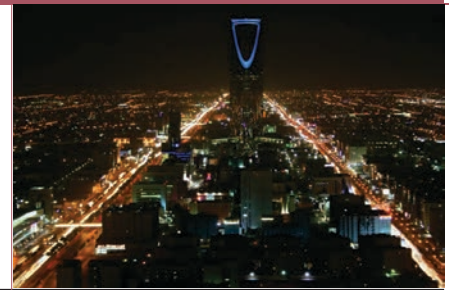


MIT Faculty Newsletter

<http://web.mit.edu/fnl>

in this issue we offer several comments on MIT's policy toward Saudi Arabia (editorial and Letter to Associate Provost Lester below; Response to Professor Lester, page 5); short biographies of the candidates for the upcoming FNL Editorial Board election (page 8); an article by the MIT Office of Communications on the new MIT homepage (page 14); and "A Plea for Integrity of the Grievance Process at MIT" (page 16).



Kingdom Centre, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Letter to Associate Provost Richard Lester Regarding MIT Engagements with Saudi Arabia

Christopher Capozzola, Lerna Ekmekçiođlu,
Malick Ghachem, Anne E. C. McCants,
Kenda Mutongi, Hiromu Nagahara, Tanalis
Padilla, Jeffrey S. Ravel, Craig Steven Wilder

15 January 2019

WE WRITE AS HISTORIANS and members of the MIT Faculty in response to your report to President Reif on MIT's current engagements with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). While we are not in agreement with your conclusions, we want to acknowledge the Administration's willingness to hold an open conversation with the MIT community about these matters. It is in this spirit of open exchange that we write.

MIT's relations with KSA before and after the March 2018 visit of Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) trouble us deeply. The atrocities of the war in Yemen, and the internal Saudi repression

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Core Values

Catherine Drennan, Linda Griffith,
Haynes Miller, Peter Shor

THE MIT SYSTEM OF core science General Institute Requirements (GIR) is under attack.

This system was put in place in 1965, following a report of a committee led by Physics Professor Jerrold Zacharias. This system – two Mathematics subjects, two Physics, and one Chemistry, supplemented by the Laboratory Requirement and what became the Restricted Electives in Science and Technology, REST – replaced an earlier one that required four semesters each of Mathematics and Physics and two of Chemistry. Biology was added to the mix in the early 1990s, responding to the observation that more than a third of the research conducted at MIT was in the life sciences.

This system has served our undergraduates well. It provides the whole of the

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Editorial Saudi/MIT Policy: Thoughtful Consideration, Wrong Conclusions

WE APPRECIATE THE THOUGHTFUL consideration of the issues relating to agreements between MIT and the Saudi monarchy and its agencies in the February 6 letters from Associate Provost Richard Lester and President Reif. However, the conclusions that they arrive at – to essentially continue the current relationships – are profoundly distressing, morally unsound, and not in keeping with MIT's mission and culture. We print in this issue two letters from our History colleagues (page 1) and Philosophy colleagues (page 5), both deep and detailed, of the many letters from faculty sent to Associate Provost Lester.

In response to President Reif's decision to continue the current relationships: There is little doubt that the Saudi monarchy is harshly authoritarian, with seemingly unchecked power currently in

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Physics

Robert Berwick
Electrical Engineering & Computer Science

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Anthropology

Nazli Choucri
Political Science

Christopher Cummins
Chemistry

***Woodie Flowers**
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Writing and Humanistic Studies

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Literature Section

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Electrical Engineering & Computer Science

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Managing Editor

*Editorial Subcommittee for this issue

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Photo Credit: *Page 1*: BroadArrow at English Wikipedia; *Page 7*: Courtesy of the Frankel family.

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Saudi/MIT Policy
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the hands of an amoral Crown Prince. It withholds democratic rights from its own people; imprisons, tortures, or assassinates its critics (see: “Saudi Arabia is heinously torturing female activists. It must face consequences.” Editorial Board, *Washington Post*, February 2, 2019); and is directly responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of Yemeni civilians in its military campaign there, as well as for the widespread famine and collapse of health-care that is affecting millions in that country.

The reports and condemnation of the Saudi actions continue to appear (see: “UN expert: Saudi Arabia undermined Khashoggi probe.” Associated Press, *Washington Post*, February 7, 2019).

1. The relationship with the Saudis legitimizes and stabilizes this anti-democratic regime and its policies, regardless of the well-meaning intent of our MIT colleagues and Saudi students.

2. MIT should terminate its relationships with the Saudi monarchy, and with Aramco, SABIC, and KACST, which are all directly under the control of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

3. Though MIT faculty need to have considerable freedom to pursue their research and investigations, research is a social enterprise, regulated by a wide range of societal, institutional, national, and international norms. Research projects involve not just the motivations of the researchers but those of the funding agencies and industries too, and the immediate and eventual direct and indirect impact on the communities involved. The Saudis

and Pres. Reif claim that the projects they are supporting are in the interests of the Saudi people. But the criteria is not what such regimes say or what the MIT Administration claims, but how the regimes act in the world. Had Mussolini’s government in the late 1930s approached the Civil Engineering Department for assistance in rail transportation, would we have supported that?

4. For research initiatives that are likely to be more broadly productive, such as water quality in arid lands, those faculty and students losing support from the Saudis should be fully supported for the next two years with MIT funds. With \$16 billion in endowment generating an income stream, MIT can afford this. MIT can also support new Saudi students, who apply and are admitted to our programs through our standard admission procedures, as are other foreign nationals.

5. MIT should make an equivalent sum of dollars available to Yemeni students who apply to study at MIT. Given the devastation in that country, support may first be required to rebuild Yemeni educational infrastructure.

6. A broad-based committee review and standard-setting process is indeed needed, as suggested by Associate Provost Lester. However, the current proposal puts the cart before the horse: making the decision to continue the contractual relationships, before establishing the standard. The order needs to be reversed. The committee should carry out its investigations, present its findings and recommendations to the MIT community, and receive input. A set of clear standards on relationships with outside funders should be promulgated. Only after that process will it be

appropriate to reexamine whether some of the terminated relationships, for example with the Saudi universities, might be reinstated or renewed.

All these points lead us to conclude that the proper path for MIT is to end its relationships with the Saudi regime and its agencies, thus upholding the humanitarian, scientific, academic, and civic values represented in the MIT mission, and to which we continue to aspire.

Editorial Subcommittee

Vote in the Upcoming Faculty Newsletter Editorial Board Election

A DISTINCTIVE AND DISTURBING feature of MIT governance, compared to other leading U.S. universities, is the absence of a Faculty Senate or equivalent. In essence all standing committees of the Institute are joint Faculty/Administration committees. This works well in many cases, but breaks down when the general views of the faculty diverge from the positions of the Administration. The current Saudi-MIT debate is an example. It can be difficult to bring faculty views forward, which are critical of the Administration, from a committee that is joint.

The only committee at MIT composed entirely of faculty and elected by the Faculty, is the Editorial Board of the *Faculty Newsletter* (FNL). Thus the election to the Editorial Board of colleagues who will represent the interests and values of the faculty is important.

Please vote in the upcoming online election for candidates of your choice. See page 8 for short biographies of the candidates. ■

Letter to Associate Provost Lester
Capozzola et al., from page 1

of women and LGBTQ Saudi citizens, were well known before last March. These activities suggest that the public relations effort in the West to present MBS as a modern reformer was a disingenuous campaign to provide cover for continuing abuses at home. In our view his March 2018 campus visit allowed MBS to claim tacit endorsement for his regime from MIT.

