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Graduate Student Council

of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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

Parties present: GSC Officers, HCA Chairs, HCA-Advocacy Chairs, Chancellor Barnhart, Vice Chancellor Waitz, Vice President and Dean for Student Life Nelson, Jon Alvarez and [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), Kim Haberin (Senior Advisor, Office of the Chancellor), Lauren Pouchak (Director of Special Projects, OVC)

The GSC Officers first raised the issue of improving supports for grad student veterans at MIT. We spoke with several veterans recently who mentioned that we don't have a dedicated veteran support office the way some other universities do. As examples of what such a dedicated body could help with, both US and foreign veterans could use support finding trauma-informed mental health professionals and adjusting to civilian life, and US veterans could also use help navigating the GI Bill and setting up Yellow Ribbon program benefits. Suzy Nelson suggested that we consider setting up a coalition to advance this issue the way we did with ARM. Ian Waitz suggested that until we know the size of the population of students this will serve, we set up a designated contact person in an existing office. GSC may agree as long as that office is visible and accessible to grad students. All parties agreed to think over possible next steps before the next meeting. Further, GSC Officers will follow up with John Dozier about integration into DEI training and ways to counteract the stigma.

The GSC brought up several logistical difficulties our constituents are experiencing during the Research and campus-occupancy ramp-up, including access to quiet places to take qualifying exams. We are actively transitioning to having building access issues handled by department heads, and should see a list of contact point people from IST soon. Library issues will be brought up in the GSC meeting with Maria Zuber.

On the issue of TAing, GSC Officers advocated for Institute guidance about what TAs should do if they are being obligated to do more in-person than they are comfortable with – although theoretically this issue is under department head jurisdiction, culturally we don't all know how/when to reach out to department heads.

The Housing Working Group will include GSC, DSL, an HRS team coordinated by David Friedrich and the Office of Campus Planning. The group will consult on a case-by-case basis with the Associate Provost. We agreed that though it is focused on implementation, grad student leaders will be able to provide input on the focus groups and survey related to the west campus graduate housing development, analyze the results and help ensure that our portfolio of housing options meets the needs of all graduate students. We discussed tight timelines for this project. All parties recognize the importance of making it both marketable, and affordable and attractive to grad students. If the solution requires higher rents for the new residence, then HWG members will help ensure that stipends are increased commensurately. We planned follow-up meetings between GSC, DSL and



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Office of Campus Planning to discuss changes to the ACC survey so that it answers its intended questions in line with MIT grad students' lived experience, as well as interpret the data, giving voice to the numbers.

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