Association of Fraternal Advisors as a finalist for the "Excellence in Programming Award." This year the Accreditation Program received further recognition by the MIT Alumni Association with the Great Dome Award. The award is presented "in recognition of distinguished service to the Institute and the Association by alumni groups or organizations. It is the highest honor the Association bestows upon any of its organizations." The Committee is humbled by this recognition of the many years of work put in not just by Committee members, but even more so by the countless volunteers on the numerous Visiting

Committees. The award also serves as a motivator, though, to continue to enhance and expand our operations.

1.2. Off-Year Review Pilot Program. For some time the Accreditation Committee has wrestled with how to monitor FSILG status in the two years between full reviews. Of particular concern are those organizations that had been recommended for accreditation without reservations, yet had serious issues in the intervening time-frame. As such, in Spring 2011 the Committee undertook a pilot program involving three FSILGs that had been accredited in Spring 2010 and scheduled for another visit in Spring 2012. This pilot ran by having these organizations update their BDF from Spring 2010 with Spring 2011 information, and then have these updated BDFs reviewed by the Accreditation Committee. Each group received an abbreviated report that, while not issuing a recommendation on accreditation status, gave feedback to the living group on areas of improvement and areas of focus from the previous review, especially on areas of excellence or areas needing improvement from the previous review. Overall the Committee found this a valuable experience, and the limited feedback received also indicated the FSILGs found this helpful. In particular this avoids a year of undergraduate leadership not having exposure to the Accreditation Program. It also allows for enhanced alumni/undergraduate interactions, and better continuity for completing the BDF. We plan on continuing this endeavor with an expanded pilot program in Fall 2011 and the hope of having this institutionalized by the end of the 2011-12 academic year.

1.3. Other Activities of AILG Members. The Accreditation Committee is very pleased that Sigma Alpha Epsilon, which was re-colonized at MIT in 2009, was recommended for accreditation in Spring 2011. The Visiting Committee recommended a revisit in one year, instead of the usual two, to ensure their continued growth in their short tenure, in particular how they adapt to having a property beginning in Fall 2011.

## 2. Program Objectives

There are 2 main objectives of the Accreditation Program:

- Provide a program in which 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 multidimensional evaluation of the overall health of each MIT organization that qualifies as a FSILG.

## 3. Review Approach

3.1. Preparation. The reviews held during the 2010-11 academic year followed an approach that began with a prototype six years ago and has been operational for over four 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 and upgrading that significant investment.

The first year of the program, the 2004-05 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 two-year rotating basis, so visits were limited to about two hours per house in the 2005-06 academic year. The questionnaire was tightened, with fewer long-format answers, to reduce the effort to complete to about eight hours and to limit reviews to two hours. Seven more living groups were reviewed. For the 2006-07 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 two hour visits for academic years from 2008-09 onward.

We have also continued to use the websites created in 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 two 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 three to four AILG members each. We request that each FSILG provide at least three members of the house corporation or advisory team (and preferably more) and at least three 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.

3.2. Timetable. Seven Saturdays, one in each month from September through May (excluding December and January) were selected for reviews. Three to five reviews were held on each Saturday with two to three Visiting Committees each conducting one or two reviews, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. We successfully completed all 27 of our planned reviews. 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 maintain 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 two 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 and snacks were provided as an afternoon refreshment. We asked Visiting Committees to submit their reports within one to two 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 makes for a much more organized and productive day and contributes to significantly more rapid report completion.

3.3. Resources and Budget. In aggregate, alumni/ae involved in this program donate an estimated 900 hours per academic year to keep the program running smoothly. Each of our 30 reviewers (whose names appear under “Acknowledgments”) contributed four to eight hours of time during one day of reviews, and more than half of these reviewers participated on two or more out of the seven Saturdays (and in some cases represented their own organization on the other side of the table on some other Saturday). Four to six 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 six reviews in which the reviewers expressed reservations, the AILG board spent three to six person-hours reviewing, suggesting changes to, and finally approving each report.

