

Report on Student Space at MIT

UA Committee on Student Space Planning

Spring 2007

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Introduction

This report summarizes the findings and activities of the UA Committee on Student Space Planning in its first year of existence. Much of the Committee's efforts focused on analyzing the current state of the campus, working with student groups to ascertain their needs, and defining the role of the Committee in MIT's campus planning process.

The MIT campus faces many challenges including old infrastructure, development pressures on all sides, a long queue of desired building projects, and scattered resources across departments and student groups. Student space, whether it is residential, recreational, educational, or athletic, is one of many needs to balance in the development of the campus. However, because MIT is a residential campus, student space is central to the quality of life of MIT students, and in particular, the undergraduate population.

Most visibly, student groups face a crunch for useable space on campus. They need places to hold meetings, practices, performances, public events, etc.; they also need places to build and store materials. Student groups are growing, both in number and in importance to the MIT community. They contribute greatly to the quality of life of students, providing outlets for creativity and relieving stress through non-academic activities. Many prospective freshmen are drawn to the enthusiasm of MIT student groups; the many hours of work that groups dedicate to holding Campus Preview Weekend events attest to this.

The problems these groups and the rest of the MIT student body face are as follows:

Space availability

Almost everyone the Committee has spoken with agrees that there is a lack of student space.

More accurately, there is a lack of space and time. Available communal space gets reserved very quickly, and there are not enough timeslots to go around for all the activities groups wish to hold. Academic departments and groups outside of MIT take up a lot of time in these communal spaces as well, and often seem to take priority over student groups.

It is hard to analyze the exact breakdown of time devoted to student groups, departments, and outside groups, since different offices are responsible for scheduling different parts of campus. VirtualEMS does a good job standardizing the process, but lacks transparency and discourages groups from interacting face-to-face with the CAC and each other. There is a steep learning curve to securing CAC space; it takes luck and some hard-earned wisdom to be able to reliably reserve high-demand spaces like Kresge Auditorium. Having to reserve rooms

months or years in advance also makes short-term planning nearly impossible, and encourages groups to “hoard” timeslots that they might not necessarily use.

Most student groups also lack individual offices, and there is simply not enough available space for the Association of Student Activities to allocate and meet everyone’s needs. Storage is a major concern, as groups need secure, convenient, accessible locations to store their materials between events.

Suitable spaces

The space that is available is also in need of repair. Performance spaces like Kresge Little Theatre and La Sala de Puerto Rico need new A/V equipment. Student group offices need storage solutions, and groups without offices need alternative methods of storing equipment. Walker Memorial is plagued by numerous infrastructure problems, and will need substantial investment to be brought up-to-date.

There are also certain spaces that do not yet exist. None of the performance spaces on campus are suitable for the scale of show that groups like Musical Theatre Guild produce. There are no easily accessible dance rehearsal spaces, which could benefit many groups. There are also no visual arts studios freely accessible to the general MIT population.

Student involvement

Many MIT students feel that they are not well-represented in decisions that affect student spaces on campus. Incidents like last year’s backlash against removing the dollar bill mural in Lobby 10 and protests against covering McDermott Court with temporary buildings (in 2000) indicate that efforts to collect student feedback are either insufficient or being ignored. One reason the Committee on Student Space Planning was formed was to better represent student interests in planning decisions made across the campus. In general, students are informed too little and too late about impending changes to spaces they regularly use, and have few ways of altering the course of these deliberations.

Discussion Sessions

In February and March of 2007, the Committee held a series of weekly discussion sessions, each one devoted to a specific student space concern. Student group officers, administrators, and any other interested parties were invited to each session to describe problems, answer questions, and give the Committee a detailed look at a particular area of concern. Not only were these sessions useful for the Committee to obtain feedback on the state of student space, but they also served as a valuable forum for groups to come together and better understand the common challenges they face.

By no means is this list of topics exhaustive; given the time, the Committee would have liked to hold sessions on many more topics, including cultural groups, club sports, open green space, etc. Hopefully, future Committees will be able to build on this model and cover the full gamut of student space concerns on the MIT campus.

