

Council Meeting 3/9/16

Attendance

LGC Rep - Daniel

IFC – Robert, David, Will

Baker – Elizabeth

Maseeh - Billy

Panhel – Caitlyn, Meredith, Courtney

Random – Isaac

New House – Sarah

BC – Flora

Simmons - Yuga

McCormick – Susan

East Campus – Piper

Senior Haus – Sarah

Next – Absent

Macgregor - Absent

Medical Insurance Discussion

Matthew: It's an archaic reason, before ACA the assumption was you had some sort of medical insurance and if not it may be factored into financial aid but you could appeal to have it included if it wasn't initially – there are specifics for this for international students. If you are an MIT student right now you have to appeal since it won't initially be included – but it's currently an opt-in vs an opt out. Right now we want it to be an opt out mechanism where MIT assumes you will be paying and you have to declare you have your own insurance.

So before you we have a document prepared by John Drago who is our rep on the committee. Currently MIT rates are about average. I feel MIT has a good insurance plan for the price it includes transport to and from the hospital and everything is standardized so you can get most drugs for \$10 instead of at other schools where it is \$5 for generics but \$30 for other drugs. So we have a nice level of standardization and we also get a lot of free services that other schools do not have get with their basic rates. So even though we are paying more than, for example, Princeton, you will get more services for a reduced rate as opposed to Princeton. Any questions?

Susan – I'm wondering is this discussion going into a vote or is this just to inform us?

Matt – I'm informing you right now but we look forward to a lively debate afterwards

Isaac – To be clear, is that what they plan to increase it to or what currently exists?

Matt – All that is changing is the rate, potentially, the services will remain the same.

Matt – So the proposed rate increase is 10% so we would be paying around \$2800 per student under the new amount. For most students this should be included in their financial aid because for most students average wage is \$10 so if the increase is \$280 then that would be an additional 28 working hours which would create too much cost for most working students. Though some students will have to pay for this. We're approaching this from 3 fronts: Meeting with Stu and making sure we get a new financial aid rep. We have also highlighted this to the chancellor and MIT's treasurer – Israel Ruiz – and we are looking to see if there are alternatives in the MIT budget to see if there are new models to see how we can fund insurance. Third we are making sure to openly communicate to make sure the rate increase is actually justified despite the fact that none of us are insurance experts but we have heavily questioned the experts on the subject. Any question?

Isaac – The biggest thing about the medical system is that the wait time is really long so I'm not sure how this plays into that but even fairly urgent things take longer than they should.

Matt – So this is a separate conversation since none of the rate increase is actually going to directly improving services, the discussion around expansion of MIT medical is a separate one. As you can already see we are approaching the upper end of insurance for our peer institution so around the \$3000 per student mark its possible that we would switch to outsourcing medical services to reduce cost per student. Insurance is determined based on pool of services – but if the pool of services expands it does not necessarily mean we will automatically have increased insurance rates.

Flora – Is the discussion about increasing rate now because MIT people are using more services?

Matt – So to start the Tech is doing some research on this, but from my understanding from conversations with Lucy who does the calculations for MIT medical - so it has increased in terms of medical inflation but hasn't increased in terms of real dollars. So for the past four years they have been spending down a reserve and the reserve has been depleted. The way MIT does insurance is on a zero sum funding model and we are exploring if it makes sense for MIT but currently we have to do an immediate increase so they can reach a zero balance each year rather than a gradual increase. So its possible if we changed the model MIT could become a loss making entity but we would have to evaluate how this would effect the need to outsource services.

Matt – So that's our current strategy and trying to see if this rate rise makes sense but at the end of the day I am confident that the rate increase conversation will help get more students get this covered by financial aid and there will be a small impact on a subset of the student body who will have to pay but we want to mitigate it for students that will have to work during the semester to pay it off. Any problems or suggestions for alternatively strategys? The timeline for this is the end of april. Ok seeing none then there will be no vote.

Policy Review Committee

Matt – Ok so now we can move to the next item which is the Policy Review Committee. I served on it in the fall but currently Githui is my representative on it. So in October the committee was asked to reconvene by the Chancellor to review some new policies. Some of these policies include "requirement

that students have to comply with an administrative request” which would give an administrator the weight of a police request. Another one is an enforceable honor code, but again the faculty was against it and so were we. Another is an honesty policy which is difficult to enforce. None of these are moving forward currently.

