



MIT
PUBLIC SERVICE CENTER

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beyond

the infinite

Twenty years ago the Public Service Center was founded in an effort to organize student service efforts in the Cambridge community. Since then, the Center has gone far beyond its

initial scope with programs and initiatives such as Fellowships, ScienceExpo, the MIT IDEAS Competition, and the Yunus Challenge. Along with these increased opportunities for students, the past two decades have seen a shift from a local perspective to a broad perspective, where MIT students work in once-thriving cities such as Lawrence, Massachusetts, and in places as remote as Western China. Much of this growth would not be possible without the generosity of our donors and other supporters to whom we are very grateful.

Looking back and looking ahead are part of the territory when celebrating a milestone. To that end, we asked alums, who had participated through the Public Service Center (PSC), what kind of an impact their public service work had on them and what they hope the PSC can accomplish in the future.

In the early 90s, a Public Service Fellowship helped **Keith Bevans** ('96 Course 61 MNG Course 6P), a Bain Consultant, found TEAMS (Technology and Engineering for the Advancement of Minority Students), a 10-week Saturday morning program for Cambridge

Priscilla King Gray co-founds the PSC with Shirley McBay, Dean of Student Affairs. Its aim is to provide centralized institutional support for community service.

The Center is staffed by a director and a few student staff members.

Public Service Fellowships are offered, providing stipends for students to perform full-time community service in Cambridge Public Schools and in local community agencies.

1988

1990

1990

1991

middle-schoolers staffed by MIT undergraduate and graduate students. In 1994, the Jackie Robinson Foundation awarded Keith the “Willie Smith Youth Motivation Award” for his work on TEAMS. “The fellowship was the spark that led to my passion for developing my community. It is critically important that minority children, especially black boys, see someone like me take an interest in their academic development and nurture their intellectual curiosity,” says Keith. Looking towards the future, Keith hopes “the PSC continues to teach students that the privilege of learning at

Arnold Schwarzenegger, created the iMath program through the PSC in 2004. An interactive math curriculum for eighth graders, iMath was noted for dramatically increasing the enthusiasm that students felt not only for math education, but for the rest of their classes. “iMath taught me how important it is to ensure we have a robust, reliable, and effective education system that helps to prepare the next generation for opportunities following high school and college,” says John. As for the future, John hopes the “PSC continues to become an integral part of the MIT experience,



Girls in KEYs program put together a motorized lego car

“I’m still in touch with some of the girls I helped mentor in KEYs.... I made a positive contribution to the way the KEYs girls view science and higher education, in general,” says Sherry.

a place like MIT requires them to use their talents to change the world around them.”

John Velasco (‘06 Course 17), who most recently served as an Executive Fellow in the Office of California Governor

enabling the Institute to develop scientists and engineers, who will utilize their talents to impact the world.”

Sherry Xia (‘07 Course 14) worked as a mentor in the KEYs program, which brings teenage girls together with MIT

female students to participate in workshops designed to excite girls about science and inspire them to think about their lives in new ways. “I felt that my work was highly gratifying. I’m still in touch with some of the girls I helped

First CityDays festival is held. Giving Tree is launched in partnership with the MIT Panhellenic Association. LINKs, a science program in the Cambridge public schools is launched.

Girls mentoring program, KEYs, is launched. ScienceExpo begins.

The PSC now supports five student programs: CityDays, KEYs, LINKs, Giving Tree, and Science Expo.

1992

1993

1994

mentor in KEYs. I feel like I made a positive contribution to the way the KEYs girls view science and higher education,” says Sherry. She is currently applying for law school with a public interest specialty. “I hope to settle into a career that will empower me to continue to support marginalized communities,” says Sherry.

Michael Bryzek ('99 Course 62, '00 MNG Course 6P) volunteered throughout his MIT education. With PSC support, Michael founded Volunteer Solutions, an online nonprofit business that connects volunteers with meaningful volunteer opportunities. Winning the MIT 50K Competition, Volunteer Solutions still enables millions of volunteers to work in communities across the United States. “MIT can create new business models that truly combine economic and social value,” says Michael.

