

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

# East Campus Culture Report 2008

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The dormitories at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) are all special in their own way. East Campus is one of the largest dorms at MIT, and is home to some of the brightest minds here. In this report, we aim to give you a glimpse of the unique culture of East Campus, and an insight into this open, vibrant, and fascinating community of students.

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By Vinayak V. Ranade (EC President 2008-09) and Sarah C. Hopp (EC President 2007-08)

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## Overview

Housing about a twelfth of the MIT undergraduate population, East Campus (EC) is a supportive and accepting community for an eclectic group of residents. Our residents work on creative projects, whether it's a mural in a hallway, a rollercoaster in the courtyard, or a disco dance floor. Our motto is "No Mistakes," coined by our old Housemaster, Julian Wheatley. We love crazy and nerdy ideas as long as everyone is safe and happy. We are united as a dorm, yet have a variety of strong hall cultures. Each hall operates independently while also participating in dorm-wide activities. We are a proud group with not only longstanding traditions, but with endless creativity and open-mindedness to start new ones.

## House Government

The EC house government works well with the Houseteam to accomplish things that will promote EC culture and programming.

## Executive Committee

The main branch of our house government is the executive committee consisting of the president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. These four people do most of the behind-the-scenes work to make sure everything in EC runs smoothly and residents are happy. President and VP are elected by a full vote of the dorm, while Treasurer and Secretary are elected by Hall Chairs.

### President

By our constitution, the president chairs House Committee meetings, represents the dorm to the outside world, goes to Dormitory Council (DormCon) meetings, encourages committees to carry out their duties, casts the deciding vote in case of a 50/50 tie vote of hall chairs, and interprets this constitution and anything attached to it. The president has the final say, unless 6 out of 10 halls vote otherwise it. The President is also the symbolic leader of EC, and acts as a crisis manager when issues arise. A particular example of this was running a town meeting when one of our former residents went missing in the spring of 2007. The president is also expected to know the sentiments within the dorm, and is an active participant in EC events, particularly Rush, CPW, and Bad Ideas.

### Vice President

The Vice President assists the President in his/her duties. The Vice President is responsible for all things related to room assignment, as the VP of EC is also the Room Assignment Chair (RAC). The VP resolves conflicts related to rooming and works with the halls to make assignments that will work well for both the halls and the residents.

### Secretary

The Secretary is responsible for taking meeting minutes, sending reminder emails concerning House Committee meetings, updating the EC wiki, and writing the EC newsletter, which is posted in walls in bathroom stalls to maximize the number of residents the information reaches.

## **Treasurer**

The treasurer manages the budget for all of EC and distributes funds. He or she prepares a comprehensive budget at the beginning of each semester, which is voted on by the House Committee at the second meeting of the semester. The treasurer may allocate up to \$15 without approval, up to \$400 with approval of Exec, and any other amount with the approval of a House Committee vote.

## **House Committee (HouseComm)**

HouseComm is the East Campus voting body. Meetings are held every other Wednesday in Talbot Lounge and are open to all current residents. EC Exec, Hall Chairs, and Committee chairs are in attendance, as well as about 20 interested residents. During HouseComm the president updates residents on any issues that have come up in DormCon, with administrators, or anything else that could affect the dorm. Any decisions are made by a vote of the Hall Chairs.

## **Hall Chairs**

Each hall elects between 1-4 hall chairs by hall's individual process and timeline. These hall chairs serve as the voting members of the HouseComm. Hall Chairs are expected to communicate HouseComm decisions to their halls and carry out any directives made by HouseComm. On each hall, the Hall Chairs serve a slightly different role, from simply attending HouseComm to organizing parties to performing intra-hall rooming tasks.

## **Committees**

Committees are elected by Hall Chairs at the first meeting of the spring semester. They carry out directives of HouseComm and work on specific aspects of EC's residential life.

## **Social Committee (SocComm)**

Beyond the Executive Committee, EC's Social Committee (SocComm) is one of the most important committees. SocComm is responsible for funding and organizing social events in EC, including hall-organized parties, all events involving food (CPW, REX, etc), and social events run by the housemasters. SocComm is also responsible for organizing Spring Weekend and Fall Festival Events. SocComm also helps Hall Chairs register parties and makes sure that appropriate individuals receive Social Host Training.

## **RushComm**

Rush Chair is one of the most coveted elected positions in EC. We elect three, and their responsibility is to organize everything related to REX activities that take place for freshmen in the fall. It is popular because of the excitement around building activities during REX, but the task requires an immense amount of work and experience with safety concerns. The three Rush Chairs are each in charge of budget, manpower, and safety respectively. The Rush Chairs also work with the VP to secure early returns, and assist with the freshman rooming process.

