

Dean for Graduate Education

This year the Office of the Dean for Graduate Education (ODGE) completed the strategic plan that will guide our work in the coming years by providing the guiding principles and priorities for moving forward. For details, please see the plan at <http://web.mit.edu/odge/about/strategy/>.

The plan is organized around four key themes: expanding the diversity of the graduate student population, improving funding for graduate education, enhancing graduate community, and improving the day-to-day business processes within the offices of ODGE. The plan has received wide acceptance within ODGE and, more important, among the various groups we serve. It has guided our decision making, particularly the increased emphasis in providing more diversity fellowships to attract incoming graduate students and our funding of the graduate community fellows program to support graduate students undertaking projects of service to their fellow students under the guidance of senior staff members.

Office of the Dean for Graduate Education

The mission of ODGE is to promote graduate education and student life at MIT. The vision of the office is to make the graduate student experience at MIT a transformative one, thereby developing the next generation of scholars and leaders who will create new knowledge, innovate in ways that serve society, and educate succeeding generations. To that end, ODGE provides a range of services to support the internal community and to strengthen external relations. The office:

- Works with departments and other academic units on the recruitment and inclusion of graduate students with a focus on the success of underrepresented minority and women students
- Works with the Committee on Graduate Programs to develop, review, and administer graduate student policies and procedures
- Collaborates with Resource Development and the Alumni Association on fundraising and stewardship
- Complies with federal immigration requirements for admitted international undergraduate and graduate students and provides immigration advice for all international students
- Provides and administers central graduate fellowships and responsibly stewards internal and external funds entrusted to the office for that purpose
- Advocates for graduate student issues to improve education and the overall quality of the graduate experience
- Provides support for meaningful living and learning experiences on and off campus in conjunction with the dean for student life
- Provides support for improving processes such as graduate admissions, student financial services, and career counseling in conjunction with the dean for undergraduate education

- Provides a venue for resolving individual problems facing graduate students
- Creates communications that serve the entire graduate student body

Leveraging the efforts of a small office with a headcount of approximately 20, ODGE accomplishes its goals primarily by working collaboratively with other units. This entails key partnerships with the Office of the Dean for Undergraduate Education (DUE), the Division of Student Life (DSL), MIT's academic departments, Resource Development and the Alumni Association, and the Office of the Provost. For example, although Housing is part of the Division of Student Life, ODGE provides financial support for programs in graduate housing. Similarly, ODGE supports DUE activities in graduate student career services and graduate admissions and the fundraising efforts initiated by the Alumni Association and Resource Development.

Strategic Themes

ODGE, often serving as a catalyst, works closely with other units on recruiting a diverse graduate student body, identifying and managing sources of graduate student funding, creating and sustaining programs in the arena of graduate student life, and ensuring streamlined business processes that support the overall graduate agenda. Strategic planning for ODGE focuses on four distinct themes, as mentioned above:

- Improving graduate student diversity: working to recruit, advise, and mentor a diverse graduate student body
- Enhancing graduate community: creating a strong extended community of graduate students through programs and residential options that support students' personal and professional growth
- Strengthening financial support: supporting graduate students with a combination of fellowships, research assistantships, teaching assistantships, and loans, ensuring that all admitted students can be academically successful, complete their chosen degrees, and thrive in the educational environment without imposing undue financial hardship on themselves or their families
- Refining business processes: providing service-oriented and efficient business processes in the areas of finance, petition handling, student advising, visa assistance, and communications

As a result of its efforts, ODGE hopes to attract the most talented young scholars to MIT. The sections that follow describe these four themes in greater detail by outlining ODGE's goals and objectives over the next one to two years. As with any plan, this is an evolving one. Given the current economic climate, the plan may change considerably over the coming years.

Diversity

ODGE serves as a catalyst for attracting a more diverse graduate student body into all of our graduate academic programs and provides all students with support in various forms so that they are academically successful. We are guided in our vision by the 2004 faculty resolution that called for MIT to increase the number of underrepresented minority graduate students by a factor of three within a decade.

Our overall strategy consists of two parts: partnering with academic departments to improve the quality of recruiting and mentoring, and developing programs operated from our office to support diversity at MIT.

ODGE's efforts related to Institute diversity include recruiting applicants from underserved and underrepresented groups, engaging departments and programs in targeted outreach, and developing programs to support students who matriculate.

The primary mechanisms for recruiting applicants from underserved and underrepresented groups and for engaging departments and programs continue to be the MIT Summer Research Program (MSRP) and CONVERGE, a graduate preadmissions preview weekend.

MIT Summer Research Program

Since its first summer in 1986, MSRP has worked tirelessly to increase the pool of minority students who pursue graduate degrees. During this time, MSRP has seen more than 90 percent of program participants go on to pursue advanced degrees.

A faculty committee serves as an advisory board for MSRP. Working with this committee, chaired by professor Paula Hammond of the Department of Chemical Engineering, Christopher Jones (assistant dean for graduate students) has continued to implement important changes in the program. Additional committee members have included professor Steve Bell (Biology), professor Eric Hudson (Physics), professor Tayo Akinwande (Electrical Engineering and Computer Science), Karl Reid (Office of Minority Education), Janet Fischer (Office of the Provost), and Isaac Colbert (former dean for graduate students).

During the program's redesign, MSRP articulated its 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. As a direct result of the redesign, there has been an increase in the number of MSRP participants who apply to, are admitted, and decide to enroll in MIT's graduate programs.

