TO: Dean’s Committee
FROM: Robert A. Brown
DATE: December 9, 2002
SUBJECT: Naming of Initiatives in MIT

We discussed at a meeting of the Dean’s Committee recently the need to have a process for naming initiatives within MIT. We agreed that we should have a process for officially agreeing on the naming of initiatives. We agreed that deans would bring to the Dean’s Committee specific recommendations (with a written description of the initiative) for discussion. The Provost will make the final decision on the acceptability of the name, after listening to the recommendation of the Dean’s Committee.

It is important to note that this process is not an attempt to dampen the entrepreneurial efforts of our faculty or to control the need of individual faculty to distinguish their research efforts. However, it is important that we have some sense of the meaning and use of terms such as center, laboratory, initiative, program and institute, within our schools and departments.

I am especially sensitive to the use of the term “Institute.” There seems to be agreement that this term be reserved, if at all possible, for larger scale multi-disciplinary initiatives that have permanence commensurate with MIT. Examples of “Institutes” with large endowments and permanent positions are the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research, The Dibner Institute, and the McGovern Institute for Brain Research. I suspect that provosts will reserve this term for initiatives with a similar degree of permanence.

RAB/cjh