

FSILG Ops Teams Initial Phase Report

June 2020

Introduction

This report presents a summary of the work of the FSILG Ops Teams in assessing the impacts of the COVID-19 situation on MIT's fraternities, sororities and independent living groups (FSILGs). The goal of the initial phase of the FSILG Ops Teams' work was to provide high-level guidance to MIT senior leadership on how re-opening options will impact FSILGs, keeping in mind the distinctive experience provided by the FSILGs and the uniqueness of all our organizations.

This work is the result of collaboration between the Association of Independent Living Groups (AILG), MIT's Division of Student Life (DSL), and FSILG student leadership councils. The steering group was comprised of AILG alum leaders, FSILG student leaders, and DSL staff, including the FSILG Office. The five working groups were populated by a general call for volunteers from the FSILG community. The steering group and working groups met throughout May and June 2020.

FSILG Ops Team Steering Group

Steering Co-Chairs:

Akil J. Middleton '08, ALLG Board Chair; Alum Advising Co-Chair

Peter Cummings, Executive Director for Administration, DSL

Steering Group Members:

Brad Badgley, Associate Dean and Director of FSILGs, DSL

Pamela Gannon '84, Director of FSILG Alumni Programs, DSL; IRDF Grant Advisory Board; Sustainability Chair

Andrew J. Haeffner '21, Housing Operations - Lifestyle Chair

David Hutchings '10, Housing Operations - Logistics Chair

Liz Jason, Assistant Dean of FSILGs

Kate Nelson '21, Panhellenic Association President

Topher Nelson, Associate Director & Senior Area Director of Random Hall, DSL

Judy Robinson, Senior Associate Dean of Residential Education & Executive Director of Strategic Initiatives, DSL

Nico Salinas '21, Interfraternity Council President

FSILG Ops Teams: Working Groups

Sustainability

- How do we support the long-term financial stability of the FSILGs?
- What are potential long-term impacts on the FSILG community?

Housing Operations – Logistics

- How do we maintain FSILG housing?

Housing Operations – Lifestyle

- What is the effect of partial membership on running a chapter house?
- How does a physical distancing model work within an FSILG?

Student Life

- What is the effect of partial membership in houses? On campus?
- How do different re-opening scenarios impact the student experience?

Alum Advising

- How do alums continue to provide support to students?
- How do AILG and alum programs adapt?

FSILG Ops Teams: Working Groups

| Name | Grad year | Organization | Assigned Working Group |
|------------------------------------|-----------|--|------------------------|
| Pam Gannon, Chair | 1984 | Director of FSILG Alum Programs, Alpha Phi | Sustainability |
| Eric Cigan | 1983 | AILG Treasurer, Lambda Chi Alpha | Sustainability |
| Bob Ferrara | 1967 | Theta Chi | Sustainability |
| Justen Holl | 2021 | Phi Beta Epsilon | Sustainability |
| David Lawrence | 2014 | TEP/Xi Fellowship | Sustainability |
| Mark Thompson | 1994 | Alpha Delta Phi | Sustainability |
| Jon Carlson | | Director Of Finance, DSL | Sustainability |
| | | | |
| David Hutchings, Chair | 2010 | Zeta Beta Tau | House Ops - Logistics |
| Tom Holtey | 1962 | Chi Phi | House Ops - Logistics |
| Mark Holthouse | 1976 | TEP/Xi Fellowship | House Ops - Logistics |
| Nellie King | 1986 | Alpha Phi | House Ops - Logistics |
| Tom Stohlman | 1976 | Kappa Sigma | House Ops - Logistics |
| Alessondra Springmann | SM 2011 | pika | House Ops - Logistics |
| | | | |
| Andrew J Haeffner, Chair | 2021 | Zeta Psi | House Ops - Lifestyle |
| Nathan Basinger | 2022 | Phi Beta Epsilon | House Ops - Lifestyle |
| Zach Rolfness | 2022 | Beta Theta Pi | House Ops - Lifestyle |
| Jason Ye | 2021 | Living Group Council, Epsilon Theta | House Ops - Lifestyle |
| Stephanie Zhang | 2022 | Panhellenic Association, Sigma Kappa | House Ops - Lifestyle |
| | | | |
| Brad Badgley | | FSILG Office | Student Life |
| Liz Jason | | FSILG Office | Student Life |
| Nico Salinas | 2021 | Interfraternity Council, Beta Theta Pi | Student Life |
| Kate Nelson | 2021 | Panhellenic Association, Delta Phi Epsilon | Student Life |
| | | | |
| Akil J. Middleton, Co-Chair | 2008 | AILG Board Chair, Zeta Psi | Alum Advising |
| Catherine Higgins, Co-Chair | 2006 | Alpha Chi Omega | Alum Advising |
| Natalie Burgos | 2016 | WILG | Alum Advising |
| Sameer Deshpande | 2013 | Zeta Beta Tau | Alum Advising |
| Kim Hunter | 1986 | Alpha Phi | Alum Advising |
| Emily Wood | 2005 | Pi Beta Phi | Alum Advising |

