From the Makers of Orientation 2002...

Residence selection report gets it half right.

By Scott Schneider

Killian Kickoff has packed up andbugged. With it have gone the steak and lobster dinners, the cacophony of fraternal activities, and (except for the occasional kickshaw) the shuffles hurrying freshmen to and from. Times are different—more placid, certainly, but are we better off? The Residence Selection Implementation Team (RSIT) answers this question, for the most part, affirmatively. It frames the question objectively, based on its goals and perspective. Its analysis is thorough and it draws a number of important conclusions, but it does not compare how the new residence selection system to the old one, and seems wholly ignorant of how dorm culture functions. Although RSIT had many student members, it did not assess how Orientation 2002 affected dormitories’ cultures or the extent to which freshmen benefit from these cultures. This is why it misses the main student critique of Orientation—too little time for dorm rush—and makes the infamous claim that freshmen were “somewhat satisfied.”

RSIT’s mission

RSIT was created to follow up on then-Chancellor Lawrence Bacow’s The Design of the New Residence System, issued in December 1999. It was charged with six goals:

• Providing meaningful opportunities for freshmen to participate actively in the process of selecting their residence.
• Respecting the diversity of cultures that exist throughout the residence system with special attention to the status of the theme houses.
• Striking a balance between accommodating the desire of some students who wish to know where they will live immediately upon arrival at MIT, and the desire of others who wish to be able to visit dormitories personally before expressing final preferences.
• Ensuring that no student experiences rejection as their initiation to life at MIT.
• Respecting the existing house governance systems that match students to rooms, and in the process, help to create functioning communities.
• Enhancing the ability of parents and students to communicate during their first few days at MIT.

Over the last two years, RSIT created a detailed plan for residence selection and worked to implement that aspect of Orientation 2002. This year, it evaluated the success of the new residence selection process based on questions in the summer and fall housing lotteries and a freshman survey conducted last November.1 The RSIT Report analyzed all of this data and drew conclusions about the residence selection process.

Continued on page 8

Winning the War of Words in Iraq

by K. Anderson-Veal

Slam bam goodbye Saddam? Almost. As the Coalition forces prepare to mop up Operation Iraqi Freedom, no one has been entirely able to pronounce the whole Operation a cake-walk. The number of US military dead now stands at 118 with 495 US wounded. Coalition soldiers continue to be picked off daily suppressing ‘pockets of resistance.’ The Iraqi resistors have been out-gunned, out-maneuvered and out-numbered, but apparently not out-stilled. And that’s what this war, any war, essentially comes down to—a contest of wills. To the extent that it is, icy is to attack cities. "To capture the enemy’s entire army is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the supreme excellence. Thus, what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy’s strategy. Next best is to disrupt his alliances by diplomacy. The next best is to attack his army. And the worst policy is to attack cities."

Americans wage a War of Words on Several Fronts

The Americans started waging words early and often. Since last summer, logic, fear, desire and other ‘non-violent force’ have been aggressively engaged to influence the Iraqi people. In typical fashion, the Americans prefer relying on the ‘truth’ to persuade Iraqis not to fight, to surrender, to cooperate. According to Ed Rose, a former specialist in Psychological Operations for the 1st SOCOM and Civil Affairs Psychological Operations command of the US Army Airborne Division, the truth, it turns out is a better weapon than lies. The notion is that only a real friend will tell you the truth (especially when it hurts). The Coalition forces are the true friend and liberator of the Iraqi people. That’s our message and we’re sticking to it. All of our propaganda has been driven by this underlying perspective. This theme has been repeated over and over in emails, radio broadcasts and leaflets since President Bush started talking about invading Iraq. The Iraqis became victims of carpet spamming (or what the military refers to as an ‘information warfare campaign’) some six months before the first land assault. Senior military sources told CNN what a hacker for WiredNews pounced on the whitehouse.gov and high-ranking Iraqi officials were deluged with love letters from the United States government. Brian McWilliams of WiredNews cracked the email of the Iraqi leader and discovered that Saddam’s...
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From the Editor