## **MovieComm**

MovieComm organizes the EC movie collection.

### **WebComm**

WebComm manages the EC website and makes sure it is updated for critical times such as REX, CPW, and IAP to reflect our latest events. Visit <http://web.mit.edu/ec>

### **DarkroomComm**

DarkroomComm is in charge of maintaining EC's darkroom, which is available for all residents to use.

### **GameComm**

GameComm is responsible for the upkeep of our pool tables and all related supplies.

### **PetComm**

PetComm is responsible for making sure that all cats in EC are kept track of through appropriate means. PetComm also provides information to pet owners who are unaware of inexpensive vet and vaccinations services. PetComm also works with Hall Chairs and the Houseteam to deal with concerns of owners who are not attentive enough to cats needs.

### **JockComm**

JockComm organizes EC's intramural sports teams and makes sure fines are taken care of in a timely manner.

### **DiningComm**

DiningComm works with MIT personnel to make sure the dining needs of EC are met through Pritchett, kitchen facilities, Stata, food trucks, and greater campus dining services.

### **CPWComm**

CPWComm is organizes building projects and events that take place during CPW. The two members of CPWComm work with EHS to ensure the safety of all projects, encourages residents to host prefrash, and manage the CPW budget and funding requests to Admissions.

### **AVComm**

AVComm manages the EC sound system, maintains the Talbot projector and sound equipment, and helps halls use the equipment at parties.

### **AlumniComm**

AlumniComm Communicates with Alumni about upcoming events and news in the dorm as well as reaches out for assistance from alumni.

### **WeightRoomComm**

WeightRoomComm maintains and improves the EC weight room which is in the basement of the dorm.

### **CameraComm**

CameraComm keeps track of EC's video camera and equipment, manages our footage archive in digital and tape form, documents important EC projects and events, and designs EC's i3 video.

## **ToolComm**

ToolComm maintains the safety and functionality of EC's hobby-shop and power-tool collection. They also manage training and checkout of the tools.

## **PianoComm**

PianoComm makes sure EC's two pianos are tuned and that our other music equipment is in good working order. They are also in charge of the Piano room.

## **ComComm**

ComComm provides community service opportunities for the dorm, holds voter registration drives, and helps with the dorm electricity competition.

## **BikeComm**

BikeComm helps residents maintain their bikes, keeps the bike room clean, manages EC's bike-share and helmet-share program, and gives abandoned bikes to residents in need of a bike.

## **The Halls**

The East Parallel of EC is divided into Goodale, Bemis, and Walcott, while the West Parallel is divided into Munroe, Hayden, and Wood, named after alumni. Each close-knit hall has its own personality, traditions, events, and rules and contributed to the sections below.

### **First East**

We are First East, or 1E, and we are a group of enthusiastic, social, oft loud, sometimes harmonious, but always easy going people. If you're looking for a bit more on what it's like to live in such an awesome place read on!

First East is a good mix of all the types of people in EC. Unlike most, on our hall we like to have a gradient of noise level, in Goodale most residents are asleep by a reasonable hour, in Bemis you usually going to find someone up tooling or watching YouTube, and in Walcott you can be as loud as you like. We have a music server in the Walcott lounge and it has been known to throw a Britney Spears dance party at 2AM (I assure you it's way more fun than it sounds). But more than always having a place to throw a spontaneous jam session the gradient says something important about 1E. We work hard to make sure our hall works for everyone rather than everyone working for the hall.

We First Easters like to think of ourselves as a social bunch. Towards that end, a few years ago our hall built the fabled Disco Dance Floor. This dance floor has 1,536 LEDs, 128 square feet, 4,096 colors, 30 frames/second, and 20,000 hand-soldered connections (For more on the Disco Dance Floor go to <http://web.mit.edu/storborg/ddf/>). Originally the Disco Dance Floor was built as part of East Campus's Bad Ideas Competition. First East hosts the Bad Ideas Ball at the end of IAP when prizes are awarded for the best/worst entries in the competition.

We try to host two parties for the dorm a term to make sure the floor gets lots of use.

We elect two hall chairs to run our hall's government for a year from the beginning of one Spring term the beginning of the next one. We will then elect Comms to serve more specialized functions, and a treasurer to keep the hall budget. This term we have the following Comms:

- DiscoComm: responsible for maintaining the Disco Dance Floor and all other hall electronics.
- WebComm: keeps the hall website up to date. Check it out at <http://web.mit.edu/first-east/www/>
- GameComm: collects a store of board and other games for hall members and their friends to play with.
- SuckComm: fixes the vacuum cleaners which never work and hardly suck at all.
- RushComm: prepares our hall for dorm and hall rush events at the beginning of the year.

