The Graduate Student Council Housing and Community Affairs Committee held an emergency meeting last night to react to the possibility that Ashdown House will no longer be a graduate dormitory. The administration's Strategic Housing Planning Committee recommended in February that Ashdown be converted for use by undergraduates and that a new graduate dormitory be constructed on land near the corner of Sidney and Pacific streets in Cambridge.

The committee decided to immediately commission a survey of Ashdown residents to determine what the position of the building should be, according to Professor Mark S. Vest, who will chair the committee. The results of the survey will be forwarded to the administration for consideration in making any housing decisions. He said.

President Charles M. Vest said last month he will make a final decision about short-term housing plans by the end of Independent Activities days.

General survey results released
The new survey comes on the heels of the Monday release of the results of a general student housing survey. That survey found that graduate students seek convenience, in terms of location and hassle-free housing, as primary reasons for selecting their dormitories.

Next to convenience, responders listed cost, type of living arrangements, and safety as reasons for selecting their current dormitories. Among Ashdown residents, the sense of community and social life are the second most important reason.

Thirty-six percent of the 1,450 graduate students living in on-campus housing responded to the general survey.

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Arts Provost Harris to Resign

By Ranya A. Amanat

Last month Associate Provost for the Arts Provost Mary Harris announced her intention to step down this summer after six years in her current position. She will then join the music department.

When she came to MIT, Harris said she committed to her job for four to five years. "I have stayed in the position for six years because it has been exciting and fulfilling, especially working in the arts in the MIT curriculum and with our arts community, and me in selecting the next associate provost for the arts," Harris said.

He has served in many roles, including chair of both the Committee on Campus Race Relations and the Creative Arts Council. "Ellen’s leadership and influence in the MIT campus community and with our alumni/ae and friends across the country have been truly remarkable," said President Charles M. Vest. In a Dec. 14 Talk Talk article, "I will miss working with her," said Provost Mark S. Wrighton.

"It has been a great pleasure to work with her, come to know her, and learn from her," said Provost Mark S. Wrighton.

"Professor Harris has done a superb job in greatly strengthening the arts in the MIT curriculum and in connecting MIT with the arts community," Harris said.

Harris plans to devote her year-long sabbatical "to complete a book on Handel," she said. "There are some things that you need a lot of time to do it.

Time has come for a successor
A committee is in the planning to look for Harris’s replacement, Wrighton said. "The process to identify [Harris’] successor has not yet been put in place, but will involve the appointment of an advisory group to assist the President and me in selecting the next associate provost for the arts," he said.

"I think first and foremost, the [new] person needs to be involved in the arts," Harris said. "It’s important that the successor have experience working in the arts in an academic environment, which is a little different from the arts community," said Harris.

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Higginbotham to Deliver MLK Address

By Stacey E. Blou

The community activist and legal scholar A. Leon Higginbotham Jr. will speak at MIT’s Feb. 10 celebration honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The civil rights activist killed was 26 years ago last Sunday.

This year’s activities mark the Institute’s 21st celebration of King’s life and work. Higginbotham is the chief judge emeritus of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit and Public Service Professor of Jurisprudence at Harvard University.

Higginbotham’s address is part of a series of day-long events, said Leo Osgood Jr., the new dean of the Office of Minority Education. Osgood is co-chairing the planning committee for the MLK celebration with Professor of Physics Michael S. Feld.

"The events will begin with an invitational breakfast hosted by President Charles M. Vest and with Reverend Dr. William Higginbotham, Osgood said.

Higginbotham’s title this year’s address and celebration is “The Trumpet of Conscience: Dr. Martin Luther King’s Conference with America.”

The traditional silent march from Lobby 7 to Kresge Auditorium at noon will precede Higginbotham’s address, Osgood said.

King “developed a contract with America,” Osgood said. “Judge Higginbotham would like to explore the extent to which it relates to the civil rights movement,” he added.

Higginbotham discussed the contract with America in an interview. "It is a broad vision of how one contract can work for the betterment of society. It is a turning point in the denial of justice to the weak, the poor, the powerless, and minorities."

A reception in the Student Center will follow the keynote address, Osgood said. "Higginbotham will meet and talk with members of the MIT community at the reception.

The celebration will continue Saturday, Feb. 11 at 7 p.m. in Kresge with a performance by jazz vocalist Semenya McCord. Osgood said. McCord will be performing "A Journey into a Dream," a musical tribute to King.

In addition, Melvin H. King, director of the Community Fellows Program, plans to conduct a weekend youth conference, Osgood said.

Highly involved in government
The MIT community might benefit more from Higginbotham for his support of the Institute in the Overlap case. In the case, the Justice Department charged MIT and other schools with violating the Baltimore Antitrust Act by discussing and agreeing upon the financial aid packages of individual students who had been offered admission to more than one of the schools.

After nearly three years of litigation, the case was settled in December 1993. In June 1993, Higginbotham joined MIT’s attorney and made an impassioned argument before the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. He argued that the military service aspect of the case outweighed the alleged harms of price-fixing. "This is not the politics of exclusion, it is the practice of inclusion," he said.

Higginbotham served as circuit judge and chief judge of the Third Circuit Court of Appeals from 1977 until his retirement in March of 1993. Prior to his tenure as an appeals judge, Higginbotham served as a district court judge for 13 years.

He was named a member of the Federal Trade Commission in 1962 by President John F. Kennedy. He was the youngest person ever appointed a member of the FTC as well as the

Perkins will return next fall after a short sabatical and continue working in water resources engineering. He will also chair the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering’s new Masters of Engineering program.

“Those are very few others who could claim equal experience,” said Perkins, who did not constitute a turning back in the denial of the "free will," he said. "I’ve always admired Perkins’ professionalism in the technical aspects of his work.

"At MIT, we take the center of graduate education of the highest possible quality as a given," said President Charles M. Vest in a Dec. 14 Talk Talk article. "Dean Perkins has worked effectively to provide a supportive environment for graduate students as they pursue their studies, responsibilities, and contributions as key members of our community."

"Perkins has been a sage and wise leader of the Committee on Graduate School Policy and has made a strong effort to recruit more women and minority graduate students," said Provost Mark S. Wrighton.

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The Weather

Today: Partly sunny, 44°F (7°C)

Tomorrow: Mostly cloudy, 40°F (4°C)

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