

*Kennedy report*



**REPORT OF  
THE INDEPENDENT LIVING GROUP  
REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**TOWARD RESIDENTIAL HOUSING OF  
QUALITY AND CHOICE FOR ALL UNDERGRADUATES**

Submitted to Dean Shirley McBay

December 1988

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Conclusions and Recommendations	page 1
II. Introduction	page 3
III. A Brief History of the Residence System	page 8
IV. Is There a Problem?	page 10
V. Simple Solutions	page 15
VI. Impact Upon the Residence System	page 19
VII. Construction of New Facilities	page 23
VIII. Epilogue	page 26

### APPENDIX A

## I. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations and conclusions that follow emerge from a lengthy and focused examination of certain problems currently facing the Institute's residence system. While these problems will become evident in the course of our presentation and analysis, the goals of the residential system at MIT provide the criteria against which our recommendations and conclusions must be judged. We take the goals to be four-fold:

- 1) To provide a residential system that can accommodate virtually all MIT undergraduates;
- 2) To provide a residential system that furthers the educational mission of the Institute--a system that provides students with academic and social support from peers, proximity and convenience to the Institute's educational resources, and relative comfort and privacy in terms of living conditions;
- 3) To provide a residential system that encourages interaction and understanding across diverse social groupings of students; and
- 4) To provide a residential system that allows individual students a choice of living accommodations.

We believe these goals characterize current MIT housing policies, both implicit and explicit<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, we believe these goals are appropriate to the Institute and are therefore important to support and maintain. Policies and practices directed toward the independent living groups, which are crucial elements of the residential system, are the focus of this report.

For over a century the Institute's independent living groups have played an important role as part of the residence system for undergraduate students. Their importance stems jointly from the social experience they have provided for many students and from

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<sup>1</sup>These policies are discussed in:

"Report of The Committee on Educational Survey", December, 1949

"Report of The Committee on Student Housing", June, 1956

"Interim Housing Report, Committee on Student Environment", 1963

the housing facilities they have provided to the Institute at very low cost . The independent living groups will change in the decades ahead as a result of the shifting demographic composition of MIT's student body.

We cannot predict the exact effects. However, we are convinced that the system faces a decade of uncertainty and change. In particular, if the number of students residing in independent living groups declines significantly, the Institute no longer will be able to guarantee undergraduates housing in the present residence system.

We find this an alarming prospect. Although long a stated goal, the Institute did not become a true residence school until the second century of its existence. Now, unless steps are soon taken, the Institute may have to risk losing that recently gained ability and abandon the policy of providing undergraduates four years of housing within the residence system.

We are convinced that the Institute must begin now to plan for the acquisition of additional undergraduate residence facilities or be faced with an unacceptable risk that the present housing policy will have to be abandoned. The cost of acquiring these facilities will be substantial and will encourage procrastination. However, we believe that to defer the decision is tantamount to assuming the risk because of the time required to fund and construct such facilities. Further thought will be required to determine the number of students those facilities should house but we believe it could be as low as 200 and as high as 700 undergraduates. The reasons for this wide range are discussed in Section VII. There will be several points at which the plans for construction can be tabled if the need for them diminishes.

We have explored several other courses of action that might make it unnecessary for the Institute to develop additional residence facilities. These include transitions from all-male fraternities to co-educational independent living groups and to a mixture of single-sex independent living groups and sororities. Such transitions have intrinsic merit and should be encouraged and supported by the Institute. However, we do not believe that they alone will make it possible for the Institute to continue housing the undergraduates within the residence system.

## II. INTRODUCTION

The committee to review the Independent Living Group System was appointed by Dean Shirley McBay in December of 1987. The review was motivated by a serious concern about the long term effects upon the independent living groups of the changing ratio of women to men in the Institute's undergraduate population. Our approach to that task and the conclusions we have reached are described in the remainder of this report.

To put the subject of our deliberations in context, the independent living groups form one component of the residence system in which freshmen are required to live and in which the Institute guarantees to house undergraduates for four years. The other component consists of the Institute houses that are owned and operated by the Institute. The Institute houses have a nominal capacity of about 2,630 students, and the independent living groups house about 1,400 students. The all-male fraternities are the dominant component of the independent living group system and house about 1,200 students. They are the primary concern of this report.

A copy of the charge to the committee is attached as Appendix A. From our early meetings it became clear that: 1) the independent living groups are facing a period of increased membership pressure as the number of (Anglo) men among our undergraduates decreases and 2) these pressures will severely strain the Institute's residence system if they are not relieved. Accordingly, our primary concern became the impact the changing demographics of the Institute's undergraduate population will have upon the independent living groups and the residence system. In particular, we sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) Are the all-male fraternities apt to continue housing about 1,200 men in the decades ahead?
- 2) If not, can they change so that they will continue to house 1,200 students?
- 3) What will be the impact upon the Institute's residence system if the number of students living in independent livings groups does drop appreciably?

4) What action should the Institute take?

In addressing these questions we have tried to identify the demographic trends that will shape our student body and to determine the implications of these trends under a variety of realistic assumptions. Those variable assumptions are discussed in the body of the report. Two other fixed assumptions have been made throughout our work. One is that the number of undergraduate students will continue to be approximately 4,250. The other is that some freshmen will continue to reside in the independent living groups.

Throughout our deliberations we have been concerned with the long term, say a decade or so, rather than just with the next few years. We chose this time frame in the belief that it will take that long to achieve any major change in the residence system if major fund raising is necessary.

