Dean, School of Architecture and Planning

The School of Architecture and Planning (SA+P) is composed of five main divisions:

- The Department of Architecture, the first such department in the nation (1865), and a leader in introducing modernism to America
- The Department of Urban Studies and Planning, which began as the Program in City Planning in 1932, was the second of its kind in the country, and has evolved into the longest continuous planning program in the United States
- The Media Lab, the birthplace of multimedia computing (1985), which has come to be known around the world as a world-class incubator of new design ideas
- The Center for Real Estate, which established the nation’s first one-year graduate program in real estate development (1984), becoming recognized worldwide as a leader in the field
- The Program in Art, Culture and Technology (2010), which was the result of a merger between the academic Visual Arts Program (1989) and the Center for Advanced Visual Studies (1967), a research program in visual arts

What follows are some of the highlights from the year for the School as a whole. For more information on the various divisions, consult their individual reports.

Highlights

Hashim Sarkis Appointed Dean

Hashim Sarkis was named the 10th dean of MIT’s School of Architecture and Planning. Sarkis, who took up his duties in January 2015, is a prominent scholar of architecture and urbanism, a practicing architect whose works have been built in the United States and the Middle East, and a leading expert on design in the Middle East. He assumes leadership of the school from Adèle Naudé Santos, a professor in both the Department of Architecture and the Department of Urban Studies and Planning (DUSP). Santos served as dean from 2004 through 2014. Professor Mark Jarzombek served as the School’s interim dean during the fall semester of academic year 2015.

Sarkis came to MIT from the Harvard Graduate School of Design, where he was the Aga Khan Professor of Landscape Architecture and Urbanism in Muslim Societies. For the past dozen years, Sarkis also served as director of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. The Aga Khan Program, located jointly at Harvard and MIT, is a leading program for the study of architecture, urban issues, and visual culture in Islamic societies.

As a scholar and designer, Sarkis has moved across boundaries and disciplines. He has published works on architecture and urbanism in Lebanon in addition to writing about leading 20th-century modernist architects. His architectural firm, Hashim Sarkis Studios, has won numerous competitions and designed completed civic and commercial projects, as well as private houses, from Massachusetts to Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates. His architectural work has been published extensively and has been displayed at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, as well as at Biennale exhibitions in Venice, Rotterdam, and Shenzhen–Hong Kong.
Sarkis’s publications include Circa 1958: Lebanon in the Pictures and Plans of Constantinos Doxiadis (2003). He has edited or co-edited volumes about several leaders of modernism, including CASE: Le Corbusier’s Venice Hospital (2001) and Josep Lluís Sert: The Architect of Urban Design (2008). Sarkis also co-edited Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City (1998), about the modern development and more recent reconstruction of Beirut. He holds faculty appointments in both the Department of Architecture and DUSP.

**Historic Gift from Samuel Tak Lee**

In 2015, SA+P received the largest gift in its history — and one of the largest gifts ever received by MIT — from alumnus Samuel Tak Lee ’62, SM ’64. This gift establishes the Samuel Tak Lee MIT Real Estate Entrepreneurship Lab with the mission to promote social responsibility among entrepreneurs and academics in the real estate profession worldwide, with a particular focus on China. The $118 million gift will fund fellowships to attract both US and international students; will support research on sustainable real estate development and global urbanization; and will make the lab’s curriculum available online to learners worldwide via MITx. In recognition of Lee’s substantial and ongoing commitment to the Institute, Building 9, home to the MIT Center for Real Estate (CRE), will be named the Samuel Tak Lee Building.

The new Samuel Tak Lee MIT Real Estate Entrepreneurship Lab will be part of DUSP and the Center for Real Estate (CRE). Yu-Hung Hong MCP ’89, PhD ’95, is the founding director. The lab’s professors and students will seek partners within the School of Architecture and Planning — such as the Center for Advanced Urbanism, the Media Lab, and the Building Technology Program — as well as from the MIT Sloan School of Management and from such MIT departments as Civil and Environmental Engineering, Materials Science and Engineering, Economics, Anthropology, and other departments that share an interest in responsible real estate development.

