Student Leaders Collaborate on UA Restructuring

A new UA Committee on Restructuring has been formed; its considerations include meeting with faculty and administrators to gather feedback, engaging directly with students to ask about what they see as the role of their student government, coming up with alternative proposals for the restructuring of student government, soliciting proposals from outside sources, communicating with students about competing proposals, and deciding how to select and implement a final proposal. Committee membership includes the incoming UA President and delegates selected by the Senate, DormCon, IFC, and Panhel. Professor Tom Kochan, the Chair of the Faculty, has agreed to facilitate the process. The committee started meeting this week and will continue its work next fall.

This is not the first time the UA has considered changing its structure. This year, conversations about restructuring began at the start of the spring semester. Two proposals were formally brought to Senate on March 28. The Bill to Unify the Undergraduate Student Voice at MIT, authored by UA President Vrajesh Modi, proposed a new council to replace Senate that would consist of dorm presidents and representatives from IFC, Panhel, LGC, and off-campus. The Bill to Coordinate the Action of the Undergraduate Governments, authored by Senate Speaker Jonté (Continued on page 3)

Dozens Attend “Community Conversation” with Amster

On Wednesday, East Campus hosted a Community Conversations event with Richard L. Amster, Jr. Mr. Amster, who told students he would prefer they call him “Dick,” is the head of Campus Planning, Engineering, and Construction in the Department of Facilities. He chatted with students over dinner about construction projects on campus, the problem of deferred maintenance, how he got into the construction industry, what renovations in EC would look like, and the bureaucracy involved in any construction project, among other topics. Students enjoyed getting to know Dick in a casual setting and learning more about the logistics of construction projects and the state of construction at MIT. They also managed to get advice on some of their own construction endeavors! Students appreciated Dick’s sense of humor, ability to answer all their questions and listen to their concerns, and down-to-earth approach to the construction problems MIT is currently facing. East Campus hopes to continue its relationship with Dick and is glad the UA was able to fund this event with him.

Betsy Riley, East Campus Senator
Professor Yue Visits Senate to Discuss MIT-Online

On April 25th, Professor Dick Yue, the Philip J. Solondz Professor of Engineering and chair of the MIT-Online Faculty Study Group, visited the Senate to speak about the group’s endeavors and gather feedback from students. The committee was charged by the Provost to “explore the feasibility and possible approaches for MIT to extend its educational leadership, excellence and impact, domestically and worldwide, in a rapidly evolving global environment.”

The committee will deliver a report to the Provost by May 31st, indicating the ideas they feel are most promising, and we may see a small pilot program or two as early as Fall, 2011. Students at the meeting voiced a strong desire to differentiate any online offerings from the residential education we all value so highly by using a separate brand. They also wanted to make sure no faculty attention was diverted away from students on campus by new online initiatives. Protecting the value of the MIT experience and degree was the theme of the discussion, and the feedback was well-received.

Daniel Hawkins, Chair of Housing

“Feedback from residents ... will be incredibly valuable throughout this process.”

Kitchen Renovations on the Horizon

In an effort to bring dormitory kitchens up to acceptable standards of use, MIT plans on renovating a different dorm’s kitchens every summer until they have all been improved. The order of the renovations has not been established. Dean Humphreys, Sr. Associate Dean of Residential Life and Dining, has been talking to residents of exclusively cook-for-yourself dorms about what they want in their renovated kitchens. He has released a set of assumptions about what will appear in all renovated dorm kitchens soon, and dining chairs will be contacting residents for feedback. Since each dorm’s kitchens are so different, Humphreys will work with each dorm to customize the kitchen plans to best meet that dorm’s needs. The first renovations will occur next summer. Feedback from residents will be incredibly valuable throughout this process, so keep an eye out for e-mails from your dorm’s dining chair soon if you live in a cook-for-yourself community.

Betsy Riley, Chair of Dining

Sustainability Update

Over the semester, the Sustainability Committee has been working to make the campus more environmentally friendly. In March, we ran the Recyclemania Dorm Competition as part of a sub-competition of the national Recyclemania challenge, which brought together over 630 colleges across the nation in a joint effort to reduce waste and increase recycling. Congratulations to Burton-Conner for winning the prize: $500 toward a dorm sustainability project sponsored by MIT EHS.

The committee has also been working on getting a Reverse-Vending Machine installed in the Student Center. This machine accepts beverage containers and gives the user 5¢ per bottle/can recycled. The company we are working with is a local start-up called Green-Bean Recycle. They plan to have the machine up in the student center over the summer for beta testing; the fully functional machine will be officially launched in the fall. Stay tuned for updates!

