

Residence Exploration Parties Proposal

June 2003

MIT Dormitory Council

1 Introduction

Two welcoming parties intended to introduce freshmen to the MIT community while giving them the opportunity to explore their first year residence options will be held during the Residence Exploration (REX) period of Orientation. The two REX parties are scheduled to be held on Sunday, August 24th and Monday, August 25th. The first party, the West Side REX Party, will be hosted jointly by Baker House, Burton-Connor, MacGregor, McCormick Hall, New House, Next House and Simmons Hall on the west side of the MIT campus. The second party, the East Side REX Party, will be hosted jointly by Bexley Hall, East Campus, Senior House and Random Hall on the east side of campus. The Dormitory Council (DormCon) is responsible for overseeing the coordination and successful implementation of both REX parties but each party will be planned and run by dormitory residents of the host residence halls.

DormCon hopes that the two REX parties will achieve several goals in introducing the freshmen to the residential communities and the MIT community as a whole. Firstly, the two REX parties will give the freshmen a fun and informal opportunity to meet fellow freshmen and build friendships with upperclassmen. Secondly, the parties will introduce the freshmen to all of the living options available to them by allowing them time to discuss the housing system with upperclassmen. DormCon hopes that the two parties will encourage freshman to seriously consider all of the dormitories for their unique cultures and communities. Because the two REX parties are the sole events during the evenings of Sunday and Monday, freshmen will be encouraged to explore all residence halls equally and will be afforded some time to seriously look at each residence hall before making their final decision on where to live for their first year at MIT. DormCon hopes that the parties, combined with the Residence Midway and residence hall tours, will encourage freshman to actively participate in the Fall Housing Lottery/Orientation Adjustment Lottery.

Furthermore, the REX parties will help foster a sense of unity between all the residential groups on campus because the residence halls will be working together to host the events. DormCon also plans to extend invitations to the MIT faculty and administration and hopes that they will also attend the events. Thus, DormCon hopes that these large-scale events will allow freshmen and upperclassmen alike an opportunity to build meaningful relationships with the faculty and administration.

In order to successfully host two large REX parties during the Residence Exploration period in Orientation 2003, DormCon submits to the MIT administration this proposal outlining the specific events and activities to be held during the parties, facilities to be used, and funds necessary to feed and entertain approximately 700 freshmen, 350 upperclassmen dormitory residents, and 200 fraternity, sorority and independent living group members expected to attend each REX party.

2 Inclusion of the Fraternities, Sororities and Independent Living Groups

The Dormitory Council has been working closely with the leaders of the fraternities, sororities and independent living groups (FSILGs) to coordinate their participation in the campus-wide East and West REX parties. DormCon feels that it is crucial to include FSILGs in the REX parties so that the freshmen have an opportunity to meet the upperclassmen in these unique organizations. Inclusion of FSILGs in these parties will help ensure that their rush period begins on a positive and strong note later in the fall. Furthermore, FSILG participation fosters a positive sense of unity across campus. Including FSILGs in the REX parties demonstrates to the freshmen that there are a diverse number of unique living communities at MIT, while also showing them that each residence community is a part of the larger MIT community.

However, while it is important to include the FSILGs, DormCon believes that this involvement should be limited in order to keep the main focus of the parties on the residence halls. As such, DormCon and the leaders of the Inter-Fraternity Council (IFC), Panhellenic Association (Panhel), and the Living Group Council (LGC) have been working closely to establish rules and regulations that will govern the type and level of involvement that the FSILGs will have in the REX parties.

While discussions are on-going, it has currently been decided that a maximum of two hundred FSILG members will be invited to attend the REX parties representing FSILGs. As such, five members per FSILG group will be allowed to wear their letters or group name on their person. In addition to regulating the number of FSILG members present at the REX parties, DormCon, IFC, Panhel and the LGC have also agreed to observe the following two rules:

- No speaking negatively of any living group.
- No escorting freshmen back to an individual residence (dorm or FSILG) that is not hosting the party. For example, upperclassman may encourage freshmen to tour Baker House during the West Side Party, but not during the East Side Party. FSILG members cannot take freshmen away from either REX party to bring them back to their houses.

The Judicial Committees (JudComms) of DormCon, IFC, Panhel and the LGC will work together to ensure that all groups observe the rules during the parties. JudComm will also be responsible for appropriately addressing any infractions of the rules. DormCon hopes that these rules and regulations will ensure that the REX parties are fun and positive experiences for everyone involved.

3 West Side Party

For the West Side REX Party, the REX chairs of Baker, Burton-Connor, MacGregor, McCormick, New House, Next House, and Simmons Hall have planned events and activities to showcase their unique cultures and communities. The West Side REX Party is scheduled to be held on Sunday, August 24th after the Residence Midway (3 to 5 PM) and residence hall tours (4:30 to 6:30 PM). The West Side REX Party will officially begin at 6:30 PM. The party events will be located at the Zesiger Sports and Fitness Center (Z-Center), Johnson and the area immediately outside the Z-Center on the pavement facing the Astroturf. In the event of rain, food and dancing will occur inside the Z-Center, Rockwell and/or Johnson.

