

# MIT Faculty Newsletter

<https://fnl.mit.edu>

**in this issue** we offer a recap of last spring's Faculty Newsletter Zoom forum on the choice of the next MIT president ([page 4](#)); "Palestine, MIT, and Free Speech: A Letter from Student Activists to Our Professors" ([page 10](#)); and a response to last issue's "Project Indigenous MIT" ([page 12](#)).



Students Voting, U. of Texas/Arlington, 1972

## Transforming Research Administration: Second Update

Maria T. Zuber and Krystyn J. Van Vliet

**EARLIER THIS YEAR, WE** provided a [progress report](#) on MIT's work to transform its research and sponsored activity enterprise to meet the needs of principal investigators (PIs) in a changing and increasingly complex funding environment. We wrote about our efforts to build a high-performing research administration enterprise through a focus on two Ts – teams and tools. Here, we offer a second progress report.

### Team building in RAS and OSATT

We shared the good news earlier this year that Vivian Holmes had joined MIT as the first-ever director of Research Administration Services (RAS). Ms. Holmes brings to the role 30 years of research administration experience, including at the Broad Institute. Most recently, she was the Assistant Dean for

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## Encourage Your Students to Vote

Dear Fellow Faculty,

**IN 1998, THE HIGHER** Education Act was amended to require universities to make a good faith effort to encourage student voter registration. At MIT, [72% of eligible MIT students voted in the 2020 election](#). This is 5% higher than [the national average](#), but we can do better. We write to urge all faculty members to join in MIT's ongoing non-partisan efforts to increase voter participation among our students.

Many avenues exist for faculty to promote voter participation and signal the importance of democratic engagement. We can:

1. Simply ask students if they have registered to vote and have a plan to vote (directing them to [mit.turbovote.org](https://mit.turbovote.org) if they have not);

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## Editorial I. Lessons on Governance from Yale II. Prof. Vera Kistiakowsky, 1928-2021 III. Faculty Newsletter Business

### Lessons on Governance from Yale

**A RECENT ARTICLE IN** the *Chronicle of Higher Education* by Len Gutkin, "The Review: The Report Yale Doesn't Want You to See" (August 22, 2022) is very illuminating about how oversized, overpaid, and opaque the top administration is at Yale.

There's also a 2018 *Chronicle* [report](#) showing that Yale has the fifth-highest ratio of administrators to students in the country, and the highest in the Ivy League (for comparison, peer institutions like Columbia, Harvard, and Stanford were 24th, 35th, and 55th, respectively). MIT was 6th, with a very high administrator to student ratio and high cost of administration leadership.

Perhaps we should encourage a similar review here.

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Photo Credit: Page 1: University of Texas at Arlington News Service

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**Lessons on Governance from Yale**  
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The thesis in the article also suggests that an “increasingly intolerable burden of bureaucratic oversight” stems from the numerical increase in administration even as the size of the faculty has remained stagnant, which is precisely the case at MIT.

Then there’s the issue of the enormous administrative salaries as well as additional outside compensation at the Institute. According to Schedule K “highly compensated individuals” of the IRS filing for MIT as of tax year 2020 (filed May 21, 2021), President Reif received \$1,675,260. This, of course, doesn’t include further compensation he received as board member at Schlumberger, reported to be \$357,265. Executive Vice President and Treasurer Israel Ruiz received \$926,593.

Which brings us to MITIMCo (the MIT Management Company) which operates completely outside of any oversight by the Faculty. Seth Alexander, President of MITIMCo, received \$2,545,561. Steven Marsh, MITIMCo Senior Vice President, received \$2,520,619. Other MITIMCo officers were similarly highly compensated. The office buildings built on the East Campus probably return substantial bonuses for MITIMCo, which of course wouldn’t be provided by desperately needed graduate student housing.

Of the many reforms in governance that MIT would benefit from, bringing MITIMCo under faculty review seems critical. The return to governance appropriate for a university, rather than a corporation, should be one of the guiding principles in the search for a new president.

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**Prof. Vera Kistiakowsky, 1928-2021**

**PROF. VERA KISTIAKOWSKY** passed away on December 11, 2021 at the age of 93. Dr. Kistiakowsky was the first woman to be appointed a professor of physics at MIT (1972). She subsequently founded the *MIT Faculty Newsletter*, in response to the precipitous closing of the Department of Applied Biological Sciences under then Provost John Deutch and Dean of Science Gene Brown.

Quoting from her *NY Times* obituary: “Vera was an adventurous woman ahead of her time. She was a physicist who studied elementary particles and the light from distant stars.

She was an early advocate for women in science and a peace activist who called for the abolition of nuclear weapons. . . . Her contributions to experimental particle physics ranged from the design and construction of detectors to their use measuring the properties of high energy sub-atomic particles. Later in her career Vera moved to observational astrophysics, studying the light emitted by supernovae and planetary nebulae. She was a fellow of the American Physical Society (APS) and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and held an honorary doctorate from Mount Holyoke.”

Vera Kistiakowsky was one of the country’s outstanding scientists of the twentieth century. She moved to astrophysics because she did not enjoy the work required to build and support the large research teams necessary in experimental physics. She disdained that kind of power and resented the energy that it took away from intellectual work. Energetic and fit, she climbed mountains as a hobby, and tackled several in the Himalayas when she turned 65.

Vera Kistiakowsky also had a very strong interest in education and was a leader in the Department of Physics in this effort. With her tart and no-nonsense demeanor, she was an unfailingly generous colleague. She was especially helpful to young faculty members who often had little experience in teaching when they joined the MIT faculty. She provided not only important material to help them in their teaching, but also honest and thoughtful evaluations of their teaching efforts and outcomes. Many faculty members remember her for these contributions and still miss her presence.

Kistiakowsky was also a pioneering advocate for women in science, publishing early scholarship and founding Women in Science and Engineering in Boston with her friends Elizabeth Baranger and Vera Pless. She founded the American Physical Society Committee on Women in Physics and served as President of the Association of Women in Science.

Vera was a peace activist, lecturing for nuclear disarmament around the country, and serving on the board of the Council for a Livable World. At MIT she was very outspoken about the need for nuclear disarmament and denounced a number of Department of Defense sponsored projects. She was very active in efforts to promote equity, ethics, and

free expression at MIT, which is why she founded the *MIT Faculty Newsletter*. She is reported to have subsequently said of the *Newsletter*, “It’s not the radical rag that I had hoped it would become, but it will serve.”