## Second East (Beast)

Second East became known as the Beast from the East during the 70's thanks to a particularly captivating beast-like drawing which the residents clung to as a symbol of the hall. The Beast mentality was maintained for many years, as Second East transitioned to a coed environment in 1995. The Beast of Second East has been immortalized in many murals on hall whose ages stretch back to the early 80's. Second East has a great deal of artwork to boast of, and new murals and doors are still being painted frequently. Notable large scale murals include a replica of the Sistine Chapel in one of the lounges and a collaborative space themed mural in the largest bathroom, whose ceiling tiles have been painted by multiple residents.

Second East residents are very involved in East Campus government and programming, such as Rush, Campus Preview Weekend, and the Bad Ideas Competition, to name a few. Many Beasts also participate in sports (recently the IM badminton team won the league championships), and enjoy working on various engineering projects. Over the years we've constructed a magnetic game-board wall, an arcade machine running every arcade game made before 2000, multiple remote control lounge and bathroom sound systems, a string of programmable LED clusters spaced down the hallway, a custom refrigerated soda machine, and a mounted CRT projector, connected to a custom water cooled media server, the radio, a television antenna, and multiple other external sources including at least a half dozen different game consoles. Thanks to Reuse, we've obtained a large server farm to back our many projects and support many hall services, including a wiki, photo gallery, radio server, Athena dial-up, and IRC server. Additionally, many hall residents have their own personal servers.

Second East's culture is constantly evolving, and so many of our traditions fluctuate with the times. Some recent active traditions include

- Weekly GRT sponsored hall feeds
- Serious Sunday – when we gather to watch a classic cinematic drama on Sunday nights
- Nightly viewings of the Daily Show
- Resident coordinated hall dinners (Thanksgiving, Easter, Passover, etc)

- Dinner mobs to local restaurants
- Hall parties at least once a term
- Clotting in the halls (residents passing by just cannot help but clot in the hallway)

### Third East (Tetazoo)

Third East is about giving others space to enjoy the freedom to explore and thrive at MIT, while being eager to help, and providing a true 'home' to combat the stress of MIT.

We have a myriad of hall traditions, many of which have been passed down for over 30 years.

- Registration Day Movies: Movies play in the lounge all-day on Reg Day for hall members to gather around and enjoy the last bit of break before classes start again
- Phi Frisbee Grunt: Held the week of the first freshman exams, the hall gathers for tons of popcorn and frisbee to get the freshmen's minds off the stress of their first big MIT exam.
- Add Date Party: After the stress leading up to add date, Tetazoa run outside for games of tag during the brief period of relaxation
- Swimming Event: Tetazoo enjoys a fall group swim for an afternoon for group bonding
- Hall Photo: In a new and interesting location each year, ranging from the tarmac at Logan to the Van der Graff generator at the Museum of Science
- Holidays: For Christmas, the hall gathers around a homemade and amusingly decorated non-denominational Holiday Shrub where each hall member has wrapped a present for another.
- Faculty Dinner: We invite members of the faculty from all departments for a Tetazoo-cooked dinner during the Spring. This year's dinner features at least 10 different professors.
- Camping Trip: Each fall and spring, the hall goes on a weekend camping trip to the Outing Club's cabin, braving the cold for hiking and relaxing around a campfire.
- We celebrate each birthday as a hall - somebody bakes and the entire hall gathers to sing happy birthday and enjoy sharing the food.

A number of Hall Comms are in charge of everything from stocking the hall cooking supplies to collecting spare pennies to buy hall ice cream. People leave their doors open while on hall, welcoming others in to ask questions and get guidance – academic or otherwise. Open doors also invite our hall cats to enter. We enjoy making things. Those with particular specialties are glad to work on something and teach those who have never tried, sharing unique skills. A common sight in the hall is an alumnus hanging out with the residents. Alumni are a ready source of experience regarding the issues students are facing and have the time to help out.

Whenever an interesting problem comes up, Tetazoa are ready to figure out how to engineer a solution, both in practical projects and far-fetched experimental designs. We have a top-notch Mystery Hunt team, paired with second west, which ran the 2004 mystery hunt after beating all other teams on campus. We don't really have a bed time - residents are found up working at all hours Hall Projects - in addition to providing strong support to the construction all of EC participates in, Tetazoo likes building projects of its own, such as a tall trebuchet constructed in the courtyard. We maintain a bunch of

facilities, such as hall Athena machines, a media system, a soda machine, EE equipment, and multiple mailing lists. Tetazoa are active around campus, particularly involved in community service with APO, trips with the Caving and Outing clubs at MIT, and running campus-wide events in LSC.

