In light of the changes made to the MIT residence system and the implementation efforts of said changes, the Dormitory Council recommends the following changes for next year. All data is taken from the survey conducted of freshmen by the Residence System Implementation Team in the fall of 2002.

1 Improvements for Next Year

1.1 Room Squatting

Students were neutral with regard to their acclimation to MIT if they could keep their summer room assignment. While the 80% of students did not have strong opinions about the issue, three times as many students (93, 14.6%) strongly disagreed that their acclimation would have been better had they been able to keep their room than the students who agreed to that sentiment (31, 4.9%).

Changing rooms had a significant positive effect on the students’ preparedness for classes (1.83, 45% less than the neutral value of 2.5).

There are many reasons (outlined in the UA-DormCon report to the Chancellor last year) that the dorm communities and the freshmen benefit from the lack of guaranteed room squatting. With these reasons, the freshmen opinions outlined above, and the academic benefits outlined above, the present system with regard to room squatting should be continued.

1.2 Dorm Exploration

There was no difference in community support and connection to the dorm community between those who moved and those who did not. Changing dorms had a slight positive effect on students’ preparedness for classes (2.13, 25% less than the neutral value of 2.5). After Orientation, students felt they were only slightly more informed about their choices than before Orientation (2.86 after vs. 2.74 before).

Students did not get enough additional information to make their decisions more informed. The Orientation schedule was quite full, with many activities for the freshmen. Freshmen did not have much time to themselves scheduled. Some freshmen used the time set aside for dorm exploration to communicate with family and high school friends or otherwise spend time doing their own thing.

The consequences of moving between dorms were neutral or positive, however many students did not consider moving. For the academic reasons shown above, students should be encouraged to look at the various dorms during Orientation to find the best fit. Students should be given more time to explore the dorms in order to better inform themselves, and dorms should make a greater effort to hold events that accurately portray their dorm.
DormCon Recommendations for the Changing Residence System

Forty-one percent (41%) of students did not visit a dorm with the intent of moving. Ninety-six percent (96%) of students did not visit every dorm, losing an opportunity to meet fellow students, learn about other dorm cultures, and get to know campus.

Students should look at other dorms with the intent of changing, even if they are content with their present dorm. Without comparing their current dorm to others, they can’t know if they are truly happy. Additionally, in comparing their dorm to others, they may find that another dorm is a better fit. If they do want to remain in their current dorm, students should actively chose to do so (actively squat their dorm), which is supported by the one of the Bacow Report’s key points, that freshmen participate actively in the process of selecting their residence.

Students should be explicitly encouraged to look around during Orientation in order to find the dorm that best fits them. Information to the freshmen, including I3 and First Year Guide, should encourage the freshmen to make a serious choice over the summer and to further explore their choices during Orientation.

1.3 East and West Campus Dorms

It is generally believed that East Campus Dorms were more active in their encouragement of freshmen to explore the dorms. Coupled with the generally lower facilities of many of the East Campus Dorms, this caused many more freshmen assigned to East Campus Dorms over the summer to explore other dorms than those freshmen who were assigned to West Campus Dorms (87% vs. 65% visiting at least one dorm with an intent to move, respectively). All dorms should be active in encouraging their freshmen to explore the dorm system. The facilities of the dorms should be upgraded. Students should not be basing their housing decisions on the quality of the facilities but rather the community they would live amongst.

2 DormCon’s Plans for Next Year

This year DormCon and individual dorms helped the freshmen in many ways. DormCon funded moving vans, for which each dorm provided drivers. Each dorm had upperclassmen as moving helpers to ease the between dorm and between room moves. Burton-Conner had a wonderful storage system for the freshmen’s belongings that were unneeded during Orientation. Next House wrote and distributed to the freshmen a FAQ on housing, dorm rooming policy, and dates. The Cultural Houses had individualized welcome baskets for the freshmen.

Next year DormCon will: better publicize the moving vans and helpers over both the summer and during Orientation; expand the dorm storage system to other dorms; encourage individual dorms to write an FAQ or write one for the whole system; explore the idea of individualized dorm welcome baskets.
DormCon Recommendations for the Changing Residence System

DormCon would also like to: work with the Housemasters to have the same basic information and the same “mission” at each brunch; create a unified brochure outlining the major events at each dorm; provide more information over the summer explicitly for parents and more information that broadly overviews the dorm system in the First Year Guide and I3 CD.