With the faculty meetings chaired by the administration, it was very difficult to make motions opposing the closing of the Department of Applied Biological Science. When the Provost’s office declined to provide the internal mailing addresses of the faculty, Vera went through the directory, hand typed faculty office addresses onto mailing stickers and mailed out the first issue of what became the *MIT Faculty Newsletter*. Here is the link to the first communication, [her “zeroth” issue](#).

All MIT faculty owe Vera Kistiakowsky gratitude for refusing to be a bystander and for taking on the interests of graduate students, research staff, postdoctoral fellows, and junior faculty whose careers were put at risk by that arbitrary action. We miss her clarity, commitment, and, most of all, her courage to speak up about matters of concern to MIT, to the nation, and to the world.

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**Faculty Newsletter Business**

**Upcoming Editorial Board Elections**

**LATER THIS FALL, WE** will be holding elections for new members of the *Faculty Newsletter* Editorial Board. As always, these elections will be held electronically, and all faculty members and emeritus faculty will be eligible to vote. Election to the FNL Editorial Board is the only election at MIT open to all faculty and emeritus faculty. We strongly encourage you to vote when you receive your email invitation.

**Ruth Perry Donation**

**MUCH THANKS TO RUTH PERRY**, long-time FNL Editorial Board member and Ann Fetter Friedlaender Professor of Humanities, Emeritus and MacVicar Faculty Fellow for her most generous sustaining donation to the *Newsletter*. Her gift will help ensure the continued existence of the *MIT Faculty Newsletter* and allow us to improve our web presence and hold live forums. The Editorial Board has long benefitted from Ruth’s participation, and her gift will strengthen her legacy of independent analysis and vigorous defense of academic freedom in the best sense.

**Editorial Subcommittee**

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## Faculty and Staff Views on the Choice of the Next MIT President: A Recap of Last Spring's Faculty Newsletter Zoom Forum

ON MAY 24, 2022, the *Faculty Newsletter* hosted a Zoom forum on the selection of the next president of MIT. Following is an abbreviated version of that presentation.

### Introduction

**Jonathan A. King**  
Professor of Molecular Biology,  
Emeritus

Good afternoon, and thank you for joining this “Forum on the Selection of the Next President of MIT.” The appointment of a new president of MIT will influence education and research at the Institute for years – and perhaps decades – to come. We do not yet know whether the committees and procedures put in place recently to correct prior administration errors will be effective. These errors included – in the aggressive pursuit of income – allowing undue influence on MIT from fiscal donors such as Saudi Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Jeffrey Epstein, and others. Thus, the choice of a new president needs broad and close scrutiny.

This forum has been organized by the Editorial Board of the *Faculty Newsletter*. *Faculty Newsletter* Editorial Board members are elected by the faculty, independently of administration input. We have invited members of the Postdoctoral Association and the Graduate Student Union to join. All the panelists are speaking for themselves.

We note that the general Administrative Staff is not represented, nor are undergraduate students.

Before introducing our faculty panelists, I would like to call your attention to the very substantial [article on MIT gover-](#)

[nance](#) in the current issue of the *Faculty Newsletter*, by current and former faculty chairs Lily Tsai, Rick Danheiser, Bob Jaffe, and Tom Kochan. The situation at MIT is correctly described as Shared Governance. However, the Faculty and the Administration are in no way equal partners in this shared governance. The Administration holds many levers of influence, not available to the Faculty, most notably the budget.

Thus, the policy for decades of underpaying our female faculty was not set by input from the female faculty. Similarly, the decision of the Reif administration to use the invaluable campus land on the East Campus for commercial office buildings rather than graduate student housing and academic buildings, represented ignoring the faculty, grad student, and postdoctoral preferences. The dominant influence of the president and close advisors in MIT Governance makes the selection process deserving of our closest scrutiny.

It's worth mentioning two other features that add to our concern. MIT is one of the only research universities in the country in which the faculty does not have their own senate or council, that can confer independently of the administration. The MIT Corporation is also somewhat unusual in the scarcity of national research, scientific, or educational leaders among its members.

Our first panel will be five-minute statements from four senior faculty:

Professor Rosalind Williams from the Program in Science, Technology and Society; Professor Ceasar McDowell of the

Department of Urban Studies and Planning; Professor Ruth Perry of Literature; and Professor Robert Redwine from Physics. After their presentation we will open the floor for general discussion.

Roz, you have the floor.

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**Rosalind Williams**  
Bern Dibner Professor, Emeritus  
Program in Science, Technology,  
and Society

I want to use my five minutes to offer three descriptions:

- Of this moment in history
- Of an ideal MIT President
- Of the current MIT governance structure

Order matters: These three things are connected in a logical sequence.

### First: the historical moment.

In modern times (at least since MIT's founding in 1861) universities were widely assumed to be good for society – their quest for knowledge, led to research, useful applications, economic prosperity, social progress.

Today, there is much less conviction that this is how history works.

Instead, there is distrust of universities as institutions and suspicion of motives and behavior of many faculty.

Coming years will be very different from previous ones for universities because they will not have the civic and political support that universities have long enjoyed.

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**Second: the ideal MIT president will  
need skills to navigate in these troubled  
waters.**

These will be partly political skills but most of all they involve moral leadership within the Institute and beyond.

Often heard is such a person described as someone with a strong moral compass.

What does this mean in the context of higher education?

The true north in a university setting means dedication to the ideals of Enlightenment – to the discovery of knowledge, the quest for truth, dedication to understanding how the universe works, both non-human nature and human societies.

The president and the institution need to point towards the values of Enlightenment, but both must understand their limits: there is an ideal but there are also human shortcomings and both need to be acknowledged.

An example would be MIT studying its own history of exploitation connected with enslavement – using tools of research and study to understand its own failures.

**Third: an ideal person is not possible  
and also not enough.**

MIT needs a governance structure where the moral compass of the president can operate.

Currently this is questionable.

In the latest issue of the FNL (May/June 2022) Faculty Chair Lily Tsai [has described the shared governance of MIT](#) – Faculty, Administration, and Corporation – as a triangle where the relation between Faculty and Corporation has become weak and needs to be strengthened.

Similar themes [were raised by Leigh Royden and myself](#) in the Jan/Feb 2020 issue of the FNL.

We put particular emphasis on the December 2012 quarterly meeting of the MIT Corporation, where a series of votes by the Corporation renamed the “Bylaws of the Corporation” as “Bylaws of MIT”;

extended the responsibilities of the Executive Committee of the Corporation; and, most significantly, determined that the Executive Committee would no longer be chaired by the president of MIT but by the chair of the Corporation. In practice this has meant that the Executive Committee is no longer headed by someone with experience as an academic leader, and sharply limits the authority of the MIT president.