### **Fourth East (Slugfest)**

Fourth east's hall government consists of 3 hall chairs and a hall constitution. The hall constitution acts mainly to define the roles of the hall chairs and the policies for making hall decisions. Fourth east's hall budget is allocated at the beginning of each term by a vote among hall members. Traditionally, the budget is split about evenly between funding hall feeds and making purchases for building and maintaining hall projects. Hall chairs are elected by the hall members during the spring budget meeting and serve for one year starting at the beginning of the spring term. The hall chairs are also responsible for attending HouseComm and serving as an interface between the dormitory and the hall whenever necessary, including rooming issues.

Fourth East has a 40+ year tradition of having cocoa every school night at 11 PM. Cocoa serves as a great opportunity for residents to not only take a break from working but also promotes hall socialization. Cocoa has taken a few new forms in recent years. Special Cocoa, which happens a few of times each term, features a faculty member joining us for cocoa. For Happy Cocoa, which happens on every hall member's birthday, hallmates make a cake that is served at cocoa. At the end of each term, hall member's dress up in formal attire for Formal Cocoa; this features fancy cocoa and desserts. Fourth east invites each of the other 9 halls of East Campus over individually once each year for Inter-hall Cocoa.

Fourth east traditionally takes a hall trip once each year. Past hall trips include camping in the White Mountains and a day trip to NYC. Fourth east also makes a lot of use out our kitchen. Most of our residents prepare most of their own meals and then eat in either the kitchen or lounges. The kitchens are also used to prepare food for hall feeds (we have about 7 each term) as well as a lot of random group cooking and baking. Even so, we keep our kitchen very clean by using a system in which people rotate cleaning responsibilities. So while each person is still responsible for cleaning up what they use, one person each day is responsible for making sure the kitchen as a whole stays clean.

When not working, many fourth east residents enjoy working on electronics projects. In recent years we have installed a hall music system, made music visualization systems and constructed other LED displays. Other common leisure time activities on the hall include spontaneous dance parties, watching TV and movies and singing.

### **Fifth East**

Fifth East is a hall known for its black walls, red lights, and strong traditions. Our hall culture is passed down through an oral tradition of stories from previous residents. Many of these stories are not only for entertainment and for carrying on hall culture, but also for showing current residents that they should be wiser than their predecessors. We elect three hall chairs every spring, who serve for a year and are responsible for organizing parties, going to HouseComm, and resolving rooming issues. We also elect a treasurer and a kitchen cleaner, and approve the budget by voting each semester.

We are a loud hall, with most of the noise centered in the middle black section, called Bemis. Our hall mascot is named “Krotus” and is known for feeding on the suffering of students during the semester and lying dormant during the summer months. We awaken him in the first month of term by throwing a party, which includes a traditional and usually comical skit performed at midnight. We throw other parties, and usually try to come up with an interesting theme. Our parties don’t have much dancing compared to other EC halls, but a lot of sitting around and talking, often hearing the aforementioned stories from previous residents. Many of our residents are involved in the Alpha Phi Omega service fraternity, although to a lesser extent in recent years. We also have had strong student government involvement, with two past UAVPs, various senators, and DormCon presidents. Fifth East is also the home to Jack Florey.

To welcome freshmen to the hall we have an annual dinner to Royal East following our first hall meeting of the term. We also have weekly dinner mobs to various restaurants, including Mary Chung and more frequently the Pour House. In addition to outings, we also have hall feeds once every other week, with various residents making their specialty dishes each week. Our GRT provides us with entertainment from his B-movie/horror/action movie collection. We also have larger communal meals on weekends sometimes, and every spring we have a picnic that we invite alumni to and give out inside-joke gifts and awards to various residents. We also have finals breakfast to get everyone off to a good start during finals week.

Overall, we are a supportive hall, but on the surface may come off as harsh. In the past we’ve been known for our mistakes, so our harshness is in part to prevent future generations from making the same mistakes. We are accepting of all ethnicities and are extremely supportive to our openly LGBT residents. In the past residents have worked together to build a dance floor platform (usually used for studying), an LED wall display, various servers, and bookshelves. We enjoy watching various TV series as a hall, particularly House and Star Trek, and we also play video games together in the lounge with our communal video game systems.

### **First West (Stickmen)**

1st West, also known as 1e-stickmen (pi-e-stickmen) is the smallest hall in East Campus with roughly 25 residents, 3 turtles, and 2 geckos. We are an incredibly close knit group because, well, we only have one lounge to hang out in, making it rather hard to avoid people. Furthermore, we tend to be rather lazy. Who wants to walk up stairs after all? We also tend to be on the neater, cleaner, and quieter end of the EC scale.