**MIT Architecture Tops Inaugural QS World Rankings**

MIT was named the top university for architecture and the built environment by QS World University Rankings in 2015. This is the first year that QS has ranked architecture programs.

Published by Quacquarelli Symonds, an organization specializing in education and study abroad, QS rankings highlight the world’s top universities in 36 individual subjects. Rankings are made on the basis of academic reputation, employer reputation, and research impact. QS ranked MIT as the world’s top university overall for academic year 2015.

**Joan Jonas Represents the United States, MIT**

Joan Jonas, professor emerita in the Program in Art, Culture, and Technology (ACT), was selected as the US representative to the 56th Venice Biennale. Jonas’s exhibition, *They Come to US Without a Word*, received a Special Mention award and was covered broadly
and favorably in the media. For example, the headline in a New York Times review read, “Joan Jonas’s Venice Biennale Pavilion Is a Triumph.”

The installation at the US national pavilion in the Giardini, south of St. Mark’s Square, was commissioned by the MIT List Visual Arts Center and co-curated by the List Center’s director, Paul Ha, and former Department of Architecture faculty member, Ute Meta Bauer, currently director of the Centre for Contemporary Art in Singapore.

**SA+P Faculty Instrumental to Kendall Square Initiative, MIT2030**

Faculty from the School of Architecture and Planning have been instrumental in helping the Institute with two major planning efforts that will shape the campus and the surrounding environment for decades to come: the Kendall Square Initiative and MIT2030.

The product of a five-year planning process, the Kendall Square Initiative will produce 500 new housing units for graduate students and for market use, more than 100,000 square feet of new and repositioned ground-floor retail space, and nearly three acres of new and repurposed connected open spaces, in addition to providing research and development space. The anticipated investment in the development of these projects will be at least $1.2 billion.

Building on the careful analyses and recommendations from several MIT studies related to Kendall Square, East Campus, and graduate housing, MIT moved ahead—with faculty leadership from (SA+P)—to engage with five teams of architects to design the new buildings. This year, and in earlier years leading to this milestone, the former and current SA+P deans, Adèle Naudé Santos and Hashim Sarkis, and the former and current heads of the Department of Architecture, Nader Tehrani and J. Meejin Yoon, contributed their expertise as architects, urban planners, and designers to the process.

MIT2030 seeks to explore how the MIT campus and surroundings could evolve to meet future academic and research needs and continue to foster innovation. Urban Planning Professor and Department Head and Professors Xavier de Souza Briggs, Phillip Clay, Dennis Frenchman, and James Wescoat are assisting in the formation of plans for the development of both East and West Campus.

**MIT Dedicates Memorial to Officer Sean Collier**

Thousands of members of the MIT community—along with hundreds of law enforcement officers from MIT, the City of Cambridge, the Massachusetts State Police, and many neighboring campus and municipal police departments—gathered on April 29, 2015, for the dedication of the Institute’s memorial to Sean Collier, the MIT police officer killed in the line of duty by the perpetrators of the Boston Marathon bombings in 2013.

The Collier Memorial was designed by Meejin Yoon, professor and department head of the Department of Architecture, and engineered in partnership with Professor John Ochsendorf, Class of 1942 Professor of Architecture and co-director of the Structure Design Laboratory. Yoon and Ochsendorf collaborated over a two-year period with a
team of more than 100 people across campus, including members of the MIT Police, faculty, students, and staff, on the design, engineering, and construction of the memorial. The challenging installation process took place amid the record-setting snowfall of the winter of 2015.

In the true MIT spirit, the memorial is not only a thoughtful and fitting tribute to Officer Collier, but also a groundbreaking fusion of design and construction. Yoon’s design employs 32 solid granite blocks to form a five-way asymmetrical vault, achieving stability and strength through unity and the interaction of each part. The memorial symbolizes strength through community and combines historic stone-setting techniques with contemporary robotic fabrication technologies.

“The vaulted design of the Sean Collier Memorial embodies structural principles in its material configuration and symbolizes generosity as service. This didactic visualization of forces is consistent with MIT’s ethos of openness and transparency, while the idea that all five walls are needed to achieve a stable form is symbolic of a community coalescing to commemorate a loss,” Yoon wrote of her design. “The permanent Collier Memorial will offer our community the opportunity to remember Officer Collier’s life and to honor his service as it reminds us of our values: openness in the face of threat, unity through diversity, and strength through community.”