As stated in Section I and developed in Section IV, the committee concluded that the independent living groups are almost certainly facing a decade of instability and change. We do not believe they will continue to house 1,400 undergraduates if they continue to house only men and especially if only Anglo men. We further believe that this *de facto* separation, by ethnicity and gender, is neither desirable nor acceptable.

Having reached the conclusion that the independent living groups, and therefore the residence system, are facing a decade of change, the committee explored the changes that could be made in the independent living groups so that they might continue to house 1,400 students. The three possibilities are: 1) some of the all-male fraternities become co-educational living groups; or 2) some of the all-male fraternities are replaced by sororities and 3) the independent living groups house more persons of color.

These possibilities will occur gradually even if nothing is done. The Institute should encourage and support them. However, we do not believe that such changes are apt to occur on a scale that will preserve the living space for 1,400 students that is now provided by the independent living groups. Moreover, we believe that mandating co-educational independent living groups might well create more problems than it solves. Our reasons are presented in Section V.

The question then arises as to the impact shrinking independent living group membership will have upon the residence system as a whole. That impact is discussed in Section VI. The principal conclusion is that MIT will not be able to provide housing for the number of students that it now does if the membership in independent living groups drops. If the number of students housed in independent living groups declines, so also will the number of students in the present residence system.

It is not certain that the number of undergraduates residing in independent living groups will decrease significantly in the coming decade. However, if it does, the only reliable means of avoiding a corresponding lack of residential space for undergraduates is for the Institute to acquire more residential facilities. The question as to whether or not it should do so is the subject of Section VII.

It may be that the residence system will evolve without difficulty or a need for major Institute actions. The system has endured well. However, it has given us pause for thought to note that:

- 1) In 1916 students lived in Building 1 with a bed and packing crate because the Faculty Houses were unfinished.
- 2) Following the second World War Building 22 was converted to a dormitory to house the large number of students who could not find housing elsewhere.
- 3) In 1962 some freshmen from outside the Boston metropolitan area could not be housed even though no metropolitan area freshmen were allowed in Institute houses.

Two final topics deserve comment here. The first is the following question:

Should independent living groups continue to be included in the residence system?

The question arose not because of any major sense of dissatisfaction with independent living groups but rather because it seemed appropriate to ask it at a time when we were considering the investment of Institute resources in the residence system. Our



conclusion is that independent living groups should continue to be included in the residence system.

There are two compelling reasons for this inclusion. First, independent living groups appear to be viewed in a positive light by a majority of the student community. This is not to say that there are no tensions between residents of the Institute houses and of the independent living groups. Some of us have been surprised at the scorn that can be conveyed with the word "frat" or the phrase "dorms are the default choice". Nevertheless, in discussions with students, alumnae and alumni who are not independent living group members we have been told repeatedly that the independent living groups are an important and positive part of the social environment at MIT. Had we heard a less positive response generally we would have pursued this question further.

Second, the independent living groups provide a valuable living environment that differs significantly from those available in the Institute houses and that appeals to a number of our students. We believe that the residence system should continue to provide such diversity.

Two other arguments are sometimes advanced to support the continued inclusion of independent living groups in the residence system. One is that they have served the Institute and its students well for over a century and the other is that their presence is a financial necessity for the Institute. To at least some degree, both statements are historically correct but in our minds the former does not alone justify the continued existence of independent living groups and the latter will become less true in the future as the demographic composition of the student body changes. Thus we are far less convinced by these arguments than we are by those concerning the positive contribution the independent living groups make to the living and social environment at the Institute.

The final remark pertains to the way in which we have concluded our work. Our original plan was to distribute a draft of the report widely for discussion within the community and to revise it to reflect that discussion before it was put in final form. However, we have examined the issues in the context of the current policy which allows first year students to reside in independent living groups. Since the wisdom of that policy is now being re-examined by Freshman Housing Committee, it seemed best to postpone the community wide discussion

of our conclusions until they can be combined with those of the Freshman Housing Committee.

### III. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE RESIDENCE SYSTEM

The evolution and role of independent living groups at MIT is more easily understood when one realizes that they have been a major source of housing for our students since MIT was founded in 1861. For sixty years after its inception the Institute did not provide any housing for its students. They either commuted from home or lived in private accommodations throughout the city. Residential fraternities arose in 1882 to meet the desire for housing and community. The number of students living in fraternities was small but they were the only students who had an opportunity to live together as a group until Boston Tech became MIT.

After the move to Cambridge in 1915, the six Faculty Houses, which are now known as Senior House, were opened to approximately 200 of MIT's 1,900 undergraduates. Two of the six houses were designed for and used by fraternities. In 1925 the Alumni Houses, now known as East Campus, began to be opened. More fraternities requested space in the new facilities but not all could be accommodated. Hence, in the interest of fairness among the fraternities, all fraternity use of the Institute houses was abolished.

With the addition of the Alumni Houses approximately 600 of the Institute's 2,800 undergraduate students were able to reside in Institute houses. Although records are sketchy on this point, it appears that a comparable number of students lived in fraternities. This pattern of fraternity membership continued without major change until the Second World War.

