This year has been challenging and ultimately successful for Physics at MIT. Budget cuts and attrition through retirements resulted in a small loss in faculty positions yet, as a result of previous hires, we retain a vibrant and productive faculty. Thanks largely to the generosity of our alumni and friends we have been able to shield our students from cuts. We remain the largest producer of undergraduate and graduate physics degrees in the nation (80 bachelor and 44 Ph.D. degrees this past year), and once more we’re at the top of the physics graduate school rankings of U. S. News & World Report.

To ensure that the year ended on an upbeat note, our undergraduate Society of Physics Students collaborated with faculty to stage an awesome Physics Rock Concert.

This spring two new assistant professors joined our ranks: Jesse Thaler, a theoretical high energy physicist, and Jeff Gore, a biophysicist and 2007–2010 Pappalardo Fellow. You can read about them in our New Faculty section. Speaking of Pappalardo Fellows, 2010 is the 10th anniversary of this wonderful postdoctoral fellowship program that has thus far brought 35 outstanding young physicists to our community and enhanced our quality of life. You can read more about the program and its impact on page 12. This spring we also celebrated the promotion to tenure of Scott Hughes and Hong Liu, while mourning the passing of faculty members Michael Feld and Richard Yamamoto.

During the last few years we’ve expanded our research programs in two exciting areas described in this journal. On page 52, biophysicist Alexander van Oudenaarden writes about MIT’s rapid progress in the enormously fertile interface between physics and biology. I’m proud that with Alexander’s leadership and collaboration with MIT’s outstanding life scientists, MIT was awarded a new National Cancer Institute center for the study of cancer using the methods of physical science.

Our second feature article, by high energy physicist Markus Klute and heavy ion physicist Gunther Roland, describes MIT’s impressive involvement in the Large Hadron Collider project at CERN. We’re excited about the science being done there; on page 40, you’ll see why.

Our efforts to foster diversity and inclusion have expanded and joined with other efforts around the Institute. In January, the Department hosted a Physics Diversity Summit at which students, postdocs and faculty shared their experiences and passion for service. The outreach work in Africa of one of our graduate students, Matt Landreman, is featured on page 38. Many other students, staff and faculty volunteer...
their time in mentoring and support activities that are valuable to MIT and to our profession. Their efforts are helping to make MIT not only the top-ranked university for science and engineering, but also to make it one of the best places to work and study for everyone.

The support of our alumni and friends has been a great blessing during this sometimes difficult year. Your interest and encouragement continually remind me how fortunate we are to be at MIT training the next generation of scientific leaders. Our graduate program is at the heart of our success and it needs continued care to be the best it can be. My highest priority for fundraising remains graduate fellowship support. Donors who provide a full fellowship join the Patrons of Physics Fellows and enjoy a close partnership with our remarkable students. To increase support in this area, our good friend George Elbaum has generously offered to match all new full fellowship gifts. For more information on supporting the Department, please contact our Director of Development, Erin McGrath, at either 617.452.2807 or emcgrath@mit.edu.

Thank you for your interest in, and support of, MIT Physics. I invite you to learn more by visiting our new website, web.mit.edu/physics/. If travel brings you to Cambridge, please visit us. In the meantime, I welcome your comments to me at physics@mit.edu.

With best regards,

Edmund Bertschinger
Head, Department of Physics