

DORMCON MINUTES - APRIL 28, 2011

Attendance:

Dorm	Representative	Absent
Baker	Brian Luque	
Burton-Conner	Alex Penn	
East Campus	James Douberley	
MacGregor	Meagan Roth (proxy)	
McCormick	Krithika Shanmugasundaram	
New House	TyShaun Wynter	
Next House	Alec Lai	
Random Hall	Rebecca Cox	
Senior Haus	Paula Countouris	
Simmons Hall	Zach Hynes	
Phoenix Group	Virginia Nicholson	X
President	Christina Johnson	
Vice President	Meagan Roth	
Secretary	Alicia Singham Goodwin	X
Treasurer	Leonid Grinberg	

Topics Discussed:

(1) Elections

- President — Nominees: James Douberley (East Campus), Ellen McIsaac (Next House)
 - James: Hi, I'm James. I'm the EC President. I really want to see DormCon do cool things.

I remember when REX happened. The first thing I did was I went to the UA senate meeting. They wanted to cut REX. Within 3 days there was a meeting of most of the dorm presidents; we effectively hashed out what to do, what we felt about the issue, and within a couple of weeks, the problem had been solved. I was really impressed. I want to see that continue to happen. I want to see DormCon as a body that is able to do this with every single issue. We have many of them. i3 censorship, RBA, CPW. REX will come up again. Dining is still constantly plaguing us. I want to see us effectively handle our problems and be effective representative body. DormCon President, as the chair of our meetings, makes sure that we are capable of doing this effectively. I want to make us capable of completing things.

The President is also the representative of the council of dormitories. I am able to do that. I can hold myself accountable, and I can separate my own opinions from what I am supposed to be saying. I want DormCon, as a council, to do the same thing, so that we are capable of holding ourselves accountable. I want reports from exec every week. I firmly believe that no single person can represent *all the dorms*. The UA President tries to speak for everyone, but representing dorms specifically is hard. There is no way to know all the cultures well enough

and know what they want. You have to be capable of getting input and being a point of contact, and I believe that I can do that.

- Ellen: Hi, I'm Ellen. I'm the previous president of Next House. I was on Dorm-Con for a year, and have had involvement with the UA.

I think there are a lot of good things that student government has done, but we have a long way to go. With all the restructuring talk, it's important to have a strong representative there. I have a lot of previous relationships with the MIT administration that will come really in handy. It can be very difficult for DormCon to be in touch with all the issues that are going on in all the dorm. I am willing to do whatever it takes to get to know all the dorm execs, so I can accurately represent them.

I have involvement in issues like housing with the UA housing committee. I want uniform facilities in all the dorms, and also to improve inter-dorm housing lottery. I worked on FYE and feel like I have relevant experiences. Dorm life has been very important to me, and I want to make sure we all still get a voice.

- Questions:

- Zach: Next year a combination of administration, faculty, etc. are setting orientation and REX. Let's say that the final decision that they come up with is to cut REX to one day. Grimson is the one to tell you this. What is your next move?

- James: First off, I really hope that won't happen. Being on ROC, we were a bit concerned about the direction it was moving in, but we had some discussion with the chair (an amazing guy, by the way) and we actually had Grimson come talk to us, said that whatever the committee comes up with will be taken very very seriously. We're looking at orientation programs more than student-run things. If that were the case, though, the first thing to do would be to find out how much this actually bothered everyone. I got feedback recently that maybe not everyone cares about REX. I don't know if this is the case, I want to find out. I want to know who is affected, what cutting it to one day would do for us. Having time to do REX accomplishes different things for different days.

If dorms said we really can't do this without 2-3 days of REX, and if there was going to be no agreement, I want to find other ways of accomplishing those goals. Doing things before REX, communicating more with freshmen before they arrive, etc.

- Eilen: I would also be really shocked if it came out of nowhere. I think it will take a unified effort to make our voice heard. I would want to meet with him and figure out where this came from. Arrange a meeting with dorm presidents ahead of time, to find out what parts of REX are important, how we can voice with the administration to compromise. If REX is important, we should not let them take it away. But we should also compromise. It would probably take a week to come up with something. Hopefully that will be able to resolve the process. But even before that sort of thing happens, we should have open communication, this should not be coming out of nowhere. Hopefully we will be able to keep open relationships.

- Hannah: How do you think you can reach out and represent cultures of both the East and the West?

- Eilen: I recognize that all dorms are different, so I want to be involved in all the house meetings. I want to get in touch with everything that is affecting everyone. I want to spend time in each of the dorms to figure out what is going on.