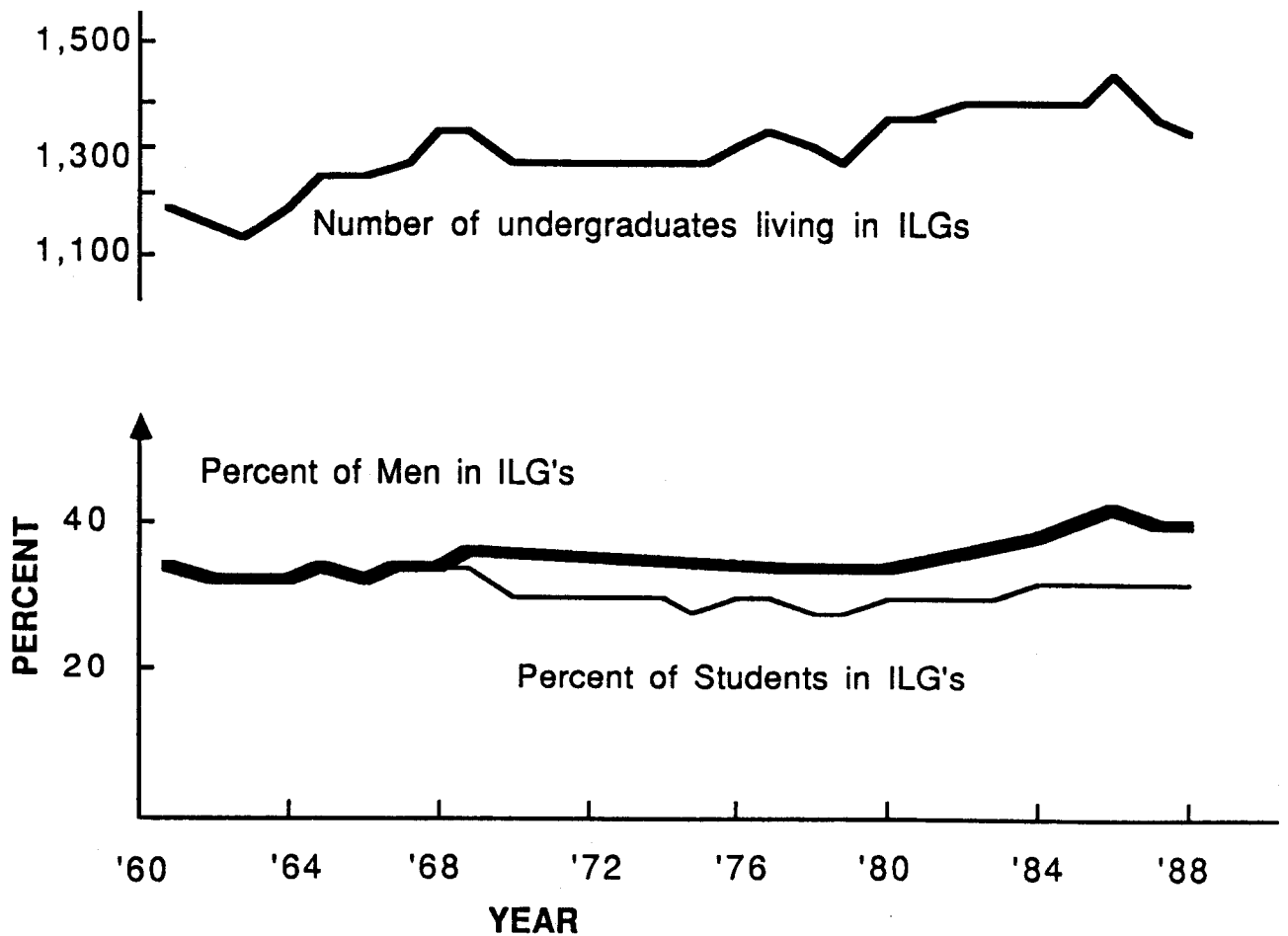
After the war both components of the residence system grew in size to accommodate the increasing number of undergraduates seeking to live within them. The growth lagged behind the demand through the early sixties and policies temporarily were adopted to exclude some students from the system. At times the Institute leased private accommodations to meet its commitments to students. During this period a major building program was completed and the capacity of the Institute houses increased more than four-fold. Also independent living groups that were neither fraternal nor all-male began to appear.

At the present time the residence system has space for about 4,030 undergraduates. The independent living groups provide 1,400 of these spaces and the Institute houses provide the other 2,630.

#### IV. IS THERE A PROBLEM?

The present residence system is providing an adequate living environment for the 94 percent of the undergraduates who desire it. The question is whether or not it can continue to do so in the coming decade. For the reasons put forth in this section, we doubt that it will be able to do so.

We begin by considering: 1) the number of undergraduates residing in independent living groups (ILGs), 2) the percentage of the undergraduate students who reside in independent living groups and 3) the percentage of the undergraduate men who reside there. The variation over the past 28 years is shown below. The disproportionally increasing percentage of the undergraduate men who reside in independent living groups is evident from the figure.



