

Student Life Programs

Summary Statement

Student Life Programs (SLP) is made up of a team of energetic, committed, and talented staff who strive to build partnerships with students and improve the quality of both MIT's educational experience and its student life for graduate and undergraduate students. SLP has demonstrated our commitment to student life by devoting personnel, time, effort, and resources to the following key areas: building trust, rapport, and partnerships with students; creating leadership development opportunities; enhancing recognition and celebration of student achievements; improving service and support to student organizations/groups; and maintaining a focus on personal support/crisis response to assist individual students in times of need.

Highlights of the Year

SLP collaborated with faculty, students, and offices in continuing to optimize the structure and timing of various aspects of residence selection and fraternity, sorority, and independent living group (FSILG) recruitment, with a focus on Campus Preview Weekend and Orientation. The office coordinated surveys to continue evaluation of changes and enhancements to MIT's first-year experience, particularly as it relates to FSILGs and residence halls. A first-year survey, focused on various aspects of transitioning to MIT, and an all-student resident survey, focused on gathering information on student satisfaction with living in a residence hall or FSILG, were the primary efforts. Each was offered to the full population with more than 50 percent participation. We received graduate student-life grants to support community service and residential life initiatives. We responded to and supported critical needs of various groups and individuals. We revised and distributed Dean-on-Call system protocols. Finally, we coordinated and expanded the Leadership Series, a monthly workshop open to all students, presented by administrators from around MIT.

SLP successfully established the Latino Cultural Center (LCC), now beginning its second full year, with regular office hours, a movie collection, and other valuable resources for students. We focused our efforts on increasing and supporting student traffic to LCC.

The Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgendered (LBGT) Issues Group successfully advocated for the addition of "gender identity" as a protected class in MIT's nondiscrimination statement with support from various groups and organizations at MIT, including the Graduate Student Council and Undergraduate Association. To raise awareness of this addition, the "You Are Welcome Here" campaign was relaunched with an invitation sent by President Vest to all MIT faculty and staff.

SLP continued efforts to support LBGT faculty, for example, Professor emeritus John "Tephra" Southard and Professor Lorna Gibson each published LBGT-themed articles in the December/January *Faculty Newsletter*. Additionally, Professor Gibson worked to submit LBGT-related information to the New Faculty Orientation Guide.

SLP updated the “Being LGBT and at MIT” photo exhibit, which culminated in a Lobby 7 display. The exhibit, featuring many LGBT faculty, students, staff, alumni, and friends at MIT, is an effort to raise awareness, create visibility, and broaden understanding. Photos from the exhibit were also integrated into a new resource guide FREE2B that replaced the paper version of the Lavender Guide.

SLP supported significant volunteer efforts among the MIT LGBT community and our allies to advocate for same-sex marriage during the Massachusetts state legislature’s debate on amending the state Constitution. With the first phase of an amendment having been passed, the battle will continue in the coming years.

SLP also organized a training session to improve the connection between resources within Mental Health Services and the housemasters. This session dealt with issues of communications about students with problems and the range of possible ways in which both the housemasters and the staff of Mental Health Services could more effectively work to help students at MIT.

Housemasters Halston Taylor, Dorothy Mark, and Lori Lerman worked on a variety of issues through their membership on the Housing Strategy Group, including discussions about the desirability of constructing additional dormitory space for both undergraduate and graduate students. New dorm space might initially serve as “swing space” to allow cost-effective renovation of some of the existing dorms, and then provide additional capacity in the entire system. In particular, it is clear that the Senior Segue Program, designed as a temporary measure, is likely to be ended only after additional undergraduate residential space becomes available.

We are proud to note the continued success of the Simmons Hall Experimental Dining Program, with a high participation rate and satisfaction with quality of food and overall program, on which SLP collaborated with other Division of Student Life (DSL) offices.

SLP enhanced the FSILG Resident Advisor Program by developing an official Appointment Agreement Form and initiating monthly reports. The staff supported the work of the presidentially appointed Task Force on the Future of the MIT FSILG System. SLP collaborated with the Office of Institutional Research and other offices to offer comprehensive assessment data related to the FSILG system. SLP provided the second of three years of first-year on-campus housing requirement transition support to fraternities and independent living groups. Based upon the original formula, the needs of the organizations were greater than the budget of \$500,000, resulting in a reduction in the percentage.