Performing arts groups

On February 15, 2007, representatives from performing arts student groups were invited to a discussion session on the current state and future of performing arts space at MIT. The purpose of the session was to formulate a student position on building new performing arts space or renovating existing space by hearing from those intimately aware of its advantages and shortcomings.

In attendance were representatives from: Shakespeare Ensemble, Drama Shop, Lindy Hop Society, Marching Band, Musical Theatre Guild, Dance Troupe, Movements in Time, and Concert Band.

The performing arts groups at MIT, which are an essential part of MIT life for many of its students, all suffer from the same basic problems:

- There are few, if any, suitable rehearsal spaces on campus.
- Spaces that can be used for rehearsal are tightly scheduled, and student groups feel they are at lower priority than departments and outside groups (e.g. conferences).
- Performance space is generally unsuitable or needs repair and is also tightly scheduled.
- The current space reservation system lacks transparency and flexibility.

Rehearsal spaces

- The Mezzanine Lounge needs supplemental lighting for the Marching Band to read its music.
- Mirrors cannot be installed in many rehearsal rooms because the walls are unsuitable (in Kresge, for example, the walls are curved). Groups practicing dance routines, including MTG and Dance Troupe, have few places to practice effectively; sometimes they are forced to use large windows as mirrors.
- Poor flooring also precludes dance rehearsals. At best, the flooring materials are not optimal for dancing (concrete, carpet); at worst, the floors are warped or have holes (Kresge Rehearsal A and B).
- Certain public areas that were useful for groups as additional practice space, such as the 2nd floor and basement of Walker Memorial and 4th floor Student Center lobby, have been carpeted and furnished specifically to prevent such use. This further limits useable space and sends a bad signal to groups.

Office/storage spaces

- All groups maximize their usage of office space for meetings, storage, rehearsal, and even as workshops, and all agree that more space is needed. In particular, none feel that they have enough storage space.
- Concert Band balances its assigned space between storage and office; still, it is forced to use the entire office for practice because they have no dedicated practice space.
- Some rooms in Walker that are assigned to groups are unusable, and some are practically condemned.

Performance spaces

- Kresge Little Theatre and La Sala need repairs and new equipment to continue functioning. Various groups own and share equipment required for use in each room, but few groups have the resources to purchase new lights and sound equipment for themselves.
- Kresge Little Theatre:
 - "The equipment is slowly dying."
 - Individual groups had to fix floorboards and make other repairs.

- Sound crosses easily and bi-directionally between Main Kresge and KLT, which breeds conflict between performing groups. This hurts performances and further constrains scheduling choices for student groups.
- Main Kresge often takes over Kresge's auxiliary spaces (changing rooms, rehearsal rooms), making logistics difficult for KLT users. For example, Dance Troupe dancers were forced to wait outside the building between stage calls because all rooms were taken by the Main Kresge performance.
- La Sala de Puerto Rico
 - It is difficult to rebuild the stage and seating for each show. The risers used for audience seating are broken, and no group can afford to replace them.
 - More black curtains are needed to break up the space into a suitable performance size.
 - At nearly 30 years old, the lighting system is outdated; 2 to 4 bulbs are blown per performance.
 - Ventilation is terrible.
 - The floor of La Sala is easily scratched, and student groups are the first to be blamed. It is not necessarily performance groups that are responsible for the damage.

Scheduling

Virtual EMS is convenient and ostensibly grants access on a first-come, first-serve basis. However, the system lacks transparency and is based on hidden priorities. Student groups would like complete documentation of the system to be available.

Currently, the scheduling system hides which group has a space scheduled for a particular time. While there are obvious reasons why this might be preferable to a completely open schedule, it makes negotiating for space much less flexible. Performance groups are used to cooperating with one another to share space and would only benefit from a more open system. In addition, **spaces are sometimes reserved but not used, and it is impossible to report this** without knowing who has the space reserved.

Recommendations

- Virtual EMS's priority system and reservation schedule should be made transparent and available to all groups.