I would also note that the president of the MIT Investment Management Company reports directly to the Chair of the Corporation, without going through the President of MIT. At a time when the MIT endowment has grown remarkably, this means that its payout and related matters, which are increasingly significant, rest entirely within the reporting structure of the Corporation.

In sum: The new president of MIT may bring a strong moral compass to the job – but the structure of MIT as it now stands does not make it clear whose compass will be consulted to direct the course of the Institute. The search for a new president should bring intensive discussion by all parties involved not only of the values and priorities of individual candidates, but also of the governance structure which will make it more or less possible to act upon those values and priorities.

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**Ruth Perry  
Ann Fetter Friedlaender Professor of  
Humanities, Emeritus**

When I first came to MIT 50 years ago, the faculty meetings were large, noisy, energetic events. There were speeches and debates on the floor – and votes. Presidents – Wiesner, Gray, and then Vest – recognized people to speak but did not direct the discussion. If you wanted to send a message to the entire faculty – this was before email – you could get a roll of faculty labels, stick them onto a letter or a flyer folded in thirds, and put them in intercampus mail. I communicated this way with my colleagues across the Institute a number of times, without any

oversight. I knew many of my colleagues in other Schools. And the big names in those Schools – Herman Feshbach, Phil Morrison, Salvador Luria, Art Smith, Joe Weizenbaum, Patrick Winston – were highly literate with interests in the arts and humanities and enjoyed discussing literature with me.

In the last 15 years the position of the faculty in the governance of MIT has deteriorated. No one comes to the faculty meetings anymore because there is never open debate on issues and little time left for comments after planned announcements and committee reports. One is encouraged to submit comments on important matters – privately, separately, individually – but not as part of an ongoing collective discussion. The administration has been switched to broadcast but not to receive. The layers of bureaucracy and administration have multiplied and thickened, muffling communication among the faculty. The administration communicates with its faculty and the world through public relations agents. The old face-to-face connections are far less frequent.

And that is a shame because MIT is its faculty. You could change out the Corporation and it would still be MIT. And you could change out the administration – which is about to happen – and it would still be MIT. But you could never replace the faculty and stay the same institution.

So that’s one imperative: the new president must value and strengthen faculty participation in the governance of MIT. We need a return to transparency in our leaders’ decisions and increased trust in faculty voices and representation.

Then there is the issue of intellectual balance. Every week new initiatives are being announced – encouraging start-ups and entrepreneurial activity and new businesses. MIT has become the R&D arm of the technology and business community – instrumentally geared to serve industry rather than to develop a balanced educational institution. The irony, of course, is that this corporate and entrepreneurial culture will be less creative than its

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earlier intellectual exploratory version. Our Corporation used to have more MIT faculty members on it as well as faculty from other institutions. Nowadays it is largely made up of people from the business world and even the faculty on it are faculty from business schools.

But capitalism and the profit motive are not the best guiding principles for an educational institution. Strategies for making money do not lead to new understandings about the solar system or breakthroughs in biology or physics; a focus on maximizing real estate investments won't illuminate a complicated tract in German philosophy or help us understand the meaning of a nineteenth-century English poem, a French painting, or a Romanian social movement.

We need a president who comes from a more traditional and less corporate university – who has operated with a different set of standards to those of business – a leader who believes more in the collective production and open dissemination of knowledge than in leveraging corporate gain. We need a leader who has another intellectual register to draw on other than business and who resonates to other values than merely that of cash. Let's find a climate scientist determined to halt the heating of the planet. Or an engineer who has been involved in forestalling surveillance techniques. Someone with an ethical stake in the world of technology and science.

It ought to be possible to locate a new president interested in:

1. Strengthening the hand of the faculty in the governance of MIT.
2. Committed to hiring a diverse faculty.
3. Broadening the educational objectives of the Institute beyond the entrepreneurial.
4. Bringing an ethical dimension to the Institute's initiatives.

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**Robert P. Redwine**  
**Professor Emeritus,**  
**Department of Physics**

Thank you to the leaders of this forum for inviting me to have a significant role in this important event.

I have been on the MIT Faculty since 1979; I formally became emeritus faculty in 2021. In addition to doing teaching and research in physics over these many years, I served as Director of the Laboratory for Nuclear Science from 1992 to 2000 and as Dean for Undergraduate Education from 2000 to 2006.

Given the structure of leadership at MIT, it is hard to overestimate the importance of choosing the right person to fill the role of president.

Obviously, the Corporation has the formal responsibility to appoint the president, but it is very important that the Corporation members get a broad range of inputs and perspectives in making this decision – from faculty, students, research staff, and administrative staff. I think we are doing a better job than before at including input from faculty and students, but the staff, including administrative staff, is really important as well. It is important to remember that administrative staff members are in an especially complicated position, as they may feel that expressing their honest opinions may put their jobs at risk.

The search should be broad. We know from experience that even someone who has no MIT past can be a great president. I was fortunate as dean to work closely for several years with Chuck Vest, who did not have an MIT connection before he was appointed president. Chuck was broadly viewed as very successful in many ways as president.

Clearly, we want a president who has appropriate experience and who has demonstrated that he or she has the moral compass and commitment to making sure that MIT makes the right decisions and moves in the right direction. However, how the president interacts with the broad MIT community is also very important.

One feature about Chuck Vest that I really liked, and I hope that those who

choose the next president will care about, was his willingness to listen to different points of view. If you were concerned about the direction MIT was going on an issue and you went to Chuck to express that concern, he would listen carefully. And if you had good arguments for changing direction, he would almost always agree to do so. He was not concerned about being seen as personally right all the time, he just wanted MIT to be going in the right direction.

This leads to the general issue of connections between the president's office and the rest of the Institute. It is important that the president receive regular input and feedback from a range of roles across MIT. When I was Dean for Undergraduate Education, the Academic Council played an important role in providing this. Meeting once a week, there was time not only for specific agenda items but also time for general discussion and for people to raise issues they were concerned about. Academic Council is certainly not the only mechanism for providing such input and perspective, but one way or another it is important to make sure the president is exposed to such discussions and to make sure that the president is a person who will welcome such discussions.

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**Jonathan A. King**  
**Professor of Molecular Biology,**  
**Emeritus**

Though a stable financial base is essential for any institution, it is all too easy for that goal to supersede others.

In my personal estimation, focus on income above scholarship and teaching, led to a number of abuses which have undermined rather than advanced MIT in recent years.