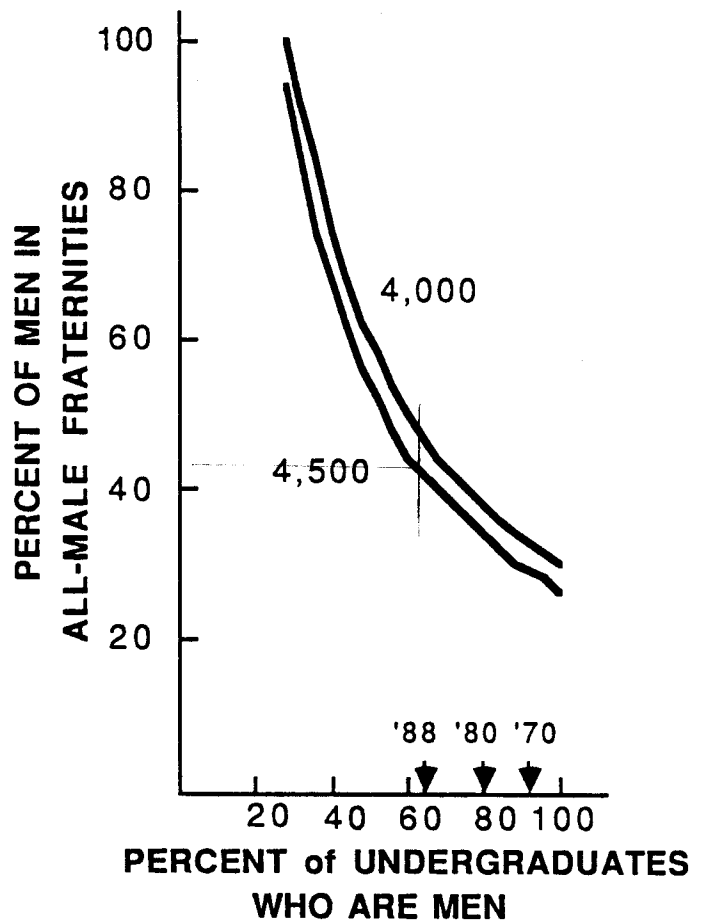
The trends in residence selection are smoothed somewhat by the fact that a selection typically lasts for four years during which time the fraction of our students who are women has been changing appreciably. Therefore the trends in the residence choices of the freshman are a better guide to the future than are those of the entire undergraduate student body. In 1988, 352, or 57 percent, of the men in the freshman class chose to reside in independent living groups.

These data suggest that over 55 percent of the undergraduate men may reside in independent living groups within a few years if the composition of the student body and the preferences of students do not change. In fact the composition is changing with a smaller number of men being admitted to the Institute each year. The question thus arises as to where those changes will lead. To indicate the scale of the answer, let us suppose that the all-male fraternities continue housing 1,200 undergraduates from a population of 4,000 to 4,500, of whom 60 percent are men. Then approximately 44 to 50 percent of those men must live in all-male fraternities<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> If Freshmen are not allowed to reside in independent living groups these percentages increase by a factor of 4/3 to become 59% and 67%, respectively. The amplification factor of 4/3 applies to all of the results that we present when freshmen are excluded from the independent living groups.

The figure at the right gives more detailed information. That figure shows the percentage of all undergraduate men required to fill 1,200 spaces in the all-male fraternities as a function of the percentage of the undergraduates who are men. Results are shown for class sizes of 4,000 and 4,500 students. The arrows on the horizontal axis indicate the current percentage of the undergraduates who are men and the percentages for 1980 and 1970.



The outlook becomes even less certain when one realizes that historically all-male fraternities at MIT have been unwilling or unable to attract many members either from minority groups<sup>3</sup> or from the Asian-American group<sup>4</sup>. Together these male students represent about 25-35 percent of the men in entering classes over the past five years yet comprise less than 15 percent of the total all-male fraternity pledge classes over this same period. This pledging pattern is now beginning to change, perhaps as a result of recent efforts made to broaden the appeal of all-male fraternities within our student body<sup>5</sup>. Table 1 shows the pledging patterns of minorities, of Asian-Americans and of other students since 1980.

<sup>3</sup>In this report, the phrase "minority group" includes male students who are black, Native American, Mexican American or Puerto Rican. They comprise more than ten

*underrep. minority*

**TABLE 1: All-Male Fraternity Pledge Rates**

Class	MINORITY MEN*			ASIAN-AMERICAN MEN			OTHER Males		
	Total Number	Number Pledged	%	Total Number	Number Pledged	%	Total Number	Number Pledged	%
1980	78	6	8%	55	9	16%	696		
1981	--Not Available--			82	12	15%	--Not Available--		
1982	--Not Available--			107	17	16%	--Not Available--		
1983	74	8	11%	112	14	13%	638	307	48%
1984	83	8	10%	102	10	10%	567	309	54%
1985	73	12	16%	119	16	13%	578	306	54%
1986	79	18	23%	87	14	16%	447	303	68%
1987	87	25	29%	104	19	18%	452	263	58%
1988	143	40	28%				403		

\*Minority students include blacks, Native Americans, Mexican-Americans and Puerto-Ricans

*not sure if this is only all-male frats.*

These figures suggest that unless the all-male fraternities can continue to increase their apparent attractiveness to minority and Asian-American students or can pledge an even larger majority of the remaining male students at MIT, the continuation of the present system is doubtful. Although they have made some progress

percent of MIT's undergraduate student population and join independent living groups at rates reported in Table 1.

<sup>4</sup>Asian-American men represent about ten percent of MIT's undergraduate student population and join independent living groups at rates reported in Table 1.

<sup>5</sup>T. Collins, "Residence Evaluation Report", 15.953, December, 1987



toward broadening their membership, it is not clear that all-male fraternities will be able to equally attract men from all parts of the campus community. Thus we conclude that they almost certainly will undergo major changes in size and form during the coming decade. We next examine other means by which the number of undergraduates residing in independent living groups might be maintained by simply changing their current pledging practices.