The main attraction at the West Side REX Party will be a pool party in the Z-Center. For those who do not wish to swim or observe the activities in the pool area, there will be dancing and

field games on the paved and grassy area outside of the Z-Center. Some specific events planned for the West Side REX Party include:

- Dancing—Student DJs will be spinning and encouraging people to dance.
- Pool Volleyball—A volleyball net will be strung across the teaching pool so that pool volleyball may be played.
- Boat Races—East Campus will collaborate with the west side residence halls to coordinate a boat racing event. East Campus residents will build and race plastic model boats in the pool with any freshman or party attendant who would like to help. A prize may be awarded to the winning boat racing team.
- Relay Races—Relay races will be arranged and prizes awarded to the winning relay team. Freshman will be invited to join teams during the Residence Midway and at the party before the races begin.
- Marco Polo—A game of Marco Polo will be organized and played in the large pool.
- Pool Floats—An assortment of pool floats and toys will be provided for those who wish to lounge on floats or play with pool toys.
- Frisbee—An ultimate Frisbee game will be organized. Frisbees will also be available for those who just wish to leisurely throw a disk around.
- Soccer—A soccer ball and small cones will be provided to set up an impromptu soccer field for those who wish to play a game of soccer.
- Kickball—A kickball will be provided incase people would like to play a kickball game on Kresge Oval.
- Volleyball—A volleyball net will be set up so that people can play volley ball on land if they wish.

Volunteers and REX early returns will be stationed at each event to encourage freshman to join in the activities and to ensure that a “critical mass” of people is already participating in the events. Furthermore, the way freshman will enter the party will be designed such that freshman are encouraged to investigate all the activities occurring in the party’s space. The variety of events occurring during the West Side REX Party will ensure that everyone enjoys their time at the event.

Most of the West Side REX Party events will occur after dinner is served to the party attendants. Vinny Testa’s Italian Restaurant will prepare penne, bread and salad for the expected number of guests. Student volunteers from the host residence halls will pick up the food from the restaurant in Boston to bring it back to MIT. Volunteers will also serve the food to the freshmen. Light snacks will be provided later in the evening for dessert.

4 East Side Party

For the East Side REX Party, the REX chairs of East Campus, Senior House, Random Hall and Bexley have planned events and activities in the spirit of their communities. The events and activities to be held during the East Side REX Party on Monday, August 25th will be located in the East Campus Courtyard and the Dot. Walker Memorial, East Campus’s Talbot Lounge and the Senior House basement have been reserved as rain locations.

The general format of the East Side REX Party will be that of dance party with other unique events occurring simultaneously. The REX chairs of the East Side dorms all agreed that an open and varied format would ensure that everyone attending the party would find something in

which they would like to participate while maximizing the interaction between freshmen and upperclassman.

Events and activities will begin at 8 PM and run until approximately 12 AM at which time the party areas will be cleaned up. Throughout the evening, tours of each East Side dorm will be running so that the freshmen have the opportunity to see the dorms personally if they wish. Tours of all the eleven residence halls will also be running from 5:30 PM to 8 PM right before the East Side REX Party. Food will also be prepared and served by East Side dormitory residents throughout the duration of the party.

The largest challenge facing the students in executing plans for the East Side REX Party will be preparing and serving enough food to feed the anticipated number of party attendants. In order to keep the cost of dinner to a minimum, the East Side residence halls are currently planning to prepare and serve a barbecue dinner. Volunteers and REX early returns will begin cooking food well in advance of the beginning of the party to ensure that there is a significant amount of prepared hamburgers, hotdogs, and veggie burgers available when the freshmen arrive at 8 PM. The food and equipment necessary for barbecuing for one-thousand two-hundred and fifty people is outlined in detail in Table 2 (see attached).

The food will be cooked in the East Campus Courtyard and served on tables lined up along the west side of the West Parallel of East Campus facing the Dot. Volunteers and REX early returns will be serving the food to the freshmen in the same fashion as was used during the CryoFAC¹ during CPW, to ensure good hygiene around the food.

At the present time, a catering option with local grills, Mexican and Chinese restaurants are being explored in detail to compare costs and labor expense with the current plan. If a local restaurant can offer DormCon a comparable price on prepared food to what has been outlined in Table 2, the East Side residence halls will likely hire a restaurant to prepare the food to reduce student labor. Exact details regarding this option are forthcoming in the next couple of weeks.

In addition to dinner, ice-cream made with liquid nitrogen will be served for dessert. Dessert will be prepared in EC's Talbot Lounge and served on the Dot to facilitate safety and serving concerns. The ice-cream event will be organized in much the same way that CryoFAC was organized. Measures will be taken to ensure cleanliness and safety during the event.