When President Reif took office, I was part of a faculty and grad student group pressing for alleviating the acute housing shortage for graduate students. The Institute had available campus land on the East Campus, and plenty of capital. Sadly, rather than expanding graduate student housing to meet the need, President Reif chose to build commercial office buildings.

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Many people don't understand that the university environment is unique in promoting open communication – grad students, postdocs, and faculty are all trying to communicate what they have learned, and to learn more from you. That is a central component of the culture, and key to discovery and innovation.

The commercial sector operates in the opposite mode; corporate secrecy, patent monopolies, non-disclosure agreements. For decades to come our East Campus will have culture of open communication and cooperation undermined, weakening MIT's ability to contribute to national and international needs.

I want to see a new president chosen for their commitment to the role of the university, and not to increasing income available to the administration.

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**Benedict Borer**  
**Postdoctoral Fellow**  
**Department of Earth, Atmospheric,  
and Planetary Sciences**

Thank you very much for the opportunity of being part of this panel and lend a voice to the postdoctoral community! As briefly mentioned by Nader [Nikbakht, Postdoctoral Association President], we created a survey to assess the current financial situation of the postdoctoral community at MIT in February of 2022. This was in response to frequent comments that the ever-increasing cost-of-living in the Boston area is mentally draining, fuels existential fears, and restricts postdocs from performing their research at peak performance. Indeed, the results of the survey were eye-opening and the high rate of response, approximately a third of the MIT postdoctoral community within 48 hours responded, emphasized the grim financial situation of many postdocs currently working at MIT.

The depressing truth is that 85% of all postdocs at MIT feel financial stress every single day. There are multiple reasons for this such as the fact that MIT pays among

the lowest postdoctoral salaries in the Boston area, two consecutive years of high inflation, and an increase in housing costs of up to 30% in a single year. As a result, over 50% of the postdoctoral community pays more than 50% of their salary for rent, 65% of the postdoctoral fellows cannot afford to pay into rental savings, and the 15% of postdocs that have children pay an additional \$20,000 to \$40,000 per year for childcare. A number of postdocs commented in the survey that the only way to make ends meet is to work a second job, and others have accrued significant debt since joining MIT.

It goes without saying that this is not sustainable. Since MIT expects their postdocs to work at the cutting edge of research and technology in a vastly competitive environment, compensation and working conditions should empower us to do so and not be a further burden on mental health.

Due to the current financial situation of postdocs and actions of MIT under the previous president, many postdocs identify themselves less with what MIT stands for. I therefore believe that the next MIT president needs to govern MIT less as a corporate institution, but focus on the core mission of MIT: excellence in teaching and research. Reigniting the sense of belonging and nurturing trust in the leadership not only among the postdoctoral community but across MIT faculty, staff, and students will be paramount in successfully navigating MIT through the next decade.

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**Adam Trebach**  
**Graduate Student**  
**Department of Physics**

Hello my name is Adam Trebach, I'm a 5th-year graduate student worker in the Physics Department and I've been organizing with the MITGSU [Graduate Student Union] since fall 2018. As a union organizer, I'd first like to encourage any grad students in the audience to fill out your bargaining survey! Go to [tinyurl.com/mitgsuBargainingSurvey](https://tinyurl.com/mitgsuBargainingSurvey). It takes about 10 minutes and your voice matters, so please share your thoughts.

I have three primary points that I would like to make: two stemming from my status as a graduate student worker and one from my status as a young person.

As a grad worker, I know that it's of paramount importance that our next president is committed to honest collaboration with the MITGSU. We share the same goal: we want to build an MIT where bright young academics, regardless of class or race or gender, can thrive as we hone our skills and discover new things. And we want to work with the administration to make this happen.

So, when grad workers say we need protections from abuse, that's because we know that abuse and harassment and discrimination hamper our work here. When we say we need affordable housing, that's because we know that rationing food and stressing about paying our rent hampers our work here. It is my sincerest hope that the next president will view us as allies in the quest for a better MIT. A good start to this would be honest communication with grad workers here and respect for our needs, something that was conspicuously absent during the administration's anti-union campaign.

For example, we repeatedly received messages claiming that the administration could not negotiate with the MITGSU about housing even though this is strictly, verifiably false. Housing is not a required subject of bargaining but it is absolutely permitted. This was a deliberate lie that was spread to dash the hopes of grad workers who saw and see a union as a vehicle to improve our lives and work here. In this church where we worship the pursuit of truth, dishonesty is blasphemy. Eventually the administration conceded that they \*would\* not negotiate on housing. This, at least, is an honest statement of intention, although I sincerely hope that the administration changes their tune. I have heard some faculty are being told that you cannot talk to graduate students about the union. This too is disinformation, and seems to be an effort to divide us even though, as fellow academics, our interests are largely aligned.

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This actually neatly brings me to my second point: housing. We need it, but we can't afford it. Housing costs have risen faster than our wages for several years running now. While this has happened, MIT administrators have demolished the Eastgate dorm and replaced it with site 4, raising rents by over 50%. This is the wrong direction. I know from my hundreds of conversations with grad workers that this issue is both important and urgent. So I would urge the next president of MIT to construct grad dorms that are not luxury apartments and rent them below market rate so that grad workers aren't rationing our food.

Finally, I speak as a young person. From 2007 to 2020, our departing president L. Raphael Reif, sat on the board of directors for Schlumberger (the world's largest offshore drilling company). To be clear, this is not an energy company, this is an organization that is almost exclusively an oilfield services contractor. During that time, President Reif received compensation of at least 4.3 million dollars, including over 36,000 shares of stock. Now I've only been able to find the SEC filings since 2010, but the stocks listed in there are today valued at over 1.5 million dollars (<https://sec.report/CIK/0001396628/Insider-Trades>). MIT has a vital role to play in the global decarbonization effort, but any breakthroughs in this endeavor could cost President Reif

millions. This is an obvious conflict of interest.

I am not claiming that President Reif has steered the Institute away from decarbonization, but the possibility and incentives for this clearly exist. And I do know for certain that my generation will pay the price for our sluggishness in addressing the climate crisis. Being president of MIT is an awesome responsibility, and the next president should have no financial entanglements that oppose MIT's commitment to building a better world. MIT can and must be committed to producing new knowledge and to the public good, not simply to the enrichment of itself and its executives. ■

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## **Request for Proposals for Innovative Curricular Projects The Alex and Brit d'Arbeloff Fund for Excellence in Education**

**THE OFFICE OF THE** Vice Chancellor is soliciting wide-ranging proposals to support larger-scale ambitious projects designed to strengthen MIT undergraduate education and curricula, and enrich the academic experience of our undergraduates. Proposals can be focused at any level of undergraduate education, and those transcending specific departmental curricula are also encouraged.