Githui – We have another meeting in 3 weeks but so far we aren’t moving forward with anything but we’ve only gone through half the list.

Matt – From a process standpoint, if there is a policy up for discussion we have a website where undergraduates can provide feedback as well as graduate students can as well. Are any policies which you think should be included that are currently not? [Silence].

Matt – Now we can look at the help seeking protocol – currently it only applies to alcohol but we want to extend this to drugs. The data shows that MIT students are incentive driven and if we think our living group is going to get in trouble its possible we will not seek help for someone and most other universities recognize this and include drugs and alcohol but MIT is the exception. For many years we want to include drugs in the Mind and Hand Book, but each time we do we have been prevented by the committee. So even though we have a comparable problem to other universities, we have a few orders of magnitude lowers than other universities in terms of medical transport. There are staff that are opposed to this because they feel that they cannot include drugs in the Mind and Hand Book because it promotes drug culture at MIT. This has been a continuous problem and it is incredibly frustrated. The committee feels that is not even worth discussing this year because we have not made any progress in these discussions in the past. We need a Good Samaritan policy which covers drugs because it is a health issue and legitimate student concern. We also really need a statement from MIT senior executives which explains exactly what happens when you call in a medical transport. From two different offices you can hear two very different things so we need once and for all a statement on what happens what you call in a medical transport. These two things are critically important and ultimately I would like a vote on this. I would like to start by writing a public and open letter to the Chancellor explicitly writing out what we want in a Good Samaritan policy: This includes what happens from a medical and disciplinary standpoint. We also want it to cover both alcohol and drugs the same. We also want clarity from senior administrators on what the consequences of calling in a medical transport because currently we have two standards and we need someone to explicitly delineate what a medical transport entails. We should also include a timeline on this so we can discuss it at our April meeting and we will really need to do something about this because we haven’t been proactive and we have not been able to make traction. So we want to draft a letter, send it to the Chancellor, see what her response is, and then discuss it on our next meeting.

Caitlyn – I’ve been reading in the Mind and Hand Book and it’s a required to call a transport for people if they are in danger but its ridiculous that we could also get in trouble for it.

Isaac – You can also tell they are saying different things. In the alcohol section it’s a health and safety risk but for drugs it’s a health and safety risk “first and foremost”

Piper – Who usually discusses this?

Matt – It’s usually Head of COD, Dean Robinson, GSC President, UA President, staff, and a few others for the Student Policy Review Meeting.

Sarah – I know the statement on MIT drugs is also being discussed at Dormcon – specifically statement 5.3 under other selected institute policies.

Matt – So seeing no other comments. We would like to move to write a letter clarifying what the good Samaritan policy is as well as what are the results and consequences of medical transport. SI there a motion.

Isaac – So moved

Piper – Second

Vote passes unanimously. With no abstentions or objections.

Matt – Next point is the UA Election code. One point we want to talk about is the signature requirement. Right now you are required for 450 – 750 to run for UA President. For Class Council it's a few hundred signatures. I'm worried that this is too high of a bar for people to run and if we want to have more diversity then we should lower the barrier to entry. Grace disagrees on some points in that if we completely abolish the bar, then what if we elect officials that are unable to go out and reach out to 450 people then do we want them serving as UA president. We have also looked into getting digital signatures instead of physical handwritten signatures – though we aren't sure how this would affect incentive structures. I would like to discuss the signature requirement.

Yuga – I'm personally in favor of the signature requirement. I'm not sure if it raises the barrier to entry for a particular personality type.

Isaac – I don't like the signature requirement because I don't believe in the barrier to entry though I do acknowledge that if it was just a click of a button then we might get swamped with candidates.

Binky – How onerous was the effort to collect signatures.

Matt – Pretty high. One of the practical effects is that it causes you more to interact with students. The reality is you interact with 100 – 150 but you can't campaign during that time so you just walk up to people but you can't talk about your platform because you're so busy focused on your signatures. The goal is the signatures, not meeting people.

Sarah – Addressing the personality type thing, there is definitely a group of people that would not want to do this – speaking as an introvert – because introverts aren't necessarily worse leaders.

Piper – Can I suggest some proportion of the signatures be filled through the election?

Matt – Well what would be the goal of collected digital signatures?

Piper – For EC I think the proportion is 75% and there are a lot more platforms through which digital signatures can be collected. It wouldn't be dorm spam, it would be a digital working of what you do already.