Rishi Kumar ('02 Course 15, '03 Course 63 MNG Course 6P), who is currently working at a New York real



The Setu Computer Centre in Bihar, India estate firm on acquisitions and development, founded Setu, a student group, while at MIT. With financial, administrative, and mentoring support from the PSC, Setu's mission was to develop sustainable projects in India. Beginning with a computer education center and classes in rural Bihar, India's poorest state, the group founded a center run by women, for women, that offered vocational and personal development training. The group also sponsored free health camps with diagnostics and

medicine provided by local hospitals. Eleven D-Lab students and other interns from local colleges interned at the center. Rishi “sees the PSC continuing to serve as the backbone of service initiatives at the Institute – providing resources (financial and otherwise) to students, elevating the idea of service and development in the public consciousness, both at MIT and outside.”

Sally Susnowitz, Director of the PSC for the past eight years, who co-founded the IDEAS Competition with Amy Smith, and helped to develop the first living-learning residential community at MIT, iHouse, looks toward the future with the kind of ambition that has made the PSC what it is today. “MIT students and alumni are an incredible resource. If we encourage their participation in public service, support their ambitions to create a better future, promote collaborative approaches, and help them learn from their experiences, they will positively change the world.”

“MIT students and alumni are an incredible resource.”

Sally Susnowitz, Director of the MIT Public Service Center

Volunteer Solutions is established. Wins the MIT \$50K Competition and through the United Way, still facilitates volunteer placements.

Staff members now include a Director, an Assistant Director, and an Administrative Assistant.

1995

1996

1997

1998

Bringing leadership home to Chittagong

Shammi Quddus brings a leadership-oriented community service program to her home town

Shammi Quddus ('10 Course 7) and her partner, Ejaj Ahmad, spent this past summer in Shammi's home town, Chittagong, the second largest city in Bangladesh, implementing their community service program, Building Bridges Through Leadership Training. It was one of two MIT projects awarded the Davis Projects for Peace Prize. Selsabila was the other project. Developed by Mustafa Dafalla ('09 Course 1) and Zahir Dossa (G Course 11), Selsabila offers a sustainable model for low-cost irrigation technology in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The Building Bridges Through Leadership Training program aims to create dialogue between different peer groups in the spirit of active citizenry. Thirty high-school students from three separate schooling systems – the Bengali system, the English/British system, and the Madrassa system – enrolled. Students like Mamun, a Madrassa student who prays five times daily, and Raihan, an English student who carries two cell phones and drives his own car, participat-

ed in class lectures, reflection time, and community service work. Gradually, their superficial understanding of one another was replaced by a deeper understanding. "One student, Roksana, told the class, 'Today, on my way here, the bus driver was denying a seat to a blind passenger. I stood up for him and argued to let him on. It is from this training that I found the courage to do so.' Roksana came to us saying she wanted to stand up against discrimination," says Shammi. The intensive leadership training through self-analysis, group reflection, and feedback in the program helped Roksana move beyond her comfort zone," reports Shammi.

The community service component took place in the densely populated slum of Kusumbag where students identified some of the social, health, and environmental issues. "The students completed more than 670 hours of service in two weeks during which they planted more than 100 trees, set up waste disposal systems, and gave first-aid training to the residents," says Shammi.

Given the tremendous response from the students, Shammi and Ejaj hope to form the Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center. "There is a hunger in the youth of Bangladesh for positive and social activism," says Shammi. She hopes the Center will become a full-fledged training institute for young students and professionals. Business plans are underway, and legal processes are on the move to register this non-profit.



Students in the Building Bridges Through Leadership Training program talk with Kusumbag area children

Public Service Fellowship program now offers international opportunities.
The MIT IDEAS Competition and the Service Learning program are launched.

1999

2001

2002

Innovating internships

New Public Service Value-Added Internship program will give students exposure to non-profit sector

Thanks to the generous gift of Jono Goldstein ('83 Course 7, '84 Course 10, '86 SM Course 20) and Kaia Miller Goldstein in honor of Paul and Priscilla Gray, the Public Service Center has a new service to offer MIT students: the Paul and Priscilla Gray Internship program. The program will help to address the needs of students seeking to gain work experience in the non-profit service sector.

Alison Hynd, coordinator of the Public Service Fellowship program, noticed that

undergraduate students had no way of obtaining international experience with non-profits or the space to create their own project ideas within a non-profit setting.