For the most part, our hall activities tend to revolve around food, games, and our television. Cooking tends to be a group activity, where the majority of us try to cook dinner most nights. We also have a few aspiring chefs who make desserts.

The main event that our hall puts on each year is Pumpkin Drop that has been a tradition for at least the last 35 years (or so our alumni tell us). Each Halloween, we put on a spectacle by dropping numerous pumpkins off of the incredibly tall Green Building. In the last few years, Pumpkin Drop has slowly become more elaborate as we try out various special effects to make the explosions more impressive to

watch and even more of a pain to clean. For example, two years ago, we tried to coordinate the drop to music to varying levels of success.

Our two major hall events each year involve food. In the winter, we put together a huge Thanksgiving dinner that eventually feeds us for at least a week. During the spring, we do a barbecue outside with lots and lots of meat.

## Second West (Putz)

The principles of second west (affectionately known as Putz) are

- High value of tolerance and respect for others.
- Commitment to Overdesign.
- A significant portion of our hall is raised by LISP hackers.
- Friendliness, willingness to help others and work on hall projects

2W has a number of events and traditions, including

- Putzgiving: Putzgiving is an annual event that takes place the weekend before Thanksgiving where people on hall cook massive amounts of food, and lots of crafty alums come and eat it all.
- Cruftmas: Cruftmas is an annual holiday party where various members of the hall make gifts for each other. The gifts range in quality of course and one can never know what to expect.
- Hall Rush: Hall Rush is the night when all of the new residents pick their hall. Putz generally cooks delicious food, as well as building various contraptions to engage and enthrall.
- Hall feed: Every Thursday night Putz has a general meeting to talk about hall affairs and gossip about the latest events in EC. Plus food.
- Cryofac: For CPW every year we make liquid nitrogen ice cream and host the ice carving event at the CPW festival.
- Parties: Just like any other hall in East Campus we host a party or two every semester for the greater good.

We like to build interesting contraptions – EC’s ToolComm position has been filled by a Putz resident for the last three years. We are close-knit, like to cook, and one only has to walk onto 2W to see that our doors are always open. Many of the students who live here are courses 6 and/or 2.

The second west dorm government mainly consists of the elected hall chairs who run hall feeds, appoint hall members to deal with tasks, and manage hall funds. Use of hall funds, changes to hall murals, and change of other rules requires a majority vote at weekly hall feeds. Some of our traditions include yearly hall t-shirt printing and a viewing of the popular movie “The Big Lebowski”.

## Third West (Floor Pi)

Third West has a variety of traditional community activities every year. For Finals’ Dinners, each day of finals week, someone (or multiple residents) will prepare breakfast and dinner for the hall. This is so

that people who are studying for finals actually have the time to eat decent food. On March 14th, we celebrate Pi Day by eating pie on Floor Pi. About four times per semester, residents will prepare dinner for the hall, and some residents will also make cookies or other desserts, as well. Thanksgiving dinner is a big affair for those who don't go home over Thanksgiving Break. A recently-started tradition (two years ago) was to have a hall murder mystery dinner / game. This is a large event that promotes hall interaction and is a good time for all involved. In addition to cooking as a community, our hall likes to go out to dinner together. Our favorite destination is R.F. O'Sullivan and Son, where everyone orders the Blackjack burger. Many people have its menu description memorized. In addition to our community events around cooking and eating, many people on our hall enjoy gaming. There are two predominant games that people play together – Super Smash Brothers (Melee and Brawl), and Starcraft. We would like to think that we have an annual video game tournament against Fourth East (but the timing didn't work out this year). Games of Magic also occur on our hall every couple weeks. Even graduates who still live in the area come back to play.

### Fourth West (41W)

4th West, commonly known as 41W, is a very open hall. We accept everything about our peers, and expect them to accept the other denizens for who they are. We are very comfortable with each other and ourselves despite coming from different backgrounds. Among our number we count students from vegans to carnivores, Vietnamese to Californians. As a group, we support many cats and other pets. Around dinnertime, our kitchen is full of groups of people cooking together. We all tend to gather around the television to take a break from our problem sets. We enjoy expressing our artistic abilities through such varied channels as mural painting, hall bands, making movies, and exotic cooking. Many of our ex-residents still regularly come on hall to socialize, and we often allow the greater EC community onto our hall for such events as our Annual Halloween Party and Prom. We also have a closet dedicated to Elvis.

