Addressed to: Chancellor Phillip L. Clay PhD ’75 and The Tech.

We have been told that the proposal to reduce the length of orientation has come down from your office, and so we as representatives of the student body are coming to you to ask that you amend the suggested changes to preserve the full length of Residence Exploration (REX).

We sincerely appreciate Dean Norman’s actions in presenting this proposal to the student body and seeking our input in shaping the schedule of orientation, but we must register our profound dissatisfaction with the current proposal.

At MIT, our communities are what make us strong. Fraternities, sororities, independent living groups, and dormitories all have unique identities, and each living group creates an irreplaceable support network for its students. Our living groups include our mentors, our counselors, and our friends; we strongly believe that having a supportive community at home is essential to surviving life at MIT. REX is the time during which these communities are formed, rebuilt, and rejuvenated.

For freshmen, REX is an invaluable opportunity to meet other students and integrate into the social fabric of MIT. It is their time to explore, to discover, and to find the living group and the community that will make their time at MIT most successful. Even students who eventually move off-campus or to an FSILG benefit from the friendships they form during this period of exploration and from finding the right place to spend their first few semesters.

The proposed plan will drastically cut down on the amount of time freshmen can spend on REX activities. While we were told that no REX events would be eliminated because of this, it is clear that by moving the end dates for FPOPs and the arrival dates for other students two days further into REX, there will be just one or two days during which freshmen can truly and productively explore their dorm options. This cannot possibly be considered enough time to find the right community. In 2006, the first recommendation of the UA Extended Report on Orientation was to “Place emphasis on Orientation events containing dynamic student-generated content.” A better description of REX could not be found, and we stand by this recommendation.

The goals of REX are not the goals of CPW. The two periods serve completely different purposes for incoming freshmen, and to suggest that one may serve as a substitute for the other simply because both feature free food and living group-sponsored activities displays a startling lack of knowledge about the freshman experience. Furthermore, it is wrong to think that all students who attend MIT will come to CPW and vice-versa. CPW is a time for the entire community to advertise MIT as a whole and to help freshmen decide if the Institute is the right place for them to spend their next four years. To ask us to simultaneously represent MIT as a whole and as individual living groups is unreasonable, and it is good neither for us nor for the Institute.
Finally, we must express our extreme disappointment with how this process has been handled so far. As with many critical student engagement issues in the past, we have been handed a proposal on which we have had no real input. Students are the largest stakeholders in orientation. A successful Orientation is critical to students’ welfare during freshman year and throughout their time at MIT. However, we were the last to hear of these proposed changes.

On this, the 150th anniversary year of our Institute, we must act to preserve what makes us great. “Inventional Wisdom” should not consist of copying the mainstream policies of other universities. Rather, we should embrace the unconventionalities that make our students so extraordinary. We ask two things. First, we ask for the restoration of a full REX to the proposed schedule, as a critical part of our uniquely supportive housing system. Second, as we stand to gain or lose more than anyone else on the issue, we ask to be involved in any future discussions of orientation. We as the dorm presidents would be happy to meet with you to discuss ways to make REX and Orientation beneficial to all parties.

Andy Wu, Baker House Pres. 2010-2011
Daniel Sauza, BC Pres. 2010-2011
Alexander Penn, BC Pres. 2011-2012
Robin Deits, EC Pres. 2010-2011
James Douberley, EC Pres. 2011-2012
Meagan Roth, MacGregor Pres. 2010-2011
Hannah Rice, McCormick Pres. 2010
Krithika Shanmugasundaram, McCormick Pres. 2011
Alec Lai, Next House Pres. 2011
TyShaun Wynter, New House Pres. 2011
Carolina Roque, Phoenix Group Pres. 2010-2011
Rebecca Cox, Random Hall Pres. 2011
Giulia Pantalone, Senior House Pres. 2011
Christina Johnson, Simmons Pres. 2010, Dormcon Pres. 2010-2011
Zachary Hynes, Simmons Pres. 2011