



Graduate Student Council

of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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GSC Office

Summary of meeting held June 30, 2020 with the Office of the Chancellor

Parties present: GSC Officers, HCA Chairs, Chancellor Barnhart, Vice Chancellor Waitz, Vice President and Dean for Student Life Nelson, [Melissa Stopa](#) (Office of Campus Planning), David Friedrich (Housing and Residential Services), [Jag Patel](#) (Senior Director, Special Projects, Office of the Chancellor), Peter Cummings (DSL), and Kim Haberlin (Office of the Chancellor)

The meeting began with a report from Office of Campus Planning on the nascent plan for the new graduate residence on Vassar St (covering West Lot and displacing the MIT police building; MIT Police will be relocated to an alternate on-campus location). Unlike previous grad residences, this one will be designed and built in collaboration with, and operated by, the company American Campus Communities (ACC). ACC, which has built grad residences previously at Cornell, Princeton and the UC system, among many others, supplies the capital for the project. The residence will contain a minimum of 550 new beds including a mix of housing types for graduate students who are singles, couples, and students with children. The building will have common spaces but a different model for community activities. Rents are being set by the bed in multi-occupant units for single students, and by the unit for single occupant and family units. If MIT is successful with this new model, it may enable a more rapid addition of new graduate housing in the future (since capital constraints will be reduced).

Melissa Stopa outlined a survey designed by ACC to be rolled out shortly, assessing grad student demographics, where we live now, and what we'd be willing to pay for different units. The group received input from the GSC. The survey may help fill in gaps left by the 2017 Housing Needs Survey. There will also be focus groups for graduate students run by ACC so students can give input on the mix of unit types and prices for those unit types. Student input from the focus groups and survey will be considered alongside the 2017 Survey data as well as a comprehensive market study. The upcoming focus groups and survey are intended to confirm student interests and guide any adjustments that may be needed to ACC's unit mix and rental rates.

As GSC HCA Chairs, Jonathan and Lucio argued that the graduate students need to be at the design table, having more input than a focus group. Administrators noted that graduate students will not be able to give input on the architectural design elements of the project due to project schedule and budget constraints but noted that student input in other areas such as the type of units and rates for those units is welcome. The HCA chairs proposed to reopen the Graduate Housing Working Group (HWG) to operate continuously, membership from the GSC, OVC, DSL, Campus Planning, and relevant staff and faculty partners, i.e. Assoc. Provost Krystyn Van Vliet – bringing all the stakeholders to the table as a sounding board for housing decisions. Meeting attendees agreed to reconvene the group and to focus its efforts on the most pressing issues at hand: opening Site 4 and transitioning the Eastgate community; giving input via the focus groups and survey on the mix of unit types and prices for those unit types in the new grad residence on Vassar; and connecting cost of living analysis to the stipend rate setting analysis and graduate student financial support.