Research, Activities, and Accomplishments

Highlights from the year for the divisions of SAP include the following activities and accomplishments.

The Department of Architecture instituted a new interdisciplinary “cross studio” initiative, pairing design faculty with colleagues from different disciplines to offer advanced option design studios. Three studios were offered: Cristina Parreño with Nasser Rabbat of the Agha Khan Program in Islamic Architecture; Joel Lamere with Caitlin Mueller from the Building Technology group; and Brandon Clifford with Mark Jarzombek of the History, Theory, and Criticism section.

The department also underwent review by two important groups. In April, the department welcomed its Visiting Committee for its biennial meeting, chaired by Gregory Turner ’74, AR ’77. In March, a National Architectural Accrediting Board team reviewed the professional Master of Architecture degree for continuing accreditation under the 2009 Conditions for Accreditation. The department participated in a test of the proposed 2015 Procedures for Accreditation that included a shorter site visit, a smaller visiting team, and pre-populating some sections of the visiting team report in advance of the site visit.

Faculty from the History, Theory, and Criticism section in Architecture conducted a curriculum retreat in September to review current staffing, assess teaching demands on faculty, and consider the range of topics to offer. In subsequent meetings, the faculty moved to change the policies on doctoral examinations, with the result that the entire third-year class, for the first time in the section’s history, is poised to advance to all-but-dissertation status at the beginning of the fourth year. In academic year 2017, doctoral
examinations will move to a credit-weighted system that, it is hoped, will result in clearer paths to the dissertation stage.

The Department of Urban Studies and Planning organized a project to explore the relationship between current urban planning practices and the types of places that are being designed and designated for the production of goods today. Since the Industrial Revolution, industries and cities have grown and evolved together. However, despite this shared past, popular notions of urban industry tend to focus on the negative aspects of manufacturing: pollution, environmental degradation, and the exploitation of labor. Consisting of an exhibition in the Wolk Gallery, an international symposium held on October 27, and an interactive website, the “Industrial Urbanism: Places of Production” project organized by Professor Eran Ben-Joseph and Tali Hatuka attempted to move the conversation beyond these overly simplified and overly negative characterizations.

The MIT Office of Digital Learning, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, and Eric Klopfer, who is a DUSP professor and director of the Scheller Teacher Education Program, announced a collaboration aimed at supporting teachers in their efforts to use emerging digital learning tools and environments, especially in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The effort will promote new ideas, technologies, and curricula along with research related to educator preparation, with a focus on STEM subjects for students from pre-kindergarten through the senior year of high school.

The Program in Art, Culture, and Technology hosted CULTURUNNERS, a week of workshops and public events at MIT in October that represented a multidisciplinary gathering of artists, designers, filmmakers, scientists, curators, and scholars with novel approaches to cross-cultural exchanges between the United States and the Middle East.

In November, SA+P, ACT, the MIT Museum Studio, and fellows and alumni of the Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS) hosted and organized a memorial service for Professor Emeritus and CAVS Director Otto Piene. Piene, who was director from 1974 to 1994, died in Berlin, Germany, on July 17, 2014. The memorial included a service in Kresge Auditorium, installations of Piene’s work in Lobbies 7 and 10, a repast in the Bush Room, and audio recollections by friends and family.

A significant responsibility for ACT is the stewardship of the legacy of CAVS, which was founded in 1967 by Hungarian artist and MIT Institute Professor György Kepes. ACT’s role includes the management of a considerable archive, the CAVS Special Collection (CAVSSC). This year, CAVSSC reviewed more than 5,000 folders, 110 boxes, and between 120,000 and 150,000 individual documents to produce the CAVSSC Finding Aid, an online resource that allows patrons to explore the collection’s contents more easily and provides visitors with historical context.

