

Dean for Graduate Students

Graduate Students Office

Last year, the Graduate Students Office (GSO) reported on activities and progress related to three salient themes: diversity, graduate community, and collaboration. Because those themes continued to characterize work within the GSO, this report covers that same landscape and adds one more theme, leadership.

Last year within graduate education circles nationwide, a development took center stage that promises to consume significant time and energy in the future. The National Research Council (NRC) decided to move forward with its assessment of doctoral research programs. The last such effort culminated in a controversial report, issued in 1996, that highlighted myriad concerns about inclusion and methodology. The latest effort is beginning with those same questions, as a struggle ensued last year over the proposed taxonomy of fields to be included, over whether to include a reputation component, over timing and over the cost of the study. By the end of the past academic year, there was grudging consensus among universities to share in the cost, but little consensus on taxonomy. Indeed, it was unclear whether the NRC would be able to raise sufficient funding from federal sources to undertake the study at all.

A potentially positive development was the effort begun by the Association of American Universities Data Exchange (AAUDE), comprised of institutional research offices, to identify elements from the NRC data submissions that could be captured for all AAU universities, stored centrally on behalf of the AAU, updated on a regular basis, and used by programs for self-initiated assessments. At the very least, the NRC study and the AAUDE initiative have dramatically enhanced conversations about graduate program assessment and the data requirements to enable robust internal examination and cross-program comparisons. At some future point, something worthwhile might ensue from the efforts.

Diversity

Christopher Jones, assistant dean for graduate students, focused his leadership and energy this past year on achieving objectives set forth by the 2004 resolution of the faculty.

This year, the GSO began a dialogue with the new leadership of the Office of Minority Education (OME), exploring ways to encourage MIT's students of color to begin early preparation for graduate education. One planning effort centered on collaboration with the dean for undergraduate education, focusing on recruiting MIT undergraduates as they begin the process of applying to graduate programs. A second effort is more narrowly focused on OME, as we define those activities and programs that we will implement together and separately. We expect to articulate a shared agenda for recruiting and supporting minority students and to leverage the talents and work of staff in both offices to that effect.

Community

Activities and programs that build and strengthen graduate community continued to move forward, exemplified by the graduate student life grant process. A fifth round of proposals yielded yet another set of ideas, mostly from within the student population, to explore the dimensions of community development on and off campus. Out of 28 proposals received, 18 were funded, bringing the total over five rounds to 140 proposals, of which 82 have received support. That so many new ideas continue to flow from this process attests to the depth and richness of interest in graduate community, as well as to the complexity of the task.

Clearly, we are engaged in an evolutionary process as more graduate students express their needs, participate enthusiastically in community building experiments and explore practical approaches to growing and sustaining a sense of oneness among their ranks. It's also clear that students recognize the positive impact of the student life fee on their life and learning. A task that remains is to institutionalize the most successful efforts while leaving room for future experimentation.

The dean wishes to recognize the graduate student and staff volunteers on the grant selection panel, especially GSO staff members Barrie Gleason and Heather Fry, who have led this effort from its inception. All have worked intelligently and diligently with grant applicants to define useful projects, and with grant recipients to realize the best results from their efforts and extract explicit lessons to guide the process going forward.

Fund for Graduate Community

Regarding the need to institutionalize funding support for graduate student life and learning initiatives, the past year witnessed some heartening growth in the Fund for Graduate Community. Most gifts have been modest, but there have been many, suggesting growing alumni support. A progress report on the fund was published in the fall 2005 issue of the MIT *Faculty Newsletter* (<https://mit.edu/fnl/vol/181/colbert.htm>). At fiscal year close, contributions totaled more than \$25,000, up from \$10,000 for the previous year. Going forward, we hope to strengthen the case for the priority given this fund, and we anticipate that its growth will eventually provide significant resources to support graduate life.

Graduate Alumni Convocation

An exciting new event staged this past April by the MIT Alumni Association was MIT's first Graduate Alumni Convocation and Reunion. Many academic departments and programs participated by hosting seminars, lively receptions, laboratory open houses, and other events to welcome back the 300 or so alumni who participated. The International Students Office (ISO) hosted an open house, and the GSO designed a poster session and slide show as features of the Friday reception for all alumni attendees. The poster session was an opportunity to showcase a dozen of the more enduring graduate student life grant projects (<http://web.mit.edu/gso/fund/showcase/index.html>) and the slide show, playing continually on the wall in the background, linked the successful grant process to the Fund for Graduate Community. Grant authors were on hand to discuss their projects in greater detail with enthusiastic alumni.

Graduate alumni expressed appreciation that their unique constituency was being recognized and invited to participate more fully in MIT life, and participants were enthusiastic supporters of ongoing and developing efforts to build and support community.

New Graduate Residence Hall

The Institute announced the decision to house more graduate students on campus in a new residence hall, designated as NW35 and located in the northwest sector of campus, near the Warehouse (NW30) and the Sidney-Pacific (NW86) residences. This new graduate residence will house approximately 550 students. When occupied, NW35 will bring us significantly closer to housing 50 percent of graduate students on campus and consolidate approximately 1,700 graduate students in the northwest sector.

A controversial element involving the new residence was the concurrent decision to convert Ashdown Hall into an undergraduate residence, moving its occupants into NW35 and increasing overall capacity by 220–230 students. It will be a challenge, but also a great opportunity, for the Ashdown community to identify its core traditions, values, rituals, and artifacts to seed an expanded community of students in the new building. While change is rarely without uncertainty and some initial resistance, the opportunities going forward to apply and adapt community development lessons already learned should outweigh misgivings. In the early phases of NW35's development, there were encouraging signs that those misgivings are giving way to optimism about expansive new possibilities. The presence of additional students, a new building with additional community spaces and resources (including an expanded pub that may have a food service component) will inevitably stimulate new community development initiatives throughout this increasingly vibrant part of campus. This was done exceptionally well in at Sidney-Pacific, which quickly built a remarkable house governance structure and a suite of community cohesion programs based on the Ashdown experience. The challenge ahead will be to scale up such efforts and develop new structures across a number of residence halls to create and maintain a vibrant community of 1,700 or more.