Sustainability

Financial Impacts

- Financial impacts in 2020-21 are substantial and will have long-term effects
 - Complete loss of summer 2020 income
 - Reduced fall 2020 and spring 2021 income due to planned low occupancy
- Reduction/elimination of reserves and possible bankruptcies
- Organizations may need to delay improvements to houses due to lack of funds
- Reduced 2021-2023 income from sustained low membership due to possible lower-than anticipated recruitment in 2020

Membership

- Recruitment impacts would have long-term financial and organizational consequences

Student Leadership and Culture

- Reduction of members in residence will affect student leadership roles and continuity of organizational culture

Alum Leadership and Support

- Increased time commitment required from alums could result in leadership turnover
- Alums in risk categories are unable to enter buildings to support care and maintenance resulting in increased expenses associated with facility maintenance

Sustainability

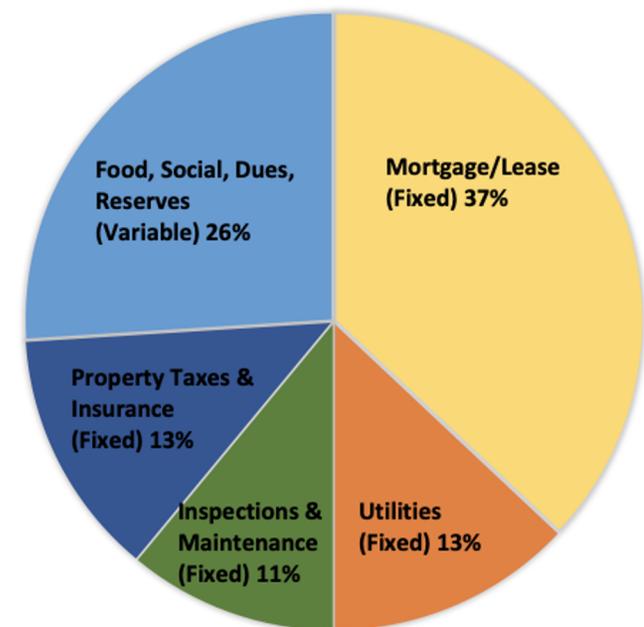
Analysis of System-wide Operating Expenses

- Fixed costs represent ~75% of expenses.
- Summer income is 25% of most house operating budgets.
- Organizations observed a marginal reduction (<20%) in utilities for empty buildings.
- Cannot defer safety inspections and building maintenance.
- Expect increased expenses for cleaning, protective equipment, and meals with new operating protocols.

→ Any scenario with reduced occupancy has severe financial impacts.

→ Loss of summer income has already constrained house budgets for 2020-21.