- Performing arts groups would welcome any initiatives to relieve the pressure on existing practice/performance spaces. One possibility is shifting department and outside performances to other facilities in the building pipeline.
- In the short term, existing spaces should be renovated or improved to make them usable by most performance groups. Examples:
 - Create some venue for groups to promptly request room repairs rather than forcing groups to attempt the repairs themselves.
 - Replace aging sound, lighting, and riser equipment in La Sala and Kresge Little Theatre. New equipment should be made available for multiple performance groups to share, and should "live" in its space.
 - Adapt rooms for dance rehearsal use. One suggestion was to convert old, unused squash courts in Rockwell Cage into dance studios. This would also reduce conflict over other DAPER space currently used for dance practice, like the Fencing Room and T-Club Lounge.
- In the long term, more facilities are needed to accommodate the growth of performing arts groups. Such facilities should:
 - Be located centrally on campus,
 - Include workshop, storage, and rehearsal space within close proximity to each other,
 - Include theatre space larger than KLT, but smaller and less cumbersome than Main Kresge,
 - Constitute either a new, dedicated building for performing arts or an extension of Kresge Auditorium into its parking lot space. The A.R.T. building at Harvard was cited as a good model for such a project.

Walker Memorial

Current campus discussion about Walker Memorial's future use prompted this meeting of Walker student groups on February 22, 2007. Other MIT groups, including academic departments, MIT Libraries, and DAPER, are prospecting the space for group usage. However, Walker is also in poor physical condition.

Attendees were WMBR, MIT Radio Society, Repeater Association, Strategic Games Society, Design For Change, Musical Theatre Guild, Laboratory for Chocolate Science, Black Student Union, MIT Gilbert & Sullivan Players, MIT

Logarhythms, Ballroom Dance, Voodoo, Student Cable, and the Graduate Student Council. These groups were asked a series of questions, and the following is a summary of responses:

Walker is a unique building, and difficult to adequately replace for the following reasons:

- History – Walker was the first place for student groups and activities, and there is a lot of irreplaceable history there.
 - Murals
 - Muddy Charles Pub
 - Black Student Union lounge (since 1968)
- Student group investment – Groups have already put a lot of their own money into upgrading their own spaces.
 - WMBR studios, equipment, A/C, etc.
 - Logarhythms recording studio, used by several musical groups.
 - Black Student Union
 - MIT Radio Society
- Infrastructure – Several radio antennas run by the Radio Society are extremely difficult to relocate, due to size (44' x 36'), weight (190lbs), and location (must stay near Green Building).
- Large multi-purpose space – There are already very few flexible, wide-open spaces on campus; many groups benefit from sharing such space.
- It is old - The one benefit of the space falling apart is the relative freedom to customize space, similar to the old building 20. “We need space that can be scuffed up; Walker is sort of a workhorse of a building.”

Student groups' non-storage uses of Walker

Student Group	Usage	Comments
WMBR	Radio station	
BSU	Events in lounge	

Strategic Gaming	Gaming nights	
Design for Change	Meetings	
MTG, Gilbert Sullivan	Set building	Can no longer build in their offices or use the lobby because of newly installed furniture.
Ballroom Dancing	Social dance	Only the first floor is feasible for the large event.
Logarhythms	Recording studio	
Radio Society	Radio operations, meetings, antenna installation, maintenance, shop work	
Repeater Association	Meetings, shop work	
Graduate Student Council	Meetings, events in lounge, administrative office	Wireless network is weak.

Safety/sanitary concerns

- The MTG set shop has rodent problems.
- There is no dumpster nearby to get rid of set trash. There was one before, but now it is either gone or reappears sporadically. The third floor has also lost its trash barrels.
- Some floors seem structurally unsound. The MTG set shop floor is a former bowling alley, so they try to avoid putting heavy things on it.
- Basement level areas suffer from flooding when outside drains get clogged. This used to be easily remedied by going outside and clearing the drains, but ever since a wooden platform was built over them, MIT Facilities needs to come in to clear it.
- Design For Change has had things stolen from their office, and apparently the windows to the outside are not secure. Bars on these windows would help.