Lo! For I have birthed unto the MIT campus a new voice amongst the bedlam, and a new vector amongst the maddening free-for-all. With so many forums already discussing the same issues, you might ask why I even bothered. I started Prometheus because although responsibility and freedom are the essential philosophy of MIT, few explicitly realize it. We see concrete versions of this truth all the time, in arguments about rush, war protests, TEAL, etc., but as a rule, MIT students are too busy to see the big picture. Prometheus will fill that gap. We will be a consistent voice for celebrating the unparalleled freedom that MIT students enjoy and the culture of responsibility that it fosters.

Prometheus will also consistently deliver well-reasoned and well-written articles. We will print anything that meets this standard, regardless of whether it relates to student life (e.g. Kamele's essay on love). The quality of our articles is more important to us than any sort of party line.

Thirdly, Prometheus will attempt to narrow the gulf between students and administrators. MIT administrators cannot be blamed for trying new teaching styles and new kinds of learning at the university level. Although Prometheus is born for students, we hope that administrators will take note for a glimpse at student perspective. A few administrators have suggested to me that rehashing old issues will only preserve bad blood and that students and administrators should instead look forward; however, we must learn from the mistakes that undermined communication in the first place. Even more importantly, most students know what their representatives are up to only with the occasional glance at the Tech. Orientation and housing may be old issues to student activists, but not to the average student. Prometheus seeks to engage these students, informing them and equipping them to improve student life when they feel the call.

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Dean VanderViver
Master of Space, Time, and Undergraduate Research

We sat down with Professor J. Kim Vandiver PhD '75 for a one-hour interview, and wound up with a two-hour conversation that hit all the major topics of student life. Vandiver was emphatic in his belief in hands-on learning, candid with his opinions on housing, and generally an engaging and friendly. We left with the impression that to the extent that students communicate their concerns to him, he does his best to understand them and work with them in his own voice.

Prometheus: To start off, would you mind describing your official position and what you do?

Kim Vandiver: Okay. I'm the Dean for Undergraduate Research, the Director of the Edgerton Center, the Director of UROP, and the Director of Academic Services. Academic Services includes the ARC—the Academic Resource Center—and a couple other smaller operations like freshman advising. We're the freshman department, so to speak, and we organize and run Orientation.

I'm supporting hands-on, student-driven education at MIT, and I started the Edgerton Center as a place where students could pursue independent projects and clubs, like the solar car team, the ORCA autonomous underwater vehicle team, the Mars gravity team, and things of that kind. And then I was asked if I would become the faculty director of UROP, which to me is a perfect combination, because it means I have both the physical facilities and the financial resources to help students out.

PM: Do you view educational hands-on experimentation as a supplement to traditional lecture-based education, or as an essential part of the MIT education?

KV: My wife is a 6th grade science teacher, and we talk a lot about education. As you probably know, faculty at universities rarely get sent to ed school. We're not taught how to teach. As a consequence we don't get to take subjects like methods courses in education or adolescent psychology or things of that kind. You have to learn techniques as you go, so some people never do.

Students have different styles of learning. Some might do just great in a chalk-talk/lecture environment, and others might do much better by what you have seen me do before, a lot of things are being done much better.

KV: During the last 5 or 10 years there's been much more attention placed on improving learning at the university level.

Subject evaluation, historically, has had a lot of questions about the person's board style, whether the quizzes are appropriate, and that kind of thing. These are all irrelevant questions, but there haven't historically been a lot of questions asking if you learned well.

In the last few years at MIT there's been much more interest in the quality of learning... Steve Hall and others in Aero are using much more interactive teaching tools. Professor Belcher in TEAL has made a huge investment in trying new teaching styles and new kinds of assessment to see if students are actually learning. We think too much about improving teaching, while we really ought to measure how well people are learning.

