

## A Hole in the Flag

Haynes Miller

**THERE IS A FLAGPOLE** outside my office window in Lowell Court, from which the flag of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts flutters. I noticed yesterday that the flag is badly torn; there is a large hole in the center.

This struck me as a metaphor for the commonwealth of MIT today; one of its most characteristic and beloved institutions has been torn away.

As an MIT faculty member since 1986, I am deeply troubled by the MIT administration's expressed attitudes and actions culminating in the elimination of Senior House. From beginning to end, these attitudes have contradicted what I have always seen as core values of MIT, values that distinguish this institution and contribute to its greatness.

Valuing diversity means supporting communities with values that differ from your own. The administration seems to have adopted a narrow view of the lifestyles that are welcome at MIT. If you – or your suitemate – take a little longer to graduate than the norm, expect to be ostracized.

If your allegiance to your dorm is too strong, you are part of the problem.

The administration's actions undermine the sincere efforts of those hanging out rainbow "You are welcome here" signs.

The administration cites various statistics (some obtained, it appears,



under false pretenses), involving, for example, time to graduation. This is clearly a quantity they would like to minimize, in the aggregate. But at what cost? And what evidence is there that these same individuals would have finished quicker if they had not lived in Senior House?

I imagine that these data looked about the same 10 or 20 years ago. No evidence is presented that Senior House has changed. What was the precipitating

factor? What seems to have changed is the attitude of the MIT administration.

A letter to the MIT community from a large group of Senior House students, published on July 26 in *The Tech*, calls for a faculty investigation of the sequence of events leading up to the destruction of this long-standing MIT community. I strongly support this proposal! ■

**Haynes Miller** is a Professor in the Department of Mathematics  
([hmm@math.mit.edu](mailto:hmm@math.mit.edu)).