Collaboration

It continues to be a source of professional pride and personal satisfaction to enjoy the close collaboration with administrative colleagues who help to leverage our collective resources and generate greater impact on behalf of graduate students. During the past year, several such efforts produced excellent outcomes.

Alumni Association

The successful collaboration with the Alumni Association has already been described. Important to note is the responsiveness of academic departments and the seamless interaction with partners within the Association to realize the Convocation. The widespread buy-in to the idea of reconnecting graduate alumni to MIT, and a willingness to work together to signal to alumni that they will be recognized and included, is a most welcome sign given that our AAU peers are wasting no time in

organizing their own resources to engage their graduate alumni and alumnae. The “MIT model” relative to such matters “has legs,” as they say, and we would not want their legs to outrun our own.

Mental Health Services

The past year witnessed a successful dialogue with Mental Health Services to review and clarify roles and procedures for addressing student mental health issues. A sad reality throughout the world of graduate education is that mental health issues are consuming an increasing proportion of our time, energy, and resources. Despite increasingly elaborate resource networks put into place to identify students with problems and guide them to appropriate help, some students must be withdrawn involuntarily from their study and research. Developing alignment around the process for such action has required close collaboration among counselors, deans, medical staff, and campus police to ensure that relevant students are well served. During spring term, consensus was achieved on significant changes to policy statements, and a new process document was created to guide both staff and service providers. Going forward, those involved will have greater confidence that the process of addressing both voluntary and involuntary medical withdrawals, as well as return to active study and research, is clear.

Guide to Admitted Graduate Students

A multiyear effort to create a fully online version of the former *Practical Planning Guide* came to a successful conclusion this year. The principal partners in this effort were MIT Medical, Housing, Student Financial Services, Admissions, and the ISO. Since 1988, the GSO had served as editor and publisher of the guide; now Admissions hosts all content online on their website (web.mit.edu/admissions/graduate/planning_guide/index.html). Information providers for the various links will maintain their individual contributions, updating content as needed rather than annually.

Graduate Administrators Roundtable

Following the Graduate Student Council’s efforts to improve the graduate student academic experience, MIT’s graduate administrators assembled a body of information to serve as a resource for documenting current practices for graduate students and inspiring new ones. This evolving document is available on MIT’s faculty resources site as “Current Practices in Graduate Student Administration” (<http://web.mit.edu/faculty/currentpractices.html>).

The compilation demonstrates the broad range within which effective student advising and support activities have been developed to fit local cultures. Many appear to be transferable across departments and programs, and the work ahead is to prompt faculty to avail themselves of these possibilities. We anticipate that the newly established Committee on Graduate Programs will promote ongoing faculty awareness of resources and programs highlighted in the document.

Collaborative Leadership Network

The collaborative activities already mentioned here have been supported by the Collaborative Leadership Network (C-Network), which has been described in earlier

reports. The existence of the group, and its effectiveness in leveraging collective resources, has enabled the GSO and participating offices to support graduate life at MIT more fully. Maintaining the viability of the C-Network will be a priority for the GSO, especially as more graduate students move to campus with evolving needs for support.

Foundation Relations

Finally, it is a pleasure to report renewed involvement this past year with Foundation Relations in an effort to re-establish contact with those foundations that have formerly funded GSO programs. A round of proposals is in early stages of development, and we look forward to announcing progress in the coming year.

Leadership

Committee on Graduate School Programs

Groundwork was completed last year to restructure the large and unwieldy Committee on Graduate School Programs. Over time, the committee grew to include the graduate officers and in many cases the graduate administrators of each department and program. Meetings typically included 30–40 participants, making it ineffective as a working committee considering issues of graduate education and policy. Led by Professor Lorna Gibson serving as chair of the faculty, the faculty agreed to rename and reconfigure the group. Going forward, the new Committee on Graduate Programs (CGP) will delegate administrative actions to the dean to retain continuity in those matters and focus its attention and advice to the dean on broad issues affecting graduate education at the Institute. Membership includes six faculty members and the associate chair of the faculty; the associate provost and dean for graduate students (*ex officio*); two graduate students; and a graduate administrator. This new committee is better positioned to consider important internal issues and policies as well as a range of internal and external factors affecting graduate education at MIT. In light of the rapidly evolving face of graduate education worldwide, this restructuring was timely.

Graduate Student Council

The past year was a challenging one for the Graduate Student Council (GSC) as it experienced an unexpected leadership transition for the second year in a row. Still, the graduate student government demonstrated its resilience by regrouping and moving forward on several fronts. There were two critical assets: vice president Sylvain Bruni (recognized for his superb organizational skills and high energy) and committee chairs who stepped forward to lead. The GSC's performance shows that a strong organization with well-established priorities and some depth in leadership capacity can weather a temporary gap at the top.

Internal Matters

As an acknowledgement of her growing visibility and impact on Institute affairs, associate dean Blanche Staton was selected as a participant in MIT's Leader to Leader program, which brings together developing leaders from administrative and faculty ranks. The current session of the program began this in December 2005 and runs for a calendar year.

Assistant dean Christopher Jones was invited to become a member of the Boston chapter of The Partnership. His involvement enhances his personal and professional development within this regional circle of developing minority leaders, and strengthens the GSO's contact with potential mentoring resources and successful role models for our students.

External Matters

Over the past few years, the GSO has taken advantage of opportunities to talk about its programs for creating graduate community and share lessons learned with colleagues elsewhere. This year, Blanche Staton, associate dean, and Barrie Gleason, director of communications, took center stage as panelists at the annual meeting of the Association of Administrators in Graduate and Professional Student Services.

