

Dean, School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences

The School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (SHASS) has worked hard this year on a number of fronts, strengthening existing programs and exploring new initiatives.

In an effort to clarify and heighten the School's profile, both within MIT and among potential students and alumni, SHASS hired its first director of communications this year. Emily Hiestand has been working on improving the channels of communication between the departments of the School and the MIT News Office, designing a new SHASS website, helping departments develop descriptive and promotional materials, and working with the School's assistant dean for development, Anne Marie Michel, to identify and describe for the School's friends and faculty those people and projects that make the School so vibrant and exciting.

The dean also appointed a new associate dean. Professor Kai von Fintel, of the Linguistics faculty, brings a great deal of energy and MIT experience to the position; he has served most recently as chair of the Committee on Academic Performance. Dean von Fintel is primarily responsible for the School's academic curriculum, particularly the undergraduate programs, and works closely with the departments as well as Dr. Bette Davis in the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS) Education Office. He will also chair the HASS Overview Committee (HOC) and sit on the Subcommittee on the Communication Requirement (under the Committee on the Undergraduate Program). One of dean von Fintel's largest concerns has been the continuing work on revising the HASS Requirement.

In line with this effort, the School was very fortunate to receive a generous gift of \$2 million from an MIT alumnus to support the Learning and Teaching Innovation Fund over a five-year period. This fund is being used to support the development of new and in some cases experimental classes that focus on fundamental questions and issues facing our students. Some of these classes are interdepartmental and even inter-School, and they represent part of a new effort to bring fundamentally different methodologies to bear on important problems while at the same time joining faculty in a shared commitment to solve the toughest problems in our world.

A second pedagogical effort has focused on MIT's role in educating students for the global economy. SHASS has long been MIT's natural center for international education—in foreign languages, in comparative politics, and in Asian, European, and Latin American literature, history, music, and cultural studies. Furthermore, the School is home to MIT's most successful international program, the MIT International Science and Technology Initiatives (MISTI); MISTI trains and sends more than 300 students per year to one of nine partner countries for internships in labs and companies. Building upon this strength, the School has embarked on planning for the Global Studies Program, an elite undergraduate program that will enable MIT freshmen to combine their passion for a given field of science and engineering with their interest in particular foreign regions. Students will be mentored by a group of faculty members drawn from all MIT schools who share an interest and research commitment in a particular region, something that we think will appeal to faculty too often isolated in their labs and offices (and airplanes!).

For students, this will be a unique opportunity to combine the humanistic/social science approach with the scientific/technical approach, culminating in a capstone project that brings these different educational strands together. The School will issue a report on this planning effort in summer of 2009.

As part of the School's effort to establish research and teaching priorities for the next five to 10 years, each department has been working on a strategic plan that both captures current strengths and challenges and projects the department's boldest programmatic goals and faculty ambitions. These plans will form the core of the dean's strategic plan for the School, completed in summer 2008.

The dean continues to create opportunities for SHASS faculty to meet each other to explore ideas and discuss their research. Taking a cue from Jay Keyser, the School has initiated "random dinners" for the faculty, bringing a random selection of faculty from all departments and all ranks together for a dinner once a semester.

SHASS continues to collaborate with other schools in exploring topics of mutual interest. In the fall semester, SHASS sponsored an event with Dr. Paul Farmer of Partners in Health, which provides medical care to some of the neediest people, particularly AIDS victims, of Haiti and Africa. In the spring, the School brought author and illustrator David Macaulay for a four-day residency. Both efforts were initiated by SHASS but supported by the generosity of other schools as well.

Finally, after serving as director of the Knight Science Journalism Fellows Program for 10 years, Boyce Rensberger retired. The dean's office conducted a national search for a new director and was very fortunate to hire Philip Hiltz, a well-known and highly accomplished science writer, author, and expert on many areas of science with a special interest in international health issues.