Since the expansion of MSRP in 2005, more departments and programs throughout the Institute have become active participants, and the 2009 class included interns who worked in urban studies and mathematics. Not only have each of the five MIT schools agreed to a five-year commitment to fund a number of the interns, but several faculty members have added MSRP to their research grants, providing funding for individual interns. MSRP continues to build lasting relationships within MIT and the broader Boston community. Our community service day met with great success as we participated in six different activities throughout the Boston/Cambridge area (locations included the Salvation Army, Horizons for Homeless Children, Hearth: Uphams Corner Elderhouse, Friends of Alewife Reservation, Cambridgeport Children's Center, and American Red Cross–Boston Food Pantry). As a way to further engage the departments, we continued formal visits with graduate officers, graduate administrators, and current students in the departments in which MSRP interns have expressed an interest. Janet Fischer was successful in organizing several such discussions.

Key to the success of MSRP is faculty participation. Since 1986, more than 150 faculty members from a range of Institute departments have served as direct mentors to almost 500 MSRP interns. Faculty involvement included program design, intern selection, matching interns with projects, and academic interactions. MSRP continued to have a significant academic component in which faculty conducted weekly lunch seminars on their research. This year's list of faculty speakers included Jocelyn Monroe (Physics), Kristala Jones-Prather (Chemical Engineering), Gareth McKinley (Mechanical Engineering), Cynthia Breazeal (Media Arts and Sciences), Ki Goosens (Brain and Cognitive Sciences), and Cardinal Warde (Electrical Engineering and Computer Science).

MSRP, through the diligent work of Monica Orta (MSRP coordinator), has also formalized the training process for its program assistants (graduate students who work with the program during the summer). This training process provides leadership and professional development for MIT graduate students.

MSRP continues to be successful at engaging alumni of the program who currently attend MIT as graduate students. We hosted several events and dinners to bring the alumni together and continue to provide resources for their success.

CONVERGE

ODGE continues to identify and develop opportunities to engage departments and programs in targeted outreach. CONVERGE, the graduate preview weekend, 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. The CONVERGE mission is to increase the presence of underrepresented and underserved students in MIT's graduate programs. To achieve its mission, the program:

- Selects candidates who compose a strong, talented applicant pool
- Exposes selected students to MIT's graduate programs, facilities, and campus life through a four-day weekend
- Connects participants with MIT faculty, staff, graduate students, and other CONVERGE students involved in the graduate school admissions process

While here, students meet with faculty members and spend time with their departments of interest. This has provided an excellent opportunity for many talented underrepresented students to strongly consider MIT as a place to pursue graduate education.

ODGE continues 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 collective welcome and orientation builds greater excitement about attending MIT among admitted students.

Diversity Graduate Community Fellows

Projects from the past year included the following.

Presence of Minority Women in MIT's Mechanical Engineering Department: This project, led by graduate student Legena Henry, set out to assist the department in building relationships with historically black colleges and universities, give the department a presence at national conferences for minority students (e.g., National Society of Black Engineers, National Society of Black/Hispanic Physics Students), and make the department more aware of institutional initiatives already in place (MSRP, CONVERGE, Power Lunch, Path of Professorship). The project was welcomed by the department and will continue in the year ahead.

Graduate Student Mentorship Program: Led by graduate student Nancy Guillen, the Graduate Student Mentorship Program has the goal of increasing the retention of graduate students and focuses on first-year students from underrepresented minorities. The mentors are MIT postdoctoral fellows in different research areas who are paired with first-year graduate students having similar research interests or sharing similar backgrounds. The idea is to provide a structured support system through a professional relationship between a researcher at the postdoctoral level and a graduate student. This interaction does not involve research supervision and should allow for the development of a meaningful advising relationship.

Amgen Scholars Program

The most recent development is the award of two \$1 million grants to host and run the new Amgen Scholars Program. Amgen Scholars is a \$25 million, eight-year program through which selected undergraduates attend one of 10 prestigious universities for an intensive summer research experience in a scientific field. Sites include the California Institute of Technology, Columbia University/Barnard College (a joint program), Howard University, MIT, the University of Washington, Stanford, and the Berkeley, Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco campuses of the University of California. Participants are immersed in research directed by some of the nation's top academic scientists. The Amgen Foundation, together with the 10 program partners, announced the program and invited applications in fall 2006. This year began with 2,533 individual applicants in the United States (who submitted over 4,000 applications if those who applied to more than one institution are counted), making the Amgen Scholars Program one of the most competitive in the nation. Applicants were from 48 states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Participants represent 39 states and Puerto Rico and 136 different colleges and universities. Their majors ranged from biology to neuroscience, psychology, and chemistry. All of the students convened at a midsummer symposium to meet their counterparts from other universities and hear presentations from leading scientists in academia and industry.

As one of the 10 host institutions, MIT will host 25–30 summer research interns in its Amgen-UROP Scholars Program each year. In addition, MIT is serving as the US Program Office for Amgen Scholars. The program office oversees operations of all 10 institutions and works to promote the program at the national level. The office was instrumental in attracting the 4,000-plus applications to the program this year.

The Amgen Scholars Program has been tremendously successful, and since October 2008 we have had a European Amgen Scholars Program led by a European coordinating center at the University of Cambridge and with sites at Karolinska Institutet, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munchen, and the University of Cambridge. MIT is proud to be partnering with the Amgen Foundation as we empower the next generation of scientists to rise to a higher level of thinking in order to solve the world's most significant problems.

Graduate Community

Today's graduate students actively seek opportunities to interact and share knowledge and experiences with fellow scholars both within and outside their departments. MIT has made considerable strides in providing a vibrant environment for living and learning. However, the transformation of our graduate studies from a collection of individual labs and academic programs into a true "community of citizen-scholars" is still very much a work in progress.

As with our efforts in the areas of recruitment and inclusion, our approach is to work through our partnerships across the entire MIT community. Given the maturity of many of our graduate students and the small size of the ODGE staff, our strategy in the area of building a vibrant graduate community is to tap into student talent and creativity whenever possible.

