

Northwest

ewsletter

Northwest Coalition
Ashdown, Sidney Pacific,
Edgerton, Warehouse



Why a Northwest Newsletter?

Before this newsletter makes its way to the recycling (did I mention that *RecycleMania 2007* is currently underway?), I want explain why you're receiving yet another piece of mail.

Next year, when Ashdown House reopens as the new graduate dorm NW35, the neighborhood of Albany and Pacific will be home to 1,600 graduate students. Our dorms have distinct cultures, yet as neighbors we have common interests: rents, shuttle service, NW35 construction, and safety to name a few.

The Northwest is becoming an increasingly powerful force in graduate life. For example, this past summer, budget cuts threatened to drastically reduce the Northwest Shuttle service. However, thanks to the efforts of a committee representing Warehouse, S-P, and Edgerton, we managed to actually extend our shuttle service!

I hope that this newsletter will entertain, and encourage awareness and dialogue about the important issues that the Northwest currently faces.

Many thanks to our hard-working newsletter chair Daniel Truque for overseeing this project, and to contributors from other dorms who made this collaboration possible.

-Ben Mares (S-P V.P. of Information)

Community Updates

New Channel Lineup -- Thanks to the efforts of the Cable-storm student group, here are our new channels!

48:FX	55:MTV2
49:Nat Geo	56:VH1
50:Speed Ch.	57:Nickelodeon
51:Learning Ch.	58:MyNetworkTV
52:Comedy Central	59:CourtTV
53:Lifetime	60:SciFi
54:MTV	61:E!

The Graduate Student Council was awarded by the National Association of Graduate and Professional Students (NAGPS) in recognition of their actions in creating an ad-hoc committee to evaluate NW35 building proposal. Read ahead for a report from GSC's Housing and Community Affairs Committee

Ashdown Notices

None at the time of print

Edgerton Notices

Edgerton will hold officer elections for the upcoming year in February 22nd. Declaration of candidacy period is Feb 5-12th. There are 9 elected positions, all open. No need to be a resident of Edgerton, just grad student at MIT. If you

win, you get to live at Edgerton during your term! For more info visit <http://eh.mit.edu/elections2007.php> or email eh-sab.

Edgerton has housemasters for the first time ever! Prof David Mindell and his wife Pamela officially start serving on September 1, 2007, but look for them over the spring/summer as they start to get involved. Prof. Mindell is the director of the Science, Technology, and Society program, is on the faculty of the Engineering Systems Division, and is also a professor of History of Engineering and Manufacturing. His wife, Pamela, has a PhD in music, teaches in the music department at College of the Holy Cross in Worcester and performs with the Boston Secession, a professional choir. We are excited to welcome David and Pamela (and their wide range of experiences and interests!) to Edgerton.

Sidney Pacific Notices

Congratulations to Apostolos Fertis who was recently elected to Sidney Pacific Board of Trustees

Annual Bicycle Cleanout

Do you own and store a bicycle at SP? Please find your bike, and remove the tag on it by *FEBRUARY 15TH 2007* to prevent it from being confiscated. sp-bikes-chair.

Warehouse Notices

Warehouse residents can request an application to become an officer from Lori Lerman until March 1st. Submission deadline is March 11th.

Upcoming Events

Night at the Museum Dance Party Feb 9 @ Ashdown, see flyer

Bridge Nights at The Warehouse Monday February 12 and 26 @ 8pm, Warehouse Multi-Purpose Room. Introductory lessons available!

p1| Community Updates
House Notices
Upcoming Events

p2| NW35 Building Update
RENT: Costs on the Rise
Eternal Sunshine of the
Idiotic Mind by Daniel T.

p3| Piece of Mind by Daniel K.
NW35 Groundbreaking
Random Quote
Chuck Norris vs Jack Bauer

p4| Casino Royale Collage



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'Night at the Museum'
Dance Party

Ashdown House
Friday Feb 9th, 9pm-1am
3 dance floors

Beverages by Thrifty Ear
FREE FOOD!
Free Salsa Lessons!