Your report suggests that MIT will put the funding we receive from KSA sources to good use in our labs and our classrooms, developing technologies and ideas that will benefit all Saudis, and others in our country and abroad. But MIT-style innovation should not serve to provide a kind of moral “laundering” of money derived from problematic sources. Moreover, while we may think ourselves capable of making morally informed decisions about the uses of KSA funding, the vagaries of history should make us less confident of our ability to predict the future. Previous campus leaders who established the nuclear engineering exchange program with the government of the Shah of Iran no doubt thought differently about that decision in hindsight. Perhaps they should have paid more attention to the authoritarian tendencies of the Shah’s regime when deciding to establish the program, just as we should not ignore Saudi practices today.

You further suggest that the funding from Saudi Arabian sources comes from KACST, the state-owned enterprise Aramco, and SABIC, a public company majority-owned by the state. In your view, these entities are sufficiently distinct from the government actors responsible for the Khashoggi assassination and other unconscionable KSA policies that it is not meaningful for us to retaliate against them. We do not find this argument compelling. The government of Saudi Arabia is accountable only to the royal family, not to the citizens of the country. Therefore, all government-affiliated entities neces-

sarily act in accord with the policies of MBS, his father the king, and the royal family, and must all be held equally accountable for their actions. The public/private distinction which holds in liberal democracies is not functional in a Saudi context.

You also argue that we need to continue engaging with well-intentioned Saudi citizens who come to MIT to study, developing relations with them now that

We also see this moment as an opportunity to reflect on our own values and educational goals. Specifically, we question whether the engagements MIT currently has with KSA do in fact “honor the Institute’s principles,” as you say in the report.

will help us continue to engage profitably with KSA as these students move into leadership positions there. On this issue, we are indeed sympathetic to these students’ calls for support from MIT as they strive to reform their country. But we also note that the suppression of women’s rights, and those who advocate for them, continues in Saudi Arabia. Even as the regime granted driver’s licenses to some women, it was jailing those who had argued on behalf of this measure. It is not clear that MBS is willing to engage seriously at this point with reformers who advocate positions in opposition to his own, and it is not clear that the chances for long-term, successful reform while he is in power justify an engagement that may lend his regime comfort and support.

We are not in favor of continuing business as usual with KSA. We believe that the Institute needs to decline some of the funding that was proffered during the March 2018 visit, and end some KSA funding arrangements put in place earlier. We are not in a position to recommend which arrangements should be terminated, although we appreciate the initial information you have provided in your report to President Reif. We think, though, that it would send the wrong

message to our alumni, students, and staff for leadership to continue working with KSA without a meaningful rebuke in response to the brutal Khashoggi assassination, the war in Yemen, and human rights violations within Saudi Arabia itself.

We also see this moment as an opportunity to reflect on our own values and educational goals. Specifically, we question whether the engagements MIT cur-

rently has with KSA do in fact “honor the Institute’s principles,” as you say in the report. If one of these principles is that learning cannot be limited to the study of science, technology, energy, etc., and that the humanities, social sciences and arts must be part of the conversation, then arguably the problem is not that we have too many ties to KSA, but rather that we have too few. In particular, we may have too few of the kind that humanists, artists, and social scientists could be involved in, and that would raise the kinds of issues that the proponents of divestment/withdrawal from KSA want to see. Might we couple vigorous discussion of politics, society, and economics with our world-class scientific and technological know-how when partnering with other governments and private interests? Specifically, we suggest that the Office of the Associate Provost for International Activities collaborate with the MIT Center for International Studies (or some other on-campus venue, though CIS has the logistical expertise to do this) to host a speaker series and public campus discussion on U.S.-Saudi relations, academic freedom in the Gulf region, and the context for MIT global partnerships in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. If we want to include ethical and

historical perspectives in the curriculum of the new College of Computing, we also need to include them in our outward-facing engagements with the world.

Professor Craig Wilder and his students have explored an earlier moral challenge in the history of MIT and of our nation. There were many who believed slavery was wrong when the Institute was created, and yet we know now that our founder was a slaveholder, and that racist views played a role in shaping our early curriculum and

campus values. In our generation complicity with authoritarian regimes may well turn out to be the moral litmus test for MIT. As we evaluate our relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and other actors whose values contradict our own, we need to think carefully about the balance between speaking out and looking the other way. Present needs are important, but the example we set for those who come after us at the Institute should also weigh heavily in our deliberations. ■

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Response to Professor Lester's Report on MIT's Involvement with Saudi Arabia

Sally Haslanger
Kieran Setiya
Bradford Skow
Stephen Yablo

12 January 2019

PROF. LESTER SAYS IN his report that it is appropriate for MIT to reconsider its relationship with Saudi Arabia, given that “large-scale violations of political, civil, and human rights have been extensively documented over a long period.”¹ For example, the Saudi military aggression in Yemen has resulted in the deaths of more than 1200 children, while an estimated 13 million Yemenites could soon face starvation, according to October UN reports.² Arguably, this is a form of genocide.³ The rise of Mohammed bin

Salman has accompanied blatant human rights violations, including the imprisonment of hundreds of supporters of a constitutional government and leaders of the women's rights movement, and the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi. It is a mistake to think that Mohammed bin Salman is a force for good.

Prof. Lester recommends “against terminating [MIT's] relationships with the Saudi government agency KACST, the state-owned enterprise Aramco, and SABIC, a public company majority-owned by the state.” The argument in favor of this is a rough cost-benefit analysis. According to Prof. Lester, the organizations in question likely have no control over the violation of human rights, and coordinating with them will bring some good to the society through the work done at MIT.

We applaud Prof. Lester's offer that “if any of the principal investigators who are leading these projects conclude that they do not wish to continue to do so in light of

[wpf/files/2018/10/Strategies-of-Coalition-in-Yemen-War-Final-20181005-1.pdf](#)

recent events, the Institute should work with them to minimize the resulting disruption to the research and to affected personnel, including most importantly our students.” We urge individual faculty to take advantage of this offer and that MIT draw on its own resources to cover the costs of any faculty member's withdrawing from Saudi funding.

We object, however, to the recommendation that MIT maintain its relationships with KACST, Aramco, and SABIC, and take the following considerations to be compelling:

1) Prof. Lester seems to assume that when making moral judgments, the right approach is to employ a cost-benefit analysis. He also assumes, without compelling evidence, that the balance of considerations weigh in favor of ongoing engagement. It is simply speculation to suggest that KACST, Aramco, and SABIC, do not have ties to the human rights violations – in spite of their close connections to the Saudi monarchy – and that MIT's withdrawal will have no significant effect. Given the high moral stakes of continuing

continued on next page

¹ Other colleges and universities are also reconsidering their ties to Saudi Arabia: <https://apnews.com/4d56411af6a8490e8030eacab4401571>, and <https://www.ft.com/content/fa6d15a4-f6ed-11e8-af46-2022a0b02a6c>

² See: <https://www.unocha.org/story/clar-and-present-danger-imminent-and-great-big-famine-engulfing-yemen-un-humanitarian-chief>

³ See the recent report on the Saudi tactics by Martha Mundy, released by the World Peace Foundation at the Tufts Fletcher School: <https://sites.tufts.edu/>

Response to Professor Lester

Haslanger et al., from preceeding page

engagement, we believe that such speculation is inadequate as a basis for his recommendation.