Support and Development for Graduate Women

In addition to ensuring the ongoing success of ODGE's signature programs for graduate women, the office, with leadership from the senior associate dean and the graduate community fellow for women's programs, has begun the process of gathering information that may help the Institute to better understand the factors that influence the experience and career decisions of graduate women: those factors contributing to success and those that are barriers. Thus far, data from student surveys conducted by the Office of Institutional Research have been reviewed and interpreted, and a focus group of graduate women representing three engineering departments has been held. Over the next academic year, the office plans to meet with randomly selected graduate women from all departments and programs.

Path of Professorship. The third workshop for graduate and postdoctoral women who aspire to academic careers was bigger and, by all accounts, better. Having learned from evaluations and experience where upgrades would be advisable, the planning team refined specific aspects of the workshop. Perhaps most noteworthy was the decision to craft a team of at least three graduate and postdoc women to share the planning responsibilities and thus increase effectiveness and bring diverse perspectives to bear on shaping the workshop. The women represented different departments, different cultures, and different yet complementary points of view. Amazingly, they immediately embraced one another and the work, and the whole was truly greater than the sum of its parts.

A total of 70 participants, 10 more than last year, attended the workshop that was held on October 17–18, 2008, at the MIT Faculty Club. Attending were 50 graduate women (45 last year) and 20 postdoc women (15 last year). The faculty presenters were primarily from New England colleges and universities, including MIT, Harvard, Wellesley, Tufts, Northeastern, Olin, and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Of the 23 presenters, 12 were MIT faculty, several of whom have supported the program since its inception.

Institute Professor Mildred Dressellhaus was the keynote speaker, and the participants were captivated by her story. Her unique experience as a woman in engineering when so few were, and her stories of raising her children while excelling beyond measure in her field, inspired pride and confidence among the participants. Her “can do” spirit was contagious, and she was a perfect choice for the audience.

Perhaps the question of whether the workshop makes a difference in how our women students feel about their ability to be successful in obtaining and advancing in faculty positions is best answered by the comments of participants. According to one of the participating graduate students, “With such great information I have confidence I have the skills to prepare my application for the next step of my career and I feel good about myself.” Another participant, a postdoctoral fellow, noted: “Thank you so much for organizing this wonderful workshop—10 years of school and 2 years of PostDoc brought me across a mere handful of role models, and then I came to Path of Professorship with more than 20 impressive female professors presenting their views. You cannot imagine what a big impact that had on my view of the field, and especially on how I might fit in.”

A detailed assessment of the 2008 program will inform the development of the 2009 event. One very visible change will be the venue. In the interest of financial prudence, the workshop will be held at the Marriott instead of the MIT Faculty Club.

MentorNet. Since MIT began its partnership with MentorNet in 1998, 356 students, postdocs, and junior faculty have been paired with mentors under the aegis of this e-mentoring network for diversity in engineering and science. Of the total, 98 percent of those who have benefited from one-on-one mentoring have been graduate students. Since 2003, when MentorNet added an academic careers mentoring component, 64 MIT graduate students, postdocs, and junior faculty have been matched with tenured faculty mentors. During the 2008–2009 year, protégé matches numbered 50, up from 32 the previous year.

MIT alumni continue to be active as mentors, with 29 serving as mentors to MIT protégés. A total of 538 alumni have been matched with protégés nationally over the past 11 years.

In addition to the individual mentoring component, MIT participants have taken advantage of other services. For example, MentorNet’s resume database provides a job/internship search resource for students, allowing them to post their resumes for MentorNet sponsors to access. Over the years, 568 resumes from MIT participants have been posted.

When surveyed about the value of MentorNet, MIT participants indicated that they strongly valued having mentors who did not have a personal or professional stake in the outcomes of their decisions and who provided support and encouragement on an ongoing basis. They responded most favorably when asked whether MIT should continue to partner with MentorNet, and several noted that they had recommended MentorNet’s one-on-one program to friends or colleagues.

Looking forward, ODGE seeks to optimize its investment, particularly in light of MentorNet's recent increase in the cost of membership, by at least doubling participation among MIT students.

Graduate Women's Reading Group. This reading group, which provides opportunities for women to gather informally in a setting where social interaction is valued and friendships are cultivated, remains vibrant. In fact, the 15 current participants have decided to extend their activities throughout the summer months. In the past, the group met only during the academic year.

Graduate Women's Group. Monthly lunch gatherings for graduate women have become a "staple," an event that students and even some postdocs have come to expect and look forward to. Between 50 and 75 women pass through the Cheney Room to grab a bite and, more important, seize precious time to interact with women from other departments and programs. There is always a delightful buzz in the room. These gatherings also provide a natural, and safe, forum to raise sensitive issues and questions, and students have an opportunity for "face time" with ODGE's senior associate dean and DSL's key advisor to women students without the pressure of having to make an appointment.

The highlight of the year was a workshop on thesis completion by Dr. Xiaolu Hsi, a psychologist and thesis coach in MIT Medical's Mental Health Service. Questions related to managing time and life commitments, remaining healthy and confident, and producing quality work daily when writing a thesis are timeless, and Dr. Hsi offered concrete and reasonable advice and approaches to help answer the questions.

It is noteworthy that, as a result of their participation in the Graduate Women's Group activities, women in two departments, Aeronautics and Astronautics and Brain and Cognitive Sciences, have initiated plans for women-centered activities within their respective departments. They have consulted with ODGE and faculty and administrators in their departments. The steady emergence of department-based initiatives for graduate women speaks to the need for and value of such sources of support.

As ODGE advances its efforts to better understand the needs and experiences of graduate women and identify and provide effective services, the Graduate Women's Group will help to inform that understanding. Beginning next year, all special events will be evaluated using a short survey that each of the group's participants will be asked to complete immediately following the event.