- James: I would love to try in touch with all the culture issues of all the dorms. I’ve spent a lot of effort this year to try to understand all the dorms. If I were invited, I’d love to come to dorm exec meetings. But I would also expect this council to represent their dorms. That’s the best way to be able to effectively represent all the cultures. It’s not even that split between East and West. Within both sides there are very different cultures. It would be as much about trying to understand them as it would be to making sure to get feedback from dorm presidents. I want to make sure that we are encouraging people to bring up topics important even just to their dorm.
One of the ways we can effectively collaborate is that we can still take a stand with issues that only affect one or two dorms. I don’t want to see 600 students being screwed over, even if I don’t live with them. I think it’s about continuous feedback and pulling in DormCon together as a single body.
- Alec: This is aimed primarily at James. You will be a dorm president for next semester. Please explain how you plan to resolve this conflict of interest.
- James: I already have conflicts of interest. Sometimes what I say on behalf of my dorm, I don’t personally believe it. You have to be able to separate what you are saying from what you personally think. This is part of the reason why I believe why the DormCon president has to be accountable on every single issue what the dorms think and have that on record. We can go forward and say that this is not my opinoin, but this is the opinion of the Dormitory Council. I don’t think there will always be a conflict of interest. I think we can collaborate, but if DormCon decides something I disagree with, I’ll take that to the administrators. If they decide REX is useless, I’ll take that on to the administrators.
- Jonté: People have been in deep discussions about what undergrad governments should look like. With that said, it doesn’t look like we’ll have a solution by the end of the semester. How do you plan to work with the other governments and make sure DormCon remains a part of that conversation?
- Eilen: I think it’s really improtant that dorms be equally represented in whatever the new structure will be. I think it’s really important that the process is drawn out, that everyone has the opportunity to give their feedback. I think some of that process will have to work through the current dorm presidents in reaching out to their constituents to see what is important. I think it’s important to make sure that the DormCon exec team is present at those meetings to make sure they can advocate on behalf of dorms to make sure that whatever structure we have is able to represent the dorms well.
- James: I think you’re right, we’ve decided that it’s best to take a step back. That longer period of time will probably be on the order of a year. In the meantime, I think it’s really important to make sure we keep functioning. There are going to be 3 people on the commmittee, they should be coming to every DormCon meeting and reporting back to us what is happening on that committee.
In the meantime, it’s important for us to work on other things, advocate for dorms.
One of the things that DormCon exec should be doing permanently as long as we still exists is meeting with the UA exec, possibly as frequently as we meet with administrators, making sure we’re on the same page because we represent overlapping students. In the past, there has been a UA representative to DormCon. Or maybe it’s the DormCon president’s job. It’s about maintaining communication at the higher level and reporting back to the organiatoi.

- Alex: How exactly do you maintain open communication channels with the administration?
- Eilen: In general, DormCon hasn't met with the administrators as frequently as others have. I think we have to make that happen. Reach out to them, make sure it's important. Have a constant relationship with the administration. Make sure all dorms are represented so we can discuss all dorm issues. That way issues won't just pop up.
- James: I think Chancellor Grimson has already reached out to us. He made it clear every time I talked to him that he wants to establish regular communication with all the upper levels of MIT government. I know the UA President has standing meetings with him; I think it's prudent to do that, so he knows what's on our mind. If things are going well, we can tell him that. I think we should worry about more than just the higher levels of administration. So not just Colombo, Hastings, Grimson. We should talk to Humphreys. He has been very forthcoming with us and ready to talk to us. I think we should be talking to the Residential Life Office. When the time comes and something bad happens, they can act as advocates for us. We should be meeting with them frequently. They are happy to come to DormCon meetings. If such things happen, we should be more prepared to talk to them, know what we are talking to them about.
- Zach: I am sure the restructuring committee will work with this, but what do you think is the scope of what DormCon should be dealing with? What should we be governing?
- James: I think even though there is some overlap with the UA, our issues are anything that affect the dorms. It is hard for us to *govern* the dorms, and I don't think we should be doing that. We shouldn't be saying that these are our policies and you should be doing things this way. We should be doing a lot of coordinating things. In the past, we coordinated pet policy. Coordinating information passing when things come from the administration. DormCon should find out first and make sure all the dorms know. We should deal with issues that affect all the dorms. Things like i3, things like REX. We should also be considering things that only affect some of the dorms. What really really bothers 3 of the dorms that the rest of us don't like seeing happening. Or what's really really awesome and we'd like to see expand.
I'd also like to see some coordination between us. I'd like to see us not just as an administration, I'd like to see an inter-dorm thing here. I know that East Campus and Phoenix are going to be having a barbecue, reaching out together. I think we are responsible as a body to encourage people to do that sort of thing.
- Eilen: Anything that affects the dorms is what we should be working on. In the past, we coordinated REX and CPW to a lesser extent. There are new issues we should be pushing too. Something that has blown up is dining, and making that happen smoothly is going to be one of the key issues. Summer housing, renovations, what resources people have in their dorms. Other things are going to come up in the course of the year. All the dorm presidents should know all the issues that are coming up in the dorms so we can support each other and not send conflicting messages.
- Alec: On a question I'm working on with the administration. I have heard ideas from all of you. Eilen wants to compromise, James sometimes wants to do stuff on our own without compromise. Please elaborate on your strategies working with admins.