We applaud MIT's desire to do good in the world, but when considering the power of authoritarian regimes to do harm, it is important to address the problem at a structural and institutional level. For example, Aramco has a monopoly over petroleum in Saudi Arabia and this sector contributed 87% of Saudi budget revenue in 2018, and 42% of GDP, and 90% of export earnings.⁴ In other words, Aramco provides funding for massive human rights violations. Even if these organizations do not control the actions of the Saudi regime, they provide income and credibility. Although individuals surely benefit from MIT's involvement, we find it highly implausible that MIT's engagements with KACST, Aramco, and SABIC will contribute to progressive social and political change in Saudi Arabia.

2) To rely entirely on a cost-benefit analysis is to embrace a crude and untenable consequentialism. Moral evaluation requires consideration of a broader array of reasons for action. For example, the violation of human rights carries a special moral weight that cannot be offset by potential gains of other sorts. In particular, the extensive documented violation of human and civil rights perpetrated by the Saudi government cannot be offset by imagined economic and social gains.

For example, legal considerations, of course, bear a special weight in moral argument, not just because violating the law brings bad consequences. Some US Federal and international laws are designed to protect human rights. There are federal laws that apply to Saudi companies and the regime – such as the

⁴ <https://www.forbes.com/places/saudi-arabia/>

Torture Victims Protection Act. Even if MIT is not strictly speaking violating these laws, ongoing collaboration violates their spirit.

We applaud MIT's desire to do good in the world, but when considering the power of authoritarian regimes to do harm, it is important to address the problem at a structural and institutional level.

3) Prof. Lester's argument fails to situate MIT's actions as having expressive power, not just instrumental power. Mohammed bin Salman's trip to the United States was clearly an effort to gain symbolic support and legitimacy. Leaders in MIT's administration took advantage of opportunities to be photographed with him. These images directly link MIT with his regime. We believe that Mohammed bin Salman's actions are antithetical to the values that MIT holds dear, and lending our name and our face to give him credibility is a deep violation of what we stand for as an institution. Action must be taken to distance MIT from his regime in order to maintain our own credibility.

4) Commitment to a set of values is only as strong as our willingness to act on them, even when doing so is not in our immediate self-interest. Given the substantial resources that MIT receives from KACST, Aramco, and SABIC, one could argue that it is not in MIT's self-interest to cut ties. But to pursue our self-interest – or even to appear to pursue our own self-interest – in this case is to show the hollowness of our values.

5) It is unclear to us whether MIT's current relationship with KACST, Aramco, and SABIC has gone through an appropriate vetting process. What is the extent of their investments, business relationships, environmental or social impact,

linkages with Saudi security system? Are there safeguards against abuse of research data or findings? Why is this not discussed in the report? And although the report discusses current relationships, it does not

adequately address the potential for future involvement. Might new initiatives be launched? By what process would they be vetted?

With these considerations in mind, we urge the MIT administration to:

- Cut MIT's financial ties with KACST, Aramco, and SABIC.
- Make a public announcement that if any individual MIT researcher chooses to cut ties with Saudi Arabia, MIT will cover the cost of this decision to protect its students and research programs.
- Institute a faculty-led investigation into further ties to Saudi Arabia asking for further recommendations. Prof. Lester is one individual. If MIT believes in faculty governance, it should not let the word of one individual speak for all.

Thank you for your consideration. ■

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In Memoriam Ernst Frankel



Ernst Frankel

IT IS WITH GREAT SORROW that we acknowledge the passing of Professor Emeritus of Ocean Engineering Ernst G. Frankel MME '60, SM '60. A long-time member of the *Faculty Newsletter* Editorial Board, Frankel was an MIT faculty member for 36 years, retiring in 1995. He passed away on November 18 at the age of 95.

Serving on the *Newsletter* Editorial Board from the early days of the publication, Ernst was the first to voice the importance of the FNL to address not only campus issues, but also national and international issues that impacted on or were impacted by the scientific and engineering community.

Always a tireless worker, in addition to his numerous written contributions to the *Newsletter*, Ernst was the author of 21 books and wrote over 700 academic papers.

His bright spirit and engaging personality will be missed at FNL Editorial Board meetings as well as frequent telephone communications.

For a more complete biography of Prof. Frankel please see: <http://news.mit.edu/2018/ernst-frankel-professor-emeritus-ocean-engineering-shiping-expert-dies-95-1126>. ■

MacVicar Day 2019: “The Educated Student: Thinking and Doing for the 21st Century”

THE OFFICE OF THE Vice Chancellor and the Registrar’s Office are pleased to announce this year’s MacVicar Day program titled “The Educated Student: Thinking and Doing for the 21st Century.” The event will take place on Friday, March 8 at 2 PM in Building 6, Room 120.

In addition to celebrating the 2019 MacVicar Faculty Fellows, Vice Chancellor Ian Waitz will host a series of lightning talks, by MIT professors and students, addressing the following questions: “What’s important to a 21st century undergraduate education?” and “How is

MIT adapting to these changing needs?” A Q&A panel and reception will follow.

This event will be a unique opportunity for faculty, staff, and students to come together and discuss the challenges of today’s evolving educational landscape.

All in the MIT community are welcome. More information will be available at registrar.mit.edu/macvicar as the event approaches.

About the MacVicar Faculty Fellows Program

Named to honor the life and contributions of the late Margaret MacVicar, Professor of

Physical Science and Dean for Undergraduate Education, the MacVicar Faculty Fellows Program recognizes faculty who have made exemplary and sustained contributions to the teaching and education of undergraduates at MIT. Fellows are selected through a competitive, annual nomination process. They hail from all corners of the Institute and represent a diverse range of academic disciplines. Together, the Fellows form a small academy of scholars committed to exceptional instruction and innovation in education, embodying through their work the continuing promise of an MIT education for the future. ■

Candidates for Upcoming Election to Faculty Newsletter Editorial Board

THE ORIGIN OF THE *Faculty Newsletter* (FNL) came out of the errors in governance surrounding the dissolution of the Department of Applied Biological Sciences (ABS), by then-Provost John Deutch. At the time (1988) of the dissolution of the ABS department, MIT faculty members preparing a petition calling for a reversal of the Administration's actions had difficulty in circulating the draft broadly, due to the unwillingness of the Administration to make faculty mailing lists available. In addition, with the faculty meeting agenda set and the faculty meeting chaired by the President, fully open discussion was not easy. The FNL emerged as an effort to establish open lines of communication among faculty.

There was significant support for such a publication. The subsequent 30+ years of issues of the *Newsletter* after the "zereth" issue (web.mit.edu/fnl/volume/201/fnl00.pdf) can be found in the *Newsletter* archives. Initially the *Newsletter* was supported by contributions from individual faculty. It was a full nine years after these origins that

President Vest formally agreed to support the publication costs and a salary for the managing editor of the *Newsletter*. This battle has had to be fought continually in the years following, as described in the article "The Saga of the Struggle for Survival of the Faculty Newsletter" in the March/April 2007 issue.

During the ensuing years, the *Newsletter* has provided a forum for expression of faculty concerns and views, a major channel of communication among the faculty, and a means for candid debate on difficult issues. The primary guiding principles have been to provide open access for faculty and emeritus faculty to express views on issues of concern through control of editorial policy by the faculty Editorial Board, independent of influence by the MIT Administration. Areas where the independence of the *Newsletter* have been important include the first public release, on our website, of the report on the "Status of Women Faculty at MIT"; the publication of the Special Edition

Newsletter devoted to responses to the Report of the Task Force on the Undergraduate Educational Commons, to which more than 40 faculty contributed; exploration of health insurance, pension, and retirement issues; compacts with foreign governments; and minority recruitment and promotion.