Enhancing Graduate Community

Two other programs that have originated in the ODGE support graduate community in unique ways. Now in its ninth annual cycle, the Graduate Student Life Grants program involves a request-for-proposal process in which graduate students and others in the MIT community (including alumni) are invited to submit creative ideas for funding. The key criterion is that the proposal offers concrete ideas for enhancing the community life of graduate students. Since the program's inception in 2002, more than 200 proposals have been reviewed; the dean has funded more than half of these proposals. For more details on the process as well as examples of stellar projects, view the website at <http://web.mit.edu/odge/community/index.html>.

Graduate community fellows are a growing cadre of graduate students who work on projects and assignments that enhance graduate community in unique ways. Each fellow reports to a staff member in ODGE or in a partner organization and focuses on a specific project, for example diversity initiatives or programs for women. For further details about opportunities for students as well as for staff who supervise them on special projects, visit <http://web.mit.edu/odge/community/fellows/>.

Graduate Financial Support

In an increasingly competitive environment for attracting the best and brightest students, MIT must take aggressive action to ensure appropriate graduate student support and maintain excellence in graduate programs. Graduate student funding, especially fellowship support, is an essential priority. This requires considerable new resources, largely because MIT has fewer fellowships (as a percentage of our graduate student size) than many, if not all, of the universities with which we compete.

Graduate Fellowships

ODGE has broad responsibility for administering external, endowed, and MIT Presidential Fellowships. The Graduate Fellowship Office serves as the administrator and financial agent for the competitive external fellowships, whereas the endowed and the MIT Presidential Fellowships are administered in the dean's office. For the first time this year, the responsibility for managing the Presidential Fellowships has shifted from the Office of the Provost to ODGE.

Fellowships are attractive because they allow students to concentrate on their research without the distractions of a research assistant or teaching assistant position. With the uncertainty of the economic downturn, more and more graduate students are applying for fellowships.

Last year, the number of students on competitive external fellowships increased from 400 to 424, with total funding of more than \$15 million. The Graduate Fellowship Office administered 17 sponsored fellowships, including seven federal and 10 nonfederal fellowships.

With funds from Total Corporation, ODGE was able to offer three new fellowships to incoming international graduate students from Africa with interests in energy, social, and economic development. The three students who began their graduate programs with Total Corporation Graduate Fellowship funding graduated in June 2009. At the start of September 2009, we will have six Total students, four from Nigeria, one from Ivory Coast, and one from Cameroon.

MIT remains the university most commonly selected by National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Defense Science and Engineering Graduate (NDSEG) fellows. Out of approximately 1,600 NSF fellows nationwide, MIT currently enrolls 277, along with 91 NDSEG fellows, compared with last year's enrollments of 268 and 87, respectively.

Information on various fellowship aid resources can be found at <http://web.mit.edu/odge/financialaid/fellowships.html>.

Improving Business Processes

The most critical improvement in how ODGE conducts its business from a strategic perspective is the migration of current, largely ad hoc processes (often supported by home-grown software systems) into a new student information system. This includes support for the work of the International Students Office in handling transactions associated with the Department of Homeland Security's Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), online petition handling, and integrated support for graduate fellowships and research assistant and teaching assistant appointments.

Last year, ODGE moved to an online process for submission of petitions.

Over the past year, Barrie Gleason and Heather Fry led the effort to redesign the office's website. This effort entailed innumerable discussions with staff to develop thoughtful program descriptions and create an integrated picture of the various efforts in ODGE and how they align with one another. Scheduled to go "live" in August 2009, the new site will provide clearer directions to the office's services as well as clearer content for graduate policies and procedures. Never a static enterprise, the new site will be a refreshing update on MIT's central administrative office for graduate students and administrators.

ODGE's detailed strategic plan was finalized and published on the office's website for the first time. The plan reflects input from all of the constituencies served by ODGE, who, together, sustain and enhance MIT's excellence in all aspects of graduate education.

Finally, a first-ever collaborative effort of the chancellor and three student deans (Chris Colombo, dean for student life; Daniel Hastings, dean for undergraduate education; and Steven Lerman, dean for graduate education)—assisted by the three communications officers in the respective organizations—focused on implementing a strategic communications plan to enhance two-way communications between senior administrators and students. Since January, several pilot projects have proved highly successful and will form the foundation of ongoing programs going forward. Some of the communications mechanisms introduced include the following: monthly letters to students from one of the four senior officers on topics of interest to students, Dinners with Dialogue for a randomly selected group of 20–25 students who dine with the senior officers and have the opportunity for an intimate discussion with them, and the Dean's Comment Box, a fixture on the DUE, DSL, and ODGE websites that encourages students to submit their thoughts, ideas, questions, and comments to the dean(s).

Steven R. Lerman
Vice Chancellor and Dean for Graduate Education
Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering

More information about the Office of the Dean for Graduate Education can be found at <http://web.mit.edu/odgel/>.

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, ISO interfaces with all MIT offices, advocating for awareness in the community of issues salient to international students.

In 2008–2009, MIT had 3,005 international students on campus, an increase of 122 from 2007. In addition, over 650 spouses and children accompanied our international students. On campus, 118 countries were represented. Asian countries continue to dominate MIT's international population, with students from the People's Republic of China at the top of the list. Over 27 percent of the overall MIT student population was international. At the undergraduate level, 9.44 percent of students were international, a slight increase. At the graduate level, 39.13 percent of our students were international, a nearly 2 percent increase from 2007.

The Institute retains its enormous appeal to the best and the brightest around the world in nearly all science and engineering fields. This past academic year, all 900 or so incoming students who accepted offers of admission, and could identify funding resources, arrived by their program start dates.