PM: There's been a lot of controversy over TEAL. Some people love it and some people hate it. What do you think of it?

KV: Let's go back 5 years and go to this time of the term and let me ask you what was the attendance in 8.02?

PM: I'm gonna guess 40%.

KV: Yes, it was on that order. If you actually held it up against what we were doing before, a lot of things are being done much better.

PM: Do you understand it, there's a substantial groupwork requirement to the course, for which attendance is mandatory. So although it's increasing attendance, there's some question of whether or not students would still go if the groupwork wasn't mandatory?

KV: Right. And if the students are unhappy, because they're being made to go, then they'll be critical of the course. I do know that before spring break, they organized focus groups where outside leaders heard all the students' criticisms. The instructions studied the feedback and, after spring break, told students "Okay, we heard you. We're gonna make changes," and they're trying to dynamically improve the subject as they go along.

This is the first term 8.027 has been offered to about 600 students, with six instructors—very different from their development mode. I think TEAL is doing very well, considering how ambitious it is.

PM: Do you know what motivated the choice to bring all the incoming students under TEAL after the one semester trial?

KV: I just don't know.

PM: ESG is a good example of a successful program with an emphasis on hands-on learning.

KV: Oh yes, she's been wonderful. ESG began in '68. I was director for 5 years, and ESG was one of the best learning experiences that I've had. Many things that I do today—especially with students, things like Edgerton Center—were informed by ESG. The most important thing I learned in ESG is that when a couple of students come to you, really sincerely wanting to teach something, figure out a way to let them do it. I had never seen it done before becoming ESG director. But the investment really pays off.

We did that in a spectacular way in two or three instances. A couple of students came to me around 1986 and said they wanted to teach chemistry in ESG. By the time I left, 5.11 was being taught there, brown bag chemistry take-home experiments had been invented, and were about to be adopted by the entire curriculum. The idea was eventually shelved because of liability issues. The Chemistry department had to back out of sending kids home with paper bags experiments with kitchen chemicals in them.

PM: Let's talk a little about faculty-student interaction as a whole. What do you think the key issues are?

KV: I was a member of what was called the the Task Force on Student Life and Learning which finished its work in 1998. One of the principal thrusts of that report is that there

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Your comments go here

Dear Prometheus,

I enjoyed reading the first issue of your publication. I am glad to see that someone is finally covering these issues with an eye to the underlying ideas. I am glad to see that someone is finally covering these issues with an eye to the underlying ideas.

I started Prometheus because although responsibility and freedom are the essential philosophy of MIT, few explicitly realize it. We see concrete versions of this truth all the time, in arguments about rush, war protests, TEAL, etc., but as a rule, MIT students are too busy to see the big picture. Prometheus will fill that gap. We will be a consistent voice for celebrating the unparalleled freedom that MIT students enjoy and the culture of responsibility that it fosters.

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Sincerely,

E-mail prometheus-feedback@mit.edu

©APING PRETENTIOUS IDEOLOGUES WHO COULDN'T REMEMBER THEIR WAY OUT OF A BOX
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Winning the War on Words

Continued from page 1

inboxes contained over a thousand mails, all sent from June to August last year by the US Pentagons. McWilliams wrote that none of these mails, all in Arabic with the subtitle line “Important Information,” had been read. In the first series of emails, Iraqis had been urged to turn away from Saddam and cooperate with the UN inspectors. Later there were warnings about the impending bombings, and of the personal fate of anyone using biological weapons.

The idea in these appeals, Rousses asserts, had been to produce any one of a number of desired effects. “To reduce morale and combat efficiency within the enemy’s ranks and promote mass disillusionment within and deflections from enemy combat units. They also help cooperation within resistance forces behind enemy lines.

Besides the ones above, other leaflets project dire warnings such as. “Attacking Coalition aircraft invites your destruction.” Another massive sports a photo of a crying baby. Saddam in his palace juxtaposed with a photo of a veiled Iraqi woman in black veil and holding a crying baby. The leaflet exhorts soldiers: “Saddam lives in splendor as your family struggles to survive. Who needs you more: your family or the regime? Return to your home and family.”

