Group studies tenure in graduate dormitories

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Burges said a long-term solution to the housing problem would be to build more housing. But graduate housing is not on the list to receive capital endowment funds, he added.

A tenure system

Hickman favors a two-year tenure system, because students who have been here a year or more know the area and would have less of a problem finding off-campus apartments. Instituting a two-year tenure system would not affect current students, he said.

But other members of the committee are reluctant to limit housing tenure for two years. The problem with a one- or two-year tenure system, Burgess said, is that living in a dormitory for only two years would make the dormitory feel more like a hotel than a home. If students are "passing through a place, they don't respect the property," the said. A two-year tenure might be the fairest solution but would probably not be the best, Burgess explained.

"A short tenure would destroy Ashdown," Ingram agreed. It takes time to build relationships, he said. He pointed out that many of the students who run Ashdown have lived there for over two years. The atmosphere and sense of community would be seriously affected by a tenure limit, he stressed.

In addition, 60 percent of Ashdown residents are foreign students. They need time to adjust to the culture and a short tenure would make this difficult, Ingram explained.

"The reputation of MIT depends on what its graduate students do in research as much as it depends on its faculty," Ingram said. Graduate housing and other issues should be of higher concern, he concluded.

Twenty-five admitted graduate students decided not to attend MIT last fall due to housing and the cost of living in the Boston area, Neall said. The OSG Housing and Community Affairs Committee is surveying the faculty to find out if there are more cases they are aware of in which admitted graduate students have decided not to attend MIT because of the housing situation, Burgess said.

The lottery system

Hickman would like to see the present lottery system revised. "The current system doesn't benefit the people who could use it the most [incoming graduate students]," Hickman said.

The 80 percent of incoming graduate students who do not get into on-campus housing in the June lottery have to use their own time and money to find a place to live, he said. Another lottery is held in October to distribute the spaces that open up during the summer. This procedure is not helpful to incoming students who have to find apartments over the summer. They are usually stuck in leases by October when the extra rooms become available, Hickman said.

Hickman also felt it is unfair that graduate students who do not obtain on-campus housing can stay on-campus until they graduate.

A questionnaire will be distributed to graduate students by the OSG Housing and Community Affairs Committee asking them if they are satisfied with their housing and if they feel it affects their academics, Hickman said.

Carolyn Lee G said that the housing situation is partly responsible for the lack of "graduate school cohesion." Off-campus students are at a disadvantage, she said.