

# Ruddock House Constitution - Room Hassle Amendment

March 26, 2007

## 7 Room Hassles

### 7.1 Procedure

1. The Secretary shall be responsible for running the Room Hassle in the spirit of fairness to maximize the occupancy of the house.
2. A Room Hassle shall be held:
  - (a) once per year following the announcement of appointed offices to allocate rooms for the next academic year
  - (b) whenever beds are available and there are Full Members seeking residence
  - (c) whenever a partially filled room is sought by a member higher in the order given by section 7.1.4.
3. A Room Hassle shall continue until either all the available beds have been filled or there are no longer any Full Members seeking residence.
4. Rooms shall be picked in the following order:
  - (a) by the House President, then
  - (b) by all other Full Members in order of
    - i. class (seniors then juniors...), then
    - ii. intended number of occupants as a percentage of the room capacity, descending, then
    - iii. office as specified in section 7.2.7, then
    - iv. a random order prepared prior to the section 7.1.2a Room Hassle in a manner proscribed by the Secretary.
5. The Upper Class Committee shall arbitrate all conflicts and disputes.
6. The Secretary may consolidate unoccupied beds if doing so will increase the number of occupants of the house.

## 7.2 Guarantees

1. All Full Members shall have the opportunity to participate in any Room Hassle in person or by proxy.
2. All Full Members shall have the opportunity to designate their roommate(s) before another individual picks or is placed into the room. Thereafter, any unoccupied bed may be picked.
3. Contracted residents may exchange rooms and beds with each other at their own discretion. In the event of a dispute between roommates, the member with the higher pick shall have preference.
4. Room Hassles under section 7.1.2b or section 7.1.2c may not forcibly displace any participant from the house, and all non-participants shall retain their current rooms except as in 7.1.6. Members holding rooms sought under section 7.1.2c must participate in the hassle.
5. At any time during a Room Hassle, any participant may restart the process from his position in the order.
6. The President may have himself counted as a double occupant.
7. Entire rooms shall be guaranteed to the following officers:
  - (a) in order of preference, House President, House Vice President, House Secretary, House Treasurer, House Social Team (up to three members), Athletic Managers (up to three members), Librarian, UCCs (one guarantee per alley), IHC Chairman, ASCIT President, BoC Chair, House-elected BoC Representative, other BoC Representatives, Pepsi Pimps (up to two members), O'Domhnaill's Suppliers (up to two members), CRAP Crew (up to two members), House BFD editors (up to two members), House Head Waiter, House Historians (one member)
  - (b) for the entire academic year following the election or appointment provided the officer completes his term. If an officer quits his office mid-term, the room guarantee shall transfer to the succeeding officeholder for the remainder of the guarantee term.

## A Analysis and Reasoning

### A.1 Goal

This amendment is intended to align the constitutional provisions governing Room Hassles with house tradition. This amendment also attempts to clarify the language of the original constitution without needlessly encumbering the procedure.

## A.2 Motivation

The Upper Class Committee of academic year 2000-2001<sup>1</sup> considered whether the residency guarantee afforded to officers included the right to pick roommates. Historic practice, verified as far back as the early 1970s, reserved space for roommates as well as officers. Moreover, the appointed office selection process has usually presumed that space would also be reserved for roommates.

The Committee was concerned that this practice displaces members with higher picks in favor of members preferred by elected and appointed officers. The room allocation rules used by Ruddock are highly aristocratic in nature. The rules allocate a material fraction of the rooms to individuals selected by the Executive Committee. This is accomplished not only through the appointed office process, but also through the picks process<sup>2</sup>. This produces an allocation comprised of the “best” rather than a random sample of the membership, and homogenizes the culture. It also encourages strife as various factions gain control of the Executive Committee and use its appointment powers to mold the house composition<sup>3</sup>. It is possible for the officer guarantees to entirely determine the room allocation and completely exclude regular members from securing Ruddock controlled housing.

The Committee ruled:

1. pick and preference are synonymous within the constitution
2. holding an office grants a right to live on-campus, but not the right to pick a roommate
3. non-officers pick roommates contingent on allowing space for the remaining officers to pick
4. this edict shall establish the room allocation guidelines in perpetuity

This amendment restores preference and pick to their standard dictionary meanings. It also explicitly overturns 2. This effectively extends the rule described by 3 to include reserving space for potential roommates of officers. Point 4 is complete nonsense from the standpoint of the constitution and is superseded by this amendment anyways.