- The basement lacks ventilation, which makes the area hazardous when dealing with paint fumes and sawdust.

Current space concerns

- Upper levels have poor handicap access, and the whole building is inaccessible for wheelchairs when the approach to the ramped entrance is flooded.
- Access to parts of Walker is restricted during exams that take place in the gym.
- Infrastructure needs
 - Air conditioning
 - Better ventilation, particularly in the basement
 - Stronger wireless/wired connection
 - Handicap access that is usable during harsh weather conditions
 - Reachable electrical outlets
 - Repairs to structural damage in the second floor

Specific group concerns

- The Laboratory for Chocolate Science has no access to elevators during exams when their usage is restricted, and no air conditioning to make space suitable for storing chocolate.
- The GSC desires card reader access from the outside as well as to its lounge and offices. Their meeting room is too small for graduate student meetings, and is used as a corridor by students moving from the front of the building to the rear. Their administrative assistant's office apparently cannot be air conditioned, and is too hot for her to use in summer.
- Theater groups need a reasonable loading/unloading space near the building, as they regularly must transport their sets across the campus by truck.

Recommendations

- Walker must remain available for student groups and activities. All student groups must be informed of any upcoming renovations or plans to replace the building months ahead of time. Being forced out of Walker,

however temporarily, is extremely disruptive, and for some groups impossible as there is nowhere else to store their equipment.

- Any replacement to Walker must duplicate what is currently there. Thousands of student man-hours went into the various workshops, studios, offices, and equipment installed in Walker; these stand to be lost unless a new building emulates or improves on those efforts.

On-campus FSILG housing

On March 1, 2007, representatives from student living groups were invited to a discussion session on the possibility of constructing new housing for fraternities, sororities, and independent living groups (FSILG's) on the MIT campus. The purpose of the session was to engage every living group, not just FSILG's, on the issue, and to relay any student concerns early in the process.

In attendance were representatives from the IFC, Karen Nilsson (Senior Associate Dean for Residential Life), and Dennis Collins (Director of Housing).

As Karen Nilsson and Dennis Collins explained during the session, the administration is still in the very early stages of planning for any new on-campus FSILG housing. Thus far, most of the activity has been in brainstorming ideas and studying the possible locations for such a project. Facilities and Residential Life Programs have both begun studies, but an Institute-approved feasibility study will be most decisive, and we are not even at that point yet.

Because it is so early in the planning process, there are many issues that students should actively consider and communicate to the administration, through their student government representatives:

- Ownership
 - Can living groups own the land and buildings they move into?
 - Should groups seek to own or rent space in the new housing?
 - Possible alternative models, like Kappa Alpha Theta in Sidney-Pacific (reserving a block of rooms in an otherwise traditional dorm building).
- Configuration
 - Should we build separate houses, or a “complex” with shared utilities and facilities?
 - How should such a complex be divided? What is shared? Who maintains shared facilities?

- Location
- Cost
 - How much is it to construct and move into new housing?
 - How is this split between living groups and MIT?

Having early and frequent student input on these issues is important, if the project is to be successful and a benefit to FSILG's and the rest of MIT. The scenario to avoid is that of New House when it was first envisioned as an on-campus fraternity complex (with shared facilities on the first floor and towers that could be occupied by individual houses); ultimately, no fraternities chose to move into New House, which became a dormitory instead. Such a model could still work well, but constant feedback from both current students and alumni of FSILG's will be essential to producing a project that they will commit to.

Recommendations

- If a feasibility study is approved, the administration should create a formal avenue for current undergraduates to help guide the planning process toward something they would actually buy into.
- FSILG's should decide on the best way to represent the diverse positions and opinions of the different houses, actively participate in the planning process, and challenge any proposals made without their input.

Recreational Dance Groups

On March 8, 2007, representatives from recreational dance groups were invited to discuss current issues with space conditions and availability. The purpose of the session was to discover what was required of a recreational dance group space, and what of these requirements demanded the most attention.