Event sponsored by
Graduate Student Council
All graduate students welcome

NW35 Building Update

In response to a projected cost overrun, MIT's administration has announced a significant cutback to the new Ashdown House under construction at NW35. The portion of the new Ashdown nearest Sidney-Pacific is now to have four rather than five stories. This cutback will reduce the total occupancy of new Ashdown to 451 student beds in comparison to the originally intended 548. The administration has offered verbal assurances that this cutback, despite amounting to 18% of the new Ashdown's rental revenue base, will not increase graduate rents. Concerns have been raised over the fact that student and housemaster input was not sought in deciding on this cutback. After months of debate, resolutions and meetings in Spring 2006, the students, faculty and administration had reached an agreement regarding how future decision-making about NW35 would be carried out. The current proposal to cut out 97 beds from the new dorm marks a significant departure from that agreement, as absolutely no students or housemasters were consulted in the process. This agreement is excerpted below:

"As MIT moves to the next phase of the NW35 project, it seeks to continue the collaboration between students, faculty, and administrators. The mandate of the Stakeholders Committee itself explicitly continues throughout the construction phase, and it is intended that new committees that arise in the course of the construction phase, including any smaller group that must deal with specific construction issues on a potential faster time-scale, will include student and faculty representatives. All students and faculty members of the Stakeholders Committee will be kept apprised of any relevant issues or activities as soon as possible." [Weblink: http://web.mit.edu/dsl/NW35/pdf/NW35_Official-Institute-Statement.pdf]

It should be noted that on many construction matters, there has been and still is an active collaboration between students, housemasters, and the Departments of Housing and Facilities. However, this major decision was made unilaterally at the level of the Chancellor, Executive VP, and President. Further concerns have been raised over the fact that this cutback was motivated by a projected,

not an actual, cost overrun. Over the course of February, contract bids will be received for the bulk of the construction. At this point, it's unknown whether or not there will be similar cost overruns in the future, so stay tuned.

Rent report from the GSC's Housing and Community Affairs Committee

RENT: Costs on the rise

One of the issues that affects all of us in the Northwest is rising rents. During the Spring semester and over the summer, representatives from each of the dorms and the GSC Housing and Community Affairs committee chairs met with administrators to better evaluate the problem. This committee recently presented its report to the Dean for Student Life, the Dean for Graduate Students, and the Executive Vice President. Here are some of the highlights:

MIT Housing's costs are expected to rise dramatically in the next three years. Under the current policies that MIT Housing should charge rent sufficient to meet virtually all its expenses, these rising costs could potentially cause increases in graduate rents to continue to outpace increase in graduate stipends. The largest expenditures in Housing's budget are energy costs and the costs of building residential communities. In particular, Housing's past and continued rising expenses have been due to the spate of recent construction, a restructuring of the mortgage burden from past construction, and a centralized utilities structure that does not encourage conservation or efficiency-improving renovations. In these respects, MIT Housing is very different from its off-campus competitors. Furthermore, on-campus rent increases would come at a particularly inauspicious time due to a slackening of the off-campus rental market. Federal government data shows inflation in the Greater Boston rental market is at its lowest point in a decade.

A side effect of Housing's financial difficulties is that maintenance and renovations have been deferred for a number of years. This effect has been most pronounced in the family dorms. Recently, Eastgate and Westgate have experienced bursting steam pipes, broken elevators, contaminated water,

flooding, and electrical fires. Over the past three years, the demand for family housing by continuing students has dropped by 70%.

We also reviewed on-campus rents from the graduate student perspective, comparing them to stipends and off-campus rents collected through surveys. Both comparisons suggest that on-campus rents have been rising too fast. These increases are confirmed by a precipitous drop of demand for high-end units, such as efficiencies and two-bedroom apartments, amounting to a 68% decrease in demand from continuing students over the past three years. Incidentally, these are the most common room types to be found in the new Ashdown House (NW35).

Given that community building expenses make up a significant portion of Housing's budget, the group examined the benefits of fostering graduate community. Most notably, we demonstrated a large positive correlation between graduate alumni giving and having lived in a graduate residence.