The Americans have left nothing to chance in the way of getting across their message. Among the over 20 million leaflets dropped were those telling Iraqis to tune into a number of frequency broadcasts. “One of them was the way of getting across their message. Among the over 20 million leaflets dropped were those telling Iraqis to tune into a number of frequency broadcasts. “One of them was the Coalition’s Information Aircraft Invites your Destruction.” Another massive leaflet showed a picture of a veiled Iraqi woman in black veil and holding a crying baby. The leaflet exhorts soldiers: “Saddam lives in splendor as your family struggles to survive. Who needs you more: your family or the regime? Return to your home and family.”

According to Ed Rousses, anything sent the enemy in the way of words or pictures falls into one of three Defense Department categories: tactical, strategic or consolidation. The first stage from with tactical and strategic methods by dropping leaflets first stating what with the US jamming Iraqi broadcasting with its own propaganda and aerial bombing was the same: stay away from the Coalition forces as Big Brother.

Iraqi Propaganda: Breaking Minds and Losing Hearts

With the Coalition so communicative these days, the question remains: What have the Iraqis been doing in response to all the American psysops? No doubt when it came to propaganda of the more traditional type, that is, lies, deception and mind control, Saddam was in the major leagues right up there with Stalin, his confessed hero. As for Saddam’s message to the Iraqi people, his words made it quite clear that the Americans had arrived to do three things: occupy the land, plunder the oil and take the women.

As recently as April 5th Saddam hadn’t changed his tactics. At the very moment CNN was broadcasting live pictures of American soldiers cleaning piles of sand off the runways at Saddam Airport (renamed Baghdad International Airport), in a radio address the Ba’ath Party Information Minister, Mohammed Saeed al-Sabadheh (nicknamed Baghdad Bob because of his penchant for telling whoppers) informed the people of Iraq and any media that would listen, “We have retaken the airport! There are no Americans there! The film they broadcast to you is a lie! I will take you there and show you.” (He never did.)

Ed Rousses, who’s been sitting on top of US psyops, says that he received reports “that the Iraqis did prepare leaflets. But I have not actually seen any.” He has read reports that British and American soldiers trading souvenir items have found both Iraqi and US leaflets so abundant that he quotes his source “must have been pressed into service as toilet paper.”

“Considering that at no time the Iraqis had air superiority to disseminate leaflets, I suspect that a cache of these leaflets may have been found by Coalition troops. During the Gulf War, Coalition troops found a large cache of Iraqi leaflets that were never disseminated in a bunker complex,” Rousses explains.

As for Iraqi radio propaganda, after six days, the battle had been just to stay on the air with the US jamming Iraqi broadcasts with its own propaganda and aerial bombing raids of transmitting stations. The Gulf War, however, was a different story for the Iraqis. Able to launch flights with relatively little bombing occurring in the country, Iraqi leaflets littered Kuwaiti oil fields and Iraqi messages filled Kuwaiti airwaves. “It started broadcasting through its National Radio and other relays in early August 1990 shortly after the arrival of the 82nd Airborne Division,” Rousses explains. “The broadcast schedules were fairly consistent starting daily between 6:00 and other relays in early August 1990 shortly after the arrival of the 82nd Airborne Division,” Rousses explains. “The broadcast schedules were fairly consistent starting daily between 6:00 and 11:30 to 3:00 PM. TAKE-OUT AND CATERING AVAILABLE $6.95 SAT & SUN 14 COURSE LUNCH BUFFET FREE PARKING FREE DELIVERY IN CAMBRIDGE 781 MAIN STREET CAMBRIDGE, MA (617) 354-0405

