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Former MIT grad student chosen as graduate dean

Sasha Brown, News Office
 October 20, 2004

Just five years ago, Assistant Dean for Graduate Students Christopher Jones stood in the place where his students now stand.

A 2003 graduate of MIT, Jones earned dual master's degrees in nuclear engineering and technology and policy. The hard work prepared him well for the task at hand. As assistant dean, he will focus on helping departments and programs increase the number of graduate students from underrepresented groups.

Though not a new position, Jones' role comes on the heels of the May 19 faculty resolution urging MIT leadership to increase the percentage of underrepresented minority and other underserved graduate students. He began his job Sept. 20.

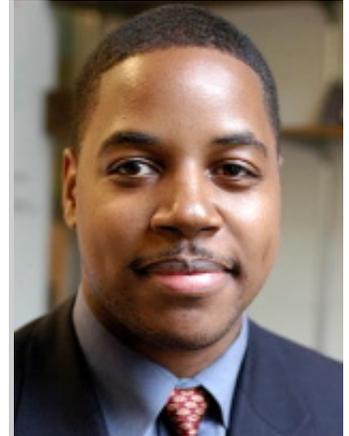
"He will work with faculty to reshape our Summer Research Program into a recruitment tool for MIT's graduate programs," said Isaac Colbert, dean for graduate students. "For the past 18 years, that program has been successful in bringing students into the graduate pipeline nationally, but now it needs to focus more particularly on MIT's needs."

Colbert knew Jones as a student and said he looks forward to working with him as a colleague. "He's energetic, well-educated and trained, entrepreneurial, articulate, thoughtful and a good problem-solver and diplomat," said Colbert. "He'll call on all of these characteristics for the task ahead."

Jones was co-chair of the Black Graduate Student Association during his student years and said he recognizes the need to increase diversity.

"Greater diversity leads to more creative research," said Jones. "When you can represent society as a whole, you can get more accomplished." Different backgrounds and disciplines bring greater richness to the table, he said.

A 1999 graduate of Morehouse College in Atlanta, and a native of Arkansas, Jones looks fondly upon the many educators who helped him along the way. After earning his MIT degrees, he decided to give teaching a whirl. He taught middle school at the Match Media and Technology Charter School in Boston.



Christopher Jones

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"Teaching ninth grade was at many times more difficult than my time at MIT," said Jones with a laugh. "But overall, it was a great experience." He said he looks forward to using that experience to help guide his work at MIT.

"The opportunity to encourage students is amazing," said Jones. "There is so much energy and excitement here," he said. "People are not afraid to challenge themselves and challenge others."

Most of all, he said, he looks forward to being able to pay back the favor MIT did for him. "I want to give in the way that was given to me while I was here," said Jones.

A version of this article appeared in MIT Tech Talk on October 20, 2004 (download PDF).

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