Since its inception, the *Newsletter* has been maintained by a volunteer Editorial Board, over time involving more than 50 members of the faculty from all Schools of the Institute. Since 2008 we have followed a formal nomination and election process with direct election of Board members by an electorate of the full faculty and emeritus faculty.

The *Newsletter* has come to be widely read, not just at MIT but outside as well, through the online edition at web.mit.edu/fnl. The FNL website also can potentially serve as a forum for discussion of national and international issues. With the support and involvement of MIT's faculty, the *Newsletter* will continue to play an important role at MIT and beyond. ■



Aron Bernstein

Aron Bernstein

http://web.mit.edu/physics/people/faculty/bernstein_aron.html

Aron Bernstein is Professor of Physics Emeritus at MIT where he has been on the faculty since 1961. He has taught a broad range of physics courses from freshman to graduate level. His research program has been in nuclear and particle physics, with an emphasis on studying the basic symmetries of matter.

Since 1969 he has been active in the area of nuclear arms control. He initiated the Nuclear Weapons Education Project: <https://nuclearweaponsproj.mit.edu/>. In addition to supervising individual MIT undergraduate students his teaching has included seminars on the nuclear arms race with Jim Walsh of the MIT Political Science Department. He is a national board member of the Council for a Livable World.

Professor Bernstein is a fellow of the American Physical Society and the American Association of Scientists. He has been awarded John Simon Guggenheim and Humboldt Senior Research Fellowships.



Sally Haslanger

Sally Haslanger

<http://sallyhaslanger.weebly.com>

Sally Haslanger is Ford Professor of Philosophy and Women's and Gender Studies at MIT. Broadly speaking, her work links issues of social justice with contemporary work in epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of language and mind. Recently she has been working on social structural explanation with an emphasis on the materiality of social practices and the role of ideology. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and holds a Guggenheim in 2018-19.

In addition to her research on social justice, Haslanger has been deeply committed to promoting diversity in philosophy and beyond. She was the founder and convener of the Women in Philosophy Task Force, and co-founded PIKSI-Boston, a summer philosophy institute for undergraduates from underrepresented groups, held at MIT. Since coming to MIT in 1998, she has served as Director of Women's and Gender Studies (2009-2013) and has been a member of the Campus Committee on Race Relations (now Committee on Race and Diversity) and the Council on Work and Family; she currently serves on the Committee on Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response and the Day of Action organizing team. She was awarded the YWCA Cambridge Tribute to Outstanding Women in 2011 and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Leadership Award at MIT in 2014.

Haslanger has taught at six institutions of higher education, several of them being public universities. In her view, MIT's administrative structure does not provide adequate mechanisms for genuine and independent faculty governance or oversight of institutional decisions. It is essential that the faculty have a strong voice in determining the future of MIT. The *MIT Faculty Newsletter* has been an invaluable source of information, debate, and critique and must continue to call attention to the challenges and opportunities we face. It is our responsibility, as a faculty, to lead MIT, and in order to do so, we must have open and engaged discussion. The *MIT Faculty Newsletter* is our best resource for undertaking this important work.



Seth Lloyd

Seth Lloyd

<http://meche.mit.edu/people/faculty/SLLOYD@MIT.EDU>

Seth Lloyd is Nam P. Suh professor of mechanical engineering and professor of physics at MIT. Dr. Lloyd's research focuses on problems on information and complexity in the universe. He was the first person to develop a realizable model for quantum computation and is working with a variety of groups to construct and operate quantum computers and quantum communication systems. Dr. Lloyd has worked to establish fundamental physical limits to precision measurement and to develop algorithms for quantum computers for pattern recognition and machine learning. Dr. Lloyd's work on complex systems currently focuses transitions between stability and instability in complex dynamical systems.

He is author of more than 200 scientific papers, and of *Programming the Universe* (Knopf, 2004).



Caesar L. McDowell

Caesar L. McDowell

<http://dusp.mit.edu/faculty/ceasar-mcdowell>

Caesar L. McDowell is Professor of the Practice of Civic Design at MIT. His current work is on the design of civic infrastructures and processes to connect the increasingly demographically complex public. In the Department of Urban Studies and Planning (DUSP), Caesar teaches on civic and community engagement and the use of social media to enhance both. Caesar brings his deep commitment to the work of building beloved, just and equitable communities that are able to – as his friend Carl Moore says – “struggle with the traditions that bind them and the interests that separate them so they can build a future that is an improvement on the past.”

Caesar is the founder of MIT’s CO-Lab and the new Civic Design Network and co-initiator of America’s Path Forward. He is currently working on a podcast series, *The Move*, and on civic design. Outside of MIT Caesar works with organizations ranging from Massport and the Kendall Square Association to the Obama Foundation and Beyond Conflict on community engagement and civic leadership.

Dr. McDowell served as Director of the global civic engagement organization Dropping Knowledge International, President of Interaction Institute for Social Change, co-founder of The Civil Rights Forum on Telecommunications Policy, and founding Board member of The Algebra Project. Engagement Projects include GoBoston 2030, Springfield Northend Campaign, 21Days, Cambridge, MA and Global Table of Free Voice, Berlin.

The *MIT Faculty Newsletter* is an essential instrument of academic freedom and faculty voice at MIT. I have had the opportunity to contribute several articles to the *Newsletter*. My pieces have tended to represent progressive views. The beauty of the *Newsletter* is that it can hold the complexity of the views and opinions held by MIT faculty. If selected for the Editorial Board I would work to engage the younger new faculty to see the *Newsletter* as their forum.



Balakrishnan Rajagopal

Balakrishnan Rajagopal

<https://dusp.mit.edu/faculty/balakrishnan-rajagopal>

Balakrishnan Rajagopal is currently a Professor of Law and Development and Head of the International Development Group in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT. He is currently a Counsellor to the American Society of International Law, and has served in the past for many years with the United Nations. He is the author of two books and many articles and chapters, and maintains a strong interest in communicating with the public through media. His research interests include legal and human rights dimensions of economic development and globalization as well as the law and politics of social mobilization.

He has been an avid reader of the *Faculty Newsletter* for many years and has strongly admired it as a space for independent and objective views from the faculty, and which fosters the conditions necessary for academic freedom. If elected, he would be honored to join his many distinguished colleagues to uphold the highest values of MIT in serving the *Newsletter* as a space for equity, balance, and responsibility.



Robert Redwine

Robert Redwine

http://web.mit.edu/physics/people/faculty/redwine_robert.html

Robert Redwine has been on the MIT faculty since 1979. His research area is experimental nuclear physics and he served as Director of the Laboratory for Nuclear Science from 1992 to 2000 and as Director of the Bates Laboratory from 2006 to 2018. He also has strong interests in education and served as Dean for Undergraduate Education from 2000 to 2006.

During much of the last decade he has been the faculty lead for 8.02, which is, of course, one of the General Institute Requirements for all undergraduates and which is now taught in an active learning format. He believes that the *Faculty Newsletter* is a valuable voice for faculty members in general and that it has played an important role in providing the faculty a platform that is different in critical ways from departments and standing committees.



Warren Seering

Warren Seering

<http://meche.mit.edu/people/faculty/Seering@mit.edu>

I am fascinated by the workings of this extraordinary place. I believe that the Institute operates well because our colleagues, at all levels, when deciding what should be done, become informed and then employ exceptional reasoning skills to the processes of making decisions and executing plans. The *Faculty Newsletter* should serve as an enabler of such informed decision-making.

In the next few years we will have a remarkable opportunity to reconfigure the Institute particularly with regard to computing, our infrastructure, the student experience, Kendall Square, and the choices that we make in understanding and engaging the world. I see the FNL as informing the consideration of options as we decide what we should “do with all this future.”