In attendance were representatives from: Tech Squares, Salsa Club, Tango Club, and the Folk Dance Club (a body containing International Folk Dance, Israeli Folk Dance, and Contra Dance). All of these clubs held weekly events ranging in attendance from 30 to 200 dancers.

All of the groups felt that problems with room availability were a main issue, and had many criticisms of current room reservation methods:

- The current limit of 3 large space reservations per semester does not optimally meet most groups' needs for weekend events.
- Groups cannot reserve large space in the same or consecutive weekend. Special visitors, callers, and performers are only available for single

weekends, but cannot be utilized for multiple nights in a large room. (For example, Folk Dance Club had teachers flying in from Bulgaria that could have been utilized more if consecutive night reservations were available.)

- There are difficulties using some public spaces, such as the Stata Center lobbies.
- Rooms sit unused for long periods of time when otherwise needed. This is often caused by “double padding” of event time, where a group reserves extra time *in addition* to the CAC’s 2-hour buffer for set-up and pack-up.
- CAC does not post which groups rooms are reserved for, therefore not allowing groups to negotiate with each other for space. Negotiation is possible and does happen among groups.
- Blanket reservations for high priority events are very inefficient, leaving many spaces unused.

Recommendations

- Groups should be penalized for not using room reservations.
- CAC should allow groups to know which spaces are reserved for whom, or at least allow communication to a group who has reserved a space, where this group remains anonymous.
- CAC should study ways to improve the buffering system between reservations, especially for dance groups or other activities that require minimal set-up and thus less than the standard 2-hour buffer.

Additionally, some pressing room renovations were requested:

- Low quality varnish on the floor of La Sala is slippery and difficult to dance on.
- Morss Hall floors are consistently dirty, and require a more frequent cleaning. Dirty floors not only damage dance clothing, but they are easier to slip on.
- Porter room has poor heating and lighting.
- Sound system quality is generally poor all around, and outside equipment needs to be brought in.

When asked about the ideal dance space, groups suggested the following:

- Size should be comparable to a basketball court (size is most important)

- Parallel and perpendicular walls
- Sprung wooden floors
- Mirrors
- Plug-in sound system
- Ventilation and temperature control
- Consistent, overhead lighting (Ballroom Dance currently hires professionals for lighting)
- Close to campus
- Nearby parking
- Open to public, without security card swipe
- Examples:
 - Dance Complex at Central Square
 - Boston Ballet

Additional dance locations possible (speculation by groups):

- Walker gym (exam room)
 - Cannot clear the tables because they must be “perfectly aligned” for exams
 - Fire codes allow use of room during exams, but no other time
- Dupont basement or second floor (T-Club)
- Old campus police building by DuPont
- Burton-Connor Porter Room
- Ashdown rooms
- McCormick studio
- Brain and Cognitive Science building, third floor

Student Center Arcade

Early last fall, the future of the space which currently houses the Student Center arcade came under question. The CAC announced plans to convert half of the space into a new branch of the MIT Federal Credit Union. Considering the lack of student space available now, the future of the arcade became of significant interest to the Committee.

The Committee sought to answer the following three questions:

- What was the impetus for making the change?
- Now that the decision has been made, what is the future of the space?
- What are the effects on students, and what role will students play?

Making the change

- The CAC determined that having an MITFCU branch in the Student Center would be of significant benefit to the student body. It should be noted that in the past, the UA has sought to bring more banking options to the Student Center, and this aligns well with that goal.
- Arcade usage was deemed to be low enough that the effect on current students would be relatively small. This is based on the declining income the arcade machines produce, rather than usage of the room as a simple lounge. However, since most lounge furniture was removed from the arcade over the last year, it is likely that lounge use has declined as well.
- The space occupied by the arcade is actually part of MIT's real estate portfolio. Ostensibly, this means that the space is reserved for revenue generating uses. To that end, a bank is a more appropriate and sustainable use of the space, especially as arcade use and revenue declines.