At the fall meeting of the AAU Association of Graduate Schools, outgoing president Isaac M. Colbert, MIT's dean for graduate students, addressed the relevance of graduate community for creating cadres of connected and engaged graduate alumni. AAU colleagues have expressed strong interest in the steps MIT has taken in this regard; for example, Northwestern University has created its own graduate life grant process modeled after MIT's and has focused greater attention on its own graduate alumni matters.

On the national front, Dean Colbert represented MIT in other roles. He served for the year as president of the AAU Association of Graduate School Deans, shaping the agenda for the annual meeting of the 63 deans from research-intensive universities. In addition, he was named president-elect of the Graduate Record Examination Board and will become the active board chair as of October 2006. As chair, he will be closely involved as the Educational Testing Service completes major revisions of the Graduate Record Examination and moves to achieve its rollout date in the fall 2007. Finally, as vice president for university strategy of the GEM Consortium (National Consortium for Graduate Degrees for Minorities in Engineering and Science), Dean Colbert helped to restructure the organization's leadership team to improve operational efficiency and relocate the GEM organization from its traditional base at the University of Notre Dame. This participation continues MIT's 30-year involvement as a founding and leading member of the GEM Consortium and helps ensure that this highly effective fellowship program continues to provide funding opportunities for underrepresented and underserved students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.

Support and Development Activities

The October 2004 *Technology Review* article "Plugging the Leaky Pipeline" noted that more women are earning doctorates in science and engineering, but that a disproportionate number are opting for employment in industry. The increase in PhDs has not translated into increased movement into faculty positions; thus, the promise of more women faculty role models for undergraduate and graduate women in these disciplines remains just a promise.

Clearly, no silver bullet can mitigate the factors that turn the talented pool of women PhDs away from academia; however, the GSO is committed to creating opportunities that encourage, inspire, and inform women graduate students who are considering an academic career.

Forward to Professorship

One such opportunity was the Forward to Professorship workshop sponsored by the GSO and planned by the associate dean. The 1.3-day workshop for graduate and postdoctoral women focused on skills, strategies, and “insider information” necessary to obtain a tenure-track position, succeed in one, and advance to other leadership positions. Topics included: balancing work and family in the 24/7 academic world, networking, applying and interviewing for faculty positions, negotiating salary and benefits, types of universities, and grant writing. Session leaders and presenters were women faculty, department chairs, and deans from major universities across the nation. A total of 45 young women attended, and there was a waiting list of 10 more.

Without exception, the participants indicated in their evaluations that they would recommend this workshop to friends or colleagues. They described it as inspirational, useful, enjoyable, excellent, encouraging, pivotal, and practical. One participant said, “This information is hard to come by, and women at MIT need it to be successful in academia.”

Perhaps the most palpable statement about the workshop’s value was the decision of participants to convene monthly throughout the academic year to discuss issues related to the pursuit of an academic career. They brought topic experts to campus and reached out to other women who had not been able to attend the workshop.

Going forward, the GSO hopes to build on the workshop’s success by offering related seminars and web-based resources accessible to a broader audience throughout the year. Another consideration is partnering with other area institutions to create a regional initiative.

Graduate Women’s Reading Group

Thanks to the initiative of one interested graduate student, the Graduate Women’s Reading Group is once again a thriving activity. Each month, 15 graduate women students gather to discuss the book of the month, share personal and professional experiences, and support one another. As one student said:

“I think my favorite aspects usually had nothing to do with the books. From the very first meeting, our group has felt like a safe space, one where we were able to share intimate emotions without fear of being laughed at and express conflicting opinions while knowing that fundamental respect would be there. On a more pragmatic note, now when I walk down the Infinite Corridor or I’m at the gym, I actually see people I know. Just saying hello in passing makes me feel like I’m more a part of a community here at MIT than I was before.”

MentorNet

The GSO's partnership with MentorNet continues to serve the Institute by demonstrating support of diversity in STEM fields and providing career development opportunities for graduate women and others underrepresented in STEM. MentorNet gives students access to advice from mentors in industry and the academy and a better sense of career possibilities.

Since 1998, 238 MIT students and postdoctoral associates have been matched in MentorNet's One-on-One programs. The disciplines with the largest number of MIT protégés have been electrical engineering and computer science (54), biological sciences (33), bio/biomedical engineering (22), and chemistry (15). This year, 51 students and postdocs were matched with mentors. Also noteworthy is that 333 MIT alumni have participated as mentors, and 19 students and postdocs have been matched with alumni. (MIT alumni mentors are not necessarily matched with MIT students.) As efforts intensify to increase the "pipeline flow" of underrepresented MIT undergraduates to MIT graduate programs, the GSO via the associate dean will liaise with targeted undergraduates, alumni, and MentorNet to promote stronger relationships between MIT alumni with graduate degrees and MIT undergraduates.

The best expression of the impact of the GSO's efforts comes from the protégés themselves:

"My mentor has been absolutely excellent. As a female engineer in mostly male labs I have had a wide range of experiences, some good and some bad. My mentor has helped me with positive, practical input. After this I hope I can participate as a mentor myself to other women scientists."

Graduate Women's Group

This informal network for graduate women students continued to thrive with 40 to 60 students attending events regularly. While structured discussions sometimes dominated a gathering, the real impetus for involvement has been the opportunity for these young women to build social and professional networks across department boundaries and feel less alone in their unique experiences.

In response to the need expressed by many women students to have their voices heard in their lab groups, the GSO sponsored a two-part workshop on effective communication during IAP for 30 students.

One of the year's highlights for the Graduate Women's Group (GWG) was a luncheon hosted in partnership with the Association of MIT Alumnae (AMITA) held during the Graduate Alumni Reunion and Convocation in April. Graduate women filled the room to hear from 12 graduate alumnae with invaluable wisdom and experience to share. Based on the feedback from students following this event, the GWG coleaders, associate dean Blanche Staton and Lynn Roberson, will collaborate with AMITA on two events over the next academic year to connect graduate women students with graduate alumnae.