ISO remains concerned that students feel welcomed and valued, not only within the MIT community but also in the nation as a whole as students contend with a more security-minded America. Mindful of newly imposed budget constraints, the ISO staff sought creative ways to increase efficiency and lower costs without compromising our mission of service. In weekly strategy meetings, the staff continues to develop new initiatives for outreach to keep students informed about the latest regulatory alerts and to address and validate their personal concerns in day-to-day interactions within the community.

In preparation for the January 2010 deployment of SEVIS II, the next generation of the US Department of Homeland Security's student tracking database, ISO reviewed and enhanced business practices to ensure compliance with evolving federal mandates.

Admissions

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

Foreign nationals applied to MIT in record numbers. International undergraduate applicants were up by 8 percent, while international graduate applications increased by 10 percent (source: Office of the Provost, Institutional Research, July 2009). In addition, foreign universities and governments continued to seek to establish formal exchange programs with the Institute. Over the next few years, MIT will undoubtedly expand participation in international exchange, bringing more foreign nationals on campus for nondegree academic programs as short as three weeks and as long as 24 months.

The number of visiting students invited to the Institute by MIT faculty grew to more than 500. The School of Engineering sponsors the vast majority of the visiting students on campus. Visiting students present unique challenges to ISO, since they rarely fall under the purview of a particular department. As with all international students, they must comply with the US government's SEVIS mandates. But because they arrive throughout the year, bypassing the normal admissions process altogether, and often arrive at short notice, they are particularly vulnerable to SEVIS compliance issues. Because these students are tuition exempt but utilize many on-campus services, the Student Life Working Group of the Institute-wide Planning Taskforce is assessing the cost to the Institute of this growing international constituency on campus. In April 2009, the ISO director recommended that a nominal fee be assessed for each incoming visiting student in order to generate revenue to support these students' presence on campus.

Advising

Advising is at the core of ISO's responsibility to international students. The vast majority of ISO staff time is spent in individual appointments with students who seek confidential advice and counsel. Typically, the five advisors have as many as eight student appointments in a day. Whether by appointment, the ISO HELP line, or through the website, prospective students, admitted students, current students, and graduates have kept staff busy providing legal and personal advice. While ostensibly seeking ISO expertise because regulations require it, students also come to ISO with underlying concerns about cultural adjustment and worries about political tensions back home. Beyond immigration advising, ISO staff routinely provide information to international students about such challenging issues as domestic violence and academic integrity.

In response to recent Department of Homeland Security requirements mandating the tracking of employment data on international alumni for up to three years after graduation, ISO proposed and facilitated an ODGE administrative fee for international alumni who continue to need immigration advising from ISO staff. This new revenue source, which became effective in April 2009, helps defray Institute costs associated with providing service to international alumni who no longer pay tuition.

Programs

ISO is legally mandated to provide immigration information to all new students and to verify that they 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 orientation. To accommodate graduate internationals arriving throughout the summer, ISO held daily immigration sessions in August 2008 so that students could more quickly participate in community life. Then graduate internationals join their domestic colleagues in the graduate orientation activities sponsored by the Graduate Student Council (GSC). The ISO staff actively participated in many of the GSC events in 2008.

All international students, regardless of age, degree program, or familiarity with life in the United States, undergo a period of cultural adjustment. They, and their dependents, require information about their new surroundings, culture, and community. Orientation

activities, such as the Campus Police Workshop and MIT Medical presentation, and updated information about spouses&partners@MIT, elementary schools in the Boston area, and English language classes address these needs. Newly admitted students have been able to find answers to many of their practical questions and concerns prior to their arrival in the United States by accessing the ISO website. For graduate students, collaborative efforts established last year with GSC continued with ISO participation on Graduate Student Day and in Grad School 101 and 201 seminars.

ISO is solely responsible for International Freshman Orientation. While only 9 percent of MIT undergraduates in 2008 were international, they required ISO advice and services at a disproportionate rate compared to their graduate counterparts, especially with respect to immigration compliance issues. Enhanced orientation materials help ameliorate this reality, and ISO continues to explore ways to reinforce legal obligations to our members of our international undergraduate population throughout their study at MIT.

The International Freshman Mentor Program, currently in its 11th year, has become a mainstay of freshman orientation. This program matches incoming international freshmen with upperclassmen long before their arrival in the United States. Strong bonds develop between student and mentor, beginning with email correspondence while the student is still at home and continuing to airport pickup and many yearlong mentor-organized activities. The mentor program is now staffed and organized entirely by volunteer students who bring enthusiasm and creativity to the program.

The Host to International Students Program (HISP) provides new students with supportive emotional and social ties to MIT community members and their families. Over 250 students and community members participated in HISP in 2008. Despite reductions in budget and staff time devoted to the program, HISP continues to offer many formative experiences and positive, lifelong relationships for international undergraduates who participate.

The Kailath International Student Fund (established in 2002 with a generous grant from professor George Verghese and Dr. Ann Kailath) continued to provide support for ISO programming that would otherwise not be possible. Some activities and programs supported by Kailath funds include immigration attorney presentations during Independent Activities Period (IAP); subscriptions to international journals and newspapers, available to students in ISO; support for several international students with severe dental issues; a three-week-long "ISO Haven" in December 2008 that provided food and a place for international students to take a break from end-of-term exams and projects; and the ISO Graduation Open House (June 2009) for graduating internationals and their visiting family members.

Roger O. Jeanty '72 continued his financial support to ISO, thereby ensuring the continuity of the popular International Jeanty Teas established in 2007. With colorful cultural/holiday themes ranging from an African Harvest Tea (November 2008) to Mardi Gras (February 2009), over 150 international students attended each tea. The Korean Spring Festival (April 2009) had a record 226 students attend. Though a reduction in financial resources to support this type of programming will limit the number of teas

next year, we hope to continue to look for ways international students can engage with one another in fun and informal venues.