## V. SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

The difficulties facing the independent living groups, in general, and the all-male fraternities in particular, largely result from the changing demographics of the undergraduate population. One solution would be to increase the number of women who reside in all-male fraternities. This could result either from the all-male fraternities becoming co-educational or from some of them being replaced by sororities. The ramifications of these two approaches are discussed in this section. Our conclusion is that both of the approaches are of some value, but they will not substantially lessen the problems faced by all-male fraternities.

### Co-ed Fraternities

An obvious solution is to encourage the majority of all-male fraternities to invite women as well as men to live in their houses. Since 1974, women have been encouraged to live in some all-male fraternities and a few have chosen to do so. This trend will continue in the future. In our judgement the Institute should facilitate such transitions in any all-male fraternities that desire to make it but we doubt that it will occur voluntarily on a large scale and are even more doubtful that it will be successful if forced by the Institute.

The desire to survive in the face of the changing composition of our student body may cause a number of all-male fraternities to admit women to their houses. However, in almost all instances such an action will cause the fraternity to lose its national affiliation and become a local organization. Several all-male MIT fraternities have made the transition to a local co-ed living group successfully so there is proof that it can be done; however it may not appeal to all, or even many, groups. Moreover, in some instances, alumni groups will oppose this break with tradition and use their ownership of the house to resist it. Finally, it is difficult for students to look beyond the four years that define a lifetime at MIT to the possibility that their independent living group might not survive after they leave. Thus they may feel little need to make such major changes in their houses.

Of course, the Institute can influence the actions of the all-male fraternities a great deal through the policies it adopts. As an extreme example, if the Institute decreed that only co-ed independent living groups could be part of the residence system and

hence house freshman, many more all-male fraternities might be inclined to go co-ed. There are also a variety of more positive and subtle pressures that the Institute can use to facilitate the emergence of co-educational living in the all-male fraternities. These include a natural migration of men toward a co-educational living environment, favored treatment of co-ed independent living groups by the Institute and, perhaps, parental pressures on men reflecting a belief that co-ed independent living groups are less apt to match the "Animal House" stereotype than are all-male fraternities .

A mandated conversion to co-ed independent living groups could be accompanied by more serious difficulties than we had originally foreseen. We have been struck by the experience of some other schools (Amherst and Bowdoin) who, having required their fraternities to become co-ed, discovered that the fraternities were either unwilling or unable to modify their practices so as to make the houses hospitable for women. In some instances, this resulted in women refusing to live in the houses, in others it resulted in their being harassed. The difficulty was so acute and so basic that fraternities were eventually eliminated at Amherst and severely constrained at Bowdoin. Also after a very thorough and thoughtful deliberation, Colby decided that it could not successfully cause its fraternities to become co-educational and decided instead to eliminate them<sup>6</sup>. Of course, those schools differ from MIT and MIT's all-male fraternities might well provide excellent co-educational living environments. However, the approach is not the panacea that it might first appear to be.

Two other factors may limit the willingness of women to reside in all-male fraternities that become co-educational. One is that many of the all-male fraternities are located in neighborhoods at a distance from the campus. In some instances women might not feel secure living in those neighborhoods or in traversing the route that connects them to the campus. Another factor is that many parents may not be willing to let their daughters live in co-ed independent living groups, particularly since many of them have reservations about their daughters living in co-ed Institute houses. Obviously the Institute can take steps to alleviate some of these concerns, but they may well limit the degree to which a conversion

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<sup>6</sup>The lack of alumni involvement in the fraternity operations was also a factor in the decision.

of all-male fraternities to co-ed independent living groups can avoid the difficult times that lie ahead for the all-male fraternities<sup>7</sup>.

### Complement All-male independent living groups with Sororities

Another strategy would be to anticipate the demise of a number of all-male fraternities and to facilitate and hasten their replacement with sororities. If successful this approach has certain virtues. It would provide women with more diversity in their choice of living quarters (for example, single sex or co-ed Institute house or independent living group) and it would help to reduce the disproportionate number of women who either do not get to live in the Institute house they prefer, or in single sex housing, or who are "crowded". It would also respond to the expressed desire of several sororities currently in existence at MIT to obtain residences.

The three avenues by which this objective might be reached are discussed below. All of them should be followed to some degree but we do not believe that they should be the primary means of accommodating the demographic changes in our student body.

The first approach is to rely upon interested sororities to accumulate the resources needed to acquire residential facilities, as they are now trying to do. The difficulty with this approach is that there is no certainty that they will succeed and if they do not less time will be available for the Institute to deal with the overall problem.

At the other extreme the Institute could provide residences for the sororities. Since the expense would be roughly comparable to that of providing additional space in the form of Institute houses, a choice between the two alternatives would have to be based upon a rather detailed comparison of their merits. As noted in Section I and discussed in Section VII, we feel it is imperative that the Institute create more undergraduate residential facilities. However, we do not here attempt to decide the best use of that space.

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<sup>7</sup>Some useful steps would be the establishment of security patrols and the provision of transportation to and from the campus.

A final means of replacing all-male fraternities with sororities might be to orchestrate a rather delicate dance in which sororities are able cheaply to purchase the houses of all-male fraternities that have failed. Since the houses are owned by the fraternities, or related Alumni Corporations, the Institute cannot force such a sale. However, in many cases the owning body would have neither the desire nor the ability to profit from the sale of a house; hence it might be inclined to support the cause of sororities. The ability to preserve the fraternity's Boarding House License would be an important part of any such conversion. We have been advised by the Institute's attorneys that such a license is identified with the property rather than the owner and would be transferred with a sale unless the granting agency specifically took steps to revoke it.