Undergraduate Education

All MIT undergraduates must complete the HASS Requirement in order to graduate. This requirement, which is overseen by the School, is the principal point of contact between SHASS faculty and undergraduates. Undergraduates who wish a deeper engagement with the disciplines represented by the School may do so by pursuing a major or minor in any department or section, or by undertaking any of several interdisciplinary majors and minors. Among 2007–2008 graduates, 78 completed undergraduate degrees in the School.

As the interests of students admitted to MIT continue to diversify, the role of the School in the mainstream education of MIT's scientists and engineers becomes even more important. Having faculty members of national rank in the fields of humanities, arts, and social sciences ensures that MIT undergraduates receive the rounded education that they expect when they are admitted. The School's faculty takes this educational mission seriously, a fact reflected in the high-quality teaching evaluations received by our instructors and the continuing educational innovation that emanates from the various faculties.

Because all MIT undergraduates must take eight HASS subjects, including three HASS Distribution (HASS-D) subjects, the School devotes considerable resources to overseeing the HASS Requirement, particularly the subjects licensed as HASS-D. The addition of the Communication Requirement has expanded this oversight task, especially since the Subcommittee on the Communication Requirement has assigned the School the responsibility of reviewing classes that meet the Communication Intensive (CI-H) portion of the Communication Requirement. The HOC bears the direct responsibility for reviewing subjects that are proposed to fulfill the HASS-D and CI-H requirements. This past year, the HOC was chaired by associate professor Jeff Ravel (History). Other members were professor Diane Davis (Urban Studies and Planning); associate professors Noel Jackson (Literature), Patricia Tang (Music and Theater Arts), Andrea Campbell (Political Science), and Agustin Rayo (Philosophy); and Caroline Rubin ('08, Courses 9 and 21A). Dr. Bette Davis served *ex officio*. HASS-D and CI-H licenses were granted for several new subjects, and numerous subjects were relicensed after an extensive review. HOC also initiated a review of all HASS minors and concentrations and issued an interim report to the dean. The review will be completed in the coming academic year.

Affirmative Action

After steadily increasing for several years, the number of women faculty in SHASS peaked at 49 in AY2000 and then steadily decreased through AY2003 to a total of 41. Retirements, departures, and unsuccessful promotions contributed to this decrease. However, we seem to have turned the corner over the past four years, creeping back up to 44 in AY2005, 45 in AY2006, 48 in AY2007, and reaching a total of 49 women faculty in AY2008. Effective July 1, 2008 (AY2009), we will reach a new high of 51 women faculty, and we remain optimistic that this upward trend will continue. With a faculty of 153 in AY2008, women represent 32 percent of the total, and 35 of these women are tenured (representing 30 percent of the tenured faculty). We successfully recruited two untenured new women (a third Asian American woman who was recruited in AY2007 will join our faculty in AY2009). Unfortunately, we lost one senior woman at the end of this past year, leaving us with a net increase of two women for AY2009.

The School has had moderate success in its efforts to recruit minority faculty, although we continually strive to further diversify the faculty. There were 25 minority faculty members in the School in AY2008, and we have successfully recruited five more, to join our faculty in AY2009 (one untenured Asian American man and one untenured Asian American woman were recruited in AY2007, and their appointments are effective in AY2009). In AY2009 the number of minorities in SHASS will increase to 29. Of the four SHASS faculty approved for tenure this year (effective AY2009), two are women (one of whom is Asian American) and one is a Hispanic man.

With the help of the Provost's Initiative and in keeping with the Institute's standards for faculty searches, at the end of AY2003 the dean and the SHASS Equal Opportunity Committee (EOC) asked the departments within SHASS to identify 5 to 10 leading senior (or tenurable at MIT) women and 5 to 10 leading senior (or tenurable at MIT) minority group members in each discipline/field, and we have spent the last five years (AY2004–AY2008) trying to recruit from these lists. These efforts led to the hiring of a senior woman philosopher in the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy in AY2005 and the

recruitment of a junior philosopher (a Mexican national), who joined the department in AY2006. Buoyed by the success of Linguistics and Philosophy's recruitment efforts, the dean and EOC reinforced this commitment by encouraging the other academic units to follow that department's lead in recruiting qualified women and minority group members. This led to the hiring of one senior African American man in the History department; he will join the faculty in AY2009.