Graduate Community Fellows

The graduate community fellow for international students, Clarice Aiello, continued to offer creative and compelling programming and initiatives for international graduate students. The Today's and Tomorrow's Leaders Lunches that she established in 2007 brought together international students from a cross section of nationalities, disciplines, and interests. She designed and refined the "ISO Speed Survey" concept, allowing ISO to gather quick data from students about a topic or issue. With support from the English Language Studies program at MIT, she compiled a report comparing the efficacy of the traditional Test of English as a Foreign Language with the more dynamic International English Language Testing System exam among our international students. We hope to expand the fellows program in the future, with the goal of providing joint opportunities for community building among our international graduate students and their domestic graduate colleagues.

Danielle Guichard-Ashbrook
Associate Dean and Director

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

Graduate Student Council

The activities and initiatives of the MIT Graduate Student Council over the past year were ambitious, varied, and, by all accounts, successful. Two broad goals from GSC's mission statement guided the efforts of the officers and Executive Committee: to make the MIT graduate student experience a more satisfying one and to leave GSC a stronger organization. To that end, this year's council deployed a number of exciting new programs and worked collaboratively with offices across the MIT campus on several multiyear advocacy priorities. As well, the traditional activities of GSC were performed with distinction, and several new initiatives started in 2007–2008, particularly on graduate housing and alumni relations, were expanded upon and improved. Overall, GSC represents a successful and respected student government that consistently delivers a core set of programs and services. Building on this solid foundation, future executive committees will be able to explore some larger and more visionary initiatives to better serve the graduate community. A summary of GSC's activities follows.

Advocacy

Advocating on behalf of MIT's entire graduate student body is the central role of the council. GSC's annual stipend recommendation to the MIT administration has been a consistently strong example of the council and administration working collaboratively. Each year's recommendation is based on a cost of living analysis produced from surveys and government inflation statistics. The most recent Cost of Living Survey was conducted in the 2007–2008 academic year. Designed to measure both income

and expenses, that survey was administered with the help of the Office of Institutional Research. In combination with the survey data, our analysis this year showed that the average graduate student faced 4.85 percent inflation during 2008–2009 and that many graduate students still rely on savings, credit card debt, and gifts from relatives to meet their expenses. These findings were presented to the Dean's Group, resulting in a central stipend increase of 3.4 percent.

Because individual departments set their stipend levels within a band defined by central administration, GSC organized discussions between departmental student groups and/or GSC representatives and their respective department heads to discuss the impact of budget cuts on stipend levels and funding for graduate student life and learning more generally. In addition, GSC interviewed and selected graduate student representatives to serve on the Institute-wide Planning Task Force, which advised the MIT administration on budget cuts to be made over the next several fiscal years.

One of the most important tasks of GSC this year was the implementation of the first graduate student dental plan. GSC worked closely with the Office of the Dean for Graduate Education on the implementation of the Preferred Provider Option provided by Delta Dental of Massachusetts. The dental plan provides access to a network of dentists and offers diagnostic and preventative services with no copayment and restorative services at a prenegotiated discounted rate. For this first year, there were 873 subscribers, 61 of whom were on the family plan, representing a significant success. GSC will work with ODGE to continue to promote the plan and monitor its usage in the coming year. Ultimately, GSC will utilize data on student usage of the plan to propose to the MIT administration an expanded dental plan.

Over the past several years, there have been several cases of MIT making decisions with a large impact on students and student life with very limited input from those affected. Last year, GSC and the Undergraduate Association (UA) Senate passed a joint resolution highlighting this trend and calling for corrective action in such future decision making. MIT's primary response was the creation of a task force on student engagement to examine how students should be involved in decisions that affect student life and to bring student leaders and key administrators and faculty members into regular and structured conversation. This year, GSC leaders actively participated in this task force, which focused on issues including hacking, dining, student safety, and student relations with MIT Police.

GSC expanded on last year's initiatives for enhancing and embracing diversity at the Institute. This year GSC provided funding and support for the Minority Summer Research Program, which provides research opportunities for high school students from underrepresented minority groups and encourages them to apply to and attend MIT. In addition, GSC continued the International Student Mentorship Program, matching new international students with current student mentors, and organized a Diversity Social Hour during the graduate orientation. Graduate students participated in the Diversity Congress organized in the fall of 2008 and in Institute-wide efforts on diversity and inclusion, including the design of a new diversity website. As well, GSC started the Rethinking Interactions seminars, a biweekly series of conversations on diversity with faculty and staff members.

GSC created the Task Force on Alumni Relations, the major aim of which was to design and implement a Grad Gift in conjunction with the Alumni Association. In addition, the task force organized a number of events linking current graduate students with graduate student alumni. The goal of the Grad Gift campaign, which was rolled out this spring with initial success, is to foster a habit of philanthropy, even if the amount donated by each individual graduate student is modest. The campaign achieved a 10 percent participation rate.

The potential for graduate student interaction was greatly expanded this year with the opening of New Ashdown House, building upon the Institute's vision for graduate community in the Northwest Corridor. GSC sponsored numerous events, for example a flu shot clinic, in conjunction with Ashdown and nearby dorms. The potential for expanded community involvement was aided by the new Ashdown dining program as well as the new and improved Thirsty Ear Pub, which provides a centerpiece for graduate student interaction in the expanded Northwest Corridor.

In anticipation of the next major graduate student housing project, GSC created the Task Force on Housing and Graduate Residential Life, charged with forming a representative vision for this next project. This year, the task force conducted extensive interviews with administrators, students, and faculty. The key preliminary findings of the task force were the significant need for expanded family housing and the need to keep a low-cost rent option for graduate students on campus. The work of the task force will continue into the next academic year.

