EECS REFS
Info Session
Resources for Easing Friction and Stress
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
  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
- 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\textsuperscript{nd} 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?