

September 2004

To the MIT Community,

The Task Force on Fraternities, Sororities and Independent Living Groups (FSILGs) has worked for more than a year to understand the opportunities and challenges facing the FSILG community, and to propose steps MIT should take to ensure a long, vibrant future for this important component of our residence system. We owe the Task Force a debt of gratitude for their hard work and thoughtful engagement with the various stakeholders.

Today, as the Task Force releases its report, its work draws toward a close – and our work as a community begins.

The next month presents an opportunity for everyone in the broad family of MIT to offer feedback and ideas to help shape the final plan of action. We are planning to gather views through a Task Force website, as well as a series of public forums over the coming month. I encourage you to contribute your thoughts through the website or to speak and listen to others in the forums.

Many voices have been heard already. In developing its recommendations, the Task Force -- composed of a broad range of current students, alumni, faculty and staff, nearly all past or present members of FSILGs – sought input from many other students, graduates, house corporation members, administrative leaders and other stakeholders. As the report documents in detail, they found that a variety of events and conditions in recent years, from the policy that all first-year students live in campus residence halls to the changing interests of incoming students, could jeopardize the FSILG system. The system will need to positively and proactively work in this changed environment in order to continue to contribute to the Institute's ability to offer students the benefits of diverse living opportunities.

Recognizing what is at stake for life at MIT, alumni led the way in alerting the community to the need for action. Current FSILG residents have clearly defined how the system could best serve a new generation. And MIT's administration has worked actively to

pinpoint the challenges, develop realistic solutions and provide funding to help FSILGs successfully transition into a new and stronger system.

In fact, the administration has already taken some key steps very much in line with what the Task Force is suggesting. For example, we recently charged Task Force Co-Chair and long-time FSILG supporter Steve Immerman with the responsibility of coordinating the implementation of the report's recommendations and overseeing the FSILG staff. In his position as Senior Associate Dean for Student Life, Steve has the leverage and access to keep FSILG priorities and responsibilities at the top of the Institute's agenda. After gathering and digesting reactions and ideas from the MIT community, Steve will develop a timeline of what needs to be accomplished over the next 12 months, in support of the Task Force goals. He will also work with key stakeholders and staff to make sure the implementation phase is a success.

Some other examples of progress:

- The Office of the Dean for Student Life (DSL) has increased its staff serving FSILGs from one person to four.
- As we work with alumni on everything from training treasurers to fundraising, we have also hired Bob Ferrara '67 (Theta Chi) as a liaison with alumni on FSILG issues. His work is already proving to be very effective.
- We have helped ease the strain on individual houses by making investments in them that will total \$1 million by the end of this year. Simultaneously, we have launched a significant new grants program and purchasing cooperative to help houses deal in a business-like way with both capital and operational costs.

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The Task Force concluded that FSILGs are part of the heart of MIT – that despite current concerns, they can offer exceptional benefits, and must be preserved and strengthened. MIT has in hand a residence system with valued and important strengths. By enhancing what's working and transforming what isn't, we have the potential to build the finest college residence system in the nation.

By working together, we can develop a vigorous and enduring new system that will enrich the lives of generations of MIT students and contribute to the future vitality of MIT as a whole.

I look forward to working with you in the days to come.

Sincerely,

Phillip L. Clay  
Chancellor