

eeCSREFS

# EECS REFS Info Session

**R**esources

for

**E**asing

**F**riiction

and

**S**tress

# Who We Are

- 9 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  
new **EECS REFS** members  
to start in 2017

with training in Spring 2017 or August 2017

# 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 planning a conversation with someone:
    - Asking advisor for time off
    - Confronting 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](mailto:eecs-refs@mit.edu)

[eecsrefs.mit.edu](http://eecsrefs.mit.edu)

# 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, publicity, etc.
- **Reports to the department and faculty**
- **Help with 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 snacks
- Winter care kits

*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 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. 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 **12/7 at 5pm**)
  - Biographical information and essay
  - Ten signatures from fellow students (three as references)
  - Approval from research advisor
2. Interviews (**Fri 12/09 – Wed 12/14**)
3. Appointment Notification (middle of Dec)
4. Mediation Training (Spring 2017 or August 2017)
  - Spring: Mon & Wed 5-7pm
  - August: 5-8 hours per day for ~2 weeks
  - **Required** for all new REFS
5. Start in May 2017 or September 2017



Questions?