Future of the space

- MITFCU will take up 60 – 70 percent of the current space.
- At one point, there was speculation that the current vendor of the arcade games was leaving the business and that the arcade would be gone, regardless of space issues. A solution was proposed that the UA or another student organization could take over and operate a few of the most popular games. Since then, however, the notion that the arcade would close in the foreseeable future was dismissed.

- In the discussions with Lianne Scott and Michael Foley of the CAC, which the above issue initiated, several other important facts were disclosed:
 - The arcade will be losing three games due to the renovations for the MITFCU, including DDR 4th Mix Plus, Virtua Tennis, and Bowling.
 - The pool tables, which have already been removed, were removed not because of the upcoming renovations but for two other reasons:
 - Pool tables are easily accessible in most dorms and living areas
 - Upkeep of the pool tables could not be maintained due to theft and vandalism.
 - The most requested games will be switched in for the less popular games.
 - There is no retail business in queue for the space.
 - Even if the current vendor closes shop, the arcade will remain open.

Student opinion

It is unclear how much student opinion factored into the decision to replace part of the arcade with the MITFCU branch. The Committee began investigating the issue after that decision had been made, and focused on what would happen with the remaining space. It is important that the Committee be informed and involved with any further planning for the remaining space, as it can engage the rest of the MIT undergraduate population through the UA. For example, the Committee has already received feedback on what students would like the former arcade space to be used for; this is detailed in the following section on the UA Dorm Storm survey.

Recommendations

- All significant headway and/or changes on this issue should be reported immediately for student review.
- For changes specific to the arcade section of the space, opinion should be solicited through surveys of the whole student body. The UA, through its committees, can support these efforts.

- The new branch of MITFCU should enumerate the specific benefits it can bring to the student body. It should design its space and services around how best to serve the needs of MIT students.

UA Dorm Storm Survey

Last fall, the UA sponsored an event called Dorm Storm which brought surveys directly to undergraduate living groups on and around MIT. The Committee had the opportunity to include two space-related questions to the survey:

1) The MIT Federal Credit Union will be moving into part of the current arcade/lounge space on the first floor of the student center, near La Verde's. What would you like to see in the remaining space? Please check all that apply.

- Arcade games (includes video games, pinball, pool, air hockey)
- Student lounge
- Vending machines
- Small retail shop
- Food/drink vendor (e.g. Jamba Juice, something small-scale)
- Other: _____

2) If MIT were to build an expansion to the Stratton Student Center, which of the following should be included in that expansion? Please check all that apply.

- Crafting and workshop space (for building cool projects)
- Auditorium space (for performing arts)
- Studio space (for creative arts)
- Student group space (expanding what is on the 4th floor)
- More dining options
- More retail options
- MIT Visitor's Center
- Other: _____

The most popular response to the first question was a new food/drink option for the students (Starbucks received several write-in responses as well). Following behind that were a student lounge and arcade.

Arcade	219	20.07%
Student lounge	440	40.33%
Vending	114	10.45%
Retail	146	13.38%
Food/drink	580	53.16%
Study space	4	0.37%
Nap space	2	0.18%
Starbucks	32	2.93%
Athena cluster	2	0.18%
Subway	2	0.18%
Machine shop	2	0.18%
Keep	4	0.37%
Bathroom	2	0.18%

The second question drew similar responses for space uses in a student center expansion. Dining is more than twice as popular as any other category. Student group office/storage space, crafting workshops, retail options, and shared art studios and performance areas are all in considerable demand as well.

Crafting	231	21.17%
Auditorium	153	14.02%
Studio	182	16.68%
Student group	306	28.05%
Dining	643	58.94%
Retail	160	14.67%
Visitors	94	8.62%
Study/reading room	12	1.10%
Store	2	0.18%
Other	4	0.37%

Recommendations

- The remaining Student Center arcade space should remain a lounge and gaming area after construction of the MIT FCU.
- MIT Dining should explore options for a small food or drink vendor to move into that space; if possible, the space should retain its use as a lounge throughout the day. Small vendors like Starbucks and Jamba Juice are well-suited for this arrangement.
- However early, planning for an expansion to the Student Center should include space for dining, student group offices, crafting workshops, art studios, performances, and retail.

