EECS REFS Recruitment
Resources for Easing Friction and Stress
Who We Are

• 10 EECS graduate students trained and certified as peer mediators by Conflict Resolution @ MIT.

• Serve as a resource for the graduate community in dealing with stress and conflict in a safe and confidential environment.
Why You Are Here

We are seeking several new EECS REFS to start in the 2016-2017 academic year training in Spring 2016 and August 2016
What We Do

• **Listen** to individual student concerns (academic, personal, interpersonal)
• **Suggest** departmental or Institute resources for further assistance
• **Mediate** disputes between two or more parties impartially and confidentially
• **Act as first point of contact** for EECS students when they are in difficult situations
What We Do NOT Do

• Act as attorneys or judges
• Arbitrate or determine right or wrong
• Resolve conflicts on student’s behalf
• Guarantee resolution
• Inform others about student’s situation without his/her consent.
Confidentiality

Everything between a REFS member and a fellow EECS graduate student is CONFIDENTIAL

(except when we become aware of felony-level offenses, believe there is imminent risk of harm to oneself or others, or are ordered to share information by a lawfully issued subpoena)
Examples (1)

• Just come by to chat
• Academic:
  – “What classes should I take?”
  – “I get stressed out studying for TQEs.”
  – “Help! My research isn’t going well.”
  – “I’m having trouble finding a thesis topic.”
  – “I’m thinking about switching research groups.”
  – “I’m not sure whether I want to continue in the doctoral program.”
Examples (2)

- Personal:
  - “I feel unhappy or stressed or depressed.”
  - “I’m gay and I’m afraid that my friends or advisor might find out.”
  - “I’m having trouble maintaining my long-distance romantic relationship.”
Examples (3)

- **Interpersonal:**
  - Need help in planning upcoming conversation with someone:
    - Asking advisor for time off or for feedback
    - Confronting research collaborators about responsibilities
    - Dealing with academic/professional dishonesty
    - Annoyed at office mate’s behavior
    - Concerned about friend’s drug use
  - Feel that advisor is too busy
  - Suspect that advisor practices favoritism
  - Sexual harassment
How Students Use the REFS Program

• Students come to us
• Most common avenue is through personal contacts
• Publicizing REFS is an ongoing activity
• E-mail us individually to make an appointment to meet up and chat

OR

• Contact all of us at
  eecs-refs@mit.edu
  eecsrefs.mit.edu
Statistics

- 10 EECS REFS, 2 faculty advisors
- 65 distinct cases
- 1.4 meetings per case
  - Meetings include in-person, phone and e-mail conversations
- 2.6 hours per case
- Total of 167.5 hours

(Jan 2014 – Dec 2014)
Caseload By Type
Other Responsibilities and Compensation

- **Training**
  - One-time 40-hour mediation training by ConflictManagement@MIT
  - Ongoing training from ConflictManagement@MIT

- **Meetings**
  - EECS REFS group meetings once a month
  - All-REFS meetings once a month

- **Internal duties**
  - Rotating chair position, webmaster, treasurer, etc.

- **Reports to the department and faculty**

- **Publicity events and activities**

- **~10 hours per month**

- **$200 per month compensation (paid during the summer)**

- **Expectation of multi-year appointment**
Publicity We’ve Done

• EECS orientation and visit weekend
• Seminars
• Stress balls brains
• Small socials with donuts
• Winter care kits
• “REFS Spotlight” and other posters

Do you have any ideas?
Why Be a REFS?

- Improve the graduate experience for your peers
- Develop your communication and interpersonal skills
- Deepen your understanding of issues that exist in the department and academia in general
- Broaden your personal network around MIT and the department
- Work with fellow community-minded students long-term

*Recommend your friends to apply!*
What We Look for in a Prospective REFS

1. Approachable and well-networked
2. Willing to commit time, interested in leadership, takes initiative
3. Understands graduate student issues
4. Aware of and appreciates diversity
5. 2nd year or beyond in an MEng/PhD or SM/PhD program
6. Able to stay on for multiple years
Application Process

1. Submit an Application (Due 12/8 at 4pm)
   – Biographical information and essay
   – Ten signatures from fellow students (three as references)
   – Approval from research advisor
2. Interviews (Thurs 12/10 – Fri 12/11)
3. Appointment Notification (By 12/18)
4. Mediation Training (Spring 2016 or August 2016)
   – Spring: Tues & Thurs 5-7pm
   – August: 5-8 hours per day for ~3 weeks
   – Required for all new REFS
5. Start in May 2016 or September 2016
Our role is to neutrally and confidentially support EECS graduate students in dealing with issues involving stress and/or conflict, however big or small.

Ross Finman  
Becky Mieloszyk  
Samantha Gunter  
Lawson Wong  
Wenjing Fang  
Rachael Harding  
Shreya Saxena  
Gauri Joshi  
Jen Gong  
Arman Rezaee  

CSAIL  
RLE, LEES, HST  
RLE, LEES  
CSAIL  
RLE, MTL  
CSAIL  
LIDS  
RLE  
CSAIL  
RLE

Roster as of December 2015

eeecsrefs.mit.edu