Final in a series that shows what happened when an Iraqi tank kept fighting.
More than ten years later, propaganda in Operation Iraqi Freedom has not been without its ironic twists on either side. CNN filed a report on April 3rd as the British were trying to win hearts and minds after almost two weeks battling for Basra. The Brits were dropping leaflets showing a stalwart Coalition soldier looking, what could be described as, well, dependable. The Iraqis who had taken to burning leaflets might have chuckled at that. The comedy was consistent through the dioeg. Baghdad Bob, or Moham med Saeed al-Sahhaf, the now famous war propaganda minister, dubbed “Baghdad Betty” by his contemporaries, was a middle-aged Arab woman known for her jaundiced view of reality, al-Sahhaf has ended up with his own webspoof, www.welovetheiraqinforma tionminister.com. Al-Sahhaf’s propaganda leaflets collected and supplied by Ed Rouse render either.

ing forsaken Islam for the moral corruption of their oil wealth, but it appears no Arabs sur-

bly wouldn’t have been enough to get American soldiers to lay down their arms. The Iraqis

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mat which typically included a mix of popular top 40 hits, oldies and some blues by contemporary artists.” Roue recalls that “the choice of music was excellent and

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out Iraqi propaganda media. Leaflets dis-

tributed by the Iraqis during the Gulf War had some American soldiers laughing instead of surrendering. The following

leaflet reads: “Liberty Stadium cries for help because of your aggression and killing civilians. innocent kids, mothers and olds.”

The following leaflet tries to create doubt in the minds of Coalition soldiers (an American, Brit and Arab) about the advisability of dying for an oil-rich Kuwait sheik whose sole mission in life is to lounge around his personal harem, a women under each arm.

PM and 7:00 PM and continuing to as late as 3:00 AM or 5:00 AM. The radio shows were
taped and about two hours long.

The radio personalities were a youthful woman dubbed “Baghdad Betty” and a male voice quickly nicknamed “Iraqi Jack”. Baghdad Betty’s broadcasts were more frequent than those of Iraqi Jack. The shows were reported to have been broadcast from downtown Baghdad, with a format which typically included a mix of popular top 40 hits, oldies and some blues by contemporary artists.” Roue recalls that “the choice of music was excellent and was better than what was locally available initially for Coalition forces encamped along points both west and south of Kuwait.”

Unfortunately for Iraq, although the music selections attracted the target audience to listen, the content was not only considered humorous but absurd. The Iraqi propaganda machine forgot the number one lesson in preparing a psyop campaign, “know and understand your target audience thoroughly.” Iraq’s propaganda developers had a jaundiced opinion of life in the United States and it clearly came across in their perception of American culture.”

APRIL 2003

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E-mail prometheus-feedback@mit.edu about our meetings every Sunday night or visit http://web/prometheus/www/
Whoit dorm culture?
Perhaps the greatest flaw in the RSIT Report is its lack of understanding of dorm and FSILG cultures. Patterns of interaction and hall traditions define these cultures, but they are so diverse that the only common element is that all cultures have them. Their strength comes from students’ freedom of association, like seeking like without external incentives or rules. If dorm culture is to thrive, residence selection must let freshmen experience dorm cultures substantially before they have to choose a dorm.

This perspective is absent from the RSIT Report. They ask how satisfied freshmen are with their dorms, and whether they felt dorm rush was informative, without pondering the fact that freshmen just finished experiencing residence selection and thus have an informed view of it. They thereby missed an opportunity to inquire whether freshmen actually experienced residence selection as uppersiders think they should have. This was the main reason why ILTP attacked RSIT’s statistic that freshmen were “somewhat satisfied” with their residence selection questions relative to their expectations. Freshmen never saw the three-day celebration of MIT culture that they had been anticipating and hoped to see.

So we ask: why do freshmen say they do not share uppersider’s visceral dislike for the trunche of rush, and its implications?
It is important to ask whether freshmen are satisfied, but it is also important to assess whether freshmen actually experienced residence selection as uppersiders think they should have. The main reason why ILTP attacked RSIT’s statistic that freshmen were “somewhat satisfied” with their residence selection questions relative to their expectations. Freshmen never saw the three-day celebration of MIT culture that they had been anticipating and hoped to see.