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 five alumni/ae volunteers including chairman David Hutchings, David Burmaster, Bob Ferrara, Herman Marshall, and Ernie Sabine. Regular meetings of the committee were held approximately monthly and were attended by a representative from the MIT FSILG office, Marlena Love, and former volunteer John Covert, who continued in the position of Accreditation Coordinator. John spent approximately 200 hours recruiting volunteers (with significant help from Dave Burmaster identifying and making the first contact with potential new 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 2010-11 academic year, we spent approximately \$1956 of the meal and minor expense budget, which is about \$280 per review Saturday, somewhat more than spent in previous years. The program has contracted with FCI for archival of encrypted data and other miscellaneous services such as arranging meals.

3.4. Execution. A review sheet for use by reviewers developed in the 2006-07 year continued to be used with minor modifications. The four 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 three 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, (iv) the private comments are not sent to the Dean's office, and (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.

3.5. Completion. Report delivery improved over prior years. Seventeen (63%) of the reports were sent to the FSILGs within two weeks (seven in less than one week) and none of the reports took more than a month. The Accreditation Coordinator only rarely had to resort to repeated email reminders to members of Visiting Committees, and strong reminders were only needed for one committee. All reports were completed before the end of the academic year, and after necessary approvals by the AILG Board, all reports were forwarded to the Deans by June 8. The policy that either the scribe or the committee chair could unilaterally declare a report complete if other committee members were non-responsive did not need to be applied this year; all visitors remained engaged until reports were completed.

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 five 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 occurred only once.

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, though this did not occur during the 2010-11 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 only if the changes were substantive.

#### 4. Review Results

During academic year 2010-11, we reviewed 24 of the 39 FSILGs which are currently active at MIT. Two of these were reviewed both in the Fall and again in the Spring. The year ended with all 25 organizations recommended for accreditation, although in the case of four of these the Visiting Committees expressed "reservations". These organizations were found to need improvements in areas of governance and oversight; three of them will be revisited next term, but unfortunately the situation at the other deteriorated to the point that the alumni organization

decided to temporarily close the chapter and to reorganize in a few years. 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 Compendium). 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.

MIT volunteers and staff offer assistance to all organizations needing improvement.

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 two years later. This underscores the need to review every living group every two years as well as the urgency of returning the next term to re-review any organization with a finding including reservations or not recommended. We conducted a pilot where we asked organizations to update their BDF after one year, after which the Accreditation Committee reviewed the updated BDF and wrote a short response. We thought this was beneficial and plan to continue and fine-tune this part of our program.

The table on the next page shows all FSILGs active at MIT during the 2010-11 academic year with the dates and results of the most recent reviews and the planned timeframe for the next review. The names of the 25 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>
<b>Alpha Chi Omega</b>	30-Oct-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2012
<b>Alpha Delta Phi</b>	25-Sep-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2012
Alpha Epsilon Phi	09-Mar-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2012
<b>Alpha Epsilon Pi</b>	20-Nov-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2012
Alpha Phi	14-Nov-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2011
<b>Beta Theta Pi</b>	07-May-2011	Recommend Accreditation with Reservations	After reorganization
<b>Chi Phi</b>	05-Mar-2011	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2013
Delta Kappa Epsilon	03-Oct-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2011
<b>Delta Tau Delta</b>	07-May-2011	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2013
<b>Delta Upsilon</b>	07-May-2011	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2013
<b>Epsilon Theta</b>	25-Sep-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2012
<b>Fenway House</b>	05-Mar-2011	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2013
<b>Kappa Alpha Theta</b>	12-Feb-2011	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2013
<b>Kappa Sigma</b>	30-Oct-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2012
<b>Lambda Chi Alpha</b>	02-Apr-2011	Recommend Accreditation with Reservations	Fall 2011
<b>Nu Delta</b>	02-Apr-2011	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2013
<b>Number 6 Club</b>	12-Feb-2011	Recommend Accreditation with Reservations	Fall 2011
<b>Phi Beta Epsilon</b>	07-May-2011	Recommend Accreditation with Reservations	Fall 2011
<b>Phi Delta Theta</b>	20-Nov-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2012
Phi Kappa Sigma	13-Mar-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2012
<b>Phi Kappa Theta</b>	12-Feb-2011	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2013
<b>Phi Sigma Kappa</b>	25-Sep-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2012
Pi Beta Phi	24-Oct-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2011
Pi Kappa Alpha		New Organization	Fall 2011
Pi Lambda Phi	24-Oct-2009	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2011
<b>pika</b>	07-May-2011	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2013
<b>Sigma Alpha Epsilon</b>	05-Mar-2011	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2012
Sigma Chi	13-Mar-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2012
<b>Sigma Kappa</b>	12-Feb-2011	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2013
Sigma Nu	24-Apr-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2012
Sigma Phi Epsilon	13-Mar-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2012
Student House	13-Mar-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2012
Tau Epsilon Phi	24-Apr-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2012
Theta Chi	20-Feb-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2012
<b>Theta Delta Chi</b>	02-Apr-2011	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2012
<b>Theta Xi</b>	30-Oct-2010	Recommend Accreditation	Fall 2012
<b>WILG</b>	05-Mar-2011	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2013
<b>Zeta Beta Tau</b>	02-Apr-2011	Recommend Accreditation	Spring 2013