It is almost certain that the financial bargain represented by such a transfer of ownership would be attractive to sororities-particularly if the house in question was in a neighborhood they found acceptable. However, the same neighborhood issues that might limit a woman's interest in joining a particular all-male fraternity that had become co-ed may also limit the interest of a sorority in acquiring that fraternity's house.

In conclusion, we do not believe that the residential space now provided by all-male fraternities could be preserved easily either by their voluntary conversion into co-educational living groups or into sororities. However such conversions can help alleviate the overall problem and, in fact, improve the overall quality of the residence system. We recommend that the Institute stand ready to support and facilitate conversions but believe that such support will not preserve the 1,200 residential spaces now provided by the all-male fraternities. Based upon the experiences of other schools, we reject the seemingly obvious solution of simply mandating co-educational independent living groups .

## **VI. IMPACT UPON THE RESIDENCE SYSTEM**

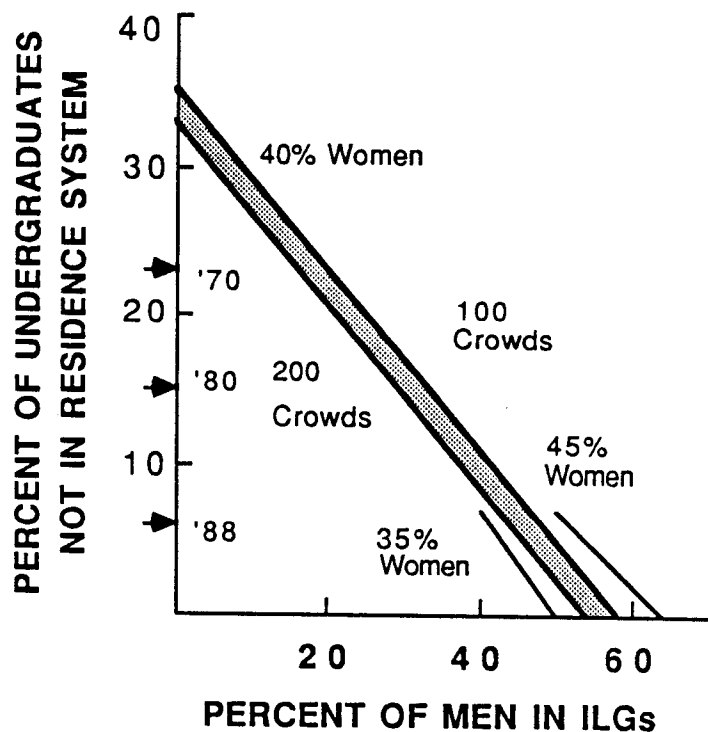
The specific effects that the changing composition of our student body will have upon the overall residence system are difficult to predict. However, the possibilities are clear. They are:

- 1) a loss of quality of life in the Institute houses if the number of students that must be housed in them increases,
- 2) a possible need to house students in off-campus apartments,
- 3) an inability to provide housing for students with a loss of the Institute's position as a residence school and,
- 4) a possible division of the residence system into two segregated components-with women and non-Anglo men living in the Institute houses and non-minority men living in all-male fraternities.

The interplay between these possibilities and the future evolution of the independent living groups is the subject of this section.

The Institute houses have been filled beyond their "capacity" since 1970. That capacity, which is nominally 2,630, is somewhat artificial in that the Institute houses are currently functioning adequately with 2797 students living in them. That is, they are "crowded". The number of crowds has fluctuated between 100 and 200 for the past 10 years. However, it is difficult to accommodate more than 180 crowds without a marked deterioration in the student's living environment and it is essentially impossible to accommodate more than 190. Thus the Institute houses will not be able to provide replacement space if the number of students residing in independent living groups drops appreciably.

The figure to the right provides some appreciation for the impact a falling independent living group membership would have upon the fraction of the undergraduates who could not be housed in the present residence system. It shows the percentage of students who could not be housed in the residence system as a function of the percentage of the undergraduate men who reside in independent living groups.



Curves are shown for 100 and 200 "crowds" when 40 percent of the undergraduates are women, for 200 "crowds" when 35 percent of the undergraduates are women and for 100 "crowds" when 45 percent of the undergraduates are women. To put the vertical scale in context, the present percentage of students who are not in the residence system has been indicated by an arrow as have been the percentages for 1980 and 1970<sup>8</sup>. The figure is based upon a total undergraduate population of 4,250 with a nominal capacity of 2,630 for the Institute houses and 1,400 for the independent living groups of which 1,200 are in all-male fraternities. It has been assumed that 15 percent of the 200 students living in co-ed independent living groups are women.

The figure indicates that the Institute's present residence system will be unable to continue housing the fraction of the undergraduates that it now does if less than roughly 50 percent of the men reside in independent living groups. Moreover, if independent living groups maintain their present level of

<sup>8</sup>Students not living in the residence system are often referred to as being "off campus" in Institute records. By that definition students living in Back Bay fraternities are not "off-campus"

membership by increasing the fraction of Anglo-men who are members, the undergraduate body would become divided into distinct groups. We do not believe that such a segregated residence system is, or should be, acceptable to the Institute.

