

DORMCON MINUTES – NOVEMBER 3, 2011

Attendance:

Dorm	Representative	Absent
Baker	Brian Luque	
Burton-Conner	Alexander Penn	
East Campus	Patrick (proxy)	
MacGregor	Mariya Samoylova	
Masseh Hall	Virginia Nicholson	
McCormick	Krithika Shanmugasundaram	
New House	TyShaun Wynter	
Next House	Alec Lai	
Random Hall	Alex Westbrook (proxy)	
Senior Haus	Paula Countouris and Giulia Pantalone	
Simmons Hall	Zachary Hynes	
President	Ellen McIsaac	
Vice President	Virginia Nicholson	
Secretary	Deena Wang	
Treasurer	Leonid Grinberg	

Topics Discussed:

1. Voting on i3

- Virginia - We are on the i3 taskforce. I met Adam along with Brian and Paula and we added a PG13 clause to the i3 section of the Constitution, which Adam agreed to. We also added that no smoking in public spaces could be shown, and set the deadline farther back so people could start meeting with Adam earlier. We wanted to elect 2 i3 chairs, which is currently written in, as well as emphasize regular meetings between i3 chairs. We don't want a repeat of the Bexley situation in which things were cut.
- Ellen – We talked about this 3 meetings ago.
Leonid – Clarification: is it preventing filming of smoking indoors?
- Virginia – No, just following MIT's current policies for smoking (in private rooms only).

The vote to amend the constitution was passed unanimously.

2. Ideas about dorm governments' rights

- Ellen – DormCon exec worked out last week what we think should be the minimum bill of rights for student governments.

The list for a potential Dorm Government bill of rights was read (see below).

- Alicia - What about rooming?
- Patrick – It's a standardized thing, where the Room Assignment Chair interacts with housing to say who transfers and what the empty rooms are. I don't think it's reasonable to change it.

- Zach – One big thing is that we don't have exclusive control over renovations. We need to define what "power" means and clarify a few things
- Alicia – Playing devil's advocate, I don't know if putting housemasters in a room and saying things to the more restrictive housemasters like "these dorms can get away with stuff, talk to these housemasters" will have results. What happens if the restrictive housemasters don't care?
- Sweet tea – We attempt to convince Housing and Residential Life that it's a good idea.
- Patrick – Housing and Residential Life has no power over housemasters. Is this a good idea so close to restructuring? We need to do our homework. Housemasters are powerful as faculty members. We would need to do it slowly and check with people. I think we should put off until after restructuring
- Virginia – My point is that DormCon is supposed to advocate for dorms. If we don't, it would difficult for us to go to UA and tell them what we do. I think it's fine to be careful but we shouldn't not make the bill of rights.
- Ellen – I think this is something we should be thinking about. Tonight we should get the most important topics and continue the conversation another time.
- Brian – It would be best if we could get support for individual situations. I feel like we would make less ground with group rights.
- Ducky – What this sounds like to me is that "every dorm has right to pick a stance on issues." The whole point of the bill of rights is not to let housemasters control that.
- Virginia – Right now the list is like 15 things; it should be tiered in order of importance.
- Paula – Desk policies are set by the house manager. We would have to go through them.
- Ducky – Let's go thru the list one by one and decide.

Key:

A = highest priority

B = middle priority

C = low priority

Control over house taxes – A

- Virginia – Our housemasters threatened to audit us by the SAO.
- Paula – It would basically be control of the House budget.

Control over the internal rooming process – A

- Rooming assignment chair communicates with housing

Dorm governments should be able to write a constitution and govern themselves based on a constitution consistent with MIT policy and laws – A

- Alicia – The problem is that students could write ridiculous things.
- Virginia – I think this wouldn't be approved.
- Ellen – I still think it's important for DormCon to advocate for students
- Brian – The reason we talk about this is because there is an inequity of rules for different dorms, for example, running parties in Senior Haus versus Simmons Hall.
- Sweet Tea – The quiet hours for Random are something we have power over.
- Brian – Some dorms constitutions have to be approved by housemasters.

Event registration – what counts as a party that needs to be registered, how many parties in same dorm, what you have to do to register – A

- Virginia – The RLA has to sign off on parties. The housemasters can say that if you don't do X, we will yell at you.
- Brian – If Simmons Hall had a party with lots of people, police say it's fine, but if Senior Haus has one, it needs a police detail.
- Paula – Do we have a copy of the housemaster's contract?
- Virginia – It depends on the dean. I think this is important and an easy topic, but we shouldn't worry about the gory details right now. We should find out current policies
- Brian – We can advocate for the RLA.

Hall disciplinary problems, ex. what happens if halls violate hall rush? – B

Alicia - I think that's too specific. What we meant was that dorm issues would be handled within the dorm.