## 5. 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. Part of this is in requesting suggestions for improvement from every Visiting Committee. The Accreditation Committee has reviewed all suggestions received from Academic Year 2010-11. In this section we highlight

first those areas where we are considering implementation of changes for next year and then discuss plans for next year and some areas where progress has been made but continued diligence is required.

### 5.1. Areas of Focus for 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 30 Visiting Committee members this year were drawn from only 20 of our 39 organizations – barely half. As soon as practical, we want to expand the pool of volunteers to include at least one alumnus or alumna from each AILG member. The committee strongly believes that this is not only necessary to avoid volunteer burnout but will also allow greater opportunity for sharing of ideas and successes amongst AILG members to enhance FSILG standards for both those representatives on the Visiting Committees and those organizations being reviewed. Potential volunteers are asked to contact the Accreditation Coordinator or any member of the Accreditation Committee.

*Facilities Issues.* An area of repeated concern from Visiting Committees relates to facilities management. The Accreditation Committee has been working with the Facilities Committee and the Building Safety Facilitator to identify ways to allow for a better method of keeping track of facilities issues. As part of that, in addition to a telephone call to the Assistant Dean and Director of FSILGs by the Visiting Committee Chairs before the review for a sense of behavioral issues at the FSILG, beginning in Spring 2011 Visiting Committee Chairs also call the Building Safety Facilitator for a sense of any pressing facilities issues that may not be reported in the BDF. Our goal is to ensure this becomes institutionalized for the coming year to better address and diagnose facilities issues at FSILGs.

*Updates to the Basic Data Form.* We began the year with only minor updates to the BDF which had been reviewed a few years earlier by sorority members who proposed a number of questions relevant to their organizations and modified others. As a result of complaints that the form had become too long, the committee reduced the number of questions by approximately 10% during June 2011 in preparation for the 2011-12 academic year. In addition, the section of the BDF relating to facilities management has been substantially redone to supplement the telephone call to the Building Safety Facilitator discussed above to raise facilities management standards at FSILGs.

### 5.2. Plans and Continued Areas of Focus

*Uniform Evaluation Criteria.* The committee has wrestled with the tension between subjective and objective evaluation since the inception of the program. 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.

*Schedule.* To continue with our two year planned review cycle and our next term revisitation schedule, we must review 14 organizations next year which have not been reviewed since the 2009-10 academic year (including one newly colonized fraternity which has not yet been reviewed), and revisit five organizations identified above as needing improvement or requiring a revisit in less than two years. Our schedule for next year has us reviewing nine FSILGs during the Fall Term. During the Spring Term we have planned reviews at 10 FSILGs, plus any revisits in the Spring Term required as a result of findings returned from the Fall Term reviews.