The Committee edict lacks binding efficacy. They acted prior to the fact and moreover did so in the absence of parties with actual grievances. OC<sup>4</sup> section 4.3.1 instructs them to review violations of House rules. OC section 7.2.7<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Chair: Dana Sadava, Secretary: William Peterson, and UCCs: Geoffry Meissner, Trisha Sando, Barbara Kraatz, Ryan Gutenkunst, Amy Duello, and Kenny Higa.

<sup>2</sup>The freshmen selection is more significant by volume, but not necessarily by selectivity. The room allocation procedure may only have a limited effect on room allocation and house culture. Comparatively, other houses permit much more random variability in their room allocation processes. At the extreme, in Lloyd, only the President is guaranteed housing “on campus”. Other houses do tend to have noticeably more diverse cultures.

<sup>3</sup>Most recently this upheaval manifested itself during the 1999-2000 officer year. The effects linger to this day.

<sup>4</sup>Original Constitution

<sup>5</sup>The presence of this section nullifies the plenary power granted in OC section 4.3.3.

authorizes the Committee to judge conflicts and disputes arising from actual Room Hassle. Yet at the time they acted, the Hassle had not been run<sup>6</sup> and no dispute had arisen. In short, it was a non-issue. Moreover, the Committee lacks plenary interpretation powers within the Room Hassle procedure—any reasonable, fair, and honest interpretation implemented by the Secretary must be upheld<sup>7</sup>. They are supposed to act as a court of equity and arbitrate actual and specific disputes.

Nevertheless, under the current constitution the Committee could resolve future disputes in a manner at variance with historic policy. This amendment forecloses the Committee from reasonably prohibiting officers with guaranteed picks from selecting their roommate(s) and potentially displacing members from the house.

### **A.3 Reasoning for this Procedure**

#### **A.3.1 Guarantee of Roommate Choice**

Life at Tech is hard. We are beset with lengthy problem sets and unhealthy social conditions. Permitting individuals to select their roommates minimizes the chance that conflict will arise within one's room—a measure of guaranteed peace. Even the Housing Office respects this right. Individuals choosing unaffiliated housing are guaranteed the right to pull-on a roommate.

Moreover the appointed office process is the only direct way that Sophomores can live on campus. The roommate guarantee expands the number of on-campus Sophomores to a reasonable number. Without this rule, Sophomores must choose between a roommate of their choice and a room on-campus. This places an unfair burden on those individuals the Executive Committee seeks to reward. The right to select a roommate is necessary to ensure the continuity of the house.

This also benefits the house as a whole. Individuals living on-campus act as an 'anchor' that makes Ruddock proper the gathering point for social and academic activities. To allow one class to dwindle to only a handful of individuals on-campus would likely remove the ability of those few to draw the off-campus members of their class to Ruddock for homework and social events. Also, since the early 1970s, Ruddock members have enjoyed the right to select their roommates. The amendment seeks to protect this tradition.

#### **A.3.2 Clarification of Language**

The current constitution has many inconsistencies between its language and the actual manner in which room hassles are traditionally held. One of the primary goals of this amendment is to write down a set of rules which are clear, comprehensive, and allow only one reasonable interpretation of the hassle rules and procedures. The current Room Hassle rules outlined in the constitution are

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<sup>6</sup>i.e., no violation had yet occurred.

<sup>7</sup>Read any text on administrative law.

incomprehensible to anyone who does not study them carefully. Anyone who does take the time to study them simply finds many instances of the constitution either explicitly or implicitly in conflict with the traditional practices and internally within the document itself. This amendment, while seeking to stay true to the spirit of the traditional practice, also succeeds in the creation of a set of rules for the room hassle that are easily understandable on a first reading.

## **A.4 Comparative Analysis**

### **A.4.1 Seniority Privilege**

The original constitution provides no answer to the questions such as: “should a junior team of 5 take precedence over a senior team of 4 when picking 260?” This question has commonly been resolved with references to the OC section 7.2.7, “Room preference transaction shall be conducted to maximize occupancy of The House in a spirit of honesty and fairness by the Secretary.” This challenges the supremacy of pick order defined in OC 7.1. “Should the pick order be violated if doing so increases the number of occupants?” Consider a hassle with one remaining room and three remaining participants. If the participant with the highest pick is a female, and the remaining two participants are men, I argue that the highest pick<sup>8</sup> should still trump the pair of men<sup>9</sup> even though doing so reduces the total occupancy of the house. Applying the same principle, four seniors would trump five juniors in selecting 260. Moreover, there is a somewhat natural concept of 260 and 222 being held by upperclassmen rather than underclassmen.