Graduate Students of Color

Throughout the year, other events such as the Power Lunch and dinner gatherings for Latino graduate students and women students of color served as community building opportunities. Special forums included a book talk by a new author, a presentation on financial planning, and a dialogue among Sloan students and engineers and scientists that focused on business leadership and corporate culture. The Power Lunch has become such a valued forum that students offered to plan some of the lunch events.

Diversity

The Graduate Students Office continues to focus its efforts on recruiting applicants from underserved and underrepresented groups, engaging departments and programs in targeted outreach, and developing programs to support students who matriculate.

As was reported last year, our primary mechanism for recruiting applicants from underserved and underrepresented groups and for engaging departments and programs is the MIT Summer Research Program. Working with a faculty committee commissioned in 2004 by then provost Robert Brown and chaired by Professor Paula Hammond of the Department of Chemical Engineering, Christopher M. Jones continued to implement important changes in the MSRP. Additional committee members include Professor Steve Bell (biology); Professor Eric Hudson (physics); Professor Tayo Akinwande (electrical engineering and computer science); associate dean Karl Reid (Office of Minority Education); Janet Fischer (Office of the Provost); and Dean Isaac Colbert (GSO). The committee's initial charge was to redesign the MSRP as MIT's premier recruitment tool for underrepresented minority students. Since then, the committee has continued to serve as an advisory board for the MSRP.

MIT Summer Research Program

For most of its 20-year existence, the MIT Summer Research Program (MSRP) has worked to increase the pool of minority students who pursue graduate degrees. During this time, MSRP has seen more than 90 percent of its 400 program participants go on to pursue advanced degrees. With a goal of encouraging and preparing students to pursue graduate degrees at some institution of higher learning (not specifically at MIT), MIT was able to capture 17 percent of the 400 program participants. During the redesign, MSRP took on the following mission: to promote the value of graduate education, to improve the research enterprise through increased diversity, and to prepare and recruit the best and brightest for graduate education at MIT

Last year, we reported that MSRP doubled in size from an average of 25 summer interns—mostly in science—to 57 interns participating in engineering and science areas. From this class of sophomores, juniors, and seniors, 19 applied for admission to MIT's graduate programs, and five were admitted! The 2006 summer cohort continued this trend with 57 interns spread throughout engineering and science.

With the expansion of the MSRP in 2005, more departments and programs throughout the Institute expressed interest in participating. The 2006 class included interns who worked in architecture and comparative media studies. The 2006 summer saw a

significant increase in participation by certain departments and programs that have hosted interns in the past. For example, the Department of Nuclear Science and Engineering, which hosted one intern in 2005, hosted five interns during the summer of 2006 (faculty mentors were Michael Driscoll, Neil Todreas, and Jan Egedal-Pederson), and the Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, which hosted four interns in 2005, hosted 10 interns this summer (faculty mentors were Jack Dennis, Fredo Durand, Thomas Greene, Leslie Kaebbling, Thomas Knight, John Leonard, Steve Massaquoi, David Gifford, Ralph Swick, and Bruce Tidor).

Key to the success of the MSRP is faculty participation. Faculty involvement included program design, intern selection, and matching interns with projects and with academic interactions. As with last year's program, MSRP continued to have a significant academic component in which faculty conducted weekly lunch seminars on their research. The faculty presenters for 2006 were: J. Kim Vandiver (mechanical engineering); Eric Grimson (electrical engineering and computer science); Elba Serrano (brain and cognitive sciences); Professor Rafael Bras (civil and environmental engineering); Christine Ortiz (materials science and engineering); and Eric Hudson (physics). The interns were also tasked with forming groups and running discussion sessions based on a paper from the faculty presenter.

In order to accomplish the third part of its mission, assistant dean Christopher Jones has worked hard to closely align the MIT Summer Research Program with MIT's educational triad: academics, research, and community. An important addition that is a result of these efforts is the MSRP community service day. On Saturday July 15, 2006, the interns visited four sites throughout the Greater Boston area and engaged in a day of service. The sites included the Pine Street Inn, the Greater Boston Food Bank, the Charles River Conservancy, and the Salvation Army Jubilee House.

Participants offered insightful comments about their experiences in service. One intern said, "Being in the shelter and seeing the guests were concrete reminders of the world around us. Oftentimes, we surround ourselves with people like us; we forget that there are many who aren't as fortunate. Even though we're going to get busy in the future, we should set aside some time to help others."

Converge

The GSO continues to develop and seek out opportunities to engage departments and programs in targeted outreach. In 2005, the graduate preview weekend, Converge, hosted 24 students. Eighteen of these students were eligible to apply to MIT programs, 12 applied and five were accepted. This year's program will again host 24 students from a number of institutions across the country. The program seeks not only to encourage the highest caliber students to apply to MIT, but also to shift the overall perception that potential students have of MIT. While here, students meet with faculty members, interact with graduate students, explore the MIT community, and are exposed to aspects of the Greater Boston area. As in previous years, students this year were selected by a faculty committee chaired by Professor Samuel Allen (materials science and engineering).

We continue to work with departments and programs to take better advantage of preview weekends held each spring. Most departments encourage admitted students to come to the Institute to meet faculty and students and get an early introduction to the program. We have begun discussions with a number of departments to bring many of the underrepresented and underserved students to campus at the same time. This will help to build greater excitement about attending MIT among admitted students as we collectively welcome and orient them.

Fellowships

MIT was the graduate school most commonly selected for federally funded fellowships in 2005–2006 from the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Department of Defense (DOD). Last year, 105 NSF fellows declared their intent to attend MIT, with Berkeley and Stanford University as “runners-up” with 91 and 71 fellows respectively. This year, 202 of 309 NSF fellows enrolled at MIT. Eighty-five DOD fellows were enrolled this year and last.