Billy – Similar to that, your platform and other information could be adjacent to your information online which makes it easier to disseminate information.

Meredith – If we're outsourcing then what is the point of having it? If you're not even meeting the students then why don't we just lower the number of people required.

Isaac – We should be more clear about the objectives we’re trying to accomplish at each stage. At the first stage we want to show people care and that they are putting in the effort. Then we want people to interact with candidates. But currently the signatures are being outsourced and its taking away from student choice because typically there is only one candidate because it is so difficult to run.

Piper – If there any changes, I would just lower the number of signatures rather than changing the platform. As nice as it is to have a stance, it will likely change when you are in office.

Matt diagrams the election cycle: 1st week is signatures, 2nd week is campaign, 3rd week is election.

Sarah – Do you think 450 signatures is a reasonable amount for the candidate alone to gather?

Matt – No

Sarah – So the number should be an amount that is reasonable to do within the time period.

Matt – Right the problem is that if you haven’t had any experience before and you just hear about the election upcoming then the number of signatures would be a huge deterrent. So many candidates discover on the campaign trail that they are not actually passionate about this.

Yuga – Why do you think 450 is an unreasonable amount considering that they will be spending a considerate portion of their time which is similar to how much time they will be spending on the job.

Matt – So I’m a unique case because I knew I wanted to run 6 months prior, but most students aren’t like this. Most students get the election email and then think “do I want to do this?” Then they also have to consider their other commitments – academics, extracurricular, etc. – so the timeline to do this in 1 week is too much for people that don’t have prior experience. This also encourages people in the know to run but this does discourage opposition candidates. So there is a big underlying assumption about extending the time period to a month – but then I would argue that what is the reason for having this?

Yuga – Signatures represent two particulars, the first is that it serves as a source of advocacy for the election. If people only had to submit a picture and platform and deleted the signatures from the election, then you would have a smaller portion of the student body aware of the election – so it serves to engage the undergraduates in the election itself. It also serves in lieu of a debate which would otherwise be present to show a willingness to interact with a larger group of people. Completely aside from

Binky – I would agree with a lot of what you just said, but if its so hard to run that you only get one candidate per election cycle then its too hard to run.

Flora – It doesn’t make sense to me that the signature part and the campaign part is separate. The signature part is something you do just to be eligible to run, but it doesn’t make sense if most people learn if they want to actually do it from the campaign trail.

Meredith – I’ve never once had to sign a form and so it cant be getting around that to that many people.

Caitlyn – I agree with what Meredith said. If we need to force 450 people to sign their name one week before an election then what does this actually mean for how we do election. I’m personally not in favor of the signature requirement – passively signing a piece of paper doesn’t demonstrate commitment.

Yuga – I have had to get signatures every year for class council, but I don't think there is only ever one candidate because of signatures only. Mostly we have one candidate is because running against an incumbent is difficult. To answer Flora's point – we separate campaign and signatures but its mostly drawn in sand because we are allowed to express our platform on top of the signature form so people understand who they are signing for. While I agree that getting signature from 10% of the community wont get everyone involved, even if people don't go on to vote. Then they are made slightly more aware of what is going on in their governing bodies at MIT. It's certainly worth the hour that it takes to get people to outsource.

Olivia – Keep in mind the enforceability of this. Signatures are very nice because we can count them. There is a requirement to have a debate for the UA President in the Constitution.

Piper – I am not arguing against the importance of having signatures, I just feel the law of diminishing returns is in effect for 450 signatures

Isaac – I think that we should do 150 each for a President and VP, but I'm not as concerned. I also think it's really bad to intimidate people by making them do boring and tedious tasks that wont ultimately encourage people to run. I wouldn't be president without the low barrier to entry.

Sarah – The idea of signatures of being an advertisement or a way to raise awareness because we wouldn't do this for anything else on campus.

David Dellal – I think we've talked enough about this so we can either vote or draft a proposal

Matt – If everyones ok with that then we can vote on a proposal at the next meeting. Final thoughts?

Yuga – I think we should include other people who make more experience on this topic.

Matt – I agree please talk to your constituencies before our next meeting.

Isaac – I think the election committee should have precedence on this.

Caitlyn – There is a UA website presentation as the next item on the list.

Matt – Yes I will be sending this out and please give me your feedback.