On-campus allocation is unlikely to be effected by this privilege. Specifically, sections 7.1.3, 7.1.6, and 7.2.2 prevent unoccupied beds from persisting if there are members to fill them

### **A.4.2 Late Comers and Withdraw at Secretary’s Discretion**

The original constitution prohibits members from withdrawing or entering an in progress Room Hassle. The amendment removes this absolute prohibition and relegates it to the Secretary’s discretion. This will permit at the Secretary’s discretion, individuals who are tardy to participate, for example, if they only learned of the Room Hassle at the last moment. The ability to enter and withdraw may aid in breaking deadlocks. These are not enforceable rights, and the Secretary may disregard abusive or excessively disruptive requests<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup>For simplicity sake, assume that the order is assigned solely randomly, without regard to class, occupancy, or office

<sup>9</sup>In practice the Secretary would foresee this event and the single would have gone to an individual with a higher pick.

<sup>10</sup>This list is not inclusive. The Secretary has full discretion over the Room Hassle except as otherwise specified.

#### **A.4.3 Mandatory Participation of Single Occupants Limited to Those at Risk**

Single occupants<sup>11</sup> are only required to participate in Room Hassles when their singles are at risk. The original constitution mandates their participation even when it would just be a formality.

#### **A.4.4 Singles Picking Rule Broadened**

The provisions for picking singles have been generalized to provide some arbitration for the allocation of 222 and 260, and allow for large rooms on-campus. The presidential exception is also more explicit.

#### **A.4.5 Explicit References to Playing Cards Dropped**

The amendment does not require the use of Playing Cards to randomly order the Room Hassle participants. The term “card pick” has been abandoned as it lacks innate meaning.

#### **A.4.6 Stronger Distinctions between the Annual and Interim Room Hassles**

The amendment forces the secretary to hold interim Room Hassles whenever (and only whenever) Rooms are available and people are seeking residency. The amendment also clarifies that the right to remain in a room is limited to interim hassles only.

#### **A.4.7 Explicitly Authorizes Room/Roommate Exchanges**

The original constitution was silent on whether individuals could of their own accord exchange rooms and roommates outside of a Room Hassle. This practice is sufficiently common that it deserves to receive formal approval. Moreover, this can save everyone a great deal of hassle.

The existence of this privilege should not be construed as justifying abusive swaps. If two people pull-on<sup>12</sup> roommates without the intention of actually rooming with these individuals, a swap under section 7.2.3 that permits the pulled-on members to live together on-campus should be considered an honor code violation and be prosecuted appropriately. Simply because something can be done does not justify doing it; the countervailing principle of the honor code prohibits schemes intended to subvert the room pick order.

#### **A.4.8 Clear Right to Pick Roommates**

The amendment makes it clear that individuals must be given the opportunity to pick their roommates. This rule applies under all Room Hassles.

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<sup>11</sup>In general occupancies below the capacity of a room.

<sup>12</sup>i.e., their roommates are unable to make it on campus themselves.

#### **A.4.9 Officers Guarantees Extend to Roommates**

As mentioned before, this document explicitly reverses the Upper Class Committee Room Hassle Decision.

### **A.5 Hypothetical Situations**

#### **A.5.1 Order by Capacity**

In a situation where there are single rooms, doubles, triples and quads available, picking order as it relates to capacity would go as follows (percentage of capacity filled): members filling a room to capacity (100%), three members seeking to pick a quad (75%), two members seeking to pick a triple (66%), a member seeking to pick a double as a single and two members seeking to pick a quad as a double (50%), a member seeking to pick a triple as a single (33%), a member seeking to pick a quad as a single (25%). Of course, the other methods of ordering would also apply (class, officer status, random ordering).

#### **A.5.2 Consolidation of Unoccupied Beds**

Following are two examples of possible situations in which the Secretary should consolidate beds:

1. There are two unoccupied beds in the house, as Alan and Bill, two males, each have a single in a double room. Two females, Carol and Denise, are seeking to move into those beds. The Secretary should inform Alan and Bill that they will have to move in together to make room for Carol and Denise. Effectively the Secretary is consolidating the two empty beds into the same room. Alan and Bill are each given the chance to designate a roommate of their choice to avoid consolidation (section 7.2.2). Alternatively, either Alan or Bill may use this same guarantee (section 7.2.2) to designate the other as their roommate to comply with the Secretary's order to consolidate.
2. There are two unoccupied beds in the house. Alan and Bill hold a triple as a double, and Carol has a double as a single. Two members, Denise and Eileen, wish to move into those beds. The Secretary informs Alan and Bill that they will have to either find another roommate to fill their room, or relocate to a double (presumably the one held by Carol) so that the three females are able to live in the triple.