Of the nonfederally sponsored fellowships, funding decreased because the Howard Hughes Medical Institute Fellowship is phasing out support for the predoctoral program over the next five years. Also phasing out is the Mellon Fellowship.

Significant effort was made to streamline some internal processes related to managing a fellow’s stipend and academic allowance. For example, a Bell Labs fellow now receives a stipend amount that includes an allowance to cover living expenses, books, and travel expenses, eliminating the need to submit receipts for reimbursement.

On April 2006, the program director of the Jacob K. Javits Fellowship Program visited MIT to learn how the GSO administers support for Javits fellows and to help the program gather historical data by compiling names and information about achievements of previous Javits fellows.

The GSO also sponsored two workshops, the annual graduate teaching workshop and the tax workshop. Both workshops have proven to be a valuable service to graduate students.

Isaac M. Colbert, Dean for Graduate Students

Christopher M. Jones, Assistant Dean for Graduate Students

Blanche Staton, Associate Dean for Graduate Students

Brima Wurie, Fellowships Administrator

More information about the Graduate Students Office can be found at <http://web.mit.edu/gso/>.

International Students Office

The mission of the International Students Office (ISO) is to help the international student population at MIT fulfill academic goals by providing services and support programs that facilitate adjustment to a new academic and cultural environment. The office assists students in maintaining their legal status in the United States, provides support for

their dependents, and promotes their interaction with and integration into the MIT community at large. In addition, the ISO interfaces with all MIT offices, advocating awareness in the community of issues salient to the international student.

MIT has had a substantial international student population for many years. This year, 2,792 of our students were international, with representation from 109 countries. The People's Republic of China (PRC) continues to be the country with the largest number of students at MIT. In 2005–2006, more than 25 percent of the overall MIT student population was international; at the graduate level, it was nearly 37 percent.

Over the year, international students grew accustomed to more stringent regulations and procedures imposed by the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). DHS officials consulted frequently with SEVIS users in their efforts to improve the efficacy of this federal database. While there is still work to be done, SEVIS improved dramatically over the past year.

The ISO remains concerned that students continue to feel welcomed and valued within the MIT community as they contend with a more security-minded America. ISO's primary focus was overhauling orientation programming and enhancing all services for the international population. In weekly strategy meetings, the staff developed new initiatives to inform students about the latest regulatory alerts and to address and validate their personal concerns in day-to-day interactions. Associate dean Danielle Guichard-Ashbrook sent out quarterly email greetings to international students, highlighting timely topics, and offering general advice. The ISO help line was enhanced to address pressing inquiries from incoming and current students. The ISO website was completely redesigned as a key communications vehicle with intuitive access and user-friendly content and site tools. Throughout the year, the ISO held several open houses where students were invited to stop by and chat. In April 2006, as part of the Graduate Alumni Convocation, the ISO sponsored an open house for participating international alumni. Current students and returning alumni mingled informally, sparking lively discussion about the international scene at MIT. The evolving configuration of the ISO's small reception area has also helped create a comfortable space for informal gathering.

As MIT moved forward in bold initiatives to encourage and promote international experiences for its student body, the ISO served as a critical resource for ongoing dissemination of US policy and procedure. The director gave numerous presentations, updates, and advice to groups such as the Academic Council, MIT's Washington Office, the Committee on Student Life, the Committee on Academic Performance, Student Support Services, MIT Police, and MIT Medical.

Admissions

The ISO plays a pivotal role in the legal admission of international students, issuing the immigration documents required for appropriate student visas and port-of-entry inspection.

International applicant numbers, graduate and undergraduate, have rebounded this year after two years of decline, allaying concerns that MIT was losing its

strong international edge. At the graduate level, 63.2 percent of all applicants were international, up from 60.1 percent in 2004. International yields also increased to 15.2 percent, up from 14.5 percent in 2004 and the highest yield since September 11, 2001. Numbers of students from specific countries have fluctuated over the years. Currently, students from France, Canada, and the United Kingdom have declined, while those from China, India, and Korea have increased. At the undergraduate level, four countries were represented for the first time: Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Turkmenistan, and the West Bank. Overall, MIT's numbers of enrolled international students increased to 2,792, up from 2,723 in 2004–2005.

This year, all admitted students who chose to matriculate at MIT and had sufficient funding arrived by registration day. No student visas were denied. Less than a handful of students were subjected to extra security review, and those few were still able to arrive in a timely fashion.

Two categories of international students posed particular challenges for the ISO in 2005–2006: visiting students and Singapore-MIT Alliance (SMA) participants.

The number of visiting students invited to the Institute has skyrocketed in the past few years, nearly doubling to 340. This category of student presents unique challenges since they rarely fall under the purview of a particular department. As with all international students, visiting students must comply with SEVIS requirements, but because they arrive at any time throughout the year, bypassing the normal admissions process, and often at short notice, they are particularly vulnerable to SEVIS compliance issues. In the past year, visiting students have had a record number of serious legal, cultural, and medical issues. Because they are tuition-exempt, institutional support resources in place for regular students are not easily accessible to visiting students. The ISO has expanded its specialized orientation programs for both visiting students and the faculty who invite them. Further collaboration with offices across the Institute will be needed in the next year to contend with this challenging population.

The Singapore-MIT Alliance (SMA) began its second phase expansion in 2005, producing five distinct programs. Participants in each of these programs required special documentation and programming. Assistant director Maria Brennan met with the SMA staff throughout the year to ensure that this growing academic collaboration with the National University of Singapore met the US Department of State's Exchange Visitor Program strict protocol. She also met individually with SMA participants upon their arrival at MIT.