CAC Space Improvement Study

The Campus Activities Complex requested help from the UA and ASA to explore ways to invest in improvements to student group office space. The UA Committee on Student Space Planning conducted an online survey of student groups, in consultation with the ASA, Graduate Student Council, and the CAC, and ran a student forum for groups to speak directly to the issue. The following are the main recommendations of the Committee, adapted from the memo written to the CAC Advisory Board on April 13, 2007.

Storage for individual group offices

Storage for individual group offices is a major concern for student groups, according to the CAC survey conducted by the Committee, the 2005 ASA space needs survey, and general complaints made by student groups through Committee-led discussions. To function efficiently, student groups require stable, accessible, appropriately sized, and centrally located storage. Because storage is an issue that concerns most student groups, addressing it will effectively help many groups continue to function and grow.

103 of 118 groups who responded to the ASA space needs survey currently use or would use potential office space for storage. The Student Center and Walker are preferred locations for office space; investigating storage options in these buildings will be most beneficial to student groups. Since most groups expect an increase in membership, creating ample storage space is necessary for building student group capacity.

The CAC survey revealed the following general concerns with current storage accommodations:

- Small activities locker rooms are too small for larger items
- Items get mixed up and lost in shared group offices
- Some potential storage space is currently inaccessible

Based on the information garnered, the Committee recommended the following:

- Provide storage divisions for shared group offices, such as storage cabinets, bookshelves, and cubicle dividers.
- Add larger lockers to the Student Center and Walker Memorial for the ASA to assign as needed. Possible sites include hallways and currently inaccessible rooms in Walker.
- Assist groups with further storage improvements to their own offices.

The CAC should run a follow-up survey of all the student groups, focusing on storage improvements, to clarify the cost and merit of each potential project. The groups that responded to the survey with suggestions related to storage were: Baptist Student Fellowship, Shakespeare Ensemble, Lebanese Club,

Asian Christian Fellowship, MIT Snowriders, MIT Pro-Life, Sloan student clubs, and Vietnamese Student Association. There are probably many more who would respond to a survey targeted at storage improvements.

A dance-equipped space

Many groups lack a proper rehearsal space for practicing dance routines. The most suitable rooms (McCormick dance studio, T-Club lounge, fencing room) are very restricted in access, while the more common practice rooms in Kresge Auditorium and the Student Center are not suitable for safe, effective dance practice. Creating such a space would benefit a large number of student groups, including:

- performing arts groups, such as Musical Theatre Guild and Dance Troupe
- recreational dance groups, such as Folk Dance and Ballroom Dance, and
- cultural groups, most of which incorporate dance into regular culture shows.

The CAC should consider refitting one of its rooms into a dance studio space, primarily for student groups to reserve and use. Optimally, it would be located in a central, visible location like the Student Center, but anywhere publicly accessible is fine. Such a space should at least feature:

- Flat, springwood floors
- Large mirrors, wall-to-wall if possible
- Good ventilation and temperature control

As a side note, the Folk Dance Club suggested that **a different varnish** be used in La Sala de Puerto Rico, a space many dance groups use. The current varnish is too sticky when it is first applied, and wears off quickly making the floor too slippery.

Visual art studio

One proposed idea that the Committee found particularly promising was to create a visual arts studio for any student to use for free. The Baker Foundation is currently pursuing this project, and described it as this:

“MIT currently has no free studio space where students can paint, draw, or sculpt. Visual arts exercise the brain in different ways than problem sets. Many students who were passionate about art in high school have been forced to choose between living in a cramped room smelling of oil paints and giving up their passion. MIT is one of the top universities in the world, but in terms of its visual arts opportunities, MIT trails all comparable universities.

