Rent to fund repairs

by Kenneth Snow

The average room cost for the undergraduate housing system will increase 11 percent from $580 per term this year to $648 per term next year, according to H. Eugene Brammer, Director of Housing and Food Services. 8.6 percent of the increase is due to inflation, explained Brammer. The remaining $103,000 of the rent increase will be deposited in reserve and will help fund maintenance of the dormitories.

The actual increase in operating the housing system was in line with the inflation rate, Brammer noted. He said that the process of deciding a specific dormitory’s room rate is based on the cost of operating the entire housing system and not based on the operating expenses of that particular dorm.

Brammer explained that the total income for the housing system is computed assuming no increase. The operating budget for the coming year is then calculated, and the deficit is computed. An average room rent can then be calculated, and the operational costs of the system are then spread over the entire housing system.

Brammer noted that he is seriously considering a flat dollar increase rather than a percentage increase in room rates. With this increase, the differences in cost between dormitories remain approximately the same, whereas, under a percentage increase, the differences in price continue to increase. “I tend to narrow this spread,” noted Brammer.

The differences in dorm room prices come from a study conducted 10 to 12 years ago, according to Brammer. The positive and negative aspects of each dormitory were evaluated, and housing costs were set. These differences were reviewed three years ago.

The $103,000 in the capital reserve will help pay for necessary dormitory repairs, said Brammer. These repairs will be centered around East Campus, Senior House and Baker House. Brammer said that the repairs would not necessarily be immediate, but that the fund will provide the capital so that the repairs could be made in the future.

Brammer said that the Housing Office is investigating the possibility of raising the average price of graduate housing to 90 percent of its fair market value. He noted that by raising the price of on-campus housing, more revenues will be generated which could be used to alleviate the housing problem. Currently two-thirds of the graduate students at MIT live off campus. Brammer said that the capital could be used to “renovate the infirmaries, do more with off-campus housing, acquire or off-campus housing.”

Graduate students receive a “practical planning guide” on how to meet costs at MIT, according to Dean for Student Affairs Shirley McKay. She added that the proposed increase is “well within the recommendations given in those guidelines.”

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