GSC put forth several initiatives related to sustainability. Since a large number of sustainability-related groups exist on campus, GSC focused on initiatives that it is uniquely positioned to carry out, for example partnering with the Dorm Electricity Competition in order to expand the competition to include graduate dorms. In addition, GSC began work with Sustainability@MIT and MIT Facilities to conduct a campus temperature survey to determine specific locations that are overheated or overcooled. GSC also passed a resolution to support minimizing print runs of the *MIT Bulletin*. Closer to home, we reduced the print run of our *Graduate Student News* magazine, with plans to further reduce printing next year while expanding the electronic reach of the magazine.

Funding for Students and Groups

Another key role of GSC is enabling the growth of graduate community through the disbursement of funding to students and student groups from across MIT. Funding this year was distributed through GSC's varied channels.

The GSC Funding Board is the primary funding source for more than 100 graduate student groups. The funding board was given \$120,000 to distribute, allowing an average allocation of between \$350 and \$500 per group in each of the four funding cycles. A number of financial training sessions were held throughout the year to make the board more accessible and to educate groups about all of the funding options available.

GSC provided funding to students and student groups through several additional avenues beyond the funding board. Recognizing that graduate students participate

in a broad array of artistic and sporting activities, sometimes at a very high level, the council continued its Athletic and Performance Activities Grant to help students pursue such activities at competitive levels. Through this grant, students who excel in sports, music, or dance, for example, were able to travel and compete around the nation. The Collaboration Reward set aside funding for events organized collaboratively between two or more existing student groups to promote mixing of social circles within the student body. To support graduate student professional development, GSC again offered a travel grant program. Travel grant funds enable students to present their work at research-related conferences, primarily when their research supervisor is unable to support the travel.

Events

In addition to enabling others to build community, GSC endeavors to do so itself, using its size and broad reach to host both social and resource events that appeal to the entire student body.

Last year, GSC added the highly successful Two Dollar Tuesdays series. Held once a month, these dinners were created to be a low-cost dining option for graduate students. The intent was to foster interaction across social circles and to demonstrate sufficient interest in a more comprehensive graduate dining program. This year, the Two Dollar Tuesdays drew 175–225 attendees per event. Some dinners had themes, such as entrepreneurship, alumni interaction, and the Grad Gift campaign kickoff.

The 2008 Career Fair, organized jointly with the Class of 2009 and the Society of Women Engineers (SWE), was a tremendous success by all measures. With representatives from over 300 companies and more than 4,000 students attending, the fair was the largest student-run event on campus. Financially, the fair again exceeded revenue expectations for the three partners, though whether this trend continues and how the partners manage such excess revenues are open questions for the year ahead. For the student directors of the Career Fair, the complex work of organizing the fair constitutes an important leadership opportunity. Discussions from the previous year were continued about aligning the fair with a student holiday to make student participation easier and reduce class absenteeism. With the collaboration of UA, SWE, and the Class Council, students worked with administrators and faculty to propose a resolution at the May Faculty Meeting for moving the September student holiday from a Monday to a Wednesday “Career Day.” This resolution will be voted on by the faculty in the fall.

The third Grad Gala was held in mid-April, continuing a growing tradition for GSC. A reception, three-course dinner, live music, and dancing were included in the program for a very reasonable ticket price. The event’s 700 tickets sold out well in advance of the event. The council is uniquely positioned to host such an event; hopefully, it will remain a fixture on the community’s calendar for years to come.

GSC is also well suited to hosting the official Institute Orientation for all incoming graduate students. More than 1,500 new students were welcomed to MIT this year, with a special focus on international students, who represent almost 40 percent of the graduate student body, and international culture. This focus was reflected in new events

such as an MIT Photo Safari in the format of a treasure hunt, the Lab Open House as an introduction to a variety of research resources, and the Wine Tasting Mixer in an effort to mix with Sloan School of Management students, as well as services such as the Airport Shuttle and an issue of the *Graduate Student News* specifically welcoming foreign students. Old favorites such as Dance Fusion, a Boston Harbor cruise, and a White Mountains hiking trip were organized as well. Academic and resources events, such as Grad School 101 and the Info Booth, rounded out the schedule. New connections were also established with the MIT Alumni Association, the MIT Ombuds Office, MIT Recreational Sports, and various student associations. The Orientation Committee embraced diversity to align itself with the vision of the Institute. Along this line, the committee not only initiated the Female Student Welcome and the Diversity Social Hour but also expanded and enriched the iFest (International Festival), with a tenfold increase in attendance as compared to the previous year.

Last year, the academics and research branch of GSC focused on the current interest in interdisciplinary collaboration in science, as well as assessing the perceived quality of advisor-advisee relationships and advocating for improvements. Consistent with the first goal, we started, in collaboration with TechLink, a very well received Lab Open House during graduate orientation in which students received tours of various research laboratories on campus to highlight the myriad opportunities for collaboration within MIT. In addition, we sponsored an email parsing competition with the objective of developing an Interdisciplinary Lecture Calendar, a centralized interface to all research seminars, talks, and workshops on campus. The Committee on Student Life selected the calendar as one of the primary features of the Interact@MIT website to start in the fall of 2009. Furthermore, as part of a broader advising initiative, we developed a new graduate student survey on mentoring issues and advisor-advisee relationships and started analyzing the results from a similar survey conducted in 2004 and the doctoral exit surveys; this work will continue next year. The last new initiative in academics was the creation of the Dissertation Boot Camp, a four-day-long program providing a quiet venue, refreshments, and writing and research resources for graduate students working on their dissertations.

This year we made a concerted effort to expand resources for professional development to enhance the career prospects of graduate students. Our new efforts in this area led to a collaboration with the MIT \$100K Entrepreneurship Competition at the Sloan School of Management and the creation of professional development panels in entrepreneurship, careers in nonprofits, and PhDs/postdocs in management. In addition, we continued our traditional set of Academic Career Series workshops in partnership with the MIT Career Development Center.