## 6. 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: Ryan Andrews, Steve Baker, Dave Burmaster, Bryan Owens Bryson, Eric Cigan, Dan Craig, Dan Dunn, Caroline Fernandes, Bob Ferrara, Mike Garcia, Andy Hackett, Debbie Hannigan, Michael Howard, David Hutchings, Clifton Leigh, Alice Leung, LeAnn Lindsey, Jeff Lobo, Herman Marshall, Albert Mena, Akil Middleton, Jason Mondanaro, Kevin Moore, Herb Mower, Rich Possemato, Erik Stockham, Steve Summit, Sara Wilmer, Aaron Wippold, and 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 Marlena Love and Constantino Colombo, whose support of this program has helped greatly to ensure its success.

## 7. References

AILG Historical Website, accreditation main page (past documents):  
[ailg.mit.edu/committees/ailg-accreditation-program/](http://ailg.mit.edu/committees/ailg-accreditation-program/)

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

## Appendix A: 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 Compendium, 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.

- Using Bill Highway as member billing system. This system streamlined financial processes by allowing members to pay their bills online and in a much more timely manner. As a result, there were no delinquent members accounts.
- Created new undergraduate role of Internal Relations Representative. The officer facilitates communication between the House Corporation and the active members.
- Having multiple levels of “big sibling” including immediately upon joining the chapter until a permanent big sibling can be found and an alumnus/alumna volunteer for each new member who can provide support in a different manner.
- Comprehensive mentoring and transition process. One example was made up of four components: (a) a meeting between incoming and outgoing officers chaired by the president; (b) officer manuals that are updated at the end of each officer's term and kept on the chapter's wiki; (c) a shadowing process where multiple interested members can shadow incumbent officers for a portion of their term; and (d) a staggering of officer terms (*e.g.*, the President and Treasurer serving for a calendar year and academic year, respectively, to avoid gaps in institutional memory.
- Strong financial oversight. One chapter utilizes Omega Financial for all incoming cash, which goes to the alumni treasurer who then disburses cash to the undergraduate treasurer on a weekly (or as needed) basis provided the alumni treasurer has received Profit & Loss statements (in Excel via Quickbooks) from the undergraduate treasurer. This ensures any shortcomings in financial processes are seen immediately.
- Having an established and detailed capital plan, providing a goal on which to grow a “nest egg” and save for a rainy day.
- Having a strong referral program during Rush (*e.g.*, referring upwards of 20 freshmen in one Rush). This spirit of interfraternalism should be encouraged throughout the system.

- An academic program that both celebrates academic achievement amongst successful members and encourages those who are struggling.
- Strong alumni networking, in particular having annual events on a regular basis that can attract upwards of 200 alumni. Also having events in cities other than Boston where there are strong collections of alumni.
- Having all members do a minimum of 10 hours of community service per year.
- Chapters learning from previous judicial sanctions. In particular, having more members become involved on campus with governing bodies (*e.g.*, IFC JudComm and the IFC RMC Program) so that they can inform their fellow members and bring best practices back to their organization.
- Setting aside designated study space and set quiet hours to focus on academic performance.
- Reaching out to National Headquarters and the MIT Annual Fund staff to plan large capital campaigns. This has allowed many groups to start a “quiet period” before their campaigns, which often times make the “public period” much more successful as a successful framework and fund raising apparatus is in place.
- Applying for national awards and participating in national leadership activities to bring best practices from other universities back to MIT.
- Creating a program for seniors to transition to alumni/ae status, similar to new members programs.
- Hosting well-planned faculty dinners, some of which have more than 20 MIT faculty, in addition to MIT staff, attend.
- Establishing strong neighbor relations, through regular events (*e.g.*, annual barbecues, hosting a Haunted House for families dating over 20 years), volunteering at local schools, and proactively communicating contact information and updates to neighbors.