In recent years, several important reports have been released that include recommendations for improving MIT. You are encouraged to review these and others as you develop ideas for proposals focused on undergraduate education:

- [Report of Task Force 2021 and Beyond \(October 2021\)](#),
- [Report of the Ad hoc Committee on Leveraging Best Practices from Remote Teaching for On-Campus Education \(August 2022\)](#),
- [Draft MIT Five-year Strategic Action Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(2021-2026\) \(March, 2021\)](#).

Necessary forms, instructions, and descriptions of previously funded projects can be found on the Fund website (<https://registrar.mit.edu/darbeloff>). If you would like to discuss how the d'Arbeloff Fund could support your idea or have questions about the application process, please contact the Registrar's Office, Curriculum and Faculty Support at [darbeloff-fund@mit.edu](mailto:darbeloff-fund@mit.edu).

**Proposals are due by Friday,  
October 21, 2022.**



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## Encourage Your Students to Vote

continued from page 1

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2. Create flexibility in our course curriculum on Election Day November 8 and record lectures that day (indicating these in advance in our syllabi);
3. Attend voter participation events on campus;
4. Add a message on our email signature emphasizing the importance of voter participation;
5. Use a [Zoom background image](#) (available through the [PKG center](#) or you can create your own) emphasizing the importance of voter registration;
6. Reach out to work with the student group [MITvote](#) or the [MIT working group](#) for the wider [ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge initiative](#).

All students, regardless of eligibility to vote, can help with voter assistance hot-lines, encouraging peers to register, driving people to the polls, participating in voter protection teams, [combating disinformation](#), and engaging with others in policy discussions about issues that matter to them, all of which help increase civic engagement.

MIT's ALL IN working group is developing several initiatives to increase student civic engagement, including integrating voter registration into course registration (as many universities have already done), and providing support to students working with faculty leadership to adopt a policy of having no classes on Election Day. Your involvement can help ensure that these initiatives are in place for 2024.

Some may lament that voting in Massachusetts is unlikely to affect national politics. But students' voting locale can be based on their permanent address if they so choose. And many of

our students are affected by local politics, where even students voting in Massachusetts can have an impact. Our students also have friends all over the country that they may be able to influence, including those voting in swing states. Furthermore, voting is habit-forming; young voters usually continue to vote in subsequent elections, and our students today will be dispersed all over the country in just a few years.

To learn more and get involved, please contact Jill Bassett ([jbassett@mit.edu](mailto:jbassett@mit.edu)), Nancy Kanwisher ([ngk@mit.edu](mailto:ngk@mit.edu)), or Roger Levy ([rplevy@mit.edu](mailto:rplevy@mit.edu)). ■

Nancy Kanwisher  
Roger Levy  
Daron Acemoğlu  
Edmund Bertschinger  
Marah Gubar  
Tom Levenson  
Kieran Setiya  
Rebecca Saxe  
David Autor

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## Nominate a Colleague as a MacVicar Faculty Fellow

**PROVOST CYNTHIA BARNHART** is calling for nominations of faculty as 2023 MacVicar Faculty Fellows.

The MacVicar Faculty Fellows Program recognizes MIT faculty who have made exemplary and sustained contributions to the teaching and education of undergraduates at the Institute. Together, the Fellows form a small academy of scholars committed to exceptional instruction and innovation in education.

MacVicar Faculty Fellows are selected through a competitive nomination process, appointed for 10-year terms, and receive \$10,000 per year of discretionary funds for educational activities, research, travel, and other scholarly expenses.

The MacVicar Program honors the life and contributions of the late Margaret

MacVicar, Professor of Physical Science and Dean for Undergraduate Education.

Nominations should include:

- a primary nomination letter detailing the contributions of the nominee to undergraduate education,
- three to six supporting letters from faculty colleagues, including one from his or her department head if the primary letter is not from the department head,
- three to six supporting letters from present or former undergraduate students, with specific comments about the nominee's undergraduate teaching,

- the nominee's curriculum vitae,
- a list of undergraduate subjects, including the number of students taught, and
- a summary of available student evaluation results for the nominee.

For more information, visit [registrar.mit.edu/macvicar](https://registrar.mit.edu/macvicar) or contact the Registrar's Office, Curriculum and Faculty Support at x3-9763 or [macvicarprogram@mit.edu](mailto:macvicarprogram@mit.edu).

**Nominations are due by Friday, November 18, 2022.**

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## Palestine, MIT, and Free Speech: A Letter from Student Activists to Our Professors

*We are the MIT Coalition Against Apartheid (CAA), a student group that is the product of years of advocacy efforts by Palestinians and Palestinian rights activists. The CAA first began as the movement for the liberation of the black majority in South Africa in the late 1980s. Since its reactivation in May 2021, it has continued as an anti-settler colonial movement for the liberation of Palestinians living under apartheid and occupation.*

**WRITING AND ADVOCATING ABOUT** Palestine is always difficult because we grapple with many dilemmas as activists. How do we speak in a way that conveys the colonial realities of our peers while also taming our language so as to not appear “one-sided?” Do we rename our art demonstration “Palestinian Awareness Wall” or do we keep it as the “Israeli Apartheid Wall” and push back against any administrative obstacles? How can we write the phrase “Israeli Government” without being called antisemitic before the ink dries?

Activism on Palestine at MIT has always been precarious. How many of us truly feel that we can discuss Palestine without the fear of repercussion? We have seen that Palestine is the free speech exception. This article touches on the visible and reported, as well as the invisible and unreported instances that people have felt too identifying to share with the wider community but felt safe to share with the CAA. They are stories of retaliation, discrimination, and hostility.

Therefore, for those Palestinian rights activists who feel that their tongue is tied, their voice is reduced to a whisper and their vocabulary constrained, we are

taking a stand. We need to move beyond closed-door conversations with the MIT administration and open the conversation to everyone. Free speech is a collective right, interconnected and interdependent. As faculty, MIT moves where you move – we need your voice to support Palestinian advocates and move closer to a more just future that facilitates impassioned discussions and discourages censorship of the future generations at MIT.

We would also like to take a moment to pay respect to Shireen Abu Akleh, who was assassinated while covering the IDF raid on the Jenin refugee camp in May 2022. Her death was a great tragedy for the voice of journalism in Palestine. We condemn her murder by the Israeli forces and the attack on her funeral procession.