For some students, a Public Service Value-Added Internship is a better fit than a Public Service Fellowship. For example, Ke Zhang, an MIT undergraduate, wanted to enhance the work of a medical clinic in the Karatu district of Tanzania. His skills and flexibility enabled him to contribute in many ways, including diagnosing reparable problems in the clinic's wiring, setting up a computer system, and creating a pharmaceutical inventory system for the clinic.

"One of the things I enjoy about my job is getting the long-term perspective on the impact that intensive public service work has on students and the communities they collaborate with," says Alison Hynd. One of her goals is to see students using their MIT education in the pursuit of making change in the world through their Public Service Internships.

Ke Zhang (L) with an associate at the medical clinic



New IDEAS...

at the intersection of technology, education, and innovation



Lars Hasselblad Torres

The 8th Annual MIT IDEAS Competition has a new administrator, Lars Hasselblad Torres. Sponsored

by the MIT Public Service Center and the Edgerton Center, the IDEAS Competition invites teams of students to develop and implement projects that make a positive change in the world.

With his interest in global issues – Lars attended the School for International Training – and his interest in technology, education, and innovation for the public good, Lars sees IDEAS as an ideal fit. Lars' past experience was as a staff researcher at *AmericaSpeaks*, an online site that promotes civic engagement. He also directs *peace tiles*, a personal project that unites people around the world through art. "Being able to pursue my interests within the context of one of the world's leading centers of innovation has been a source of ongoing learning and a real thrill," Lars says.

Students receive \$32K in grants.
535 students participate in service learning classes in five departments

2004

2005

Reflecting on 20 years

Priscilla King Gray, co-founder of the PSC, shares her thoughts



Daniel Mokrauer-Madden ('08 Course 8) accepts the PKG Award for Public Service from Priscilla at the 2008 MIT Awards Convocation

Q How did the Public Service Center get off the ground?

A Well, it wasn't my idea; it was Shirley McBay's, Dean of Student Affairs. She came to me that October and said she would like to have a Public Service Center within the Dean's office, and she wondered if I'd be willing to be a co-chair of the committee along

with a faculty member. In the first year, we operated on a shoestring budget; we worked hard to find people who would be interested in supporting us. The next year, 1989, Vic and Mary Tyler called just before Christmas to donate a substantial gift for the endowment. Wanting to learn how we had progressed in the upcoming year was the only string attached. It really was a thrill to have our first angels on board.

Q What was the response from students during the first year?

A We began to have a group of committed students, and I was surprised at how quickly that happened. During the first week of IAP, we made a list of agencies in the city that would be interested in getting some help. We naively filled about 10 or 12 notebooks with information about volunteer opportunities. We had a pizza party out of our pockets. We couldn't believe it: the lobby of Building 10 was filled with students. They pored over the notebooks,

4 or 5 sharing one notebook, while one of our student staff members signed the students up for their service option. We were absolutely elated at the end of the evening; it was suddenly so much bigger than we ever thought it could be.

Q Why do service at all? What would you say to MIT students?

A Because the world needs people like MIT students. It's that simple. And there's a second reason that I really believe plays a big part in all of this. If they can come to MIT and take the course load that they take, and still find time to do the things they do for the PSC, that experience will be hard-wired into their way of life. They are probably going to do that afterwards; it's a pattern. If this was a slow-paced environment, you'd say they did it to take up time. But that's not right. And so, I think that they are making a commitment now, but it will be there for a long time.

PSC helps to launch iHouse, the first living-learning residential community at MIT. PSC Grant recipients travel to 25 countries.

2006

PSC partners with Student Financial Services on Community-Service Work Study program. PSC now supports more than 15 programs.

2007

Students receive over \$150K in grants.

2008

infinite outreach

More than 30,000 students have participated in public service work through the Public Service Center. We depend on our collaborations. Whether it's with alumni, a community agency across the street, or a partner halfway around the world, there are many ways to get involved. Visit our website and click on the guides section, or e-mail us at psc@mit.edu

web.mit.edu/mitpsc

showcase alum

Asked to elaborate on the past and present of the PSC, John Velasco sees the PSC

evolving from an organization focused on running a particular set of programs to a full-fledged resource center that serves as an incubator for ideas and passions enabling hundreds of MIT students to engage in public service throughout Boston and around the world each year.

John Velasco ('06 Course 17)
PSC Alumnus and Donor



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we look forward to the next 20,
and we appreciate your support.

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