

DormCon Meeting Minutes
November 21, 2013
Location: Simmons Hall

Agenda

- 1) Title IX Discussion
 Guests: Barbara Baker (Senior Associate Dean for Student Life)
 Sarah Rankin (Title IX Investigator)
- 2) Chancellor Search Committee
- 3) Bad Ideas Discussion
- 4) Murals/Artwork
- 5) Last Meeting of Term Timing Discussion
- 6) Open Discussion

Attendance

Dorm	Representative	Absent
Baker	Andrea Gutierrez Marty	
Burton-Conner	Akhil Raju	
East Campus	Kelly Snyder	
MacGregor	Walter Menendez	
McCormick	Henna Jethani	
New House	Anna Ho	
Next House	Linda Seymour	
Random Hall	Jacob Hurwitz	
Senior Haus	Alina Kononov	
Simmons Hall	Cosmos Darwin	
President	Eli Ross	
Vice President	Katherine Silvestre	Absent
Secretary	Caitlin Heber	
Treasurer	Phoebe Whitwell	

Begin: 6:05
End: 7:15

1) Title IX Discussion [Barbara Baker & Sarah Rankin]

- Barbara & Sarah: We have been meeting with different student groups about how best to communicate with the student body (both graduate and undergraduate) about Title IX presently and in the future. Near the end of January or early February, we will be starting a “student working group” on Title IX issues (they would discuss campus attitude toward Title IX, how to educate campus, what the best ways are to publicize Title IX and its uses, how and when you can use it, etc.) If you are interested in joining this group please contact us (babaker@mit.edu and srankin@mit.edu).

They proceed with a formal PowerPoint presentation about general Title IX information available on the MIT Title IX website (sexualmisconduct.mit.edu). If you would like to see the exact slides presented, please email dormcon-secretary@mit.edu.

In conclusion, our goal is that no one falls through the cracks and that students both know where to get help and feel comfortable asking for it.

- Akhil: If you report sexual misconduct to a MIT employee, they have an obligation to report it to your office. Then your staff would reach out to the student, but the student’s wouldn’t have to take advantage of the resources available, is that correct? Barbara & Sarah: Yes, that is correct. Faculty, staff, and certain student employees are held liable to MIT employee misconduct standards and are required to report sexual misconduct (e.g. if an IST student employee is told about cyber bullying, MIT is considered “on notice” and the student employee should report it). However, once reported, that employee has done their due diligence. We proceed to reach out to the student and offer our services, which they can accept or decline.
- Alina: You have given us many helpful definitions, but what is a hostile environment? Barbara: We are still trying to figure out what that is here at MIT. This is one of the many reasons for forming the student group.
- Cosmos: Title IX written 1972, what has changed to make this a big issue now? Sarah: The first 40 years of Title IX were about athletics. Students began to agitate and the outcomes of court cases began applying Title IX to other issues. The Dear Colleague Letter (DCL), written by the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in 2011, was addressed to colleges to remind them of the importance of safe educational environment free from discrimination. This letter “explains that the requirements of Title IX pertaining to sexual harassment also cover sexual violence, and lays out the specific Title IX requirements applicable to sexual violence” (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201104.html>). Basically, a grass roots student movement expanded Title IX’s influence and has made Title IX a larger, important issue.

- Eli: There is some confusion about what steps you are taking toward education. Can you clarify? Sarah: we attempt to educate students through our website, by reaching out to student groups, revamping freshman orientation, putting up posters, etc. Graduate students are harder to reach. Barbara: The mural issue has been both a blessing and a curse. We're glad that it brought attention to Title IX, but the discussion has been very focused on murals. We care about students and want them to be aware of all the resources regarding Title IX.
- Cosmos: Sarah, your job title is misleading. What exactly do you do? Sarah: I am head of both Title IX education/awareness and investigation. I run small investigations (e.g. class assignment change due to an unsafe environment) and more formal investigations (e.g. reported sexual assault).
- Matthew: with regards to murals, MIT policy takes Title IX to a higher level. Do you know what the thinking or strategy was behind this elevation? Sarah: Unfortunately, we are not aware of MIT's exact reasoning. However, the federal government sets the minimum and colleges elevate it; this is standard practice.
- Eli: Someone brings a complaint against a mural of a rainbow, what steps do you take? Sarah: We look into it. We view the mural and ask the community about it. We would poll random students within the community about the mural. From there, we would take action based on the information we had received. The mural would either be left up or takedown (procedure on the removal of murals is still in the works). Action is never taken against the student or students that painted the mural. OCR is less concerned about communities and more so about the policy; therefore, if a complaint were to bring OCR to campus, we would have to tread lightly and have sound reasoning for leaving the mural up.
- Kelly: Sticking with the complaint about the rainbow mural, what if the person finds it offensive because they associate it with LGBT people. What do you do? Sarah: This doesn't involve Title IX. This person would have to talk with house team about the issue and the possibility of moving.
- Walter: Is there protection for outside community complaints about murals (i.e. a complaint from a visitor or a summer resident)? What is the response to these complaints? Sarah: No, there is not protection. Mural complaints, whomever they are from, will be evaluated on standards we've created through other investigations. From there, a community discussion would occur, and a decision about the mural would be made.
- Kelly: Standards change overtime; many things that used to be considered offensive are no longer offensive. Why punish someone for being progressive? Barbara & Sarah: We are focused on MIT's current standards and discovering the current values of the institute.

2) Chancellor Search Committee [Eli]

- The committee emailed out a survey to solicit feedback on what students want in the new Chancellor. Please get your residents to fill this out as soon as possible. Additionally, if you have strong feelings about a particular person that should be considered for the position, please contact the committee with the name of the suggested candidate and why you think they would make a good Chancellor.

3) Bad Ideas Discussion [Marvin Romero]

- Marvin Romero: Bad Ideas is a festival at the end of IAP where we fund “bad ideas” students have before the semester. Ideas that have received funding in the past include: python bee, wings eating competition, running up and down the green building as many times as possible, cupcake roulette, construction projects, and more. This is the twelfth year Bad Ideas has been held and we have received funding from DormCon in the past (last year a total of \$8870 used, and \$1500 came from DormCon). Most of the money we spend goes into individual projects and about \$1000 goes into everything else (food, advertising, hand warmers, etc.). This year we will most likely be asking for \$2500 from DormCon.
- Eli: we will not be voting on funding today. They will be coming to us with more specifics about the event and funding at our next meeting.

4) Murals/Artwork in "non-mural" dorms

- Eli: Sadly, we do not have time to discuss this. However, we should have a discussion about artwork in dorms that do not allow murals, because many allow artwork in public spaces.

5) Last Meeting of Term Timing Discussion

- Eli: many people have contacted me about conflicts with the last meeting of the semester. Please look out for an email with the time and place of our last meeting this semester.

6) Open Discussion

- Postponed