

DORMCON MINUTES - FEBRUARY 3, 2011

Attendance:

Dorm	Representative	Absent
Baker	Andy Wu	
Burton-Conner	Alexander Penn	
East Campus	James Douberley	
MacGregor	Meagan Roth	
McCormick	Hannah Rice	
New House	TyShaun Wynter	(Arrived late because of class, represented by Chandler, New House Secretary until his arrival)
Next House	Alec Lai	
Random Hall	Rebecca Cox	
Senior Haus	Giulia Pantalone	
Simmons Hall	Zachary Hynes	
Phoenix Group	Caroline Roque	

Topics Discussed:

1. Guest Speaker from Admissions - Tiffany Meertins

- I'm here to talk to you about CPW. First of all, I'd like to thank you, the students and dorms, for all of your help in the past and all of your help in the future with CPW.
- We're already getting started to woo students to MIT, and we can't do it without your help, so I'm here asking for your help.
- I've worked at 3 other institutions, and I've never seen a student body anywhere else be so involved in a preview weekend.
- The dates for this year's CPW are April 7-10 which falls right in line with MIT's 150th anniversary celebration, which will start right after CPW ends.
- Any information that you need about CPW can be found at the [website](#) listed at bottom of handout that I gave you
- There are a couple of changes that we've made from last year:
 - We have changed the hosting forms. I'm not sure if you could imagine how complicated the matching process is for prefrish and hosts. I sort of think of it like a dating website. But you can still access the hosting form online.
 - Another change is to how we will run events. Like I said, this is the 4th school that I've worked for, and we usually need to beg people to put on events.

Here there are always a lot of events offered, so we are making the deadline for submission of events be Friday, March 6. This year we're incorporating a system to try to get feedback about what makes a great event. If you are hosting an event, it will be mandatory to attend a training session beforehand on February 23 or 24. Someone from each dorm should attend that meeting.

- We need hosts. Every year we scramble for hosts, so please encourage your friends and dorms to sign up as hosts for CPW.
- There will be a mandatory hosting meeting about rules and liability on April 3rd at 6:30 p.m.
- Maybe hosting isn't your thing, and that's ok. We also need tons of volunteers, like someone to be inside the Tim the Beaver costume, and people to greet prefrosh when they first arrive on campus.
- If you're as excited about prefrosh as we are, there will be telethons for admitted students on March 14 and March 17 from 5:30-11:00, so please join us.
- Also, if you're going home over spring break, we'll have receptions for admitted students, and we can put you in contact with alums in your area so that you can attend those receptions and talk to prefrosh then.
- Question: Is all of the info that we need on website?
- Answer: Yes. You can also e-mail cpw@mit.edu for any questions that you can't find answers to.

2. Introduction of New DormCon Members

- Each of the members of DormCon present introduced themselves.

3. Update on Dining from Hannah Rice

- There is a group of students that will be eating in dining halls that serve food from different dining companies, and then we will give presentations to the dining committee and decide which company we will use for MIT dining next year.

4. Orientation/REX

- Alicia (*referring to the [image](#) on the projector*): After Dean Julie Norman's presentation to the UA Senate over IAP, we put together this calendar outlining the tentative dates for Orientation 2011. As you can see, the latest day that students can arrive on campus is Monday at noon, and the housing readjustment lottery is still scheduled to close on Thursday afternoon.
- Brian: I spoke with someone at housing about the housing lottery, and they said that if a schedule like this were to happen, they would likely keep the lottery open until early Wednesday morning.
- Christina: James, I'd like you to talk about what the presidents have already done with regard to this issue.
- James: The emergency senate meeting happened a week before Tuesday, and a lot of us were outraged. The next day, as many dorm presidents as were available met to discuss a plan of action. A bunch of us drafted a letter, and eventually, the letter got signed by all of the presidents. The letter said, in short, "what is happening

is not acceptable, and we as students would like to be more informed and more involved in the decision making process.” A copy of the letter was printed in the Tech and was given to many administrators.