Advising

Advising remains at the core of the ISO's responsibility to international students. The vast majority of staff time is spent in individual appointments with students who seek confidential advice and counsel. Typically, each of the four ISO advisors has as many as eight student appointments in a day. Whether by appointment, the ISO help line, or through the use of our sophisticated new website, prospective students, admitted students, current students, and alumni (who seek our counsel long after Commencement), keep ISO staff busy providing legal and personal advice. While

ostensibly seeking ISO expertise because regulations require it, students also come to the ISO with underlying concerns about cultural adjustment and worries about political tensions back home. Beyond immigration advising, the ISO staff routinely provides information to international students about such difficult issues as domestic violence and academic integrity.

Orientation Programs

The ISO is legally mandated to provide immigration information to all new students and to verify that they all have appropriate legal status. Required orientation programming for all incoming foreign national students ensures that we fulfill this important statutory responsibility. In collaboration with the Registrar's Office and the MIT Card Office, incoming students are permitted to register and receive an MIT ID only *after* they have attended ISO orientation. To accommodate graduate internationals who arrive to the Institute throughout the summer, the ISO doubled the number of immigration sessions available to students in 2005 so that students could participate in MIT community life shortly after arrival on campus.

All international students, regardless of age, degree program, or familiarity with life in the US, undergo a period of cultural adjustment. They and their dependents require information about their new surroundings, culture, and community. Orientation activities help to address these needs. When the new ISO website went live in early June 2006, admitted students were able to address many of their practical questions and concerns before arrival in the US. For graduate students, collaborative efforts established last year with the GSC continued with active ISO staff participation on Graduate Student Day and Grad Student 101 and 201 seminars. We hope to collaborate further with the GSC to bring ongoing educational programs to the graduate student community throughout the year.

The ISO continues to be solely responsible for Freshman International Orientation. In December 2005, Aurora Brule joined the ISO staff; she is charged with improving and expanding undergraduate orientation. While only 8.26 percent of the undergraduates at MIT were international, they required advice and services at a disproportionate rate compared to their graduate counterparts. An increasingly serious area of concern for international undergraduates involves academic integrity. The Committee on Discipline asked the ISO to incorporate the topic of academic integrity in our orientation programming. Mandatory freshman orientation will address this critical concern when the Class of 2010 arrives in August 2006.

The International Freshman Mentor Program, currently in its eighth year, has become a mainstay of freshman orientation. This program matches incoming international freshmen with upperclassmen before their arrival in the US. Strong bonds develop between student and mentor, beginning with email correspondence while the student is still at home, then meeting the student at the airport, and continuing throughout the year with many mentor-organized activities. The mentor program has been staffed and organized entirely by volunteer students (both domestic and international upperclassmen) and program founder Paulette Schwartz. In 2005–2006, the Kailath Fund for International Students helped sponsor many of the activities.

Host to International Students Program

The Host to International Students Program (HISP) provides new students with supportive emotional and social ties to MIT community members and their families. More than 200 students and community members participated in HISP in 2005–2006. Because of limited resources, the program is not able to expand at this time, and participation is limited to international undergraduates. HISP Coordinator Janka Moss continued to bring new families into the program and has created opportunities and events for HISP participants to enjoy. HISP provides many formative experiences and encourages positive, lifelong relationships for those students who participate.

Danielle Guichard-Ashbrook
Associate Dean and Director

More information about the International Students Office can be found at <http://web.mit.edu/isol/>.

Graduate Student Council

The 2005–2006 officers of the Graduate Student Council focused their activity on three pillars—connectivity, accountability, and transparency—to support the work of the Executive Committee and enhance the graduate experience at MIT. Connectivity was addressed through different collaborations within the community, from the higher administration to departmental student groups and from the Graduate Students Office to the Alumni Association. Accountability was enhanced through optimizing communication tools such as the *Graduate Student News*, websites, and more regular and structured meetings of the officers and the Executive Committee, and reports to the council. Transparency was achieved through the content of our communication vehicles and related links.

Although the year was dominated by management issues, controversial general council meetings, difficulties in the implementation of new projects, lack of involvement of some members of the Executive Committee, and the resignation of the elected president, GSC managed significant projects (Hurricane Katrina response, travel grant revival, Task Force on Diversity) and overcame serious challenges (Building NW35, internal financial issues, representation on Institute Committees). This summary presents the main initiatives and activities of the GSC in light of these objectives and challenges.

Academic Advocacy

Three major academic advocacy items were tackled in this year's legislature.

A library system subcommittee was created within the GSC's Academic, Research, and Careers Committee to support a Library System User Interface Initiative. This initiative proposed a redesign of the user interface for the online library system to benefit the broader community. This initiative continues its work in collaboration with the Faculty Committee on the Library System.

Stemming from the initiative of the graduate student group in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, and supported by the GSC, a P/D/F Grading Initiative was

launched to study feasibility of the P/D/F grading system for graduate courses in some departments. This item exemplifies how the GSC collaborates with departmental student groups and graduate administrators.

The Graduate Advising Initiative entered Phase II in 2005, which consisted of diffusing the initiative's conclusions and materials, especially to departments. Discussions were held with numerous departmental student groups, graduate administrators, and the Graduate Students Office. Through the GSO's C-Network, GSC supported the graduate administrators' efforts to compile a database of current practices in graduate administration. The database is now available online at <http://web.mit.edu/faculty/currentpractices.html>.

The Graduate Advising Initiative was awarded the Academic Governance Program Award at the 2006 National Association of Graduate and Professional Students (NAGPS) Conference. Two officers, current and prospective Executive Committee members, attended the NAGPS Conference in Miami, FL. The GSC will continue to be a financial sponsor of NAGPS, attend and lead workshops at the annual conferences and take an active role in motivating other New England area institutions to participate.

Community Advocacy

In October 2005, the GSC created a Task Force on Diversity, whose mission is fourfold:

- Evaluate GSC and Institute diversity initiatives
- Provide a comprehensive definition of diversity that is relevant to the graduate community and the Institute at large
- Research external diversity responses at the Institute's peer graduate schools
- Formulate a set of recommendations

The Task Force studied the issue for five months and submitted its report in March 2006 with recommendations for action at all levels of the Institute, including the creation of a permanent standing committee within the GSC. The outgoing officers and officers-elect (2006–2007) established an ad hoc Committee on Diversity for 2006–2007, with the goal of creating a permanent standing committee if it proves its usefulness within the council.