SLP facilitated various workshops and programs that continue to maximize these opportunities. The Interfraternity Council updated both their Judicial Committee and Risk Management bylaws. Education and outreach efforts related to these changes are ongoing. SLP coordinated intervention programs for Delta Kappa Epsilon, Theta Delta Chi, and Lambda Chi Alpha, all of which faced significant city and/or MIT sanctions.

SLP successfully resolved abatement orders that were affecting almost all Boston-based FSILGs.

The Public Service Center (PSC) celebrated its 15th anniversary at MIT. It offered 18 service-learning courses for spring 2004. These courses included two first-time-participating departments—Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, and History. Student participation increased in all community service programs. CityDays participation increased 30 percent over last year, with 840 students serving 40 agencies.

The PSC continued fundraising and grant-writing efforts with much success. Grants included support from the Millipore Foundation to expand Keys for Empowering Youth, Boeing support for the IDEAS Competition and other engineering-focused service initiatives, 484 Phi Alpha Foundation support for the SciPro outreach program, and continued Lord Foundation support for the Public Service fellowship program.

The PSC also cohosted the International Development Forum, attracting representatives from 36 student groups and departments to showcase opportunities for MIT community involvement.

Residential Life Programs (RLP) conducted a family housing government retreat and first-ever Dormitory Council overnight leadership retreat. Leadership retreat grants to individual residence halls were offered, resulting in six such retreats. RLP collaborated with Student Discipline and Dormitory Council to reestablish a DormCon Judicial Committee.

Significant progress was made on developing a good working relationship with residential system student leaders, better positioning RLP to support the leadership opportunities presented by residential governance. Much of this was made possible through RLP's efforts to better advise and advocate for the Dormitory Council. In addition, RLP supported the development and planning of the East Campus and West Campus Resident Exploration parties during Orientation.

Three RLP members created the ad hoc Working Group on International Student Support.

RLP conducted a thorough assessment of the safety and health issues with family housing playrooms with a plan to create a cooperative with students. A formal babysitting service for the MIT community was created with sitters trained in best practices, CPR, and First Aid.

A small working group of graduate resident tutors (GRTs) was established to address the issue of community and the "freshman male flight" issues that affect the communities. This working group is the first of its kind and represents a milestone in empowering the GRTs.

In collaboration with other DSL offices, RLP helped to create a new event-registration process for events involving alcohol in graduate residences with 25 guests or less.

The Student Activities Office provided hands-on advising to the four undergraduate class councils, helping them to organize formals, a comedy event, the annual Ring Premier, ski trips, and other major class events.

The Student Activities Office advised the Large Event Fund and ARCADE (Assisting Recurring Cultural and Diversity Events) during the four allocation periods and helped initiate process improvements. Forty-six different groups and events were funded by these boards this year.

The Student Activities Office worked in close collaboration with Student Services Information Technology and the Association of Student Activities (ASA) to help launch the new web-based ASA database system. A full review of the Student Activities Finances Office by the MIT Audit Division was completed. Several of our traditional programs including Fall Festival, Charm School, and Spring Weekend, with a particular focus on graduate student involvement, were organized by the Student Activities Office.

The Student Activities Office worked with the Undergraduate Association treasurer to consolidate their monies and to develop plans to utilize their resources more effectively and consistently each year.

The Student Activities Office continued to modernize and streamline Finance Office procedures, including the development of a web-based student account access system (<http://web.mit.edu/slp/finances/access.html>). The office placed student activities reimbursement vouchers online for download. Ten thousand checks were written, and more than \$2 million in transactions were processed by Student Activities financial staff.

SLP attracted more than 300 attendees to the fourth annual Student Leaders Awards Luncheon. The number of nominations quadrupled this year, and a total of 27 awards were given to groups and individuals.

The Student Activities Office developed protocols regarding movie and music copyrights with the Intellectual Property Counsel and worked with the Office of Student Discipline to help the ASA develop a new judicial process and update their constitution.