The only studio space for students is in the poorly ventilated Student Art Association classrooms. Since the classrooms are not adequately ventilated, students cannot use real oil paints or other art media requiring any solvents or that produce any odor. Not only do the classes lack ventilation, but they are expensive, and students are only allowed to use the class space during the duration of their class. For these reasons, students have had to paint in their tiny dorm rooms--when the weather permits them to keep their windows open.

One possibility MIT should consider is improving the ventilation in the SAA classrooms and granting artists free access. Another possibility MIT should consider is creating a new studio space in the student center by moving out administrative offices. Students should have more space for extracurricular pursuits in the student center. The Student Art Association and the UA Committee on Student Space Planning support our proposal for MIT to create a free visual arts studio. Students relieve stress in different ways, and they deserve a choice.”

- Everett Moore Baker Memorial Foundation

Next Steps

Although the Committee has made many recommendations on specific space concerns, it would like to make some general recommendations, both for the administration and future Committees on Student Space Planning.

Efficiently use space

CAC must improve its scheduling system, in particular to prevent any dead time in spaces that are reserved but not used. The VirtualEMS system should be more transparent to allow groups to contact each other (at least anonymously) to negotiate and share space. It should also be very clear which spaces are controlled by CAC and which by the MIT Scheduling Office, and students should be able to speak to a staff member in person with questions about scheduling and room availability.

If feasible, MIT should repair currently unusable areas in Walker Memorial. It should also explore alternative ways to meet group storage needs, including lockers in hallways outside of regular student group offices, or possibly securing storage in private facilities near MIT. This can free up room in the Student Center and Walker to be used as flexible meeting and event spaces.

Relieve pressure on CAC space

MIT should relieve some of the pressure on existing CAC space by constructing dedicated facilities for the Music and Theatre Arts Department. This would free up time for student groups to use CAC space, which is often reserved for department activities. MIT should also look for alternate ways to accommodate conferences and other outside groups that often tie up large chunks of CAC space for days. The priority for these spaces needs to shift towards student groups, which are most limited in their resources and options.

Expand the Student Center

MIT should begin planning for an expansion to the Student Center. This is the best long-term solution to many of the problems laid out at the beginning of this report. There is considerable support for this project from all over the MIT community; the Do-It-Zone movement, Baker Foundation, and coalitions of student groups all have well-developed proposals for what such a building could provide for student life.

Such a complex project requires vision and leadership from the top levels of the MIT administration to proceed, as well as the attention of a dedicated planning office. Future Committees should continue to analyze the space needs of the student body and demonstrate the need for the student center expansion. They

should also work closely with any planning efforts to ensure students are consulted on the design of the expansion.

Engage the students

As stated before, students are dissatisfied with the administration's efforts (or lack thereof) to communicate space decisions that affect them. Part of this is because committees designed to guide these decisions rarely have adequate representation of student interests. Early in the spring semester, the UA Vice-President and Chairman of the Space Planning Committee were invited to a meeting held by MIT Campus Planning and Design to give feedback on Eastman and McDermott Courts. Although they had much to say, by no means did they believe their feedback sufficiently represented the opinions of the people affected most by changes to these Courts: residents of East Campus and Senior House. Greater care must be taken to ensure all students at least have the chance to object to changes to spaces important to their lives.

In the future, the Committee on Student Space Planning should be informed of any pending efforts to change or improve student space. It must act as a primary clearinghouse for information that must be communicated to the undergraduate population, and ensure that student opinions are correctly represented in any Institute Committees, feasibility studies, and planning decisions. The Committee is well-positioned to rally student support for good projects through the UA Executive Board and UA Senate, and should be considered both a resource and an important stakeholder in campus planning.

To strengthen its effectiveness, the Committee recommends that administrators attend its discussion sessions and meetings throughout the year to provide useful knowledge to our discussions, and to hear firsthand some of the challenges that students and student groups face. The Committee also requests that a student representative be added to the Committee for the Review of Space Planning, and invites CRSP to regularly communicate with the Committee on Student Space Planning. By opening these lines of communication, the Committee hopes to improve relations between administrators and students, and learn much more about the campus planning process in the coming years.