→ Support from MIT will be essential to preserving FSILG student housing (1000+ beds)



Breakdown of expenses for a typical FSILG

Housing Operations - Logistics

Key considerations:

- *Alum volunteer burnout*: Additional volunteer time required for maintenance, supervising move in/out, helping with contractors, etc. Harder with fewer students
- *Creating spaces to encourage distancing*: Retrofitting common spaces for bedrooms, removing seating, restricting non-resident access, etc. Easier with fewer students.
- *Additional house upkeep*: More cleaning/maintenance/training likely required for students, and likely fewer students to shoulder the load. Harder with fewer students.
- *Logistical challenges*: Supply of PPE, sanitizer, etc.; availability of professionals for maintenance (e.g., sprinklers); frequency of trash pickup; coordinating preparation for municipal inspections with distancing; supply of single-use plates/cutlery, etc. *Centralized* solution (e.g., through FCI) may help for *both* upfront supply and ongoing resupply.
- *Training and compliance*: Students will be on the front lines and will need robust training and compliance checks to ensure well-being. Will require partnership with alums, MIT, and students.

→ The viability for re-opening houses is *not* uniform under low occupancy levels, some houses may choose *not to re-open* at lower residential capacity because the densified duties may be too much for students.

Housing Operations – Logistics Details

Re-opening buildings:

- Alterations to common spaces to convert to bedrooms and/or discourage communal gatherings, e.g., removing/stacking of furniture, unidirectional hallways, assigned bathrooms, etc.
- Consider hands-free door openers
- Security protocols needed to prevent non-residents from gaining easy access
- Need protocol to track vendors and contractors; maintain a sign in-book or other system
- Consider some form of pre-opening inspection by AILG or BSF or FSILG Office (and MIT Medical?) to ensure some base level of compliance (with a fixed checklist)

Food Considerations

- Frequency and procedure to purchase and accept food deliveries
- Each chapter to consider unique ways to provide, manage communal dining
- Maintain a stock of food in the house?

Short-term building maintenance

- Need procedures for contractors entering and interacting with students

Renovations

- Chapters need guidance on in-process renovations

Housing Operations - Lifestyle

Effect of Partial Occupancy in FSILG Residences

It will be markedly more difficult for students to run their chapter houses.

Many houses will need to fill vacant house management and leadership roles.

The difficulties with this are twofold:

1. Remote transition for these roles can prove particularly difficult
2. There may not be enough members who are willing to fill the roles

In general, the role of student-led house management teams will be significantly increased by the added responsibility for maintaining cleanliness standards and physical distancing policies

These demands on an under-populated house would place extreme stress on the live-in members.

→ *Overall, it is the Working Group's view that partial occupancy would dilute and fray at the community experience in a most extreme manner.*

Housing Operations - Lifestyle

Effect of Physical Distancing Policies in FSILG Residences

The Working Group expects that student leadership teams in conjunction with GRAs would have initial success in setting community expectations for adhering to physical distancing policies, including wearing face coverings in all common spaces and banning guests (both members & non-members) from houses. We expect early success, followed by incremental decline in adhering to policies.

→ *The Working Group believes that strict physical distancing policies will be flouted more and more often. For example, it would be difficult for a leadership team to enforce a no-guest policy for a member's partner. Physical distancing violations will become incrementally normalized.*

→ *The efficacy of the GRA policing students is a concern.*

More flexible physical distancing policies also have challenges:

- Restricting the number of people in a common area at any one time and restricting a majority of member & non-member guests from the house.
- Policies of these types could be just as easily ignored by students. However, the Working Group felt that flexible policies would be viewed by students as substantially more reasonable and followable.

Finally, the Working Group readily acknowledges that the trade-off between physical distancing models involves an extremely complicated behavioral optimization.

Housing Operations - Lifestyle Takeaways

Reduced occupancy & physical distancing policies will **strain FSILG communities**

- New leaders will have to step up to manage houses
- More work for a smaller live-in membership will take focus away from just being students

Physical distancing policies and general isolation will **greatly tax students' mental health**

- The trade-off of between mental health and physical health is delicate
- Carefully consider the impact of physical distancing enforcement: socially isolated students are extremely difficult to support through stressful conditions
- **Incidents from around the country suggest serious detrimental effects** of extreme isolation and strict physical distancing policies

Student Life

General Considerations

Proposed Academic Calendar

- Rush and recruitment heavily rely upon active members meeting and interacting with first-year students.

