



Dear fellow FSILG alumnus,

January, 11, 2005

I am writing today to introduce myself, and to share several new developments affecting MIT's fraternities, sororities, and independent living groups – what's known collectively as the "FSILG community."

I'm Bob Ferrara, Theta Chi, class of 1967. Last year I was hired by the Division of Student Life and the Alumni Association to oversee FSILG alumni relations, strengthen our communication with alums like you, and support the community of FSILG alumni volunteers – now about 600 strong.

We all know that the last few years have been difficult for MIT's fraternities and ILGs, and for their champions. However, many, many students, faculty and committed alumni like you rallied in support of this crucial housing option – and I'm delighted to report that your support and advocacy have made a very important difference. We're now seeing a number of positive developments, many of which flow directly from the excellent work of the FSILG Task Force.

Appointed in 2003 by then-President Chuck Vest, the 18 members of this commission all have strong ties to the FSILG community. This fall, they published a remarkably thoughtful, practical report on their findings, recommending specific steps the Institute could take to build a strong, viable future for our living group system. The final product, along with a summary of comments from interested individuals and organizations, has just been posted at <http://web.mit.edu/dsl/aurora> (Project Aurora is the formal name of the effort to ensure the future of the FSILGs).

Thriving FSILGs have been a signature of MIT's past – and they are critical to MIT's future. In terms of numbers, the campus has never been more "Greek" than today. Thanks to the FSILGs, MIT actually offers the greatest variety of undergraduate living options of any top rank university. What's more, I'm convinced that MIT's leadership understands the special value these living groups offer. As Chancellor Phil Clay recently explained, as we define a strong future for the FSILGs, "There's a lot at stake. The FSILGs provide a large number of undergraduate students with housing, social support, other important resources for community life, and opportunities for leadership development."

Challenges remain, of course. Today's MIT demographics, student tastes, societal pressures, local government requirements and parental expectations have created a new landscape, and the FSILGs are doing their best to adapt. This year saw the most successful rush period in three years, one that was extremely well managed by the students themselves. Still, half a dozen chapters are still contending with choppy waters. In the future, some may even close – but it won't be from lack of effort. Many, many people inside and outside MIT are working tremendously hard to help the whole FSILG sector succeed. Some examples:

- The longstanding Independent Residence Development Fund (IRDF) now includes an exciting new Educational Operating Grant program. For the first time, FSILGs can receive grant money to help support operating expenses related to the educational areas of their buildings. For more details on how the program works -- and how you can help -- see <http://web.mit.edu/irdf/>.
- A reenergized Association of Independent Living Groups (AILG) has been tackling a number of priorities. Last year, they helped create a very successful purchasing group, the FSILG Cooperative, Inc., to help houses pool their buying power. They have also created practical new courses for undergraduate Treasurers and House Managers. (The AILG comprises the members of all 38 FSILG Alumni House Corporations.)
- Students have taken the lead in improving recruiting and risk management processes. The [MIT Interfraternity Council](#) is sponsoring a spring rush this year, to complement the main sorority rush of the Panhellenic Association.

- Senior Dean Steve Immerman recently took the reins of “Project Aurora,” the two-year effort to implement the Task Force agenda. From my viewpoint, there simply could not be a better person for this crucial job. As former Dean of Fraternities at MIT, Steve is thoroughly committed to the cause, and, as a veteran of two decades at MIT, he really knows this community and how to get things done. Like all of us, he deeply appreciates the value of the FSILG experience and what it can do for today’s students – and tomorrow’s.

For all this progress and much more, MIT owes its thanks to an active and dedicated group of FSILG alums. I hope you will continue to be positive and proactive in championing the value of your living group experience. If you can, please support your House Corporation and the IRDF as well. And for those of you who prefer hands-on participation, we are working with the AILG and the Alumni Association to open up more volunteer opportunities as well. If you would like to contribute your time as a volunteer in some particular way, please contact me at the address below.

As always, thank you for being such an important part of the FSILG community! I will follow up with another, more detailed update on the FSILG community this coming summer.

Best wishes until then.

Sincerely,

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