Paula – I say it's a priority.

Ducky – I had to fine a hall for not returning sound equipment. If this isn't a priority, the issue could be kicked to the housemasters.

Paula – There was a kid that had obnoxious parties and the housemasters got involved, but I think the dorm government should have dealt with it.

Ducky – There's no way to tell housemaster not to step in if it's a COD offence.

RBA – preventing entire campus from being RBA, logistic issues – A

- Ducky – I think that students should be able to choose.
- Brian – They might make all housing RBA.
- Alicia – It might be fine if it wasn't binding
- Patrick – I've heard the reason why it's binding is because when RBA first started, there was a bunch of excited professors, but readjustment happened and some professors didn't have many students to advise.
- Ellen – Not all of them are seminars. Some are like traditional advising. Next House's RBA is not binding.

Dorm-based programming – having student input – C

- Alicia - What I meant was if dorms took over alcohol awareness and other orientation activities, making students involved in content. It was talked about in the First Year Experience Committee. It makes sense for freshman orientation programming to happen dorm by dorm because alcohol issues vary.
- Paula – The sexual harassment talk is better as small groups.

Readjustment lottery – A

- Virginia – Dorms should be able to choose to enter the readjustment lottery.

Desk policies – C

- Alicia – For example, lockout keys, guest lists, etc.

- Paula – Our housemaster said to read the desk manual, which has lots of stuff not done at Senior Haus desk.

Guest policies – C

- Patrick – Some dorms have guest lists. I think some dorms tried to have a guest list system but higher ups said no?
- Virginia – What about students having power over guest lists?
- Brian – We’re not going to win the issues of “I own my room and can give others my key” and “I’m letting x live in my room over IAP.”
- Sweet Tea – According to the official housing contract, you can’t have a guest for more than 3 days, which is a MIT wide policy.

Renovation – C (we should keep it in mind but low priority)

- Ducky – It’s a large cost for MIT.
- Alicia – We want to be in the conversation if there’s a renovation.
- Paula – I think this is important. For example, our housemaster wanted balcony railings that the residents didn’t want.
- Patrick – We should be included in the process.

Gender distribution and bathrooms – C

- Ducky – Some floors gender their rooms. The issue is whether the floor can gender itself versus the Housemasters saying it.
- Patrick – The floors have say in gendering.
- Alicia – We should make a broader category that includes things like bathrooms, and clothing optional.
- Ducky – What does random think about their power to declare gendered rooms?
- Random representatives – We care.
- Sweet tea – This falls under housing

- Paula – I suggest we take the big picture and choose 5 big things. The issues shouldn’t be too broad, but encompass the above things without overlapping.
- Leonid – Otherwise, higher-ups will pick and choose things to concede to.

Smoking – C (decided by housing)

- Paula – Don’t mention smoking because it’s controversial and may be removed entirely.

Clothing optional – C

3. Rex/Rush Agreement

- Ducky – We haven’t had it in the last 3 years. Do we care?
- Ducky – This was originally an agreement between DormCon and IFC that during REX, fraternities don’t wear letters or recruit freshmen. In return, during Rush, dorms don’t wear dorm shirts to rush events and don’t mandate freshman attend anything but housemaster meeting. No alcohol for this entire period.
- Ellen – Housing is more concerned about alcohol.

- Brian – Historically, the agreement was about dry period. Then it evolved into the Rex/Rush agreement so frats can't recruit during REX, and etc
- There isn't parity between DormCon's power over dorms and IFC's power over frats.
- Virginia – Right now, rush isn't dry?
- Alicia – the Rex/Rush Agreement is not helpful for fraternities, because alcohol policies, etc. are already enforced.
- Virginia – Fraternities have infiltrated orientation leaders, so they already impact orientation.
- Fraternities can only be fined for recruiting during REX if the agreement has been signed.
- Paula – tEP was not allowed to wear colors during REX.
- Ellen – The reason frats don't like the agreement is because others can fine them but they can't affect dorms. IFC has said they will never sign the agreement unless DormCon can enforce the same alcohol policies on the dorm.
- Ellen – Has anyone seen major issues?
- Virginia – We had fraternities drink in Masseh. They were taking advantage of our lax alcohol policies.
- Ducky – One example was I heard that people were drunk in the Skyline party, violating the rules but we couldn't enforce punishment. It's unenforceable at our level because we can't open every person's room to check for alcohol.
- Ellen – We don't care about that right now.

4. Forum on REX

- Paula – Reminder of the forum on REX: On Nov 10th and 11th there will be an open forum on orientation and REX. We should voice our opinions. Don't bring screaming people.
- Alicia – The committee still hasn't made a decision yet. If people come with new ideas it would be helpful. They are not trying to kill REX. I think it would be powerful if lots of people came.