### Fifth West

The 5th floor of the west parallel is logically named 5th West. While this name informs one of the high potential energy, and general space filling existence of the hall it does little to communicate the hall's character. We refer to our hall alternatively as "scooterton - catshire – roofdancingchester burninatewithburnythingtown - moviefestgorod - amazingville". On 5th West we really like cats – we currently have the highest cat to student ratio in all of East Campus. As well as liking cats, 5westers also like other 5westers.

- Weekly Hall Feeds: These allow residents to digest the weekly developments on the hall, and food
- Thanksgiving: A semi-formal event for hall residents and alums, the Sunday before Thanksgiving
- St. Patrick's Day: An Irish feast, because everyone's Irish on St. Patty's Day
- Spring Picnic: Located on Sixth West, the spring picnic lets people enjoy food and the outdoors
- Champagne Hall Feed: The Final Hall Feed of the year, a small celebration is given in honor of the departing seniors

## Events and Traditions

EC has a vibrant social life and everyone is involved with dorm activities in one way or another. Some of our events, initiatives, and traditions are outlined below.

### Residence Exploration or “Rush”

Rush is EC’s opportunity to express itself to the outside world, particularly prospective freshmen residents. With nearly a third of the dorm participating in some way or another, it brings everyone closer together – while building, giving tours, helping with ‘Dinner at the Dorms’ and throwing the Eastside party.

### Building Projects

Building safe, interactive rides and other creative structures is an integral part of Rush. It helps us to bond as well as express our interest in engineering outside of problem sets and lab. Past projects have included a 40-foot tower, a roller coaster, a log flume ride, a zipline, a lazy river ride, a human trebuchet, and various jungle-gym structures.

Preparation for Rush begins in June. After gathering initial ideas from residents, the rush chairs meet with representatives from EHS, the House Manager, and the Housemasters to discuss the feasibility and limits to these initial project ideas. After this initial meeting, the chairs start delegating projects to project leaders. These leaders are responsible for drafting a safety proposal from a template provided by the EHS office. These proposals often include extensive calculations, and address issues from sound structure to rider comfort. Project leaders then meet with EHS and receive feedback on their proposal, which is often revised multiple times. By mid-August, all projects are approved and building begins during the same week that FOPs begin. EHS visits during building and after completion to make sure the proposals have panned out, and freshmen are asked to sign waivers and wristbanded before being allowed to use any of the rides. In the past several years this system has worked well, with freshmen (and upperclassmen) thoroughly enjoying the rides.

Perhaps more important than the fun of the rides themselves, is the leadership and teamwork experience gleaned by those involved. Project leaders often go on to become Rush Chairs and continue their involvement in other aspects of EC and greater MIT student government. They are also given project management experience, which clearly translates to real-world experience.

### Rush Events

#### East Side Party

During the Sunday night of REX East Campus residents team up with Senior House to throw a large party for incoming freshmen. Much of the fun is riding the rides, but a lot of emphasis is placed on getting to know freshmen and showing them the personality of residents. During this party, there is traditionally a wrestling competition in an interesting substance, loud music, and interactive food events such as a cotton candy machine.

### **Power Tools Seminars**

We want to get freshmen and upperclassmen involved even if they might not have extensive experience operating equipment. We try to come up with something simple that freshmen can make themselves, or something they can easily help and upperclassman project leader work on. These seminars help everyone interact safely and confidently with the equipment we have, as well as serving as a great teamwork activity for residents and freshmen.

### **Electrical Engineering Seminars**

Similar to the power tools seminars, our electrical engineering seminars allow inexperienced residents and potential residents learn how to make their own take-away devices. In the past we have had Mooninite-making, radio-making, and other light-blinking seminars. This is a good way for freshmen to talk to upperclassmen and get to know the personality of residents, which is the most important aspect of the REX process.

### **Dinner @ Dorms**

EC hosts its Dinner@Dorms in Walker Memorial's Morss Hall. Early returns work with summer residents to decorate the area with spray-painted hardhats, balloons, and confetti to create a welcoming and fun atmosphere for freshmen and parents. About two upperclassmen sit at each table and answer questions that freshmen and parents have about REX and EC, as well as life at MIT. Residents also serve food and clean up after the event.

### **In-house Rooming Night**

In-house rooming night is an exciting night at EC. Freshmen meet in our first floor lounge and are welcomed to EC by the President and Houseteam; they are then introduced to the rooming process by the Vice President. Each hall gives a brief description of their culture and events for the evening and the freshmen are released to explore the dorm until midnight, when they turn in their hall preference questionnaires. Halls do various activities, ranging from make-your-own pizza to paint-by-number murals to sew-your-own stuffed animal. At the end of the evening, representatives from each hall go through the freshmen rooming forms and try to place as many freshmen as possible in their highest ranked halls, taking into consideration their preferences with regard to smoking, cats, noise, and other questions of hall culture. Most freshmen receive one of their top three choices.