Our main end-of-semester project is publishing the 2011 Guide to Energy, Sustainability, and Environment. This guide will be distributed during Orientation to provide students with an overview of the various ways to get involved with sustainability on campus.

Alix de Monts, Chair of Sustainability
UA Happy with Engagement on Walker Memorial

The Walker Memorial Assessment Team has now been meeting for approximately one month. We have been gathering information from students through a survey we sent out to the groups in Walker, meetings with the team, and emails to walker-input@mit.edu. We have been taking this input and cataloging the impact re-purposing Walker would have on students and the community. The team is also examining alternate locations around campus that student groups could be relocated to. In addition, we are investigating possible designs of shared use for Walker. As stated in the team’s charge, the team is writing a report to inform the senior leaders of the Institute. There should be an official update on the state of the Walker project by the end of this year.

Will Steadman, Chair of Space Planning

Student-Alumni Dinners Pilot Provides Useful Feedback

The Student-Alumni Dinners program was a new initiative of the UA this year. The project launched in March and has been quite successful. We’ve scheduled 51 dinners for the term thus far. We had budgeted for 50 dinners, and the Alumni Association graciously donated an additional $1000. I have received positive feedback from alumni who are excited about this new opportunity to engage with students. Some students form a single group, while others have gone in multiple groups from the same organization: student groups, dorms, etc. We have been collecting written feedback from all of the participants and will use it to explore ideas for the program’s improvement as it continues next year.

Ashley Nash, Chair of Alumni Relations

UA Restructuring

(Continued from page 1)

Craighead proposed to keep the current structure and add an Undergraduate Coordinating Committee composed of representatives from all undergraduate student government groups. The idea was that the administration would bring issues to this committee first, which would then decide which of the government groups should tackle it.

Senate decided to vote down this second bill and to task the first proposed structure to an Ad Hoc Committee on Restructuring. All undergads were informed of this new committee and were encouraged to attend its open meetings. The committee was chaired by Fraternities Senator Tim Jenks and included the presidents of DormCon, IFC, Panhel, and LGC, as well as representatives chosen by the Senate. The committee looked at the proposal, considered its strengths and weaknesses, and considered outside ideas that could be incorporated to make the proposal better. The committee made some changes after considering a fair scope of changes, and gave the proposal back to Senate.

On April 3, DormCon informally voted on the proposed structure. A 75% vote was needed to amend the DormCon constitution, but the proposal only received 2013 out of 2919 votes (69%). On April 4, Senate created a new Ad Hoc Committee on the Implementation of Potential Restructuring (CIPR). This committee was charged with communicating the proposed transition and implementation plan to undergraduate students, administrators, and other stakeholders, and reviewing and amending it through these discussions. DormCon took a formal vote on the proposal on April 14. Again, it did not pass: the final vote was 57% in favor of the plan.

“The Alumni Association graciously donated an additional $1000.”

“A 75% vote was needed to amend the DormCon constitution, but the proposal only received 2013 out of 2919 votes (69%).”
Growth in Student-Faculty Dinners Continues

The student faculty dinners program run by the UA Student Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP) was a tremendous success yet again. 183 dinners were registered with 673 students participating in the program. The dinners were evenly spread out through different departments with Course 6 professors participating in the maximum number of dinners (17) followed by Course 21F (14), Course 18 (also 14), and Course 8 (11). The program this year registered a substantial increase from last semester, when 574 students registered for 129 dinners. We have received appreciative e-mails from both students and faculty, and thank the program participants for their support. We will be running the program again in the fall, and hope to see more students asking their professors out to a fully funded dinner.

Radhika Malik, Chair of SCEP

Senate Elects New Speaker and Vice Speaker

Elections for the UA Senate Speaker and Vice Speaker occurred on May 2. Will Steadman ’12, Space Planning Chair and former Senior House Senator, and Karan Takhar ’13, Next House Senator were the two contenders. In their Q&A sessions with Senate, both were committed to addressing some of the problems they saw with Senate, including various inefficiencies and the lack of engagement of Senators. Will’s plan was to create a policy committee where bills are presented and voted on, and to have Senate play a more administrative role because of its size’s hindrance for discussion. Karan’s main solution was a team-based, round-table approach; he also had ideas involving social media to better communicate with constituents on issues Senate is working on. Ultimately, Will was confirmed as Speaker, with Karan as Vice Speaker, for the 43rd UA Senate. Both seem very dedicated to their positions and are soliciting input from Senators on what changes they would like to see to Senate next year.