- Audience (Paula): I, along with 2 other people, ran REX last year for Senior Haus. As a response to this proposal, people at Senior Haus have been designing buttons for people to wear (funded by an alum). We also gave everyone in our dorm a bullet list about the proposed changes and a list of talking points, and we encouraged them to email 2 other people explaining the issue and how we feel about it.
- Question: If City Days is not happening next year according to the schedule, what is happening on Friday?
- Answer: We don't really know, but probably the regularly scheduled orientation events.
- Audience (pkoms): I'm the Vice President of Random Hall. Random has similarly been encouraging students to reach out to alums, parents, etc. We've also compiled a list of e-mail addresses of alums that we plan to send things to in the future. I was wondering if other dorm presidents could give me a sketch of what their dorms have done.
- Giulia: Paula pretty much said what we have done at Senior Haus.
- Alex: For Burton-Conner, I sent an email to all of the residents explaining the situation and asking people to email alums and parents, but our discussion list has been pretty quiet.
- James: At East Campus, we've sent out many emails with talking points and encouraging students to email alums and parents. Lots of alums have been outraged and have been e-mailing administrators. Alums have been getting back to us saying that they had contacted administrators who have replied by saying that the students are either "misunderstanding or overreacting".
- Zach: At Simmons, I've set up a meeting with our housemaster, but our discussion list as been fairly quiet.
- Meagan: At MacGregor, I've met with our housemasters who aren't happy with this. I also sent an e-mail to the dorm explaining the situation.
- Chandler: I'm new on the New House exec team, and I can't really speak for our president who will be arriving soon (he has a class).
- Rebecca: Paul said a lot about what we've been doing at Random. Also, our hosuemaster has been talking to other housemasters and is very upset about this.
- Alec: I called an emergency meeting of Next House Exec. Our GRTs are unanimously opposed to the proposition, but our housemaster (Colombo) hasn't taken a stance so far.
- Andy: Baker's Vice President has repeatedly been in contact with our housemasters.
- Audience: What prompted calling an emergency meeting of the Senate over IAP?
- James: It wasn't actually and emergency meeting, Dean Norman had scheduled it with the UA.
- Alicia: I was wondering who our DormCon representatives to SLOPE are.

- Christina: It will be our VP for REX, president, and vice president.
- Alicia: But since we were supposed to elect a new VP for REX today, but have postponed the election until our next meeting, will we be sending Diandra, our current VP for REX, or the person that we elect in the future?
- Christina: Last year, SLOPE didn't convene until may, so it was the newly elected VP for REX.
- Audience: Is there any information about why these changes to REX have been proposed?
- James: Every year a report on Orientation is released, and every year the results it is along the lines of "orientation is broken". They've found that students are burned out by the end, and attribute that to the length of Orientation. Chancellor Clay charged the DOE with proposing a new schedule, proposing that orientation be shortened by 2 days.
- Audience: Did they go into more detail about the reasons?
- Giulia: I spoke to my advisor and he said that he did notice that his freshmen advisees were burnt out and unprepared for the first day of classes.
- Audience (Paula): I met with Liz Young, and she said the same thing. Students are not prepared for first day. She thinks that students should move into their permanent room immediately.
- Audience: I spoke with 2 history professors, and both are supportive of us, but one told me that he hasn't been informed through the faculty of the proposed changes to Orientation.
- Audience (pkoms): Similarly, every professor I've spoken to has been sympathetic to us. However, one professor said that they noticed freshmen demonstrating poor study habits from the beginning of the year.
- Audience (directed at Paula): Do you think that Liz Young is making a conscious effort to destroy a large part of MIT culture?
- Audience (Paula): She told me about how students make great relationships during the official orientation events. The feeling that I got was very negative towards REX.
- Audience (Will): Much of the faculty wants to support us, but they don't know how to help. on February 15 there is a faculty meeting with student representatives who have speaking privileges. We should try to get this on the agenda.
- James: To all of the dorm presidents here, what should DormCon be doing about REX/Orientation? What is our response?
- Robin: How would DormCon feel about officially approving letter that we sent to the Tech and making it the official DormCon statement?
- *[Robin: Any Objections? Others: No. Alicia will put the letter on the DormCon website as DormCon's official statement.]*
- Rebecca: All of the housemasters were supposed to meet earlier, but Colombo canceled their meeting. Please ask your housemasters what is going on or if they want to work with DormCon on REX issues.

- Alex: the Burton-Conner housemaster is currently setting up another meeting of the housemasters.
- Meagan: Don't we only have like 3 weeks to respond?
- James: At the UA Senate meeting, Julie Norman said, when asked how much influence she thought that students could have, " I will not say its futile. I think we need to step back now and see what are our foundational things are. The feedback from your representatives, UA, DormCon, etc. will be helpful. It cant be next April or May; it has to be the next couple of weeks."
- Clarification: Was this referring to deciding on the orientation schedule or length?
- Answer: The schedule. The length is already decided.
- Question: Can we put together a list of why rex is important? To have something to reference when trying to explain the issue?
- Robin: I think Alicia already put something like that up on the DormCon website.
- Alicia: Yes, I did. You all received an e-mail about it several days ago.
- Alicia: Seeing as we need to respond quickly and decisions will be made soon, do other people agree that it would be good for DormCon to have another meeting before our next scheduled meeting two weeks from today?
- Christina: We need to set an agenda for DormCon, then based on that might need another meeting.
- Audience: We should also be speaking through SLOPE. We should try to get some official representative on the SLOPE committee.
- Robin: It's not entirely clear how powerful SLOPE is, but SLOPE will probably not be in charge of deciding whether REX will get saved or not.
- Audience: Would DormCon be the appropriate body to come up with an alternate schedule for Orientation/REX?
- Christina: It definitely falls under our jurisdiction. It makes sense through that we can't do it alone, but it can start with us. I have been in contact with the IFC, Pahnhel, and LGC, and they are all on board to support us however we need them to.
- Zach: What we need to do now is to appoint someone from DormCon to speak with Dean Norman.
- Christina: That basically falls into my position, so if you charge me with talking to Dean Norman, I will set up a meeting.
- Andy: Second.
- Giulia: Christina, didn't you already have a meeting with the Chancellor?
- Christina: I did, but it wasn't directly about REX.
- Giulia: Is Norman the right person to talk to?
- Brian: In the end it will be her and Dean Hastings to decide.
- James: From my understanding, she was charged with shortening orientation and making a schedule, so now they have to coordinate with a lot of other people (for example, Housing, FPOPs) before finalizing plans.
- Robin: I nominate James to go with you to these meetings.
- Christina: I agree, he's done a great job of representing us all ready.