### **Bad Ideas Competition**

The Bad Ideas Competition has become part of EC only in the last decade. The first annual Bad Ideas Competition was started by some EC residents as a spoof of the famous Ideas Competition at MIT. Bad Ideas is an event open to all of campus, and participants are encouraged to come up with unusual and humorous ideas. An example of such an idea was the real-life incarnation of the popular videogame, Mario Kart, complete with tricycles and costumes.

Bad Ideas happens during the Independent Activities Period (IAP), and thus is a time when students can pursue projects that they haven't had the time or enthusiasm for during term. There is also grilling in the courtyard, this year we rented a spit and roasted a whole pig.

Bad Ideas includes food eating and drinking contests. The ingredients for these contests are determined creatively every year. The Green Building Challenge also happens during this time, which involves the different halls in EC in an athletic contest which involves climbing the Green Building stairs as many times as possible in 4 hours. Other living groups like Pika (an ILG) and Tau Epsilon Phi (TEP) also participate in this event.

### **Campus Preview Weekend (CPW)**

Campus Preview Weekend is a big deal at East Campus. It is an opportunity to showcase not only the dorm, but MIT, to the potential and incoming freshman class, and we take it very seriously. There are a variety of projects and events that we put on to entertain the prefrosh. Residents give dorm tours all day, and we make every effort to be available to freshmen and answer their questions about MIT. One of the big events is Miss Ugly, where both male and female participants come up with entertaining ways to dress up and win the "Miss Ugly" title. The event is usually judged by the Housemasters.

### **International House of Pancakes (IHOP)**

IHOP, inspired of course by the popular restaurant chain, is put on by the Housemasters and GRT's once a month. They spend all morning preparing a hearty breakfast for the whole dorm on a fine Sunday. There is a special IHOP during CPW which prefrosh and parents can attend and mingle with the students.

### **Friday Afternoon Club (FAC)**

FAC's are put on by a different hall every Friday during term, to celebrate the end of yet another week of classes. Every FAC has a theme and challenges the hall to feed the entire dorm with a very small budget (on the order of \$100). This rarely works of course, and there is a mad dash for the food at 5pm, the standard time when classes end.

### **Study Breaks**

The Housemasters host study breaks every so often, which provide small snacks and an opportunity for students to take a break from their hectic work schedule. The GRT's on each hall also make an effort to put on study breaks and hall feeds through their annual budget.

### **Faculty Dinners**

EC has recently started the tradition of Faculty Dinners. Every term, EC invites faculty members to have dinner at EC, and interact with students in a less formal setting outside class. About 30-50 residents sign up for each dinner, which is organized by the Associate Housemaster. Invitations are made based on student interest, and the faculty member gets a tour of the dorm.

### **Parties**

Approximately every other weekend, an East Campus hall throws a party for residents. Parties are monitored by hosts who are of age and wristbands are used to regulate alcohol (if any). All EC parties are registered with the Campus Police and Student Life Programs (SLP). Recently, EC was selected as the

first dorm to participate in an online party registration system. Typically, a hall throws 1-2 parties a term, and each party has a theme, like “The Internets Party”, or “Article II: II Articles of Clothing”. There are some parties every year which are traditionally hosted by certain halls, such as the Bad Ideas Ball (1E), the Inaugural Ball (for the incoming President), the End of Term Party (2W), and the Reawakening of Krotus (5E). Halls spend a lot of time and effort to decorate their halls in the spirit of the different themes and occasions.

## **Help and Support**

At East Campus, every resident is part of the help and support system. It is very rare to find an EC resident who feels that he/she cannot rely on his/her friends and hallmates for help and support. The more formal avenues of seeking help and support follow.

### **Medlinks**

The Medlinks at EC are students who go through training with the Medical Center. They provide first aid and over-the-counter medication like ibuprofen or Tylenol, and know when and where to direct students to in case of problems beyond the scope of their operation.

### **The Houseteam**

East Campus enjoys a very supportive and encouraging Houseteam. They are very involved and helpful, but allow us to work independently to run our own programs. More importantly, the Housemasters and GRTs are the pillars of the support system.

### **Housemasters (HM)**

Our housemasters are open and involved in EC culture. Once a month they organize a dinner for Exec, the GRTs, Associate Housemaster, and RLA, during which student issues are discussed. They are accessible at student-friendly hours, and allow residents to guide all initiatives, consulting residents before most events they host. They also serve as a useful guide for other campus resources, both with regard to EC’s building projects and student support services.

