

Agenda

- discussion on Rush funding
- updates on housing redesign and the proposed RP+ housing algorithm

Roll call: All present.

Announcements

- sweidman: an email was sent out about a book and clothing swap that will take place in EC. Friday-Sun is drop-off. Mon-Wed is pick-up. The remnants will be donated.
- EC needs to make a tour video in addition to an i3 video. If you have any creative ideas, reach out to cameracomm. The video should be helpful in outlining the phys plant and facilities of EC.

Discussion on Rush Funding

One proposal has been submitted. Detailed below:

“Rush should stop accepting donations from outside the MIT community [1]. I think that this is both feasible and our only good way forward.

Rush chairs note [2] that corporate sponsorships for Rush are a very recent phenomenon, justified by the increased cost of wood and an increase in the number of projects. In reality, a large number of projects never get completed. By focusing on quality and feasibility over quantity, I hope we could keep Rush just as fun while decreasing our expenses.

If the many discussions we've had over email and at Housecomm have shown anything, it's that choosing who to take money from is a really complex question that we don't seem to have a very good answer to, and the proposals that give residents reasonable opportunities to voice their opinions will also place a logistical burden on (and create long delays for) the Rush chairs. By restricting the set of acceptable donors to a relatively safe set of entities we are already associated with and giving Rush chairs full discretion for accepting/soliciting donations from them, we can maintain our traditions without involving our community in unnecessary politics.

(Notice that Jeff Bezos, arguably being a member of the MIT community, could still donate under this policy. But then the donation would be acknowledged as such—i.e. as coming from him personally/from the Bezos family, not Blue Origin)

[1] The MIT community includes, at least, the students, alumni, faculty and employees of MIT, departments and other organizational units at MIT, as well as ASA-recognized organizations. It is up for debate whether a student's immediate family is part of the MIT community.

[2] See email from katj@mit.edu to ec-residents@ on 2019-03-04.”

Author's comment: Although this does not specifically address the existence of the Bezos' donation, it will require donors to explicitly state that they are donating personally.

Rush chairs: On average, \$5000 annually comes from corporate sponsorships. Without the supplemental corporate funds, smaller projects would be cut, and other popular activities may have to be downsized. Although it composes a majority of the rush budget, funding from within MIT is not as guaranteed or as straightforward to come by. As a comparison, internal grants often require a post-event report, whereas corporate grants just ask for a few pictures or something of that sort.

Rush chair proposal:

"Before asking for a corporate donation, the name of the corporation is emailed out to residents at least a week in advance. Any resident can call for a vote at Housecomm for the corporation, but majority vote by the hall [chairs] is required to stop the donation request."

Whether this vote is a residential referendum or a HouseComm vote is to be determined.

Corporate sponsorships should be kept because Rush may suffer without them.

Aggregate comments:

This could add a lot of bureaucracy to the funding acquisition process as well as housecomm. Perhaps some degree of discretion left to the Rush chairs is a good thing. It may be more efficient to vote on these sponsors in blocks as opposed to individually. Some sponsors may flake out if we take too long to accept funding. We would lose entities like Arctic Fox. There are probably parts of the MIT community that we don't reach out to that could make up for the funding provided by corporate sponsorships. Other dorms also have successful rushes without budgets of the same magnitude. It is questionable whether refusing corporate sponsorships will make our monetary sourcing any more moral. If we were given no stipulations or requirement for advertising a company, would it still be immoral to use Bezos' money for a good purpose. Rush is not necessarily a good thing. In fact, it could be considered frivolous. Morality doesn't apply to Rush, and I can't see how using corporate money for a neutral thing is necessarily a bad thing. We are being very modest about the good that Rush does for our community, and what we do with the funding from corporate entities or otherwise actually is very beneficial for MIT. I don't think that refusing corporate sponsorship will eliminate the most important elements of Rush, regarding upperclassmen-prefrosh interaction. Perhaps funding is not the avenue by which we should prioritize the contents of Rush.

Voting Options:

- Status Quo
- No corporate sponsorship
- Residential approval in advance

It has been decided that Rush chairs will propose sponsorships with residential approval.

Updates on Housing Redesign and Proposed RP+ Housing Algorithm

You can read about the proposed housing algorithm in this document [right here](#) under Second Rooming Assignment. Admin is very on board with using an algorithm, specifically this implementation of a housing process. Buy-in is very important to admin, so residents should express their thoughts. If the set of preferences does not solve (within a given time span or ever) the possible fixes are to lower the threshold for required satisfaction or give weight to frosh who are particularly difficult to place. We do not have a fix for a situation where a problem arises from most/all of a hall's given sets, and more upperclassmen input is needed. We do have a house team and other resources to resolve major problems, though. Exec needs input on whether or not residents are willing to buy into this system. We are not certain on whether we will be capable to retain anything similar to our current mutual selection system.

mvadari: The algorithm has been coded. The 2018 frosh preferences have not solved, but there are a few problems with reading the data.

Comments on residential approval: If RP+ is actually as effective as our current system, perhaps using this algorithm is not a bad thing. We need to see results before we evaluate whether or not we'd be okay with adopting an algorithm. We need to systematically determine whether this is truly close to our current system in terms of freshman satisfaction. Have we inquired on what admin will do if we do not abide by their requirements or demands? No. Consider the fact that if we agree to giving up mutual selection, we are likely never getting it back. If we use an algorithm, and it doesn't solve in a timely manner, we need a manual backup that would probably be similar to our current all-nighter process. We could use other satisfaction metrics like surveys and placements a few semesters after Rush. We need to be careful about the validity of this data and how we use it. Maybe if we generate more solutions, we could allow for more upperclassmen input, and the effort that we put into our current system about determining whether a freshman will be happy on a certain hall will show through the greater flexibility allowed by generating more sets. Not allowing for interhall discussion / gaming seems hard to enforce, but the solutions sets provided for each hall will not be distributed to any other hall. Can we compare the results of the algorithm solutions to the actual assignments of each year? Can we do both systems simultaneously for next Rush and go with what is better? This has many problems. We should not do this.

HouseComm adjourned.