The GSC also focused on advocacy for graduate student families. Specific mailing lists for partnered students and graduate parents were created in order to maintain contact. GSC coordinated orientation events in collaboration with spouses&partners@MIT, MIT Medical Insurance, MIT Medical Pediatrics, and the Center for Work, Family, and Personal Life. Also, the GSC continued to provide financial support and collaborative opportunities to Eastgate and Westgate for specific events and issues. Two projects for child-care coordination, the Childcare Match-up database and BabyBeacon, were implemented in beta phase and investigated for feasibility, respectively. In 2005, the "family needs presentation" was introduced to members of the MIT administration, including provost L. Rafael Reif and associate dean for graduate students Blanche Staton.

Key components of this presentation were included as part of the GSC's Academic Council presentation on graduate funding, alongside GSC's recommendation for stipend increase. The Academic Council took into account GSC's input and increased stipends by 3.5 percent (compared to an overall 2 percent in increased cost of living). The Academic Council announced a 16 percent reduction in health insurance costs for families, while health insurance for single graduate students would remain unchanged.

With the emergence of a structure for off-campus social events, GSC strengthened its ability to address the needs of off-campus constituents. With a Graduate Student Life Grant and newly recruited coordinators, GSC organized off-campus events each month. Communication was improved through the use of a mailing list. Also, GSC worked with the advisory board from Information Services and Technology on potential discounts for home internet services in Cambridge and Somerville. This is a work in progress.

The issues of safety and transportation were not as prominent as in the previous year, when the Massachusetts Avenue Reconstruction Project began. However, the GSC remained attentive to the development of this project and continued to provide feedback when needed. The GSC also collaborated with MIT Parking and Transportation on rerouting some shuttle services to accommodate on-campus residences and off-campus "graduate spots." Some early work on a potential "U-pass" for the subway and bus system was done in collaboration with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. This work is in progress.

A longstanding issue for graduate students is housing, and this year was no exception with the issues of rents, lottery, and the new graduate residence, NW35, taking prominence. First, GSC coordinated negotiations within the graduate residence officers group in order to send a GSC-wide recommendation regarding on-campus rents for graduate students to the dean for student life, Larry Benedict. After this effort failed, rents were flatly increased across the board by 5 percent. The GSC and Dean Benedict agreed to restructure the Rents Committee and enter negotiations right away for the setting of the 2006–2007 rents for graduate residences.

This year, GSC worked closely with Housing on revamping the housing lottery to avoid vacancies. The new lottery system was implemented for the 2006–2007 allocations, and it seemed to be successful in reducing vacancies for fall 2006.

The proposed graduate residence (Building NW35), which is to be located on Albany Street next to Sydney-Pacific, was the most important, controversial, and hard-to-manage issue that GSC tackled in 2005–2006. The idea of a new residence for graduate students had been in the air for quite some time, and GSC officers had maintained open communication with the dean for graduate students and the dean for student life. The package to be announced by the MIT Corporation proposed a residence in the northwest quadrant with more than 500 beds. In the fall of 2005, GSC created an ad hoc committee (the GSC Strategic Planning about Residence Community, or G-SPARC), to channel student feedback once the project became official. In February 2006, the MIT Corporation officially allocated \$104 million for the new residence and announced the accompanying

conversion of Ashdown House (Building W1, the second-oldest graduate residence in the country) to an undergraduate dormitory.

Although the GSC welcomed the decision about the new residence, it came with a set of constraints and embedded decisions that made it difficult for the GSC to provide any significant input to the project. Indeed, the work that G-SPARC had accomplished became useless in light of these constraints. Nevertheless, GSC proved its ability to bring the views of graduate students forward; thus, student representation was increased on the NW35 Stakeholders Committee, the group in charge of supervising the initial phases of planning and design of NW35, and the GSC became involved in all aspects of the NW35 project.

Using all its legislative tools and operation networks, GSC and other graduate students were able to redirect the project to satisfy at least some graduate needs and concerns. After a thorough review of the situation by the full council, GSC representatives endorsed the project. The GSC and graduate students will continue their involvement through the building committee. NW35 is scheduled to open in fall 2008.

Support, Services, and General Programs

This was a very productive year for the GSC. Activities included traditional programs:

- Funding Board, which distributes about \$100,000 a year to graduate student groups
- Graduate Student Orientation, which welcomes more than 1,300 incoming graduate students in three weeks of events
- Cultural and sports events organized by the Activities Committee—these include the Acoustic Barbecue, Harvard-MIT parties, rafting trips, ski trips, concerts, Celtics and Bruins matches, and ballet and opera performances
- Grad School 101, which provides seminars for incoming graduate students
- Academic career series, which provide information to students about careers in academia via panel discussion and seminars
- Professional development series for students who envision careers outside academia
- Business and technology series, panel discussions, and seminars
- Interview skills workshops for graduate students to prepare for the MIT Career Fair
- Airport shuttle program to provide transportation for arriving international graduate students
- International graduate student mentorship program, which pairs up continuing graduate students with incoming international graduate students
- Tax assistance workshops, which benefit both students and employees of MIT
- GSC Awards, part of the Institute Awards program

- Graduate ring (Grad Rat) sales
- MIT Career Fair 2005, which drew more employers and student applicants than ever, driving the profits up by more than 100 percent, for a record budget of half a million dollars

All these programs involve collaboration with a variety of other organizations on campus, including the Graduate Students Office, Division of Student Life, Student Life Programs, Student Activities Office, International Students Office, Careers Office, Office of the Provost, Postdoctoral Advising Council, International Development Forum, Technology and Culture Forum, spouses&partners@MIT, Science and Engineering Business Club, TechLink, Sangam, the Chinese Students and Scholars Association, the Republic of China Student Association, the Society of Women Engineers, the senior class, the Undergraduate Association, MIT Medical, all graduate residences, MIT alumni, and external entrepreneurs. GSC members are pleased that collaboration among the council's standing committees has increased significantly.