One might argue that the independent living groups now serve a group of students who would not want to live in the Institute houses under any circumstances. If that were true, the primary issue would be the suitability of having a larger fraction of the students living outside of the residence system. However, in the long run, a reduction in independent living group membership probably will be nearly matched by an increased demand for space in the Institute houses. We base this conclusion on two observations.

First, the demand for space in the Institute houses has exceeded their capacity for the past 17 years even though the nominal capacity of those houses has increased almost 40 percent during that time. This demand reflects an increase in the number of students who live in the residence system. Second, adequate and inexpensive private housing in Cambridge and Boston is in short supply. Thus it will be difficult for students to find suitable housing outside of the residence system even if they wish to do so.

Of course the Institute could decide to deal with a shrinking independent living group membership by not providing housing for all its undergraduates. This might only require the exclusion of, say, "Greater Boston Area" freshmen and transfer students, as was once the policy, or it might require the exclusion of a larger fraction of our students from the system. A return to such policies would be complicated by the aforementioned lack of adequate and inexpensive student housing in Cambridge and Boston. Indeed, the uncertainty of housing might become important in a student's decision to attend MIT- as it seems to have become for graduate students. We believe those difficulties are lesser details compared to the importance of the Institute's continuing to be a school where students can learn from each other in a shared living environment.

In conclusion, relatively small changes in the size of the present independent living group system will make it impossible for the Institute's residence system to accommodate as many undergraduates as it now does. Given the paucity of appropriate private accommodations in the vicinity of the campus, it is doubtful that many students would volunteer to leave the residence system.



Thus if the membership of the present all-male fraternities drops, other means of keeping the fraternity residences full will have to be found or new spaces will have to be created to replace those that are lost.

## VII CONSTRUCTION OF NEW FACILITIES

The decision facing the Institute is clear. On the one hand, it can take no major action, trusting that some combination of the changes described in Section V will make it possible for the independent living groups to continue housing 1,400 undergraduates, primarily in all-male fraternities. On the other hand, it can take steps to create new residence space to replace that which may be lost and to relieve what we believe will be increased crowding pressure.

If the first path is taken and the trust turns out to be justified the Institute will have avoided a major capital investment. However, if the trust turns out to be misplaced the Institute's residence system will be sorely damaged. We base this conclusion upon the facts that: 1) it recently has taken the Institute approximately eight to ten years to plan, fund and construct Institute houses and 2) the membership of the independent living groups could drop substantially, or assume a demographic profile that is not acceptable in a five year period.

If the second path is followed there will be much less uncertainty concerning the future of the residence system-at the cost of a major capital investment. To provide some measure of that investment we note that the current new construction cost, including land-use cost, has been estimated to be on the order of \$50,000 per bed.

Almost as important as the issue of money is the issue of land upon which such a facility might be built. The possibilities are rather limited-so much so that some might conclude construction is impossible. However, the issue is really one of priorities among competing interests. We believe that the Institute risks grave harm to its standing as a great educational institution if its students do not have a living environment in which they can interact with each other and that the environment is in jeopardy. To us the priorities are clear. As to specific locations, we yield to the planners who are guided by the priorities the Institute administration establishes<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> To provide a proof that construction is physically possible, we point to the land on the West campus between Vassar St and the railroad tracks.

The capacity that the facility should have also requires further detailed analysis that we will not attempt here. From our perspective the capacity should be on the order of 200 to 700 students. If the capacity were 200, it would be possible to absorb a 14 percent contraction in the size of the independent living groups without having to decrease the fraction of students in the residence system below the present 94 percent. Alternatively, it would be possible to eliminate crowding in the Institute houses and accommodate a small contraction of the independent living groups.

An additional capacity of 200 may not be adequate to offset the contraction that could occur in the present independent living groups. Indeed, it may be more prudent for the Institute to develop plans for a facility with a capacity of 700. That decision can be deferred for a time. What is most important to realize is that a substantial increase in the capacity of Institute-owned housing is needed.

Whether the new space should be used as an Institute house, as space for sororities, or as some combination thereof is not now clear. Fortunately, that decision can be deferred by structuring the space so that it can be adapted to a variety of residential uses. This could be done by constructing several smaller facilities or by appropriately dividing space in a larger structure. The original plans for the fraternity collaborative on Memorial Drive and the design of MacGregor house are examples of the latter approach. The fundamental requirement is that the Institute have the ability to change the use of the space if that becomes necessary.

Unlike the decision not to build, the decision to build can be made in steps and the construction itself can be completed in increments. The first step, which should not be long delayed, is whether the Institute is willing to base the viability of the residence system for the next decade upon the continued ability of the independent living groups to house 1,400 undergraduates. We believe that it would be a mistake to do so. The alternative is to begin now to identify and accumulate the funds that will be necessary to build new residence facilities.

If time shows that the independent living groups are able to continue housing 1,400 of the undergraduates in a reasonably representative way, the monies that have been accumulated can be put to good use in renovating the older portions of the residence

system. Alternatively, the new housing facilities could be completed for use by graduate students. On the other hand, if the independent living groups experience a major contraction the Institute will have reduced the time required to create residential space by the time required for fund raising. Since any major contraction of the independent living groups probably will occur over at least a five year period, the risk to the Institute's residence system will have been reduced substantially.

## VIII. EPILOGUE

The committee believes the housing problems facing the Institute in the coming years are very serious. By the year 2,000, MIT could easily find itself with a racially and sexually segregated campus, unable to house a significant portion of its undergraduate population. The Institute has not, as yet, taken any action to alleviate present or future pressures on the residence system and as a result, has assumed an unacceptable level of risk. Given the large amounts of time that would be required to affect major changes in, or additions to, the present housing system, and given the possibility that housing shortages could occur before those changes are completed, the Institute has left itself very little time before it will be forced to act.