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By Tev Dilacher

The Freshman On Campus decision has stirred more controversy and raised more ire than the Big Dig. Okay, probably not, but the new policy has left many unhappy, many irri-
tated, and many just plain confused.

There has been a slew of opinion articles, all saying essentially the same thing. Firstly, MIT is trying to phase out the frats and simultaneously gain more control over its stu-
dents. Secondly, this process creates inconvenience and harm to the freshmen and living groups that continue to exist.

But we can pose more interesting questions. To highlight these, let us take an imagi-
nary journey through a very hypothetical Rush 2002.

Rush begins. Alumni and alumnus help with rush as before, but their role has changed. What was once three days of reunion with old classmates and bonding with the undergrads becomes two weeks of various individuals stopping by, then disappearing again.

Many frosh, lulled into comfortable apathy by the security of a dorm room on campus, either do not rush seriously, or do not rush at all. Of those that do, some find a house and community that they enjoy, receive bids, and pledge. In years past they would cancel campus housing and move into their own homes. But this year is different.

This year house and fellow struggle over the meaning of the dictum, “freshmen may not live at FSILG.” Exactly what constitutes “living”? Must a freshman leave, at whatever hour, for the sole purpose of sleeping in his or her dorm bed? This seems to be the only ade-
sible interpretation, as waking hours are for socialization, and MIT certainly is not trying to mandate with whom frosh may associate.

Houses face two unpleasant alternatives. One option is to follow the rules scrupulously, even to the point of telling their freshmen not to visit the house quite so often. Another option allows socialization more akin to the type previously enjoyed, but which might as well be a result of the efficient future of the FSILG.

Some freshmen stay on campus, spending little time at the chosen FSILG. This inhibits the formation of traditional interpersonal and group bonds. Some freshmen want an invitation and all but move in. They then live with the constant fear that the wrong person will say the wrong thing and trouble will be brought down on their new homes. Even when no rule is broken, impressions can be wrong.

Realistically, students will react to most situations in a manner that makes them happy, the administration be damned. FSILG will nonetheless radically change relationships between FSILGs and their pledges.

This problem is a variety of questions, such as: what effects will this new system have on FSILG? Will the rules be followed up by an overzealous group leader and thus scaring off potential pledges? Or do people simply adapt and change?

What is the magic formula?

PM: There are two hurdles to introducing it. One: Faculty believe that it’s not possible to work at their work. Two: How should it be paid for? For it can be made successful overnight.

We started by having [MIT] subsidize UROPs. We did so. About 1.5 million each year comes from the UROP office.

The key is to get faculty to believe that it’s a good thing. That takes time, but if you try to take UROP away from researchers, they will fight back. You have to make the whole system work.

KV: These are the intrinsic dynamics of the FSILGs. So being affected to a point where members must go against their better judgment in order to maintain the special relationships that the organizations were created to foster in the first place?

KV: Promethean feedback has been from the students themselves. People say, “This is how we want to live.”

PM: It’s not that we don’t want MIT to become the Massachusetts Institute of EECS.

KV: There are a bunch of degree programs at the Institute that are good programs. We’re very close to having sufficient money to support every decent proposal to come in.

PM: There are hurdles in introducing it. One: Faculty believe that it’s not possible to work there. Two: How should it be paid for? It can’t be made successful overnight.

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PM: The Tech recently published a statement about the possibility of removing the Ocean Engineering department. What can you say about it?

KV: The motivating issues are primarily ones over size and efficiency. In these times of financial constraints, the Director of Ocean Engineering department felt there was not enough from a budgetary point of view to warrant continuing? To put it easily, the exercise is trying to find a way of preserving what’s important about Ocean Engineering program at MIT and at the same time preserving the department in a way that’s efficient enough that it meets certain standards in the Institute.

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