My research interests are in engineering design and product development. A personal interest has been the study of career paths that our students take. As a faculty member in the Mechanical Engineering Department for many years, I’ve served on numerous departmental, School, and Institute committees and have developed some appreciation for the ways that MIT plans and executes. If chosen for the FNL Editorial Board, I would

work to bring to our community information and ideas to inform our perspectives as we engage in inventing and inhabiting the Institute’s future.

Core Values

Drennan et al., from page 1

MIT undergraduate student body with a set of common languages and experiences. In many cases the training offered by the GIR subjects provides essential and immediately useful prerequisite skills. But in all cases this diversity of modes of thought contributes to the intellectual evolution experienced by each one of our undergraduates.

The core science GIR courses constitute, in the words of Biology Professor Hazel Sive, a great gift to our undergraduates. Departments offering these subjects sacrifice strained resources and assign their best and most creative teachers to lead them. They have been the locus of much educational creativity over the years: think of Physics's TEAL and DMSE's 3.091 Goody Bags, for example. These departments have worked hard to establish links with faculty leading subjects that list the core science GIR subjects as prerequisites, trying to make the hand-off as smooth as possible.

MIT takes pride in the number of students from unusual backgrounds – first generation college students, international students. These students are especially well-served by the GIR system. Any young person arriving on the MIT campus in their first fall is deluged with a true firehose of information and choices. The difficulty of making this transition is proportional to the distance from the student's earlier experience. It is very reassuring, especially to the more vulnerable among them, to know that there is a pretty standard panel of courses designed specifically for first-year students.

In April 2017, the Office of the Dean for Undergraduate Education and that of the Dean for Graduate Education were abolished and their functions consolidated in a newly created Office of the Vice-Chancellor. The charge to the first and current holder of that office, Professor Ian Waitz, included a revision of the “first year experience.” One concern

driving the perceived need for a revision was the recent shifts in enrollments in majors, with significant growth in 6 (Electrical Engineering and Computer Science) and 2 (Mechanical Engineering) at the expense of other majors. The revision process was intended to identify and address possible underlying causes of this shift, including lack of opportunities to explore the full spectrum of majors in a meaningful way, the outsized influence of

time, including the proposed GIR changes. And indeed some of the innovations this year seem worthwhile and with few drawbacks: broadening the range of careers to which students are exposed through alternative career fairs (e.g., the Course 20 Career Expo), and “choosing a major” seminar subjects in spring term of freshman year.

But the major component of this experiment was a change in the use of the

The CUP rejected the more radical proposals related to the core science GIRs – which involved making the student's choice of one of the six core science GIRs optional – but authorized the “experiment” we have all witnessed this past fall. . . . The first thing to realize about this is that it represents a radical redefinition of the meaning of P/NR. In its original form, P/NR applies to a specific semester. It is designed to allow incoming students to find their feet and calibrate their efforts. It is widely appreciated by students and faculty alike.

the fall Career Fair, and others. The Vice-Chancellor commandeered much of MIT's educational research capacity during the fall of 2017 to gather information about first-year programs elsewhere, and in the spring of 2018 led a course purporting to provide design proposals for a new MIT first year. This small and self-selected group of students, not necessarily representative of the MIT student body as a whole, was subsequently held up by the Vice-Chancellor as a kind of voice of the students, and its recommendations were used as foundation for several distinct proposals rushed through the Committee on the Undergraduate Program (CUP) over the summer of 2018.

The CUP rejected the more radical proposals related to the core science GIRs – which involved making the student's choice of one of the six core science GIRs optional – but authorized the “experiment” we have all witnessed this past fall. Faculty were polled about the experiment, and one of the signatories of the letter (LGG) supported the experiment at the

Pass/No Record grading option. This system, applying for the moment to the class of 2022 only, allows these students to elect to take up to half of the six core science GIRs under the standard first-semester freshman Pass/No Record grading system at any time in their undergraduate career.

The first thing to realize about this is that it represents a radical redefinition of the meaning of P/NR. In its original form, P/NR applies to a specific semester. It is designed to allow incoming students to find their feet and calibrate their efforts. It is widely appreciated by students and faculty alike. Not so long ago, both semesters of freshman year operated under this grading system. This created serious problems of motivation in second semester freshmen. It was resented by many students because of the implicit lack of faith and because it failed to reflect the hard work most of them devoted to their subjects. Morale and performance in second semester of freshman year both improved dramatically when P/NR was restricted to the first semester.

But under this experiment, P/NR adheres to a specific set of subjects: the core science GIR subjects. The message is clear: The content of these subjects is not worth learning at better than a C level.

This designation reduces these courses, so central to the undergraduate MIT experience, to a set of annoying graduation requirements that one is expected to pay little attention to and delay taking until absolutely necessary. It's hard to see this as anything more than the first step in a campaign to discredit them and ultimately eliminate as many of them as possible.

And why? The ostensible reason is to allow freshmen to "explore," in order to make more well-informed decisions in their choice of major. This is an important objective, to be sure, but the cure provided by this experiment is poorly designed to meet this objective. There is evidence that the current freshman class has not been deferring these fundamental subjects in order to explore, but rather to simply get a head start in their preconceived major. And, after all, many students seeing biology or chemistry as it is done at MIT may change their ideas about what they want to pursue: the core science course themselves are exploratory for them!

This new meaning of P/NR also has substantial problematic side effects. Here are a couple.

One: Instructors in subjects with large freshman enrollment have observed a marked increase in the number of students choosing to simply blow off the end of the course, including the final examination. They had their C, and that was that. The confidence that the course actually had some long-term educational value had been eroded by the persistent drumbeat that one should trim one's sails to the P/NR option.

Two: Many freshmen enrolled in subjects for which they were not quite prepared, feeling almost obligated to do so by

But under this experiment, P/NR adheres to a specific set of subjects: the core science GIR subjects. The message is clear: The content of these subjects is not worth learning at better than a C level.

the persistent messaging emanating from the administration. They did OK, for the most part – they passed the course. But did they learn the material as well as they would have if they had taken things in the sequence that the course was designed for? Probably not. Will this decrease their confidence going forward in that major, or some other? Probably.

There has never been a requirement to take core science GIR subjects as freshmen. The messaging has been: do it as

early as possible, for many good reasons. The reversal of that message has a demoralizing and destructive effect. But the truth is that we do not know the long-term effect of this "experiment," and won't for quite a while.

We would urge the MIT committee structure to reject proposals to re-authorize attaching P/NR grading to core science GIR subjects. There are plenty of other ways to encourage students to think carefully about their choice of majors, ways without the deleterious effects of this one. We are glad to see some of the other

first-year experience experiments to help with major selection are now off the ground, and we look forward to positive outcomes from these efforts. ■

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Commemoration of March 4, 1969: Scientists Strike For Peace

FIFTY YEARS AGO, on March 4, 1969, most research and teaching at MIT came to a halt, as students, faculty, and staff at MIT held a "Scientists Strike for Peace." The strike protested the continuing U.S. war against the Vietnamese people, and

university complicity in those policies.

These events will be commemorated this March 4th, with the showing of excerpts from the film "November Actions: Defiance at MIT, 1969." The film will be followed by a panel discussion

addressing ethics of artificial intelligence, MIT-Saudi relations, and impacts of MIT on local housing and life.