Many events and activities will be occurring while the food is continuously being served all evening. The final schedule of events has not been finalized yet, but the following activities will be organized during the party:

- Dancing—DJs from the East Side dormitories will be spinning on the Dot where there will be an area for people to dance on the lawn under party lights.
- Dunk Your Professors—Professors and administrators will be invited to participate in a dunking booth event held in the East Campus Courtyard. The possibility of combining this event with a charity collection is being investigated.
- Bouncy Ball Drop—Senior House will organize a traditional bouncy ball drop in the Senior House Courtyard. Two thousand bouncy balls will be dropped from the roof of the Haus with strobes flashing to illuminate the balls. Spectators will be located in a safe viewing position on the ground in the courtyard.
- *Alice in Wonderland* Croquet—A croquet course will be set up in the style of the *Alice in Wonderland* game. Plastic flamingos and hedgehogs will be used to set up the game on the Dot.
- Hair Dying/Temporary Tattooing/Tie Dying—Upperclassmen will help any interested persons with coloring their hair etc. on the steps of Walker Memorial or on the Dot.

¹ CryoFAC was the event organized and executed by East Campus for the Admission Office's CPW Party. East Campus residents prepared enough liquid nitrogen made ice-cream to feed approximately eight hundred prefrish.

- Movies/Video Games—Movies and video games will be projected onto a large screen and/or onto the side of Building 66. People will be free to watch and/or play whenever they wish.
- Pool Tournament—Anyone interested in playing pool can do so in East Campus's Talbot Lounge. A tournament with dormitories and FSILGs participation will be arranged and freshman will be invited to join teams.
- Foosball Tournament—Similar to the pool tournament, but with the foosball tables in Talbot Lounge.
- Card Games—Cards will be available in Talbot Lounge for those who wish to play a game of cards.
- Volley Ball—The East Campus volley ball court will be available for use during the party if people wish to play.
- Jell-O Wrestling—A small kiddie pool will be filled with Jell-O and wrestling contests held. Several dormitories and/or FSILGs may wish to challenge each other ahead of time. The event will be fully clothed and will not discriminate between the sexes able to participate.
- Miscellaneous Activities—Large (40 inch diameter) Biggens inflatable balls will be bouncing around the EC Courtyard for people to play with. People may also wish to help or watch East Campus residents complete any construction projects they may finishing up.

Due to the number of events at the East Side REX party, we expect that participation in some events, such as the pool and foosball tournaments, will wax and wane over the evening. Volunteers and REX early returns will be in charge of running the events and encouraging freshman to participate in the activities and engage in discussions.

5 Budget

In order to fund the events and activities detailed in Sections 3 and 4, DormCon is seeking funding from offices and groups around the Institute, including the Office of the Dean of Student Life, the Undergraduate Association, the Inter-Fraternity Council, the Office of the Dean for Undergraduate Education, and the Residential Life Office. While the individual dormitories and DormCon can contribute to the funding of these events, these groups have never before fed and entertained such a large number of people at a party. As a result DormCon is requesting some monetary help from other sources to ensure that the events are successful. DormCon hopes to be able to fully fund these parties in future years, but due to the late addition of these parties to the Orientation 2003 schedule DormCon was not able to properly budget for these large events this year.

Table 1 details the anticipated budget necessary to host the West Side REX party. MacGregor will be providing the sound equipment for the dance floor and all the west side dorms will provide whatever field games sports equipment they may have. To fully fund the West Side REX Party, approximately \$8,300.00 will be needed to feed and entertain the number of anticipated party guests.

East Campus, Senior House, Random Hall and Bexley are requesting grants to fully or partially fund the items listed in Table 2 (see attached). Similar to the West Side REX Party budget, approximately \$8,700.00 will necessary to fund the East Side REX Party. In addition to the items requested in Table 2, Table 3 (see attached) outlines the equipment and other items that East Campus, Senior House, Random Hall and Bexley will be contributing toward the party effort.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, DormCon believes that the West and East Side REX Parties scheduled to be held on Sunday, August 24th and Monday, August 25th will be wonderful opportunities to welcome and introduce the Class of 2007 to MIT and the MIT housing system. The wide variety of fun activities scheduled to occur at the parties will ensure that every participant enjoys his or her experience and begins the school year with a positive impression of the Institute. Because this is the first year that these parties will be a part of Orientation, it is necessary that the freshmen are welcomed with support from the administration and the Orientation staff. It is our sincere hope that over the next few years these parties will become an integral part of MIT REX Orientation and will evolve over the years as the housing and orientation systems continue to do so as well. By providing the freshmen with an opportunity to attend an integrated, cooperative party organized by a significant portion of the upperclassmen, we hope that they will not only become more informed about their housing options at MIT but that they will feel truly welcomed by all upperclassmen, regardless of their residence. This is our turn, as upperclassmen, peers, and fellow students, to welcome the newest class to MIT and befriend them in their initial days on our campus.