Work week

- IFC/LGC organizations spend the week before orientation conducting "work week" to clean up their house and prepare it for the fall semester.
→ *As students return and are quarantined for the first week, some work week activities may need to be curtailed to accommodate physical distancing strictures.*

Housing

- IFC/Panhel/LGC: Many FSILG residents have already signed housing contracts for the 2020-2021 academic year.
→ *If a resident is invited back to campus, these contract issues will need to be resolved with financial buy-outs*

Dining

- With chapter houses at a reduced 50-60% capacity inside a house, physical distancing policies will need to be applied to students accessing a shared kitchen and dining space, e.g. dine in shifts.
→ *Ordering out for every meal will be costly.*
→ *Requires a student elected officer (estimate two hours each day) to manage delays or errors in food deliveries*

Student Life

General Considerations

Social Events

- FSILG social events will be prohibited until further notice from MIT Medical, DSL, Residential Life, etc.
→ *This will make social-event related policies surrounding recruitment easier.*

Transportation

- Many members rely on the MIT shuttle system and MBTA to safely travel to and from campus.
→ *With limited access to campus, considerations will need to be made for how members travel to campus.*
→ *Will they have to request SafeRide (similar to the evening OnDemand shuttle)?*

If testing is required at MIT Medical, this introduces a greater need for travel and transportation to and from campus.

Testing

- FSILG residents could conduct self-administered group testing at their own houses
→ *Pick up and delivery process of the tests from the chapters will need to be designed.*

Chapter Dues

- Uncertainty of purpose and amount of chapter dues
→ *Differentiation of dues among members that live in-chapter or on campus?*

Student Life Re-Opening Impacts

| | Two Semester or Three Semester Model | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| | IFC | Panhel | LGC |
| Impact on Recruitment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of recruitment officers • Multiple recruitment cycles • Lack of cohesive new member cohort | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequitable access • Large time commitment • Challenging to facilitate • Multiple recruitment cycles • Lack of cohesive new member cohort | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low membership • Infeasible time required for recruitment officers |
| Impacts on Chapter Operations and Programming | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapters will be divided | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapters will be divided | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community diminished |

Alum Advising

MIT and FSILG alums **share the common goals** of **ensuring student well-being, developing student leaders, and providing safe housing options during the pandemic**

The Alum Advising working group has identified **opportunities to strengthen the partnership between MIT and FSILG alum boards** to **better support students** and to improve FSILG alum board operations during the pandemic and beyond

There are **three key opportunity areas**:

1. MIT should explicitly engage with FSILG alum boards as key stakeholders in student and residential life, and formally define the role and responsibilities of FSILG alum boards

→ *Clarify the unique roles and responsibilities for FSILG alum boards, student chapters, and DSL*

→ *Take advantage of the multi-faceted role FSILG alum boards, e.g. as mentors and landlords*

→ *Clarify the GRA role and responsibilities and their relationship between MIT and FSILG alum boards, especially during a time where undergraduates will be remote*

Alum Advising

2. Establish communication protocols and best practices

→ *Ensure FSILG alum boards get timely, accurate information of major campus events and changes related to the pandemic, e.g. updates from the President's Office*

→ *Clean up chapter data file information to ensure those communication channels*

→ *Create a resource webpage for alumni with go-to contacts for MIT staff and FSILGs, links to resources, FAQ, and ways for interested alums to volunteer or donate*

3. Provide alums with tools and training to better understand and support students

→ *Identify and share current MIT resources and tools that alum boards can use to manage themselves and communicate internally and with the students they advise*

→ *Invite alum mentors to trainings given to Heads of House and GRAs*