The event will be held at 4:00 pm in the Bartos Theatre, Building E15, 20 Ames Street. ■

The New MIT Homepage: Response by the MIT Office of Communications to the Article in the November/December FNL

Nate Nickerson
Steve Bradt
Danyel Barnard

THE MIT HOMEPAGE, which launched in a redesigned form last summer, is the Institute's face to the world. For more than a decade, its previous iteration served our various audiences, including prospective students and their parents, current undergraduate and graduate students, alumni, faculty and staff, and the general public. It was centered around a single spotlight image highlighting a timely, usually research-focused story from within MIT. There was a great affinity for the old homepage within the MIT community, but our research told us that it was time for a reboot – and one that would honor the best of what it would replace.

Discovery Process

This change was not approached lightly or with haste. We began the project in early 2016 through a discovery process with an expert digital agency. This phase of work included:

- an in-depth review of analytics
- an intercept survey on the homepage, which received more than 2,000 responses over the course of a year
- a questionnaire for MIT's senior leadership
- an analysis of 25 peer-university sites

A key part of this process was prioritizing among the audiences that use the homepage (and the second-level pages accessed from the top navigation). Prospective undergraduate and graduate students were identified as our top audi-

ence, in the service of MIT's desire to attract the world's top talent. Of course, we realized that the site would also have to work well for the campus community, alumni, and a more general external audience: Ninety-five percent of the site's visitors come from outside Cambridge.

Discovery Findings

Our main takeaways from our analysis of the previous homepage were:

- **Across all audiences, users were struggling to find the information they wanted.** Navigation/search was cited as the top frustration across all surveyed users except for prospective students, where it came in a close second.
- **Search was the most used function on the old homepage – and the most frustrating.** This was true for both internal and external audiences.
- **Users didn't click the majority of links on the homepage.** Ninety percent of total site visits ended in one of the following seven actions: leaving the page, doing a search, or going to Admissions, Education, News, Research, or OCW. The vast majority of the 65+ links on the old homepage were used by less than 1% of visitors.
- **The old site was not responsive (optimized for mobile).** The majority of prospective students access the site from mobile devices, and the percentage of mobile use across audiences is rising each year.

• **For prospective students, the site's feel was a top drawback.** Many said the previous homepage felt "old," "uninviting," and "unimpressive." Prospective students also cited navigation as a top concern, noting that specific program and course information was difficult to find.

After learning all of this, we spent additional months doing user research, including online card sorting and remote testing with representative audience members to validate navigation labels and confirm the information architecture. This work led us to create a new page that organized information the way our users did.

Search

The old site's search box was powered by a Google enterprise search appliance that was scheduled to be discontinued. Given that the search function was going to change one way or another, we worked closely with IS&T to find the best possible solution.

IS&T created a new search function using Google's Custom Search Engine (CSE). (These are the results you get from the new homepage when you hit return.) This hosted service fulfilled the basic needs for our user base by displaying better formatted and more relevant results, but it was still not a great user experience. So, as a central part of the redesign project, we added the elastic search capability (a layer that sits on top of Google CSE), which:

- integrates web, directory, and map searches

- uses auto-suggest technology to display helpful results instantly, as a user types
- facilitates discovery of new content
- allows MIT to optimize results based on user analytics and institutional knowledge (people who understand MIT will usually make more insightful suggestions than an algorithm)
- allows MIT to compensate for search engine imperfections, such as duplicative and incomplete information

The elastic search provides a highly curated index of terms and results based on data about the most used search terms and the most visited pages in the MIT digital ecosystem.

Post-launch Results

Initial results from an intercept survey on the new homepage, with more than 2,500 responses, show that the homepage is performing well for these respondents. **Two-thirds of visitors say they are “extremely satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their experience.** Only 6% say they are “slightly satisfied,” and 4% are “not at all satisfied.”

When we compare this to intercept data from the old homepage, we see that the new site is performing better with key outside audiences. **More than 70% of both prospective undergraduate and**

graduate students rate their experience as “extremely” or “very” satisfying on the new website, compared to approximately 58% of prospective undergraduates and 62% of prospective graduate students on the old site.

Finally, we’ve learned that the overall homepage system, inclusive of the landing pages linked from the top of the homepage, is doing a much better job directing visitors to the pages across MIT that help them understand and learn more about the Institute’s academic programs. These results are the fruits of the research we did to understand what our audiences want and how they organize their own thinking.

Homepage Iteration

We have paid close attention to what we’ve heard from the MIT community since the new site launched. We learned that many within the MIT community were using the old homepage as something akin to an intranet, and therefore found it frustrating that links to heavily used internal resources had been moved.

- The most frequent initial complaint was that people missed the direct link to the old people directory and the campus map, so a few days post-launch, we added those links to the footer of the homepage.
- Additional refinements, in the works, will give the MIT community more

direct access to the pages they habitually access from the homepage.

- We’ve met with the Administrative Advisory Council II to get their feedback on the site.
- We’ve also been conducting user testing with prospective students and staff to further determine how we will tweak the site. Faculty are also welcome to participate; we invited more than 25 faculty members to participate in post-launch user testing, but didn’t get much response. Faculty who would like to participate in future user testing are invited to contact us at ci@mit.edu.

Getting the MIT homepage right is a balancing act: We must excite and welcome newcomers while also serving our core community. We will keep making changes as we learn how best to strike that balance: We seek to attract the world’s greatest talent to MIT— and serve it ably once it’s here.

Nate Nickerson is former MIT Vice President for Communications (nwn@mit.edu); **Steve Bradt** is Executive Director, MIT News Office (sbradt@mit.edu); **Danyel Barnard** is Senior Director, Communications Initiatives (dbarnard@mit.edu).

Editor’s Note: Above article is in response to “Lamenting MIT’s New Web Portal,” *MIT Faculty Newsletter* Vol. XXX No. 2, November/December 2018.

Q1 – What best describes you?

I’m interested in applying to MIT as an undergraduate student	40.34%	1035	I’m MIT alumni	2.34%	60
I’m interested in applying to MIT as a graduate student	25.84%	663	I’m MIT faculty	1.05%	27
I’m a current MIT undergraduate student	0.90%	23	I’m MIT staff	5.61%	144
I’m a current MIT graduate student	1.01%	26	I’m faculty/staff from another university	4.29%	110
I’m a parent of a prospective or current MIT student	2.69%	69	I’m a Cambridge/Boston community member	0.43%	11
			Other (please describe)	15.51%	398
			Total		2566

Q5 – How satisfied are you with your experience on the MIT website? (All Responses)



Data from the intercept survey on the new MIT homepage, gathered over the first six months after the site’s launch on July 25, 2018, shows who has responded and how those users rate their overall satisfaction with the site.

An Open Letter to All MIT Faculty

A Plea for Integrity of the Grievance Process at MIT*

Referendum on corporate retaliation for whistleblower and discrimination complaints

Chi-Sang Poon

IN AN OPEN LETTER to then-Provost Rafael Reif published in the February 6, 2007 issue of *The Tech* titled “A Plea for Fairness at MIT,” a group of MIT faculty took the MIT Administration to task by questioning the integrity of MIT’s grievance process in a racial discrimination complaint brought by an African-American faculty member James L. Sherley. Among the cosignatories of that open letter, I was the only non-tenured Principal Investigator at MIT who joined in support of Sherley’s complaint, just on the cusp of his historic 12-day hunger strike protest that brought widespread attention to the issues of race and the failings of the grievance process at MIT. In a second open letter I explained the reason for supporting Sherley’s protest (“MIT scientist calls for changes after Sherley protest: MIT’s missing ticket to diversity,” Boston.com, March 6, 2007):

“I am putting my career at MIT on the line to speak out on these important issues challenging the administration and President Hockfield for the good of the Institute because they may significantly impact the future governance of the Institute on many levels.”