GSC implemented new programs as well. As part of the Institute's response to Hurricane Katrina, GSC collaborated with the Undergraduate Association to organize a Katrina orientation, a series of events welcoming those students displaced by hurricanes Katrina and Rita who attended MIT for the 2005–2006 year. Also, council members participated on different Institute committees that coordinated MIT's response. The GSC voted a \$15,000 special Katrina Funding Board allocation to support initiatives by graduate students involved in the different reconstruction or related projects.

Summer 2005 saw the first edition of the "summer olympics," a full day of sports activities aimed at bringing graduate residences together. This event, spearheaded by GSC's Activities Committee, was a typical example of successful collaboration among the government bodies of all on-campus dorms and off-campus representatives.

The first Summer Institute for Urban Leadership was created in summer 2005. This event, which focused on leadership and career-development, drew MIT alumni panelists from all over the country to discuss urban leadership. The event was successful in terms of attendance and collaboration; the GSO partnered with the School of Architecture and Planning, the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, the Association of Student Activities, the Alumni Association, and the Careers Office.

Significant renovations of the Muddy Charles Pub were implemented (flooring, paint, furniture, audiovisual equipment), and a new manager was hired. This facelift allows the Muddy to be more responsive to needs of the graduate community.

GSC collaborated with the Alumni Association on the first-ever Graduate Alumni Convocation and Reunion. GSC contributed with financial support, publicity, and participation—running a Grad Rat booth on the day of the event.

This year, the council decided to revive the GSC Travel Grant, a program that provides gap funding for students who lack funds for research-related travel. This program had been cancelled in the past due to the unexpected consequences: MIT faculty stopped

funding graduate students' travel expenses, sending them instead to the GSC. A group within the Academic, Research, and Careers Committee clarified policies and procedures for the program in collaboration with the GSO, the ISO, and the Office of the Provost. The first cycle of this revived program will begin in the fall of 2006.

Financial Activities

GSC addressed three key financial issues: the status of TechLink, the financial accountability of the council, and the operating agreement between the GSC and the Student Activities Finance Office (SAFO). An unexpected major financial challenge surfaced and was addressed diligently by the officers.

For years, TechLink, a student organization whose goal is to bring graduate students from the different schools together in social and professional events, received significant funding, comparable with that available for standing committees of the council. TechLink was founded as a joint venture between the GSC and the Sloan Senate (just as the Association of Student Activities is a joint venture between GSC and the Undergraduate Association). However, over time, the Sloan Senate's financial support diminished relative to the GSC's, and reciprocal operating agreements were not being respected. Also, TechLink received ASA recognition, which allowed the group to apply for funding from the GSC Funding Board, the ASA Large Events Fund, and the Assisting Recurring Diversity and Cultural Events Fund. Those sources are not accessible to GSC standing committees. GSC therefore removed TechLink funding, although it will still partner with the organization as it does with other student groups.

As a way to increase and ensure transparency and accountability, the council decided to publish abridged financial statements on the GSC website. Visitors can compare the budget with actual expenses.

GSC's Funding Board operates in partnership with SAFO, which handles reimbursement of expenditures by student groups who receive funding from GSC through the Funding Board. The GSC-SAFO operating agreement was revised for the first time in 2005, a change that streamlined business processes.

In November 2005, serious inconsistencies in the GSC finances and budget were discovered. It appeared that approximately \$300,000 in Institute funds had not been transferred to GSC accounts. This problem was corrected in a reevaluation of the 2005–2006 budget, providing an appropriate transition with the new GSC officers and the budget for 2006–2007. Long-term Institute funding for GSC is an item of discussion among its officers, the GSO, and the Division of Student Life.

Representation

This year, a major focus was to restore the representation level of graduate students on various Institute committees. Specific emphasis was put on recruiting graduate students to represent the council and the graduate community's interests on presidential, faculty, and administrative committees. A record 95 percent of Institute committee seats (more than 50) were filled as of May 2006. Also, three newly created committees or advisory boards (MIT Federal Credit Union Advisory Board, Student Life Programs's Student

Development Committee, and the OpenCourseWare advisory board) contacted the GSC to solicit student input and representation.

Increased representation at the Institute level was offset by below-average recruitment of council representatives, with 40 percent to 50 percent of seats filled (out of 88 seats), compared to 60 percent to 70 percent in past years. The reasons are twofold: lack of personnel for recruitment (concentrated at Institute level) and significant resignations after some controversial summer meetings.

Communication

A thorough facelift of its website (<http://gsc.mit.edu>) increased the GSC's accountability and transparency. The design of information was enhanced; content was updated; archives were reorganized. The result has been an increase in traffic and much positive feedback.

The magazine *Graduate Student News* (GSN) also underwent serious enhancement. First, GSC ensured that more than 6,000 graduate students received GSN issues. Through collaboration with MIT Mail Services and the Registrar's Office, plus a new advertisement-optimized cost model, it was possible to mail a hard copy of every issue to each graduate student at his or her term address. In partnership with Human Resources, issues were also distributed to the members of the Academic Council, department heads, and graduate administrators. GSN increased its visibility through other changes: a color, glossy cover, better layout, and more robust internal structure. GSN issues now feature a GSC report; a research profile that focuses on the work or laboratory of one or more graduate students; a graduate forum where readers are invited to contribute letters, opinion pieces, or editorials; and entertainment pages. The GSN website (<http://gsn.mit.edu/>) was also revamped in terms of layout and content. Recent GSN issues (May 2005 to present) are now available online.

Sylvain Bruni
President/Vice President

More information about the Graduate Student Council can be found at <http://gsc.mit.edu/>.