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MIT Card Replaces Meal Cards, Keys

By Charu Chaudhry

Beginning Wednesday, the new student services card will be fully activated as a dormitory access key, meal plan card, and auxiliary account card. Meal plan accounts will appear only on this card, replacing the picture identification cards currently used for food purchases.

Students will also begin to use the MIT Card to enter dormitories as card readers are installed over the next term. Next House and MacGregor House are now ready for electronic access. The electronic system will replace the current key system, enhancing security in the housing system.

The MIT Card is the first phase in a plan that will consolidate most student services on one card. Eventually, it will include access to other buildings and additional services as they become available, according to Lawrence E. Maguire, director of housing and food services.

The card keys will be slowly phased in with both standard keys and the card keys access. After that time, most standard locks will be removed from the outside doors, restricting access to card keys.

Card readers will only be used to provide authorized access and will not record individual student usage or access times, Maguire said. Non-resident students will only have dormitory access during hours of available services in the dormitories. Future developments include the possible installation of card readers on elevators in dormitories.

New card to consolidate access

The long range goal is to have one card to serve students and employees for identification, access, and purchasing. Maguire hopes that this new approach will result in streamlined and time-saving customer services, customer convenience improvements, and security control improvements.

"The one-card system is meeting the fundamental needs of the Institute as a whole, identification, access, and purchasing needs," Maguire said. "The uses of the card will grow as the users think of the new ways in which it can serve them."

The one-card system combines convenience with state-of-the-art electronic technology. "This beneficial re-engineering is definitely more in keeping with what is happening in the world today in terms of technology," Maguire said.

Many other schools, including Duke University and Florida State University, have sophisticated one-card systems tied electronically into bank systems. Harvard University is currently implementing a similar system.