Other GSC activities that made the year more enjoyable included excursions to local cultural and sporting events, the ever-popular Acoustic BBQ, beach and amusement park trips over the summer in collaboration with several of the on-campus graduate dorms, and a Harvard-MIT party. Some 550 students enjoyed an IAP weekend in the snow at Sunday River during the annual GSC ski trip.

Continuing a recent practice, GSC targeted a number of events at those students who reside off-campus. Activities such as a dedicated brunch series, mixers at local

restaurants, and joint social events with on-campus groups, as well as resources such as a weekly email digest, were organized by and for off-campus students. New this year was Spring Serve, a graduate student volunteer day that also included graduate student alumni. While these gains are encouraging, the council must do more to reach out to off-campus students, who represent the largest segment of the graduate student body.

The Muddy Charles Pub is a focal point and meeting place for many graduate students. The pub continued its cultural Muddy Mondays series, offering food and drink from around the world in partnership with student groups from the featured country, and the popular Weekly Wednesday series. The Muddy also continued to host interdepartmental socials, where two or more departments come together to socialize and exchange ideas in a relaxed and informal setting.

GSC Operations

GSC has a sustainable template for an active and successful student government, including many practices developed and refined over the past several years to improve transparency and participation.

The council's total budget for the year proposed revenues and expenditures of almost \$400,000. Revamping procedures for tracking individual line item expenditures resulted in more accurate management of GSC's finances. GSC is still heavily dependent upon Career Fair revenues to support its operations. The search for additional funds to provide a buffer for this relatively unpredictable funding source, whether from sponsorship, the Institute, or some other source, should continue to be a top priority for GSC.

As a stopgap measure, GSC passed a bylaw amendment in the fall to create a Stabilization Fund. The amendment stipulates that if a given year's Career Fair revenues exceed a three-year running average (properly inflation adjusted), then a portion of the excess must be deposited into the fund. Conversely, if revenues fall short of the three-year average, money may be withdrawn from the fund. Some flexibility is provided in the amendment for the council to withdraw additional money from the fund using legislation that must be supported by a supermajority of council members.

Following last year's practice, council meetings were used primarily to debate resolutions modifying and updating the GSC budget and operations. One of the advantages of this approach is increased transparency to the representatives, MIT administration, and beyond. Some 12 resolutions were presented, comprising four budgetary motions, six motions affecting GSC operations, and two position statements; 10 resolutions passed, while one did not and one was withdrawn.

GSC continued its publication of *Graduate Student News* with a total of seven issues for the 2008–2009 year. In order to foster greenness and to reduce printing and mailing costs, circulation was reduced from approximately 6,000 to 4,500 per issue, with plans for further reductions in future years. This first reduction was accomplished by sending only one issue per address or office (offices with more than 10 people receive two or more copies). We have also taken steps to improve the online delivery of the magazine in order to adapt to the changing landscape of news media.

The Association of Student Activities (ASA) continued to review its physical infrastructure, reallocating a large percentage of its office space, bolstering security, and expanding storage capacity for student groups. ASA also completed a major review of the recognition and classification process for student groups, particularly related to funding privileges. Some \$200,000 was distributed through the Large Event and ARCADE funds in support of almost 100 campus-wide events.

Finally, a redesign of the Grad Rat, the official class ring for MIT's graduate students, was unveiled by GSC early in the 2008–2009 academic year with a positive reception by the graduate student body.

Leadership Development

Another ongoing goal of GSC is development of leadership in the student body, as a useful component of graduate education and also to perpetuate the council. Two graduate student Leadership BBQs were hosted by GSC in the fall and spring. These events brought together graduate students who were leaders or potential future leaders in GSC, departmental student groups, or the graduate dorms along with some prominent administrators and alumni. These BBQs served as a way to thank current leaders for their contributions to graduate life and to encourage others to take on more active roles. Another goal was to foster interaction between disparate groups to encourage collaborative events and social mixing.

A university collaboration initiative was created in the spring to provide a formal structure and dedicated funding for GSC to interact with other universities. In the past, GSC has consistently partnered with Harvard for events, but interaction with other Boston-area universities has been lacking. To fill this need, GSC helped create an association, termed the Boston Graduate Leadership Organization, consisting of eight Boston-area universities. A kick-off event was held in April, providing the foundation for continued events in the coming year.

This year, GSC participated in the Ivy Summit of graduate student councils, held at Harvard in the fall. The event provided a means of information and resource sharing among student councils. GSC plans to attend next year's Ivy Summit as well. And beyond the Ivy League, MIT continued its participation in the National Association of Graduate and Professional Students (NAGPS), both at the Legislative Action Days in September and at the NAGPS national conference later in the fall. Perceiving the need to strengthen leadership within NAGPS, GSC members spearheaded efforts to recharter the association's Northeast Region, with plans to serve in leadership roles at the national level in subsequent years.

At MIT, GSC collaborated with the Division of Student Life to organize Leadership Evolution for Graduate Students, a series of leadership development workshops during IAP. These well-attended events focused on practical skills for current graduate students as well as for graduate students not yet involved in student groups or other leadership positions at MIT.

As in previous years, GSC conducted interviews with and selected graduate students to serve on the various Institute and Faculty committees that are central to decision making at MIT and that provide important leadership development opportunities for the students serving on them.

Looking Ahead

Following the successes of the past few years in advocacy and reorganizing how the council manages its internal affairs, GSC is poised to take on larger and more visionary projects. Some groundwork has been laid for investigating how GSC should interact with the graduate alumni body, on future graduate housing expansion for MIT, and, importantly, what role GSC should play in promoting recruitment and retention of a diverse graduate student body. Much of the work on these subjects lies ahead, and more such projects to improve graduate student life certainly exist. The council's track record is well established, and its future is bright.

Oaz Nir
President

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