The committee feels that MIT should begin the planning and construction of new residential facilities for at least 200 students as soon as possible. In addition, the Institute should be prepared to augment these facilities if the need arises in the years to come. While we have not strong feelings for the type or usage of these facilities, we are convinced that the need for them already exists and will continue to grow throughout the coming decade.

## APPENDIX A



OFFICE OF THE DEAN  
FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

December 4, 1987

TO: Professor Robert Kennedy, Committee Chair  
Professor John Van Maanen  
Dr. Mary Rowe  
Mr. Stephen Stuntz, AIFC Chair  
Mr. Paul Parfomak, IFC President  
Dean James Tewhey, Staff to the Committee  
Mr. Anthony Canchola-Flores, Staff to the Committee

Thank you very much for agreeing to serve as members of a committee to review the Institute's Independent Living Group (ILG) System. As you are aware, a primary reason for this review is serious concern about the long-term effects of changing demographics on ILG's. As indicated in the enclosed charge to the Committee, there are other issues of concern as well, including repeated complaints over the years from neighbors. In your deliberations, you will no doubt identify additional issues that need to be addressed.

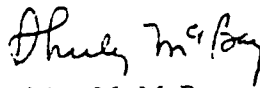
I am not aware of any comprehensive review of the Independent Living Group system in the recent past and so it will probably be necessary for the Staff to the Committee to explore the archival records and ODSA office files to obtain historical background information for the Committee.

Professor Kennedy and I have discussed both the charge and a timetable for the Committee's work. We thought that the Committee might begin to function in earnest in January, 1988 and have January, 1989 as a target date for completing its work. As a specific outcome, I am asking for a report from the Committee that (1) addresses the issues identified in the charge as well as others the Committee may identify, and (2) makes specific recommendations for action by the Institute, national alumni organizations,

or others, as appropriate. My hope is that at least the Chair would join me in making a report to the Academic Council, shortly after the Committee releases its report to me.

I deeply appreciate your willingness to assume this additional responsibility. Please let me know if there is anything that I can do to assist the Committee.

Sincerely yours,



Shirley M. McBay  
Dean for Student Affairs

SMM.mn  
Enclosure

cc: President Paul Gray  
Provost John Deutch  
Associate Provost Jay Keyser  
Dean Margaret MacVicar

## CHARGE TO THE REVIEW COMMITTEE OF THE MIT INDEPENDENT LIVING GROUP SYSTEM

The Independent Living Group (ILG) System at MIT is an important component of the Institute's residential system. Not only do they provide interested students with an alternative living environment, they also provide space to house a significant fraction of our undergraduate population. However, the future vitality of the system is being negatively affected by at least two forces.

First, the increasing number of women students, accompanied by a decreasing number of men and an increasing number of men who prefer coed living, may make it difficult for the present ILG system to find enough students to maintain its present level of membership. A substantial drop in that membership would have serious consequences for both the ILG system and the Institute's residential system.

Second, many independent living groups, especially fraternities, find themselves increasingly less welcome in their neighborhoods as neighborhood associations become more active in protecting the rights and investments of other residents. Each year there is concern that this situation may lead to the closing of a number of fraternities with an attendant loss of housing space. The impact upon the fraternities and the Institute of such a development would again be quite serious.

In view of these forces, as well as others, this is a judicious time for the Institute to:

- 1) assess the role the Independent Living Group system now plays at MIT;
- 2) estimate the way that role probably will evolve in the long run if MIT takes no action to guide it; and
- 3) recommend a long range plan by which the future evolution of the Independent Living Group system should be guided to best serve MIT's undergraduates.

The charge is intended to be a double edged one. On the one hand the question is: what can the Institute do to help maintain and improve the health of the ILG component of the residential system; on the other hand it is: what role should the Independent Living Group system, especially fraternities, play at the Institute. In the latter regard it is appropriate to examine the arguments that have led some comparable schools to conclude that fraternities should not be an integral part of their residential systems. To be useful, the answers to both questions must be accompanied by a recommended course of action for achieving any needed transitions.



### Background Information

Assuming an average freshman class size of 1000, the Institute expects that each year approximately 380 freshmen will reside in ILG's. This fall, for the first time in recent memory, there was a serious shortfall (approximately 10%) in the number of students choosing to live in Independent Living Groups. It is believed that this shortfall is, in part, attributable to a steady increase in the number of women students at MIT. The 1987 freshman class of 1002 is approximately 35% female. The Admissions Office has set a goal of 40% female for freshman classes in the near future.

There are no definitive statistics readily available on the number of complaints registered with the Institute by neighbors, neighborhood associations, or others prior to the 1985-86 academic year. The number of complaints for 1985-86 and for 1986-87 were respectively 67 and 63. Thus far this year, a total of 27 complaints have been received.

### Some Additional Questions of Interest

Other questions you might address are:

- 1) When should rush occur?
- 2) What are the potential costs/risks of a delayed rush?
- 3) What are the implications for the traditional concept of fraternities and for alumni support, if additional fraternities decide to go coed?
- 4) How feasible is a relocation of some or all of these groups to Cambridge?
- 5) What are the implications for on-campus housing if the ILG's continue to miss the 380 target each year?