## Appendix B: Areas of the MIT FSILG Community Needing Improvement

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

- Communication among alumni/ae corporations, advisory boards and undergraduate chapters needs improvement, such as more frequent in-person visits to the house by a broad set of alumni/ae volunteers, rather than just one individual repeatedly.
- Neighbor outreach could be improved in many organizations.
- House Corporation's should be proactive in working with MIT Real Estate to resolve any problematic leasing situations.
- In some organizations undergraduates are allowed to owe the chapter large amounts of debt (sometimes for long periods of time). Oversight and appropriate use of degree/registration holds from MIT should be used to closely control this.
- 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.
- Some organizations are delinquent in filing Annual Reports with the Commonwealth.
- Many organizations do not have a Chapter Alumni Risk Management Advisor (CARMA).
- Risk management issues continue to be recurring problems. Organizations must both put a well defined-plan in place and constantly educate their members to properly follow that plan.
- There are still many recurring problems with tax-exempt status in organizations. This includes out-of-date filings, discrepancies between federal and state status, and filing incorrect forms. We recommend enlisting a CPA and/or tax attorney for organizations that have these troubles to ensure everything is resolved timely and avoid fines or loss of tax-exempt status.
- Long-term capital planning continues to be lacking.
- Some organizations continue to not raise housebills every year. Those groups should consult the AILG housebill survey and ensure they are not setting rents that are unsustainable for the long-term.



- Recruitment and retention continue to be issues. Of particular concern are those chapters who have had a number of consecutive semesters of recruitment but have yet to change their recruitment strategy.
- There are some organizations that vest almost all financial responsibility in one individual and could benefit from stronger oversight, particularly if the individual is an undergraduate treasurer.
- Some organizations are still not using an accounting program or payroll service and relying on undergraduates to properly handle withholding and workman's compensation. Given the legal complexities organizations are strongly encouraged to use Quickbooks or similar software and outside experts to avoid potential legal problems.
- Summer housing policies are not always well-defined or enforced.
- Some organizations have not members come AILG meetings.
- Facilities management issues continue to be a concern in particular keeping licenses up to date, and having properly licensed roof decks.

## Appendix C: Lessons Learned from MIT FSILG Community

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

- Chapters have used summer boarders as a recruiting tool.
- After observing that frequent parties led to the perception the chapter house was only for partying chapters have reduced the number of social events to both encourage studying and promote fraternal bonding.
- Some chapters elect officers up to three months before they take office to allow for increased transitioning and shadowing.
- One chapter maintains a special building fund, setting aside 10% of rent in a long-term trust that is administered separately from the rest of the House Corporation assets.
- Some new member education programs include practical skills, such as information and advice on MIT's Financial Aid program.
- Some chapters have noted increased quality of life during the summer after strengthening their screening process and requiring rental agreements.
- Organizations are making use of security cameras and keyed-entry locks to ensure security and safety.
- Undergraduate leadership is exercising good judgment in calling for alcohol transports at parties when necessary.
- One chapter had an extended period of reflection during a social probation, including strengthening involvement with the IFC and realizing that social events focused on brotherhood and members development were beneficial and enjoyable. As a result they plan to reduce the number of “external” parties in a year to provide more opportunities for smaller gatherings of members.
- Some chapters gather all members' GPAs to identify members needing aid.
- Organizations sometimes have an alumni/ae officer attend all undergraduate executive meetings.
- One group recently completing a very successful capital campaign touted the help of a professional development officer as “worth every penny.”

- One organization located off-campus has a full-time cook who, in addition to cooking dinner, brings lunch to members on campus.
- One national fraternity, having identified 990 filings and other financial reporting as a systemic deficiency across the country, is rolling out a national program similar to Omega Financial to integrate and standardize financial reporting for all its chapters.
- Some chapters have successful virtual House Corporations, using both conference calls and video conferencing to have members partake from remote locations (in some cases the majority being not local to Boston).

## **Compendium: 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 D-1 through D-82.

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 Compendium will be printed and mailed upon request.