New Initiatives

SLP successfully developed and implemented programs through four SLP-wide working groups. The First-Year Experience Working Group developed collaborations with key offices and offered grants for improving the first-year experience. The Communications Working Group focused on outreach with several opportunities for the SLP staff to interact with students and disseminated a brochure highlighting our services. The Leadership Working Group developed a framework for organizing the many and diverse leadership development opportunities available at MIT. The Risk Management Working Group created a central website (<http://web.mit.edu/slp/safety/>) through which students can review and access a variety of forms, policies, and recommendations for organizing safe events and programs.

The office organized the first-ever LGBT student community-building and leadership retreat, funded by the Chancellor's Leadership Fund. Eighteen new and returning students, along with six staff advisors, spent a weekend in Provincetown, MA, focusing on personal exploration, community leadership skill-building, and defining our collective priorities for the year.

We participated in and supported the work of the Summer Housing Task Force Committee, which included housemasters Charles Stewart and Ayida Mthembu. The task force worked on ways to resolve several long-standing problems experienced in the dorms during the summer. Through the work of Residential Life Programs, many of the recommendations have been implemented for summer 2004. We designed a new Summer Resident Advisor Program, including a job description, expectations, an application, an information packet, and an interview process. We hired and trained 18 new summer resident advisors. Additionally, we created a system of support and communication with summer high school programs utilizing MIT's residences.

McCormick housemasters Charles Stewart and Kathy Hess worked on the design of a new dining hall in anticipation of construction during the summer of 2004 and re-opening in the fall.

FSILG community working groups were created to examine, review, and enhance the Resident Advisor Program, Housing and Facilities, and Risk Management.

SLP applied for and received a \$100,000 National Science Foundation planning grant in collaboration with the Department of Mechanical Engineering to incorporate service learning department-wide.

The staff formulated a philosophical foundation for its approach to student development. The Dome Approach identifies six key areas and challenges our staff to broadly support and enhance the lives of our students in all six areas.

The first-ever Chancellor's Summit, with 25 members of student government and 15 members of the senior administration and faculty, was coordinated by the Office of Student Life Programs.

Summary of Staffing Changes

- Assistant director Ricky Gresh resigned to assume the position of director of student activities at Brown University.
- Assistant dean for residential life programs Katherine O'Dair will leave MIT at the end of July 2004 to assume the position of associate dean for graduate student life at Boston College.
- Student Activities and FSILG administrative assistants Kari Enge and Laura Martin announced that they will be leaving MIT in early July 2004 to pursue graduate degrees in student affairs. Lauren Wojtkun was promoted from administrative assistant for residential life programs to residential life associate

to fill the vacancy created by Aaradhana Prajapati, who left MIT to pursue other career interests. Their departures created an opportunity for Student Life Programs to reevaluate its administrative support needs. As a result, one position has been saved and redistributed to Counseling and Support Services within DSL. Senior administrative assistant Heather Trickett's responsibilities within the Public Service Center have expanded to support SLP-wide communications, and administrative assistant Fran Miles will transition into a position supporting the FSILG system and event registration. A search is under way to fill the vacant senior administrative assistant and administrative assistant positions.

- lbgt@MIT graduate assistant Travis Wright left MIT after three years in the position to focus his energy on the completion of his EdD degree. A search is under way. Candi Cann, a graduate student at Harvard University, was hired as the Latino Cultural Center graduate assistant.
- East Campus associate housemaster Ayida Mthembu will assume the role of associate housemaster at Green Hall, replacing Soosan Behesti. Residential life associate Sharon Snaggs will be appointed the new East Campus associate housemaster.
- Halston and Kathy Taylor resigned as housemasters of Burton-Conner. Professor Merritt Roe Smith and Bronwyn Mellquist were appointed as their replacements.
- John and Ellen Essigmann completed their term as chairs of the Housemasters' Council. Steven and Lori Lerman were appointed as the new chairs for two years (2003–2005).

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More information about Student Life Programs can be found on the web at <http://web.mit.edu/slp/>.