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*Welcome-Alex H. Chan, GSC President*

*by Alex H. Chan*

Dear Fellow Students,

Welcome to MIT! As the graduate student body president, I congratulate you and wish that your year(s) ahead in MIT will be fruitful. While I am sure you know about the academic rigor and excellence of MIT, I also want to let you know that MIT has one of the country's most vibrant and diverse student communities.

I recall my first year at MIT. It was an eye-opening experience. I met some of the brightest and most interesting people from around the world, both faculty members and fellow students. While being a challenging environment, MIT is the greatest place to be a student. This is an environment that provides you with a broad and diverse set of potential research and non-academic opportunities. Find something

you are truly passionate about and you will thrive in MIT. For well over a century MIT has prepared the brightest men and women from around the world for truly extraordinary careers across disciplines, and you are now part of this proud tradition. Also, I invite you to take full advantage of MIT as a place of exciting living and learning. Look and learn beyond your classes and labs, take advantage of the wide variety of extracurricular activities initiated and carried out by MIT students. MIT is a place for personal growth and developing leadership skills - our graduate community has produced leaders of Fortune 500 companies, countries and the United Nations, as well as some of the first people to land on the moon.

One such opportunity is the Graduate Student Council (GSC), the repre-

sentative body of all graduate students in MIT. For over half a century, the Council had provided exceptional services, activities and events that enhance graduate study and graduate student life at MIT. Lobbying for subsidized health insurance, creating a graduate student dental plan, negotiating reasonable stipend increases, enhancing key components of the MIT transportation system (like creating the SafeRide and the Discounted subway pass program), organizing core activities like the orientation and the Grad Gala, and developing traditions like the Grad Rat are but a few examples of what the GSC does. Our team consists of a dozen committee chairs, a few dozen of Council and Institute representatives, as well as hundreds of volunteers. As you arrive at MIT, you will notice that the work



Alex H. Chan,  
GSC President

of this very dedicated team had almost made an impact in every aspect of the graduate student life. So, I extend my invitation to you to join the Council, join a committee, sign up as a volunteer, or even become a GSC representative. You can find out more about the your Council at <http://gsc.mit.edu>. Come to one

of our monthly General Council Meetings (GCM's take place in room 50-220 on the first Wednesday of each month at 5pm) to find out more and take part in enhancing the overall graduate experience. In the meantime, I welcome you to start a conversation with us through our blog at <http://gsc.mit.edu/blog>.

Best of luck with the year(s) ahead, and once again we are thrilled to have you as a new member of our community.

Alex H. Chan

### *Getting Involved: becoming the heartbeat of our community*

*by Alice Lo, Ashdown House Officer Coordinator*

Hello Everyone,

Welcome to MIT and Ashdown House, the oldest and newest graduate residence on campus. I am the officer coordinator of the current Ashdown House Executive Committee (AHEC), and my main duty is to get you participate in our hall activities and eventually become an officer. You may ask, 'Why should I join Ashdown House activity when I am already overwhelmed with my work?' Well, the answers are simple.

To know your neighbors and beyond: By joining the various Ashdown activities, you could get to meet people whom you



Alice Lo, AHEC Officer  
Coordinator

would otherwise never talk to. We have residents from many different countries and cultures. You will be surprised by how much you can learn from other people and how fun it is interacting with people from different backgrounds. Not to miss are our housemasters Terry and Ann Orlando, who have been always warm, friendly and sup-

portive and have done a lot for Ashdown and us!

To relax and destress: MIT is a hectic place and there is absolutely no one stopping you from locking yourself in the library (which opens 24 hours) or your lab (which never closes) 24-7. However, MIT is definitely more than a work/study place. Peel yourself away from your computer; meet real people and do fun things together with your fellow residents!

To make a difference: We are all temporary residents of Ashdown House, and eventually all of us will embark on very different life jour-

neys. For many of us, this is the last time we are going to stay in dorm as students. Why not treasure this opportunity to make your grad student life more memorable and to make a difference to your fellow MIT friends? To this end, I would strongly encourage you to become an Ashdown officer. As an officer, you could plan and organize

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your favorite activity for the House (Social Committee, Cultural Committee, Outing Committee, Floor Officers, Orientation and Alumni Committee), help to make Ashdown a better place to live in (Living things Commit-

tee, Environmental Committee, Art Officer, Athletics Officer, IT Committee, Inventory Officer, Newsletter Officer, Graduate Student Council Representative), and last but not least, to feed the Ashdown resi-

dents and make them interact while eating (Coffee hour Committee and Brunch Committee)! Of course, as officers, what we do go beyond the narrow job scope that I just described, you have to try it in order to

understand it.