It was, and still is, no secret to many of the disenfranchised that the Institute’s perfunctory grievance process is a futile exercise, and could be fraught with potential dire consequences. This longstanding dark side of MIT governance is revealed in vivid detail in a disturbing story of corporate reprisal “Tyranny Against a Whistle-Blower at MIT” (David Gordon Wilson, *MIT Faculty Newsletter*, Vol. XVIII No. 2,

November/December 2005). Another report (“MIT’s Missile Defense Cover-Up” [Theodore A. Postol, *The Tech*, February 5, 2008]) on a decade-long faculty grievance against MIT at the national level raises the specter that cor-

porate misconducts are often covered up for institutional gains at the expense of scientific integrity or even national interests. What’s wrong with the Institute’s grievance process to permit such tyrannies in cover-up of all these iniquities – and how to bring about reforms for the good of the Institute, its students, its faculty and its staff? Those are the questions raised earlier by some concerned faculty (“Troubling whistle-blower article” [Letter, *MIT Faculty Newsletter*, Vol. XVIII No. 3, January/February 2006]; “Academic Expectations” [Letter, *MIT Faculty Newsletter*, Vol. XVII No. 5, May/June 2005]) and in my second 2007 open letter (“MIT scientist calls for changes after Sherley protest: MIT’s missing ticket to diversity,” Boston.com, March 6, 2007).

Answering these questions calls for a close examination of the inner workings of the grievance process. For one thing, integrity (as generally taken for granted) of MIT’s grievance process hinges solely – and thinly – on the Institute’s avowed

commitment to “providing a prompt, fair and impartial process” for complaint resolution (see “Complaint Resolution Policies and Procedures” [MIT Policies and Procedures §9.8] and the Institute’s 2007 open statement following Sherley’s

It was, and still is, no secret to many of the disenfranchised that the Institute’s perfunctory grievance process is a futile exercise, and could be fraught with potential dire consequences.

protest [“Professor James Sherley ends fast” *MIT News*, February 18, 2007]). But unbeknownst to many, this widely publicized core provision in the complaint resolution process is fundamentally corrupted by a subtle tagged-on qualification that opens the door to potential conflict of interest:

“MIT tries to address concerns [through the complaint resolution procedures] while taking into consideration the interests of all involved – those raising a concern and those against whom the concern is raised, as well as co-workers and others who may be involved.” [emphasis added]

This oxymoron raises a dilemma: how could the complaint resolution process be “fair and impartial” if it also takes into consideration individual interests – including (and especially) those of the Administration itself, which would be necessarily involved in any complaint either directly (as the complainant, respondent, or adjudicator) or indirectly

(as “co-workers and others who may be involved”)? As much as the Administration may “try” to address concerns, the reality is that the final verdicts would inevitably be skewed one-sidedly in favor of the Administration’s vested interests, never mind whether justice is served.

The root of the problem is that, absent any checks and balances to guard against such inherent conflict of interest in the grievance process, the Administration is indulged with unfettered latitude to dictate the adjudication in its favor always. As the creator and final arbiter of all MIT Policies and Procedures and as a monarchy with total executive authority and legal advantage, the Administration can easily manipulate the grievance process high-handedly with absolute impunity – no matter how unreasonable or wrongful it is. Under this top-down governance scheme, any grievance against the Administration or members of its inner circle for unfair treatment or violation of policies or laws is simply a lost cause that is doomed to backfire. The resultant chilling effect completes a vicious cycle that further suppresses the utterance of whatever little remaining dissenting voices from the faculty (as lamented in the following reflection excerpted from the *MIT Faculty Newsletter* letter “Academic Expectations”):

“Yet the most difficult issue to understand is probably the failure of faculty to question the administration. . . . My concern is the increasing gap between administration and faculty. Whenever faculty, and for that matter students, question the administration, few, if any, colleagues join the discussion. This is worse than the environment in private industry or government. I worked many years for both and found a much greater freedom, involvement, and mutual responsiveness. For me, these are ominous developments that do not bode well for the future of academic inquiry, research, and learning.”

To be sure, the Institute’s “Complaint Resolution Policies and Procedures” does allow for an Independent Investigation Panel (IIP) comprised of faculty members

to address complaints of harassment and discrimination in lieu of the normal grievance process. This option may be requested provided the complainant or respondent has reason to believe that an impartial investigation will not be possible in the department or local academic unit of the respondent. However, this alternative route is rarely practicable in that, by the time a complainant finds out

In the end, integrity of the grievance process – and of the Institute as a whole – can only be upheld by the faculty collectively, not by the Administration autocratically. The MIT Faculty deserves better.

the hard way that the normal grievance process by default is really not as “fair and impartial” as promised, it would be already too late to opt for an IIP, as this process cannot be evoked as an appeal of an investigation that has already been completed. In the James Sherley discrimination case, for instance, an IIP was apparently inaccessible for these reasons, prompting a drastic hunger strike protest as the last resort. Moreover, the current IIP provision is rather restrictive and is not applicable to complaints of other unfair treatments or other violations of policies or laws such as in the above-mentioned tyranny-against-whistleblower case and missile defense cover-up case. Why can’t a faculty-led IIP be made a primary grievance procedure (as with MIT’s counterpart just “up the river”)? Further, why can’t the IIP mechanism be extended to the investigation of other faculty or corporate malfeasances, in stewardship of the core values of the Institute as a leading institution of higher learning and research?

In the end, integrity of the grievance process – and of the Institute as a whole – can only be upheld by the faculty collectively, not by the Administration autocratically. The MIT Faculty deserves better.

This is why I am reaching out to ask your help in a joint effort to uphold

integrity in the appeal of an ongoing grievance against the Administration (as the respondent) that is pending a final decision by the Administration (as the adjudicator) with an obvious conflict of interest in the process. The case concerns integrity issues at the Institute and at a federal research funding agency (the National Institutes of Health [NIH]) with potential far-reaching implications at

MIT and at the national level. Because threats to the integrity of the grievance process strike at the heart of the core values and integrity of the Institute and the NIH, there is a fiduciary obligation to inform and consult the faculty at large (and for that matter, the entire MIT community) for advice and possible recourse.

In sum, my grievances in chronological order are as follows:

1. **May-June 2018:** I was retaliated against by the Administration after I expressed concerns that some NIH officials might have violated certain NIH policies and Federal regulations regarding the handling of grant applications. The retaliatory actions included:

(1) prohibiting my further expression of concerns with NIH officials;

(2) leveling trumped-up counter-accusation at me alleging my “dishonesty” in “misrepresenting” the NIH officials’ statements. Even though the allegations were said to be not about research misconduct, an ad hoc review of the allegations was conducted hastily within the Vice President for Research (VPR) Office without adhering to due process for a formal review as stipulated in MIT’s own Policies and Procedures for screening and investigating such allegations.

continued on next page

A Plea for Integrity

Poon, from preceding page

2. **August 2018:** After I filed a grievance with the President requesting a formal review of the retaliatory counter-accusation against me, the Administration further heightened the retaliation by abruptly suspending my principal investigator status without providing any legitimate reason, causing severe damages to some of my NIH-funded projects and grant applications.

3. **September 18, 2018:** After I requested the President's assistance to protect me from retaliation and facilitate my continued employment during the investigation of my grievance as per MIT's own Policies and Procedures, the Administration did just the opposite by summarily terminating my MIT appointment instead (on 9/18/2018) citing the Administration's counter-accusation of "dishonesty" as the ostensible cause, while ignoring my ongoing complaints that I had brought to the President regarding such trumped-up counter-accusation.