### About the Free Speech Report

In the spring of 2022, the CAA produced the first *Free Speech for Palestinian Rights Activists at MIT* report to document offenses to Palestinian free speech and to empower the MIT community to hold its institution accountable. We found that there was a lack of centralization in reporting the forms of suppression that we experience, so we wanted to begin the first community consultation of its kind and share our findings with the Free Speech Working Group. The testimonies touch upon the stories and experiences of Palestinian rights activists. They paint a clear image of the patterns of suppression that students and scholars face on this campus. Some are the stories of graduated advocates, some are our own, and others are stories submitted to us from the MIT community.

Our report highlights four of the seven main patterns documented by Palestine Legal in their 2015 report, *The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack in the U.S.*

1. **False and Inflammatory Accusations of Antisemitism and Support for Terrorism**
2. **Official Denunciation**
3. **Bureaucratic Barriers**
4. **Cancellations and Alterations of Academic and Cultural Events**
5. Administrative Sanctions
6. Threats to Academic Freedom
7. Discriminatory interactions with staff/professors

What follows is a summary of that report.

### Peace, MIT Coalition Against Apartheid

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#### 1. **False and Inflammatory Accusations of Antisemitism and Support for Terrorism**

*Palestinian activists often face false and defamatory claims of antisemitism and/or support for terrorism in response to “Palestinian rights speech.”*

Examples include:

- MIT students being labeled as supporters of terror on social media by other MIT students when discussing protest movements and the people’s right of self-defense.

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## **Palestine, MIT, and Free Speech**

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- Antizionism being labeled as anti-semitism by MIT Hillel on their social media account.
- MIT staff members sharing information about training workshop by the director of Birthright engagement at MIT that conflated antizionism and antisemitism.

### **2. Official Denunciation and Academic Freedom**

*In response to outside pressure, institutional actors sometimes pronounce official disapproval of the legitimate views and actions of Palestine advocates. This is frequently done by unfairly characterizing Palestine activism, particularly support for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, as improperly delegitimizing Israel or as uncivil, divisive, and uncondusive to dialogue. Such misleading framing, promoted by certain Israel advocacy groups and predominantly reserved for speech in support of Palestine, attempts to mask the officials' underlying disagreement with the viewpoint of Palestine activists.*

In 2013, President Reif issued a statement denouncing the American Studies Association's boycott of Israel, citing that an academic boycott was "antithetical to MIT values." We believe that the discouragement and shunning of an academic boycott is an overstepping of the president's office. Boycotting is a form of free expression, and it is the right of academics to freely regulate their academic business with external actors. If academics collectively choose to regulate their behavior in a manner aligning with BDS, it must be respected and protected from interference.

### **3. Bureaucratic Barriers**

*University officials routinely erect administrative obstacles or abruptly alter school policies to hamper student organizing for Palestinian rights. These measures include*

*creating impediments to reserving rooms and forcing students to obtain advance approval for events, pay security fees, and attend mandatory meetings with administrators. Though seemingly neutral, these policies sometimes target and frequently disproportionately burden speech in favor of Palestinian rights.*

Testimonials from past activists describe how they were required to have several meetings with the administration before their events (particularly those surrounding Israeli Apartheid Week) to ensure that their content fit into MIT's idea of acceptable language. These bureaucratic barriers exist within a climate in which Palestinian activists already feel their speech is threatened on college campuses. These threats to speech are more than through bureaucratic barriers but have turned into in-person threats. Recently, at our event in the fall of 2021 with Noam Chomsky, a student became increasingly intimidating to a student organizer when they refused to check in with their ID, to comply with MIT Covid-19 protocol, and once they complied with identifying themselves they entered and left the event promptly. We encourage all members of the community to join our events and to engage in discourse, however, it is not uncommon among college activists to face physical threats of violence especially from protestors.

Such bureaucratic barriers present a challenge to Palestinian activists who may be forced to use their limited resources to ensure that their actions fall within the guidelines set by the administration. At a past event organized by Palestinian activists, MIT SOLE recognized the "sensitive nature" of their event and suggested police attendance to ensure student safety. This left the organizers concerned that their events could be canceled if any risk arose requiring police presence because their budget couldn't afford such security measures.

### **4. Cancellations and Alterations of Academic and Cultural Events**

*From campus lectures and community discussions to art and film exhibitions, public events critical of Israeli policy often come under attack, forcing organizers to cancel, move, or substantially alter the programs. Israel advocacy groups frequently contend that such programs lack "balance" or are antisemitic.*

Several years ago, activists erected the first Israeli Apartheid Wall at MIT, a colorful exhibit and advocacy campaign to educate the MIT community on the occupation (which continues to be displayed annually). The wall also included a reference sheet taped to the back, providing sources for the claims made on the wall. During its first year, several Zionists complained about its existence to the MIT administration and began distributing flyers making claims against Palestine, without references, directly in front of the wall. However, they were not reprimanded, and instead, the Palestinian activists were told that the wall would be taken down if their posted reference sheet wasn't made larger and more visible.

Similarly, in past years, the MIT administration forced activists to avoid using "Israel" and "apartheid" in their event names, renaming the "Israeli Apartheid Week" as the "Palestine Awareness Week." Such a change significantly restricted their ability to express criticism of Israel. ■

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To contact the CAA, reach out at [mit-caa-exec@mit.edu](mailto:mit-caa-exec@mit.edu).

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## Response to “Project Indigenous MIT”

Heather Lechtman

To: David Shane Lowry  
From: Heather Lechtman; director,  
Center for Materials Research in  
Archaeology and Ethnology  
[CMRAE]  
Date: 14 June 2022

Hello David Shane Lowry

**I WRITE IN RESPONSE TO** your contribution published in the May-June 2022 issue of the *MIT Faculty Newsletter*: “Project Indigenous MIT”.

What surprises me is that you made no effort to contact me or any of my CMRAE colleagues to introduce your broad mission at MIT and to enlist our help in accomplishing your goals.

As archaeologists, we deal with the human past during as much of its development as we are able to study and in as many locations on this earth as we can access. As teachers, a primary goal is always to introduce our students to the immense variety of human cultural and social developments so that they are sensitive to how people all over the world have faced the challenges we all face – and how and why they have or have not succeeded in the face of such challenges.

I have no idea what your sources of information about CMRAE are or have been, but I will point out flaws in the data you present on page 3 of your *Newsletter* article concerning CMRAE.