- Brian: I think its worth discussing what the points are important to be conveyed to the deans at this meeting.
- Audience: Is it worth it to survey the dorms? Some of the things we're arguing are about include if people are putting together their social circles during REX. A survey could be helpful in trying to gauge how important REX is to the student body.
- James: The UA report and housing survey addressed those issues, so another survey might be redundant.
- Chandler: To add on, can we also look at how REX is important to students orientation to the school in general.
- Christina: Lets try to answer the questions "What makes REX unique?" and "Why is it necessary?"
- Robin: There was a UA report on orientation a while ago. It got a high number of students responses, and they sited that many students found REX to be most important part of orientation. This puts the REX issue in historical context, showing that those of us in this room today aren't the only ones who care about REX, but that past students have also recognized the importance of REX.
- James: The survey referenced in the UA report was released by the housing office, not by students, which makes it more legitimate.
- Brian: We're answering why rex is important. I don't think anyone on this campus will say that REX is unimportant, but we need to argue why the length of REX should remain unchanged.
- Zach: Right now, we need to focus on preserving the length of REX. We want to make sure that freshmen have enough time to come to an informed decision. We should also make sure that we bring in other stakeholders like the IFC and Panhel, and come up with an alternate plan together.
- Audience: It's important to look back to past years and try to prove why all 3 days of REX are needed.
- Audience (Paula): It's not just about choosing where to live but also about making relationships and forming social groups.
- Audience: We will be repeating a lot of information from UA report. Dean Hastings's letter to the Tech said that the process of orientation was flawed. Alums and faculty will be interested in knowing that there really isn't enough student engagement or input in the administrators' decisions.
- Robin: Dean Hastings has said that we aren't technically cutting REX. Our approach needs to be saying that students have to be more involved in the process. That isn't saying anything negative about them or their proposed plans, and is a thing that DormCon can do effectively.
- Brian: When you stay "students" should be involved, who do you think those students are?
- Robin: Certainly DormCon, the UA, IFC, Panhel, and LGC should all have a say.
- Audience (Paula): I was wondering if DormCon would consider having a more dramatic response if all of this isn't successful?

- Zach: We should make a plan of making direct contact with administrators first, and worry about possible failure later.
- Robin: I see DormCon as being a concentration of power. We represent students, and alumni in a way, and the faculty are behind us. If we can have everyone standing behind us, we can point that force at the administration and have an effect. We need to keep receiving and passing on information as much as possible.
- Audience: I don't know if having every student sign on will be enough to make a change. Also what some of you indicated by telling us that your dorm discussion threads have been quiet is that there is a large portion of students that really don't care.
- Christina: It would be nice if we had reps from DormCon, IFC, Panhel, LGC and the UA meet to form a plan that we could take to Dean Norman.
- Brian: Is it necessary that Panhel, IFC, and LGC get involved?
- Audience (pkoms): Assuming that they could be bought on board, I think it would be great to work with them and it would look very strong if we had non-dorm people on our side. Also, since none of the plans have been finalized, we don't know what might be happening to Rush, or if this could set a precedent in the future for the administration not to consider student input, so it is in their best interest as well.
- Audience: It would be nice to get back to the reason why all freshmen are required to live in dorms and go through the REX process.
- Meagan: Could we possibly move freshmen Reg. day and the in-house lottery?
- Robin: There are ways that this could be done, like by moving the closing of the readjustment lottery and the in-house lottery back by a day. But would we be able to convince the people in charge of orientation to allow REX stuff to overlap with the scheduled Orientation events?
- Diandra: Last year there were Orientation events that we as REX coordinators weren't allowed to schedule events over, so I assume it would be the same this year.
- Zach: Maybe it would be a good idea if we could fill in the holes of information of the proposed schedule so that we can get a more concrete picture?
- Brian: The danger in that is that it could sound weird if we say, "could you please give us more details on your proposed schedule" and then we give them a new schedule that we come up with immediately afterwards.