We concluded with a set of recommendations:

-That MIT support the mission of providing graduate community by separating some of the costs of community building from MIT Housing's budget

-On-campus rents should increase by the same rate as graduate stipends, or roughly 3% per year

-That MIT in effect offer loans to the Housing Office for initiatives to improve energy efficiency to lower costs in the long run

-The philosophy that MIT Housing should provide residential communities while being a self-sustaining, financially independent entity should be reevaluated

• *Gerald Dalley, Leeland Ekstrom, William Kaminsky and Robert Wang*

Road rage at the supermarket Eternal Sunshine of the Idiotic Mind

You know what grinds my gears, when people break my supermarket nirvana on a peaceful Sunday

afternoon. I confess that I am one of those shopping cart Sunday drivers. I push my cart obliviously as I wander around the store allowing flashy posters to drive my needs and tell me what I like. And even if it's Tuesday night, for me it's Sunday afternoon. From time to time I run into people's ankles with my cart, quietly and unconcernedly apologize and keep pushing, always looking sideways, never forward. It's Sunday afternoon, the worst time to go shopping, and I love it! So the story starts after driving all over Somerville finding a Stop n' Shop, which according to my girlfriend is cheaper than Shaws which is walking distance from the dorm. After about thirty minutes of twists and turns, I was going to give up the search, but I didn't know how to go back either. It didn't matter, it was Sunday afternoon. I kept on driving and unexpectedly run into it on my right hand side. Sweet, I pull in and tell my girlfriend I knew it all along. Of course she knows I was less oriented than a parrot in a can, but she just smiled as I performed the worst parking job ever, touching the lines on both sides with all four tires, figure that one out. But it's fine, it's a Sunday afternoon. We walk in and I choose a cart that looks fairly new and with good wheels. I hate cars that don't roll smoothly because it destroys my sphere of peace when I shop. After about 20 minutes in the produce area, of which 19 were on the phone with her mom, she figures out what vegetables she needs. She had always claimed she cooked but until that night, I had no proof of her Boricua kitchen (Boricua = Puerto Rican). We keep walking, enjoying the people show of a Sunday afternoon. Suddenly, while pushing my cart next to the meat section, I notice a guy trying to pass me. So I moved my cart somewhat out of the way, so he pushed through bumping my cart in a bad manner. Then he stopped, and lifted and shoved it farther away so make space for himself, so that lit me up. He never even asked for more space and the way he was acting was rude, disrupting my Sunday afternoon peace. So I asked him what's his problem, to which he turns around and shoves his car aside offering me a piece of him. Looking at the price per pound on the meat section I don't think I could have afforded his fat ass. So I realize the mess I started as I'm arguing with him for pushing my cart and my girlfriend is holding my arm,

so I pretend like I want to let go but hope she doesn't let go and then we just walked away to avoid the trouble. Then I continue shopping in a calm Sunday afternoon. I guess that was a long buildup for just a calm Sunday afternoon.

• Daniel Truque

The following Piece of Mind was originally written for Orientation, but it was never published...

Piece of Mind

After you finally come to grips with the fact that you've been accepted to MIT, and that it was not because your application got somehow stuck together with that of Boltzmann's grandson, there's a lot to do before you actually start classes. The daily activities include, but are not limited to: raiding Target, procrastinating on ordering your room, attending orientation events (which involve memorizing thousands of name-face pairs), and chewing a pack of Tums an hour. There's so much going on that you can entertain yourself simply by touring campus in Brownian motion, joining the group that offers more free food (when it comes to free food, 'quantity over quality' is an absolute, not relative, truth). But, at least for me, the most memorable of the welcoming activities to MIT did not take place until a month after classes started.

The physical examination at the Medical Center was kind of an initiation ritual. I will spare the readers the name of the doctor because the story that I will tell about him is probably biased and mutates a bit every time I tell it again. Anyways, when I finally filled

up all the necessary paperwork ('Do I really need to read and fill the entire booklet? I didn't come to give birth to twins, I just need a routine physical?'), the nurse led me to a room where I waited for about fifteen minutes. After reading the flyers of all possible skin disorders, the doctor finally arrived.

Hi, I'm Dr. Rude, I will be in charge of your physical examination

He was the definition of impersonal; I would've thought he was mute, but I heard him speak to the nurse in the hallway. He closed the door behind him, and started reading the Bible-size booklet I had just filled. 'Hey Doc, if you're planning to read the entire thing just let me know and I come back in an hour.' He left the papers in the table and started taking my pulse. There was no: 'Hi, I'm Dr. Rude, I will be in charge of your physical examination' Not even: 'Stretch your arm, I need to take your pulse.' And when I thought he was not going to say a thing, he goes: 'Take your clothes off.' 'Excuse me? You don't say that you love me, you don't bring flowers and chocolates, you don't even try foreplay. And just like that you want me to undress? I'm not that kind of guy, Doc.' As I was thinking these words and internally laughing, the doctor was waiting in an impatient pose. 'OK, OK. I will cooperate. Just don't go about telling the whole Medical Center you got your way that easily.'