CMRAE is not an MIT department. It is a center [Center for Materials Research in Archaeology and Ethnology], organized as a consortium of seven educational institutions in the Greater Boston

area: Boston U., Brandeis U., Harvard U., U. of Massachusetts, MIT, Tufts U., Wellesley College, and including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. MIT administers the center; each institution chooses a member as its representative.

CMRAE is not housed within Course 3 (Materials Science and Engineering). The center was established in 1977 with funds granted by the National Endowment for the Humanities in response to an application submitted jointly by Professor Walter Rosenblith, then Provost of MIT, and Heather Lechtman. Given the multi-institutional makeup of the center, a decision was made to house it in the MIT Office of the Provost. The director of CMRAE reports directly to the provost.

CMRAE is first and foremost a center devoted to the education of graduate students in the field of archaeological materials. The subjects we teach are designed and taught by faculty from the member institutions (thus far, from Boston U., Brandeis U., Harvard U., U. of Massachusetts, MIT), and graduate students enroll from these institutions.

During our 45 years of graduate teaching, CMRAE has offered the annual, two-semester subject ‘Materials in Ancient Societies’, 43 times. When bone is the material under study, the course includes one semester devoted to human osteology and a second semester that concentrates on animal remains (zooarchaeology).

CMRAE has taught the material subject ‘bone’ three times: in 1993, 2001,

and 2005. In 2005 CMRAE requested human remains for the course from Harvard University’s Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. The human remains are not Native American. The investigation of these remains was led by Professor Javier Urcid, currently the Director of Graduate Studies at Brandeis University and a specialist in the field of human osteology. The Alptanes, Iceland human remains were handled with extreme care and kept in a secure space at MIT. No samples of any kind were removed. The human remains were returned to the Peabody Museum at the end of the MIT semester.

Cc:  
Cynthia Barnhart, MIT Provost  
Jeffrey Ravel, History  
Jeffrey Grossman, Materials Science & Engineering  
Caroline Ross, Materials Science & Engineering  
Dorothy Hosler, Materials Science & Engineering  
Max Price, Materials Science & Engineering  
Stefan Helmreich, Anthropology  
Javier Urcid, Brandeis, Anthropology  
Michèle Morgan, Peabody Museum, Harvard, Curator of Osteology and Paleoanthropology

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### ADDENDUM 24 June 2022

In his contribution to the *MIT Faculty Newsletter*, David Lowry refers to NAGRA, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, a United States federal law enacted on November

[continued on next page](#)

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**Response to “Project Indigenous MIT”**  
Lechtman, from preceding page

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16, 1990. The act establishes the ownership of Native American cultural items excavated or discovered on federal or American Indian tribal lands after November 16, 1990.

NAGRA requires federal agencies and institutions that receive federal funding to return Native American cultural items to lineal descendants and culturally affiliated American Indian tribes, Alaska Native villages, and Native Hawaiian organizations.

Cultural items include human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony.

The act also requires each federal agency, museum, or institution that receives federal funds to prepare an inventory of remains and funerary objects and a summary of sacred objects, cultural patrimony objects, and unassociated funerary objects.

The act provides for repatriation of these items when requested by the appropriate descendant of the American Indian tribe. This applies to remains or objects

discovered at any time, even before November 16, 1990, whether or not discovered on tribal or federal land. The act allows archaeological teams a short time for analysis before remains must be returned. Once it is determined that human remains are Native American, analysis can occur only through documented consultation (on federal lands) or by consent (on tribal lands). ■

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**Heather Lechtman** is Professor of Archaeology and Ancient Technology, Department of Materials Science & Engineering ([lechtman@mit.edu](mailto:lechtman@mit.edu)).

## letters

### Strengths and Weaknesses of an MIT Education

To The Faculty Newsletter:

**THOMAS EGAR AND ALEX SLOCUM** nicely outlined some of MIT’s best qualities (“[Leadership, Management and Education at MIT, redux](#)”, *MIT Faculty Newsletter*, May/June 2022). I am not, however, convinced that our supposed “intensity” is a merit, and I believe (as Paul Gray did) that with less “pace and pressure” we’d not only be happier but also more creative.

The problem isn’t a surfeit of passion and energy. It’s that we’ve created a macho culture that encourages our students to pile on so many commitments that many are barely able to keep up. Rather than engaging deeply in their work, they are forced to constantly triage, doing as little as possible to squeak through. The satisfaction of acquiring new skills and ideas, and growing intellectually and emotion-

ally, is replaced at best by a sense of relief at having dodged a bullet by surviving a term with GPA intact, and at worst by a mental health breakdown.

Not all students fall into this trap, and many find a better balance. But such students flourish not because of the “pace and pressure” culture of MIT but in spite of it.

Eagar and Slocum do point to one deficiency of an MIT education. They mention studies finding that our graduates emerge from MIT with less confidence than when they entered, and they suggest that this loss of confidence comes from comparison with others. Many MIT students made exactly this point in the interviews that I shared in my book *Portraits of Resilience* [[portraitsofresilience.com](http://portraitsofresilience.com)], and constant comparison with others may be a major factor in the increase we are seeing in depression and anxiety.

Unlike Eagar and Slocum, however, I do not believe that praising our students more and reminding them that they are the “top 3/10,000” is the antidote to this problem. On the contrary, I fear that it might exacerbate it by emphasizing comparisons even more.

Instead, I believe we need to help our students develop a sense of personal mission and deep satisfaction in the work they do, and the impact they can have in the world; and encourage them to celebrate not their superiority in being better than others but their good fortune in being part of such a talented and creative community.

**Daniel Jackson**  
Professor, EECS  
Associate Director, CSAIL

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**Transforming Research Administration**  
Zuber and Van Vliet, from page 1

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Research Administration at the Boston University School of Public Health. With Colleen Leslie, assistant provost for research administration, Ms. Holmes leads a full roster of RAS professionals in contract administration, subawards, and post-award management, with specialization in grants and contracts sponsored by the U.S. government and many philanthropic foundations.

The Office of Strategic Alliances and Technology Transfer (OSATT) also adapted its leadership structure as it onboarded new experts to support PIs interested in research funded by for-profit companies, international government agencies, and foundations. OSATT now comprises three coordinated offices that move PI ideas to impact, each led by an executive director. Lesley Millar-Nicholson is the executive director leading OSATT's Technology Licensing Office (TLO), Meghan McCollum Fenno became the executive director of OSATT Core in July 2022, and John Roberts is the interim executive director of OSATT's Corporate Relations.

We all benefited from the dedication of Ms. Millar-Nicholson and Mr. Roberts in helping to establish the OSATT Core functions with Ms. McCollum Fenno during OSATT's standup period. This year, OSATT has successfully recruited and begun onboarding impressive new colleagues across OSATT Core, TLO, and Corporate Relations.