The Center for Real Estate initiated a new educational partnership with MIT Professional Education (MIT/PE)—the first time MIT/PE partnered with a department, laboratory, or center outside the School of Engineering. The new partnership launched and successfully executed a Certificate Program in Real Estate Development and Finance. In
the first year, 56 professionals applied for candidacy, with 37 participants completing their master’s during the first two weeks of June. The subjects that were offered included Real Estate Finance: Fundamentals; Evaluating Real Estate Markets; Real Estate Finance: Advanced; Commercial Real Estate Development; and Global Real Estate Markets.

CRE lecturer John Kennedy, and Campbell Mayer (DUSP ’11) continued a collaborative project with the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal in Durban, South Africa: the Cultural, Research, Entrepreneurship, and Technology Exchange (CREATE). CREATE is designed to empower rural and local economic development initiatives and to foster economic self-sufficiency through entrepreneurship and innovation in local markets. Now in its third year, CREATE sent eight graduate students to Durban to engage with grassroots entrepreneurs in multidisciplinary teams to bring skills training and strategic consulting to local community groups and aspiring new ventures.

Media Arts and Sciences (MAS) hired Monica Orta as the program’s first assistant director of diversity and inclusion. The past year saw significant strides in the work, focusing on three main areas: branding and infrastructure building, admissions, and climate efforts. The greatest success was in admissions. With the help of faculty partners, the program increased the admission rate of members of underrepresented minority groups from zero in the previous admission cycle to 13%. The yield of admitted women, which has generally lagged behind that of men, rose from 88% to 94%.

The Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) continued to represent the largest undergraduate presence in MAS and the Media Lab. More than 200 undergraduates from across the Institute participated in a wide variety of UROP research projects at the Media Lab, and many students pursued their undergraduate theses and advanced undergraduate projects under MAS faculty supervision. In addition, the MAS program offered five undergraduate subjects.

The Media Lab announced its Digital Currency Initiative in April. Bringing together global experts in areas ranging from cryptography, to economics, to privacy, to distributed systems, the effort will reach across the entire Institute and will also include leading experts around the world and will address some of the most critical challenges to creating a safe, stable, and secure digital currency. Brian Forde, former senior White House advisor for mobile and data innovation, has been hired to serve as director of the initiative.

Other initiatives for fiscal year 2015 include OpenAgriculture, which is focused on creating a network to bring together partners from industry, government, and academia to develop the world’s first open-source research collective dedicated to advancing global agriculture for the 21st century. The Media Lab also received a $1 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to establish the Advancing Wellbeing initiative, which is exploring the role of technology in promoting healthier workplace and lifestyle behaviors.
Lectures, Events, and Exhibitions

The Program in Art, Culture, and Technology celebrated the 10th year of its Monday night lecture series. The lectures are open to the general public and attract a broad range of speakers and sizable audiences. During the fall, the series was part of Professor Renée Green’s Cinematic Migrations project; in the spring, the lecture series was developed as a component of Associate Professor Gediminas Urbonas’s Toward Civic Art research program. The program hosted a total of 13 lectures and 25 speakers from MIT, Harvard University, other US-based institutions, and international colleges and universities.

Azra Akšamija’s solo exhibition, Future Heritage Collection, was presented at the JAVA Gallery within the International Theater Festival MESS in Sarajevo, Bosnia. Akšamija, an assistant professor in ACT, also participated in the group exhibition, CULTURUNNERS, at the Armory Show, New York.

Kelly Nipper, an ACT lecturer, had an exhibition at the Orange County Museum of Art in Newport Beach, California (The Avant-Garde Collection) and at the Queensland University of Technology Art Museum in Brisbane, Australia (Performance Now: The First Decade of the New Century).

The History, Theory, and Criticism section organized two important conferences: in September, Jones chaired “Seeing/Sounding/Sensing,” which explored the intersections and tensions between art, science, and technology; in May, Dutta and PhD candidate Ana Maria Leon Crespo organized “Revisiting CASE,” bringing together the original members of the Conference of Architects for the Study of the Environment. That conference had been formed in 1964 by a group of young architects, many of whom went on to occupy leadership roles in American academia in the following decades.

In January, more than three dozen DUSP alumni from the Los Angeles area convened at the Japanese American National Museum downtown to share their work and to renew and update connections with classmates and colleagues. The evening was the second in a series created by the department to promote the exchange of ideas and to foster connections among DUSP alumni and with current faculty and students.