The more common 'right-of-passage' experience at MIT, however, does not happen at MIT Medical. It happens (at least for the ChemE department) in Walker

Gym. The name Gym is kind of misleading, because what happens there is the opposite of fun. The qualifying exams are never fun, and quite frankly, I never understood the reason behind them. I do now. After you pass your 'quals', you can rest assured that you're not here by mistake. Boltzmann's grandson may be, but you're not.

The take-home message from these random, non-related stories goes to the incoming class: enjoy your first months at MIT. You will meet unconventional people (like my doctor), get frustrated attempting impossible P-sets in preparation for quals, and, hopefully, you'll read this column for procrastination purposes. Feel free to read it more than once, in case there's a lot of homework you rather do later.

• Mr Klein

Ashdown chair's speech

NW35 Groundbreaking

In two years, we will undertake a very tricky piece of surgery. We will attempt to transplant the living heart of Ashdown House from one body to another. In so doing, it may feel to some like trying to fit a round peg into a square hole, for as the second oldest graduate dorm in the country, we have been so long in this house that we have been molded into its shape. Our social life, our government, and the rhythms of our comings and goings have all been affected by that brick building on the Charles. Our rich history in that place has made us who we are today.

This groundbreaking marks the

beginning of a huge change for Ashdown House – after seventy years in one building we will be moving to another. Like any surgery, the process will require much care and attention – but this is why we hold such ceremonies: to commemorate beginnings, and to help facilitate the transition from one phase of life to another. Such transitions can sometimes be hard and uncomfortable, but they are also great opportunities for growth and for creativity. Our new house will shape us in new ways, just as we will shape it with our traditions and memory and expectations.

Part of me is nervous about this future transplant, because for me, there is a lot at stake. However, I know that the heart of this dorm is a good one and a strong one, and I know that, with the right care, it will not only survive, but excel in its new environment. It will excel because it is made of my friends and neighbors, those I see in the kitchens, lounges, lobby, and coffee hour. It is made of Ann and Terry, of Denise, Diana, Dale, Tony, Maria, John, and all who live or work there. It is supported by our large and enthusiastic alumni base, and it anticipates those who come after us. The heart of Ashdown is her people – past, present, and future – and I have no doubt that whatever shape her future may take, it will be bright and amazing and surprising.

-Sian Kleindienst

Random Quote

"I wonder if pilots get frequent flyer miles."

-Alex Taussig

Chuck Norris vs Jack Bauer

Send us your vote to sp-newsletter.

- 5. When Jack Bauer ran out of ammo, he caught 3 bullets in his chest and used them to reload.
- 4. When a convicted terrorist was sentenced to face Jack Bauer, he appealed to have the sentence reduced to death.
- 3. Some people see the glass as half full. Others see it as half empty. Jack Bauer sees the glass as a deadly weapon.
- 2. A street named after Jack Bauer had to be renamed because people kept dying while crossing it. No one crosses Jack Bauer and lives.
- 1. Jack Bauer once forgot where he put his car keys. He spent the next four hours torturing himself until he revealed the location.
- 5. Last night I had five nightmares, Chuck Norris was in seven of them.
- 4. Chuck Norris compiled Google Maps with a disposable camera he bought at 7-11.
- 3. In an average room, there are 36,732 objects Chuck Norris can use to kill you, including the room itself.
- 2. Chuck Norris doesn't go hunting because that implies the possibility of failing. Chuck Norris goes killing.
- 1. If Chuck Norris replaces Jack Bauer in the show "24", the show would be renamed to "1".

Bonus) Who played Russian Roulette with a fully loaded gun and won? Special MIT Bonus) When Google can't find something, it asks _____.

Had a good laugh? Send in your fortune cookies, Chuck Norris quotes, hatemail, random quotes, or comments,etc (with the exception of spam) to sp-newsletter-chair.. We also accept article contribution about topics related to the graduate housing community or anything random and/or funny. Send in pictures and cartoons too. Make this, your newsletter.

Photo-Collage: Casino Royale Dance Party



Would be British agents prepare to storm the dance floor.



Partygoers mob the majestic food spread.



Couples enjoy a dance under the lights.



A rousing game of Texas Hold'em brings out the competitive side of several grad students.



Dancers navigate a crowded room.

Photos by Daniel Myers