The School also remains committed to increasing the minority representation within the administrative staff. We currently have five minorities (two African Americans, one Hispanic American [born in Puerto Rico], and two Asian Americans) among the 40 members of SHASS administrative staff (approximately 13 percent). We will continue efforts to further diversify our administrative staff by working closely with the departments and programs in the School and with the Office of Human Resources.

Honors and Awards

SHASS faculty members garnered an array of honors and awards this year. Most notable were the following:

Class of 1941 professor of economics Olivier Blanchard was inducted into the Ordre National de la Legion d'Honneur, the highest honor in France.

Nazli Choucri, professor of political science, was reelected chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the UNESCO Management of Social Transformation Program.

Professor of writing Junot Diaz was awarded the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle 2007 award.

Abdul Latif Jameel professor of poverty alleviation and development economics Esther Duflo was named the inaugural holder of the knowledge against poverty chair at the College de France.

David Jones, Leo Marx career development associate professor of the history of science, received an investigator award for health policy research from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Associate professor of the history of science David Kaiser's book, *Drawing Theories Apart: The Dispersion of Feynman Diagrams in Postwar Physics*, won the Pfizer Award from the History of Science Society in 2007 for the best book in the field.

Keeril Makan, assistant professor of music, received the Rome Prize.

Franco Modigliani professor of finance and economics Stephen Ross was awarded the 2007 Jean-Jacques Laffont prize for outstanding work that combines theoretical and applied economics.

Assistant professor of anthropology Heather Paxson won the 2008 Levitan Prize in the Humanities for her innovative research about the world of American artisanal cheese.

Ruth Perry, MacVicar faculty fellow and professor of literature, was awarded a fellowship at the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities in Edinburgh.

MacVicar faculty fellow and professor of literature David Thorburn was awarded a senior Fulbright lectureship at Utrecht University in 2007.

Fundraising

New gifts and pledges for FY2008 totaled \$9.5 million. Highlights included a \$2 million commitment to a new teaching and learning fund run through the dean's office, major new gifts to MISTI (including, among others, gifts of \$904,000, \$500,000, and \$250,000), and grant commitments to the Center for International Studies.

Faculty Promotions, Administrative Changes, and Retirements

In AY2008, one retirement, two resignations, and 10 new faculty hires within the School. We lost T.T. and Wei Fong Chao professor of Asian civilizations Peter Perdue, who retired from MIT. One of the resignations was at the full professor level (professor of economics Dora Costa), and one was at the assistant professor level. Four faculty members in the School were promoted to tenure this year, effective July 1, 2008: Agustin Rayo, Noel Jackson, Patricia Tang, and Andrea Campbell.

The School was successful in recruiting a total of nine new members to the faculty for AY2009 (along with an additional two faculty members who were recruited in AY2007 and one who will begin as an instructor while awaiting the completion of his PhD). Of the new 2009 faculty, two will join as full professors (Craig Wilder in the History Section and Robert Townsend in the Department of Economics), one as an associate professor with tenure (Benjamin Olken in the Department of Economics), and eight as assistant professors (in Anthropology, Economics, Music and Theater Arts, Political Science, and Science, Technology, and Society).

This year has also brought change in personnel within the dean's office, as mentioned earlier in this report. Dean Fitzgerald appointed Professor Kai von Fintel as associate dean, and we hired Emily Hiestand as communications director.

Deborah K. Fitzgerald

Kenan Sahin Dean

Professor of the History of Technology

More information about the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences can be found at <http://web.mit.edu/shass/>.