Now in its fourth year, the Media Laboratory’s Conversations series welcomed more than 20 guests, including several past and present Director’s Fellows, whose conversations were live-streamed to the public. They included Christine Sun Kim; Moran Cerf; Alfredo Corchado; Temple Grandin; “Guts and Genius,” part of 92Y’s Seven Days of Genius Festival, with Joi Ito, Kevin Slavin, David Sun Kong, and special guests; Cam Kerry and Isabelle Falque-Pierrotin; Sam Kass; Ophelia Dahl (Partners in Health); Masashi Kawamura; B. Alan Wallace, in conversation with Joi Ito and Venerable Tenzin Priyadarshi; and Sarah Parcak.

In November, the Media Lab co-presented the “reThink Food” conference with the Culinary Institute of America in St. Helena, California. The two-day event featured talks and presentations from speakers from the food and packaged goods industries, as well as journalists and academics.
Publications

Renée Green of ACT published Other Planes of There: Selected Writings (Duke University Press, 2014).
Gediminas Urbonas of ACT published Uto-Pia (Contemporary Art Archipelago).

Recognition

In the Department of Architecture, Professor Michael Dennis won a 2015 Congress for the New Urbanism Merit Award for his firm’s campus master plan at the University of Texas–Pan American; Professor Mark Goulthorpe’s firm, dECOI Architects, won a 2015 Architizer Award in the Plus Categories/Architecture Materials; and Professor Sheila Kennedy was awarded the $100K Berkeley-Rupp Prize by the University of California at Berkeley College of Environmental Design, a $25,000 Acknowledgement Award from the Holcim Foundation, and the inaugural Design Innovator Award from Architectural Record magazine.

ACT graduate student Alan Kwan won the first place award for the Harold and Arlene Schnitzer Prize for the Visual Arts for his installation, “Shadow Donation.” Second-year student Anne Macmillan won the Laya and Jerome B. Wiesner Awards for Achievement in, and Contributions to, the Arts at MIT.

Adèle Naudé Santos, former dean and professor of architecture and urban studies and planning, received a 2015 Gordon Y. Billard Award, given annually for special service of outstanding merit performed for the Institute.

Architect Magazine ranked NADAAA, the firm of Department of Architecture Professor and former Department Head Nader Tehrani, the No. 1 design firm in the United States for the second year in a row.

National Geographic identified six members of the MIT community—including four from SA+P—as “young trailblazers whose ideas are helping change the world.” The four 2015 Emerging Explorers from SA+P were Caleb Harper MA ’14, the founder and lead researcher of CityFARM, part of the Changing Places group in the MIT Media Laboratory; David Sengeh SM ’12, a PhD student in the Biomechatronics Group in the MIT Media Lab; Skylar Tibbits SM ’10, director of the Self-Assembly Laboratory in Architecture; and alumnus Manu Prakash SM ’05, PhD ’08, now a professor at Stanford University.

Especially because of its small size, the History, Theory, and Criticism program was proud to be heavily represented among national awards for its graduate students, proportionately far in excess of larger programs at other universities. For the second
time in a decade, the program’s doctoral students garnered five of the top national honors available to graduate students conducting research in their areas. Seventeen grants and awards were conferred on nine people, totalling $136,000 to date.

Lauren Jacobi, assistant professor in History, Theory, and Criticism, is the 2015 recipient of the National Endowment for the Humanities Post-Doctoral Rome Prize in Renaissance and Early Modern Studies and will spend AY2016 in Rome, Italy.

In May, Andrea Chegut, a research scientist in CRE, was named the 2016 Post Doctoral Homer Hoyt Fellow by the Homer Hoyt Institute of the Weimer School of Advanced Studies. Postdoctoral honorees are recognized for both their recent contributions and in expectation of continued productivity.

Of nine MIT students and alumni who were awarded US Student Fulbright grants for 2014, five were from DUSP: Mitchell Cook, a PhD candidate in planning (India); Sarah Dimson (MCP ’14) (Tanzania); Caroline Howe (MCP ’14) (Spain); Melanie Bin Jung (MCP ’14) (Mexico); and, as one of five winners of the new Fulbright–National Geographic Digital Storytelling Fellowship (out of 860 applicants), Michael Waldrep (MCP ’14) (Mexico).

