ECA meeting – Tues, Apr 13, 2010 - Minutes

Summary:

- Mariah and Hans will be stepping down as SPIRC officers, and the new officers will be Fillipe and Daniella

- Linda and Adam from housing allocation came to talk about housing within MIT and off-campus, providing lots of helpful details (please see below).

- Dennis Collins, director of housing at MIT, talked to us about the flooding issue. Flooding appears to be due to pressure differences between apartment exhausts and fans putting fresh air back into the building. The fans will be measured to ensure that they are working optimally, and Dennis will update us after this is done. Currently, there is no fast solution, although one of the residents noted that when the windows are open in the apartment during rain, the pressure is equalized and no flooding occurs.

Detailed minutes:

- housing allocation – Linda and Adam
  o housing.mit.edu
  o allocation opened on Mar 31 – open till May 12 midnight
    ▪ not date or time sensitive
  o May 12 – binding allocation
    ▪ 150 penalty if don’t take it
  o subletting available
  o license signing deadline May 28
    ▪ waitlist – July 1
  o status on campus
    ▪ nonrenewable assignments – must terminate by Aug 15 this year
    ▪ renewable assignment – ability to renew up till Aug 15 2011
    ▪ continuing status
    ▪ visitor – until Aug 2010
  o don’t select building or room style that won’t take because the allocation is binding
    ▪ but allocation favors flexibility – more options → better chance of assignment
    ▪ consider all amenities
    ▪ open entry process – can change preferences as many times as you like until May 12
  o Westgate vs Eastgate
  o If considering moving of campus – Thursday 11-2 at Stata having an off-campus event
  o They take local advertising from off-campus housing
Can customize your rental search
Tenant must know what rules are because property owners are not required to get certified
Be very alert on craigslist – scammers – if too good to be true, it doesn’t exist
We are one of most expensive metropolitan areas in country so beware of high rent
most off-campus rentals don’t include utilities
further away is cheaper than Cambridge/Sommerville
begin search 4-6 weeks before want to move
  families with kids - take 2 weeks to find
  families without kids – 5-6 days to find
illegal to say no to families with children but owners think of subtle ways to turn children away
MIT owns some apartments in Cambridge, some apartments are great, price are a little high
  but well managed
most rentals in Cambridge are woodframe double or triple decker buildings
  most common and most affordable
neighborhoods and safety
  Cambridge, Boston, Sommerville much better than other East Coast cities
  But pay attention to your surroundings
  Biggest crime in Cambridge is bike theft
  House break-ins will occur when you are not home
  But murders and sexual assaults are very rare
  Ride saferide shuttle route, might be able to find an apartment close to there
  If renting on Boston side – beware of undergrads because don’t make good neighbors
    • If landlord rents to undergrads, will be loud and apartments will not be well taken care of
Don’t take first apartment you find
  Leases are almost impossible to break
  Talk to the housing office (Linda) if you are unsure if getting a good deal
Saving your pennies
  Rentals require up to 3 months rent when sign lease – first and last and security deposit
  Get deposit back if return apartment with only normal wear and tear
Leases
  Usually September- August
  They will ask for references to ensure you have ability and resources
  Linda checks your rental account to give you a reference – so make sure your account is clean and paid on time
  May be asked to have a cosigner if international student or undergrads
• Cosigners have to US citizens in case you default and cannot pay rent, they have to pay for you
  ▪ Have renters insurance if off-campus
    • Flood, fire, theft
    • Should not be more than $200/year, sold by most insurance companies
  o Parking off-campus
    ▪ No guarantee, many landlords charging for street parking
    ▪ City of Cambridge has street parking, but have to get parking and car has to be licensed
    ▪ Car no absolute necessity – Zipcar
  o GSC developed website called rentmonkey – grads living off-campus and their experience
  o Linda can also help recent graduates or alumni

• director of housing at MIT – Dennis Collins
  o looking at windows and AC from outside and repairing
  o negative pressure is an issue due to kitchen and bathroom exhaust
  o there is a fan that puts fresh air in
    ▪ the fan is working but they will go back to see if running on max, and measure how much air is going into the building, then will see how much air being pulled out
  o poor design of AC sleeves in building – doesn’t seal at all
  o final biggest solution is replacing all windows with double pane windows, take out AC and put in central air
  o if have leak and unhappy – can get you on waitlist to move
    ▪ contact graduate housing office – Gery-Lin
    ▪ if tiles are coming up, put in a work request to get that fixed by Nelson
  o apartments that we know are leaking – new tenants will be told about this and will be given the option to opt out and not be fined
  o have done maintenance to the playground
    ▪ new coat of mulch in spring
    ▪ has reopened now
    ▪ the back where the BBQ is is closed right now, for at least another week
  o Dennis will give us a report once knows what the situation with the fans is
    ▪ But right now cannot give a solution
    ▪ One of the problems in all the building, old and new, is pressure
  o resident noted that if open windows when it rains, don’t get flooding because have equalized the pressure

• Jason:
  o Update on Sloan project and moving parking lot
  o Will happen before or after finals