[Our guest speakers from Harvard arrived and gave their presentation]

5. Research Study - Presentation by Jisoo Hwang and Anitha Sivasankaran

- We are Ph.D. students at Harvard, and we are looking for dorm support for an experiment that we are conducting at MIT.
- Our experiment aims to see if knowing how often your friends go to the gym can help you reach your own personal exercise goals.
- We will have sign in sheets at the gym, and the participants of our study will sign in when they go to the gym. We will send out text messages to participants with both

how many they worked out that week, and how many times their friends worked out that week.

- We have already received permission from MIT and Harvard to conduct our experiment on campus, and have received funding from Harvard, so participants in the experiment will be paid.
- We were wondering if we could also put the sign-in sheets in dorm gyms.
- Question (James): Just so you now, our dorm's gym isn't very nice.... Who is going to be collecting the sheets?
- Answer: There are employees at the Z center who have agreed to collect the sign-in sheets every day and scan them to us twice a week. We were hoping that it would be possible for someone in each dorm to do the same.
- Christina: I don't know if other dorms have someone in a similar position, but I know that Simmons has a facilities chair that we could probably ask to take on this extra job.
- James: Well, we have our facilities person right here. Alicia, how would you feel about doing this?
- Alicia: I certainly wouldn't mind doing it, but I can't speak for people in my position in other dorms. It does seem like a big time commitment....
- Speakers: The experiment will start next Wednesday and will last until Spring Break.
- Christina: We can definitely put flyers and sheets up in our dorms, but we will have to get back to you later about whether we will be able to provide collectors to scan the sheets to you.
- Decision: Every dorm president will find out whether having a collector in their dorm will be feasible, and will e-mail mroth@mit.edu with their answer.

[We resumed our conversation about REX]

- Christina: So can we have a recap of the plan we've set for ourselves?
- Alicia: We decided that we should charge Christina, Meagan and James with meeting with Dean Norman and Dean Hastings, that we should contact alumni with correct information and talking points, and we should create an alternate schedule for Orientation 2011. I think that we need to put one person in charge of each of these tasks to make sure that they actually get done.
- Robin: James and I can take care of the alumni letter, since we've already done something similar with EC alums.
- Alicia: I can be in charge of making a new schedule.
- Christina: and Meagan, James, and I should think about taking points for our meeting with the Deans.
- Alicia: We should also set a deadline for those three things.
- Christina: How about we say that they should be e-mailed to DormCon by Saturday morning, and then we can all discuss over e-mail on Saturday.

- Robin: Just out of curiosity, can we assert that DormCon must approve a schedule for Orientation? We as the dorms control the success of CPW.
- Rebecca: We don't want to be threatening.
- Robin: I agree that we don't, but we need to remember that we can be.
- Audience: Making CPW and REX less fun won't mean anything to them, but having no hosts for CPW could be effective. Christina - What do you know about what the UAP and VP are doing?
- Christina: I'll reach out to them to see if we can get a smaller meeting to discuss together.
- Brian: Robin had a very good point. The power to assert your authority comes from the students behind you, and we need to make sure that the students are all supportive of DormCon's actions on this issue.
- Diandra: If we're going to be really busy trying to do REX during CPW, it'll be difficult for a lot of us to host prefrash and dedicate time to CPW events.
- TyShaun: I'd be careful about putting any strain on CPW. In the cultural houses of New House, a lot of our recruitment happens during CPW, and people in my dorm wouldn't like the suggestion that we threaten CPW. CPW goes through admissions office, and they support us.
- Christina: I think we should stop the discussion of REX for now since its getting late and we have other things on the agenda, but thank you to everyone in the audience for attending the meeting and sharing your ideas with us.

6. Next House Funding Request - Presented by Feng Wu

- Here is a [link](#) to the funding request.
- Next House is hosting a party and creating a lighting system, and is asking for \$700 from DormCon to help cover the costs.
- Question (James): Clarification, is this party open to the public? Because we've heard about it over at East Campus, and we all really want to go.
- Answer: Yes, it's open to all dorms on campus.
- Question (Paula): Is it a dry event?
- Answer: Yes
- *[Feng is asked to leave the room during the vote]*
- Vote: DormCon approves the request to give \$700 for Next House's party.

7. Elections Next Meeting

- Elections for CP for REX, REX chairs, and Treasurer (Betsy announced that she wont be able to continue serving as DormCon's treasurer this semester) will happen at the next scheduled meeting on February 17.
- Alicia will send out an e-mail to be forwarded to all residents of each dorm advertising the openings.

- Audience: In case you guys didn't know, DormCon gets a free black and white full page in the Tech if you want to advertise more.
- *All DormCon members were pleasantly surprised to hear this (seemingly) new information.*