In addition, the termination letter evinced an animus against me relating to my previous complaints of discrimination at the Institute as an ulterior motive of the discharge.

4. **October 2, 2018:** It would not be until two weeks after terminating my MIT appointment did the Administration issue a belated after-the-fact decision (dated 10/2/2018) on my grievance, retroactively denying a formal review of my complaints about the trumped-up counter-accusation and other retaliatory treatments that were used as pretext for my discharge.

5. **October 31, 2018:** After reviewing my case, Massachusetts State Government officials rejected the Administration's trumped-up counter-accusation of "dis-

honesty" against me and ruled that the wrongful termination of my MIT appointment was a violation of Massachusetts General Law Chapter 151A, §25(e)(2). The ruling stated that:

The favorable ruling by the Massachusetts State Government against the Administration's trumped-up counter-accusation is a vindication of my innocence. More importantly, it points to an underlying bankruptcy of the Institute's grievance process:

"You discharged [Dr. Poon] for allegedly violating company policy regarding dishonesty. You have failed to provide any separation information in order to establish [Dr. Poon's] discharge was attributable to deliberate misconduct in willful disregard of the employing unit's interest or a knowing violation of a reasonable and uniformly enforced company rule or policy."

The favorable ruling by the Massachusetts State Government against the Administration's trumped-up counter-accusation is a vindication of my innocence. More importantly, it points to an underlying bankruptcy of the Institute's grievance process:

- How could an innocent Principal Investigator be subjected to such harrowing retaliations ending in wrongful discharge for expressing concerns of misconduct by federal officials, without being allowed due process under the Institute's Complaint Resolution Policies and Procedures?

- How could a complainant be subjected to such harrowing retaliations ending in wrongful discharge after filing a grievance against the Administration, again without being allowed due process under the

Institute's Complaint Resolution Policies and Procedures?

By way of this Open Letter I am appealing to you to join in my appeal of the

Administration's decision on my grievance against the Administration itself, with the following requested remedial actions:

1. Reconsider my grievance with a Formal Review by an IIP comprised of MIT faculty members and non-MIT scholars with no conflict of interest.

2. Reinstate my MIT appointment immediately pursuant to the Massachusetts State Government's ruling.

After 30+ years serving as a Principal Investigator at MIT with continuous NIH funding support, my career should not end in this manner with my reputation being tarnished without a due process, and with students and staff in my lab being unfairly penalized as collateral damages.

I ask your help to address this problem, which I expect is also adversely affecting the careers and lives of other faculty members and staff at MIT. Only the faculty can set it right. ■

*Original letter dated November 26, 2018 was sent to all MIT faculty via email.

Chi-Sang Poon was a Visiting Associate Professor, MIT (1988-1989); Principal Research Scientist, MIT (1989-2018) (cpoonmit@gmail.com).

Committee on Curricula

The Committee on Curricula serves to implement the General Institute Requirements and Course Curricula for undergraduates, including acting with power on: a) proposals for changes in the Institute requirements and making recommendations to the Faculty; b) proposals for Science Distribution and Laboratory subjects; c) requests from individual students for exceptions to the General Institute Requirements; d) proposals for changes in undergraduate subjects of instruction; e) proposals for new curricula, changes in existing curricula, and the discontinuation of existing curricula; and f) reviewing departmental reports on individual student's programs that include major departures from an approved curriculum.

The Committee on Curricula consists of six elected Faculty members, four undergraduate student members, and the following ex officio, nonvoting members: the Vice Chancellor (or designee), the Registrar, one member designated by the Vice Chancellor, and the Chair of the Committee on the Undergraduate Program.

Prof. David A. Vogan (L), Chair (June 30, 2019)

Mathematics

Prof. Vivek F. Farias (June 30, 2021)

Sloan School of Management

Dr. Janelle K. Knox (June 30, 2020)

Urban Studies & Planning

Prof. Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga (June 30, 2019)

Prog in Science, Technology, & Society

Prof. Donca Steriade (June 30, 2021)

Linguistics & Philosophy

Prof. Jesse Thaler (June 30, 2020)

Physics

Prof. Jacob K. White (June 30, 2019)

Electrical Engineering-Computer Science

Ms. Avital Baral, Student '20 (June 30, 2019)

Ms. Emma Bingham, Student '19 (June 30, 2019)

Ms. Sarah Curtis, Student '19 (June 30, 2019)

Prof. Duane S. Boning, Chair, CUP (June 30, 2019)

Electrical Engineering-Computer Science

Ms. Mary Rose Callahan, Registrar #

OVC Department Heads

Prof. Jeff Gore, Designated Representative, Vice Chancellor # (June 30, 2019)

Physics

Prof. James G. Paradis, Designated Representative, Vice Chancellor # (December 31, 2018)

Comparative Media Studies/Writing

Ms. Pam Walcott, Executive Officer #

Registrar

Ms. Jennifer C. Donath, Staff to Committee

Registrar

Ms. Martha Janus, Staff to Committee

Registrar

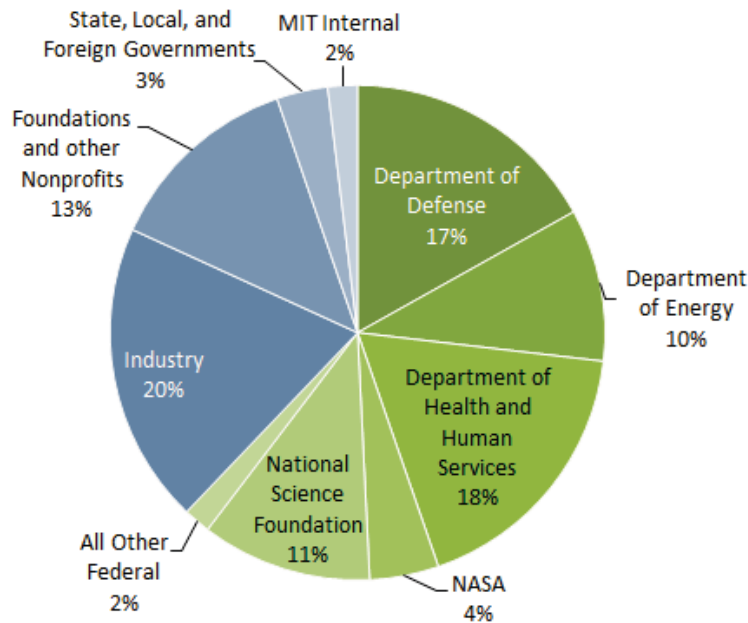
Note: Data in parenthesis designated term expiration.

Legend: * Ex Officio Voting; # Ex Officio Non-Voting; L On Leave

Upcoming Faculty Meetings: March 20, April 17, May 15. 3:30-5:00 pm. Room 10-250.

M.I.T. Numbers

Campus Research Expenditures By Primary Sponsor FY2018



Sponsor	Expenditures (\$ in thousands)
Department of Defense	123,513
Department of Energy	72,828
Department of Health and Human Services	130,668
Foundations and other Nonprofits	94,322
Industry	144,126
MIT Internal	14,092
NASA	33,024
National Science Foundation	81,563
Other Federal Agencies	12,902
State, Local, and Foreign Governments	24,471
Total Federal	454,497
Total Non-Federal	277,012
Grand Total	731,509

*These numbers represent expenditures by primary originating sponsor. Federal totals include funding that is passed through other sources (universities, etc.) Numbers may not total due to rounding.