**Process and service improvements**

To better support PI-led research, MIT needs to build new strengths in our teams in RAS and OSATT, as well as the teams in the departments, labs, and centers (DLCs) – who work closely with PIs on some steps, and with RAS and OSATT on other steps. From the PI perspective, many steps feel the same whether the research is funded by a U.S. federal agency, foundation, nonprofit, for-profit company, or international government. However, specialization among our teams in RAS and

OSATT reflects the fact that the considerations when converting PIs' ideas into funded agreements differ among these external organizations.

The past eight months of team building and continued collaborations with PIs across all MIT Schools and the College, and among RAS, OSATT, and other offices, have enabled new processes in support of

The Office of Strategic Alliances and Technology Transfer (OSATT) also adapted its leadership structure as it onboarded new experts to support PIs interested in research funded by for-profit companies, international government agencies, and foundations. OSATT now comprises three coordinated offices that move PI ideas to impact, each led by an executive director.

PIs. Just as importantly, the collaboration extends to the DLC teams that assist PIs in preparing and internally "routing" research scopes, proposals, and budgets. Some of those process improvements may be less perceptible to faculty. That represents progress if faculty find themselves spending less time concerned about behind-the-scenes administrative steps required to enable the funding and program management. Here are three examples:

First, RAS has streamlined billing agreements among MIT and many other Boston-area organizations where MIT faculty may supervise research group members or conduct some of their research. This not only makes it easier for faculty who find that these agreements create a recurring set of questions (including conflict of interest disclosures or problems for affected thesis students), but also requires much less time from the DLC support teams that play a key role.

Second, OSATT Core has revamped the services to faculty for non-disclosure agreements (NDAs), data use agreements (DUAs), material transfer agreements (MTAs), and other research-related agreements. It has been nine months since the release of the improved [NDA/DUA portal](#) that we previewed in our last update. We

are pleased to report that this summer alone, we have seen almost as many requests through the portal as we did over the six prior months, with 72% of requests coming from first-time PIs. The team has also seen an increase of 67% in the number of NDAs and DUAs requested in FY22 compared with FY21.

These agreements are often part of how external organizations explore potential projects with MIT faculty, so having a streamlined process for PIs by the same team that takes point on research-related agreements has been an important improvement. We thank everyone who piloted or has now utilized the new NDA/DUA portal.

Third, we informed PIs of a process change in September involving initiating a new research-related project or agreement with an industry counterpart. Specifically, OSATT Core will take point on all new industry-sponsored research agreements, working closely with RAS and other offices, including PIs' DLC support teams.

This process was designed to maximize faculty input and focus on their ambitious research scope, and to leverage the expertise of OSATT Core in drafting and negotiating the supporting agreements with companies. In practice, this means that PIs will gain connection to and support from an OSATT Core Catalyst as the research scope or collaboration crystallizes toward a negotiated agreement. Most internal steps for DLC support teams should feel the same, but an anticipated benefit is more efficient negotiation of

[continued on next page](#)

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### Transforming Research Administration

Zuber and Van Vliet, from preceding page

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agreements designed specifically to support the MIT PIs' research projects' purposes and research outcomes, such as publications and inventions.

#### New tools: PI dashboard

As we reported before, we have been developing a new PI dashboard app, Research@MIT, to serve as a one-stop shop for PIs' research administration and related needs. We are grateful to colleagues in Information Systems and Technology (IS&T) and Research Administration Systems and Support for their hard work on this tool. A group of faculty colleagues and DLC administrative support team colleagues has been beta-testing the app since early summer; we thank them, too, for their valuable time and input. We are pleased to have rolled out Research@MIT broadly in September.

Research@MIT will enable PIs and their administrative teams to access the

information and resources necessary for managing their research portfolios and budgets. Drawing from multiple MIT systems, it aims to organize research-related information in one place, including proposals, sponsored research awards, and associated financial summaries from enterprise systems including Quali Coeus

As we reported before, we have been developing a new PI dashboard app, Research@MIT, to serve as a one-stop shop for PIs' research administration and related needs.

and SAP; human subjects research protocols; disclosures submitted to TLO; and NDAs and DUAs. Over time, we'll add new features and capabilities that reflect faculty and administrator feedback.

The app is being made available to MIT users of Android, iOS/macOS, and Windows-based devices via download from apps.mit.edu. To help us make enhancements and add features, please share your feedback with us, using the

app's "help" feature, as you start working with the dashboard.

#### Conclusion

The transformation of MIT's research administration enterprise remains a work in progress. We're confident in the talented professionals we've recruited and are pleased to

see early indications that new tools already are being put to good use. We recognize that it will take time for new teams, tools, practices, and processes to cohere into a unified, well-oiled system, and we are encouraged by these positive developments. ■

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**Maria T. Zuber** is Vice President for Research ([mtz@mit.edu](mailto:mtz@mit.edu));

**Krystyn J. Van Vliet** is Associate Provost and Associate Vice President for Research ([krystyn@mit.edu](mailto:krystyn@mit.edu)).

## letters

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### Concern with MIT's Response to Professor Abbot

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To The Faculty Newsletter:

**AS A MOTHER OF A** 2015 graduate, I fully agree with the opinions of Dr. Geil, and with the open letter. We had sent our son to MIT because we thought he would be exposed to all kinds of ideas,

some of them eye-opening, some controversial. And that he would be able to hear the best scientists, and those scientists would be chosen based on their research and not on their views. This was exactly what I lacked at my alma mater in the USSR.

MIT was true to our expectations – till that shameful episode with Professor Abbot's lecture. I hope it is not too late to set it right.

Sincerely,  
**Vera Yudovina**

M.I.T. Numbers  
**from the MIT Survey of New Students, 2022 and 2018**

Feel quite well or very well prepared to...

Succeed academically at MIT			Succeed socially at MIT		
2018	2022		2018	2022	
56%	48%	Δ-9%	72%	57%	Δ-15%
Ask for help when you need it			Find a group that you feel part of		
2018	2022		2018	2022	
72%	59%	Δ-13%	65%	49%	Δ-16%
Live away from home			Have a roommate		
2018	2022		2018	2022	
77%	58%	Δ-19%	72%	55%	Δ-17%
Select the courses you will take			Manage your time effectively		
2018	2022		2018	2022	
44%	49%	Δ5%	58%	45%	Δ-13%

Response rates: 2018: 80%; 2022: 64%

**Source:** Office of the Provost/Institutional Research