- Eilen: Basically you said how I feel about it. You have to be open, say what the problem is, see how you compromise. You can't just blindly accept what they say or go against what they say. That makes it easy to have a working relationship. If you can put everything out in the open, give the points you have to say, sometimes you can work through issues that will make both parties happy. My freshman advising seminar was about conflict resolution. Both siblings want an orange, but one wants the peel and one wants the fruit, and you have to find that out.
- James: I hope I didn't come across as saying that we should just ignore the administration. What I was saying is what Eilen was saying. They have a different agenda than we do. Their job is not to give us what we want. It's to keep the institute running, to keep things running. They are responsible to the faculty for doing so. That said, she's right. Quite frequently, what we want is not what they want is not opposed to what they want — that's almost always the case. It's our responsibility to find out what their goals are, where things came from. If they want to save REX to save money, we can help find other ways to do it. In the case of dining, that's what happened. Maybe there are other ways to make money off of dining than just have us argue one side and them fight another. It's all about compromise. Finding out what each side actually wants. What they are trying to achieve out of the things they want. We should be able, as DormCon, to come up with what our stance on the issue is, what we want out of an issue, how to achieve it.
- Leonid: You keep saying that we have to represent all the dorms. So what about Bexley?
- Eilen: We can't force Bexley to be represented by us, but I think if there are issues that affect Bexley uniquely, or affect other dorms, we should be supporting them. They don't have the same formal dorm government, so we can't meet with their exec, but I am willing to work with them.
- James: Bexley is in a unique position. Our Constitution claims to represent them. The few things we do have a say in governing, like i3, they are affected by. They made a conscious decision not to be represented. They did it on purpose 10 years ago. They want separation to represent themselves when they need be. They want to be able to claim that we or the UA hasn't represented them. That they really haven't had their say. When we are forced to make decisions that will affect them, it is our responsibility to reach out to them. It's hard, they have no president. But on specific issues we can. They have i3 chairs. We can talk to our friends in Bexley, people we know. Try to find out what the overall opinion is. So we have some idea of where they are coming from.
- Alex: How much time will you guys have? Do you have any other commitments?
- Eilen: My other big commitment is SWE, but I am not involved in anything else.
- James: My other commitments are really small. I have a joke position in MITOC, but that just means I have to send an email. I'm a bad student, I have in the past week read all the DormCon minutes in the past 6 years and watched 2 seasons of Weeds, and I put other things in front of that. I do have responsibilities in the dorm, but I have people helping me with them.
- Betsy: Can you guys talk about your experience working with Virginia?
- Eilen: I have no experience working with her previously, but in the brief interactions with her, I think I would have no issues working with her. If I am elected

with her, I'd familiarize myself with all the other members of exec and all the dorm presidents.

- James: Yeah, it's important that if we are elected to build those relationships as professionals. I have personally worked with her in the past. We're having discussions back and forth about the RBA issues in her dorm. They are being forced into binding RBA without their input. She is really, really good at representing them and talking with Dean Colombo and other people in the student life office and talking to people who are interested in what's going on. Before I decided to run I talked to her and sort of asked, since both of us were considering president and VP, and we made a conscious decision to run in this order and hashed out our platforms.
- Christina: She texted me back. She says that whatever candidate is chosen, she'll work with them outside of regular meetings, but that she has had experience working with James.
- Alec: Recently, a nice 3-page essay got sent out to undergrads that talks about issues in student government. I want to hear your outlook about what I said in that thing. You don't have to agree with it, I just want to hear your opinion and your reasons.
- James: I absolutely do not believe that anyone should be a megalomaniac or bullying, or creating a hostile environment. If that is the case, it's completely unacceptable. It's our responsibility to get everyone to speak up, to know everyone's opinions. I will not shoot them down for it.
- Eilen: I think accountability will be very important. Integrity is one of my values. I was one of the career fair directors before, and there was an issue, and integrity was really the first word that comes up there. It's important to be a true representative.

- Eilen won the election.
- Vice President — Virginia Nicholson (Maseeh Hall), only candidate.
- Treasurer — Leonid Grinberg (East Campus), only candidate.
- Secretary — Deena Wang (Senior House), only candidate.
- JudComm Chair — Carrine Johnson (Simmons), only candidate.¹
- Dining Chair — Niki Castle (East Campus), only candidate.
- Housing Assignment Chair — Patrick Hulin (East Campus), only candidate.
- Risk Management Chair — Ben Lehnert (East Campus), only candidate.

- (2) i3 Videos: James will email about a committee to talk about the i3 process, and redesigning the role of the i3 coordinator.

¹Leonid Grinberg ran, but it was determined that he is ineligible to run as he is also the Treasurer.