Yves-Alexandre de Montjoye of the Media Lab’s Human Dynamics group was selected as one of MIT Tech Review’s Innovators Under 35 in Belgium for his PDS/SafeAnswers data privacy platform.

The Media Lab’s Bianca Datta (Object-Based Media Research Group), Niaja Farve (Fluid Interfaces Research Group), Alexis Hope (Civic Media Research Group), and Amy Yu (Macro Connections Research Group) were all selected as 2015 MIT Graduate Women of Excellence.

The Media Laboratory’s Camera Culture Research Group’s vision-correcting display was named one of 2014’s world-changing ideas by Scientific American.

Rosalind Picard, the director of Affective Computing Research Group in the Media Lab, tops CNN’s list of “Seven Tech Superheroes to Watch in 2015,” in recognition of her work developing the Embrace smartwatch.

Ed Boyden, who leads the Synthetic Neurobiology Research Group in the Media Lab, was awarded an Andrew Carnegie Prize in Mind and Brain Sciences.

Forbes Japan selected Sputniko!, an assistant professor in the Media Lab, as one of the 10 Most Active Women in Japan, for its “Female Power” issue in January.

Hugh Herr, head of the Media Lab’s Biomechatronics Research Group, was chosen as R+D Magazine’s Innovator of the Year for his work in bionics.
**Personnel**

Professor J. Meejin Yoon began her appointment as head of the Department of Architecture on July 1, 2014. Aga Khan Professor James Wescoat was named associate head, effective July 1, 2015, succeeding Leslie Norford, professor of building technology. Professor Norford served with three department heads with wisdom and clarity.

Dennis Frenchman was appointed associate dean of SA+P. Frenchman is the Leventhal Professor of Urban Design and Planning and chair of the Masters in City Planning program. He is also on the faculty of the Center for Real Estate.

Professor Renée Green ended her term as ACT director on January 15. Gediminas Urbonas, associate professor and Mitsui Career Development Chair, began his three-year term as director on January 16.

Timothy Hyde joined the History, Theory, and Criticism group in the Department of Architecture as associate professor without tenure effective January 2015.

Nader Tehrani, architecture professor and former department head, announced his departure from MIT to become dean of the Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, effective July 2015.

Assistant Professor Lauren Jacobi from History, Theory, and Criticism was named to the Class of 1942 Career Development Chair (2015–2018).

Iyad Rahwan was appointed as an associate professor of Media Arts and Sciences in the Media Lab, where he will lead the Scalable Cooperation group. Prior to joining MIT, he was an associate professor at Masdar Institute, an Abu Dhabi-based research institute established in cooperation with MIT.

Alumnus Steve Weikal was appointed as CRE’s Head of Industry Relations, responsible for increasing the center’s membership base and improving the value proposition and services offered to the center’s industry partners.

The Department of Urban Studies and Planning appointed four new faculty members: Assistant Professor Mariana Arcaya, a social epidemiologist and urban planner; Assistant Professor David Hsu, who researches and teaches urban environmental policy and planning; Associate Professor Janelle Knox-Hayes, who researches the ways in which social and environmental systems are governed under changing temporal and spatial scales as a consequence of globalization; and Assistant Professor Justin Steil, who conducts research on the intersection of law and urban policy.

Ceasar McDowell was been reappointed as a Professor of the Practice of Community Development in DUSP. Carlo Ratti was promoted to Professor of the Practice in Architecture. Yu-Hung Hong was named as the founding director of the Sam Tak Lee Lab.
Greg Tucker, the Media Lab’s director of facilities, retired after nearly 30 years at the Lab. He was succeeded by Jessica Tsymbal, who holds a master’s degree in architecture from MIT.

Although the past academic year was full of achievements and joys, it started and concluded with sorrow and grief with the passing of two professors in DUSP: JoAnn Carmin and Judith Layzer. It was a great privilege to know, work with, and learn from them both.

Hashim Sarkis  
Dean, School of Architecture and Planning