### **Associate Housemasters (AHM)**

For the past four years our AHM has been the same as our RLA. This joint role has served us well, with our AHM/RLA providing wellness events, faculty dinners, and help organizing our own social events. She increased the breadth of our social programs to extend beyond building projects and parties. We also enjoy an open and accessible relationship with her, and she offered much support to struggling students.

### **House Manager**

Our House Manager is understanding but firm in our desire to modify our living spaces. He helps us better understand fire code and safety issues so we can do most of what we want to do safely and with these limits. He, like the rest of our Houseteam, is approachable, accessible, and helpful.

## **Residential Life Associate (RLA)**

Our RLA in the past has also been our AHM. With the help of our RLA, EC has a very successful party registration system, and is currently part of testing a new online party registration system. To us, the role of the RLA is to help students accomplish the programs they come up with as well as providing breadth of programming that students might not think of, but nonetheless may enjoy.

## **Graduate Resident Tutors (GRTs)**

Each hall in EC has their own GRT and these GRTs are chosen by individual halls, with each hall having a slightly different selection process. GRTs help hall with hall feeds and provide support for students with regard to finding academic help, rooming issues, and other on-hall conflicts. Our GRTs also organize all-dorm events, including a monthly brunch and seasonal cooking competitions in the fall and spring. During finals week, many GRTs provide “finals breakfast” for their halls.

## **Conflict Resolution**

EC currently has no official Judicial Committee. We recently elected a representative to DormCon’s soon-to-be-created Judicial Committee (JudComm), but are unsure of the scope of our in-dorm JudComm will take (if any). Residents seek help from their Hall Chairs, GRTs, and other members of the Houseteam. Rooming conflicts are dealt with by the VP and the Hall Chairs. Inter-hall issues are often raised at HouseComm. In general, upperclassmen are critical of underclassmen when they see the beginnings of problematic behavior and are very proactive. Overall, EC likes to keep as many problems as possible in-house. Students are very wary of their actions (and those of their peers) having a negative effect on the community, and everyone always tries to seek a peaceful and simple solution to conflict. At the same time, we do not hesitate to seek higher authorities if anyone feels that their personal safety is endangered.

## **Community Service**

EC residents are involved in a number of community service efforts. In addition to having ComComm, many residents participate in community service events around campus, and are active members of other service organizations such as Alpha Phi Omega (APO). The Big Jimmy Fund for scholarships for undergraduate students was founded by residents of EC, and every year we host multiple fundraising events toward this cause, including the production of the Women of the East Side Calendar.

## **The Future of East Campus**

### **East Campus and the MIT community**

East Campus has evolved a lot over the years – and in recent years has one of the most active and thriving dorm communities today. Stories of “those crazy East Campus kids” have made news time and again. In recent years, EC has played a significant role in undergraduate leadership; we have established outstanding relationships with the rest of MIT, be it students, faculty, or administrators. EC wants to continue to contribute positively to the MIT community. We want to maintain the dialogue that we have with the MIT administration right now, and improve upon it. Our traditions are one of the things that we

hold dear to our hearts, and we want to be able to continue these while ensuring the safety and security of not only EC residents but the MIT community.

## **East Campus Renovations**

The issue of EC renovations keeps coming up time and again. No one disputes the fact that the building is old and broken, but it is this old and broken building that every incoming freshman comes to love. East Campus is not just another building which houses students. It is a building with personality. Every resident who passes through EC leaves their little mark on the place, whether it's through the murals, or through the traditions. We understand that the building needs to be renovated, and we understand that this involves sacrificing some of the things dear to us. We only wish that EC's culture, traditions, and kitchens are not lost during the process. Because of this, one of EC's long term goals is to set in stone a document which will articulate exactly how EC's interests will be addressed, in the event that such a renovation were to occur.

## **East Campus and Hacking**

EC has always been a staunch supporter and advocate of the long standing hacking culture at MIT. One of the things that EC hopes to push for is the clarification and improvement of the administrative policies on hacking.

## **Concluding Remarks**

East Campus is a dorm that makes MIT the place it is – an enthusiastic, diverse, and stimulating place, where learning is by no means limited to the classroom. We take pride in every aspect of our open-minded culture – from cooking in our kitchens and painting our murals, to building rollercoasters and disco dance floors. The Houseteam along with the unofficial but amazing peer-support system in East Campus enables many students to get through tough spots every year. East Campus is a place where everyone is welcome, where ideas are born, and most importantly, the place that 300 MIT students call home.

## **Acknowledgements**

We'd like to thank MIT Student Life and DormCon for giving us this opportunity to showcase our culture, and of course, the denizens of East Campus- for the community we live in, and are proud to represent today.