Come and talk to us! I am looking forward to knowing all of you.

Alice Lo

### Coffee Hour: more than just a social tradition

by Archana Venkataraman, Ashdown House Coffee Hour Chair

Ashdown House was established over 70 years ago as the first graduate residence on campus. From the beginning, Ashdown has fostered a tight-knit community, provided a wealth of activities (and, yes, free food) for its residents, and has founded many traditions relating to social and cultural life.

Perhaps the best-known Ashdown event is our Thursday Night Coffee Hour. Coffee Hour was originally established in the 1970's by former Ashdown housemasters Robert and Carol Hulsizer. The Hulsizers lived in Ashdown for eleven years, during which they recognized the importance of regular social events for improving graduate student life. In their own words:

*"... through discussions with the Dean's office, we began to appreciate the fact that the*

*Cambridge social life of many graduate students, particularly those from distant parts of the U.S. or from other countries, was often pretty bleak. So we picked up on the tradition begun decades ago by Professor Avery Ashdown of making evening snacks available on a regular basis and invented the Coffee Hour... As a weekly occasion the Coffee Hour gave house residents opportunities to enlarge their circle of friends and gave us, as Housemasters, a chance to know individual students better and learn about their lives..."*

Nowadays, imitations of the original

"Coffee Hour" can be found in living halls across campus. However, for Ashdown House, Coffee Hour has become a symbol of our commitment to bringing residents together and to creating a friendly and open graduate living environment. In the past we have featured pumpkin carving for Halloween, a float-building event for Mardi Gras, as well as several make-your-own smoothie competitions during which our Housemasters dutifully taste each concoction to ascertain the winners. Coffee Hour is also where we nominate and interview candidates

for the next year's AHEC.

In keeping with tradition, Coffee Hour is held every Thursday night from 9-10pm in the Ashdown Hulsizer Room. We serve an assortment of snacks and desserts, including veggies and dip, cheese and crackers, cookies, cakes, pastries, fruit, ice cream and drinks. It is a time for residents to chat with one another and escape the stress of MIT academics. This year, we are organizing even more "special" Coffee Hours. These will center on a unique theme, food from different parts of the world, or seasonal/holiday events. This past summer, residents have already enjoyed a make-your-own smoothie and a make-your-own-sundae event. In the fall, we will host a Bubble Tea Night, a Diwali Night, and our traditional pumpkin carv-



Coffee hour: a time to meet and mingle.

# The Official Newsletter of the Ashdown Community

ing competition, along with several other activities.

We are looking forward to meeting new students and seeing old faces at Coffee Hour this year. Hopefully all resident

will come down and enjoy a piece of history and tradition with us.



Coffee hour: a time for relaxation and repast.

## *Brunch: wake up to a special treat once a month at Ashdown*

*by Arghavan Safavi-Naini*

As an Ashdown resident you have to make sure to pay close attention to the posters taped inside of the elevators. Not only do they advertise great deal on second hand furniture but they also serve as bulletin boards for announcing the many social events happening at Ashdown. One such event is the monthly Sunday brunch in the Hulsizer room.

The brunch is attended by all of the MIT Graduate community. This means that around 300 people are served at every brunch. As a result the Ashdown brunch committee relies on the volunteers who help us with the organization, cooking and clean up.

In the past year the committee has tried to serve a larger variety of fresh fruit and warm food. However we realize that the usual pancakes, hash browns,

etc. can get boring and predictable if served at every brunch. Hence in the summer term we hosted a Chinese brunch serving items like steamed buns and dumplings. We hope to continue holding various cultural brunches in the upcoming year.

The Orientation brunch on August 30th was the



Choose from a variety of conventional and exotic brunch fare!

**“The brunch is attended by all of the MIT Graduate community. This means that around 300 people are served at every brunch.”**



A quilt more tantalizing than any you may crawl out of on a Brunch Sunday morning

first brunch of the semester, but certainly not the last. We are looking forward to seeing you all again at future brunches. It will be an excellent opportunity to get acquainted with the other Ashdown residents and a great start for the new academic year. So make sure to keep an eye on the elevator announcements and help us out by volunteering for brunch.

Website

<http://ashdown.mit.edu/>