New Ford-MIT Alliance Executive Director Aims at Value

Joseph Saleh, who earned a MIT Ph.D. in Aeronautics and Astronautics in 2002, returned in January as the new Ford-MIT Alliance Executive Director aiming to increase the value of the alliance for both Ford Motor Company and MIT. “We have to make sure that everyone at Ford involved with the alliance - from senior management to technical specialists - find a substantial value proposition in the work we are doing,” Saleh said. “And we need to make sure that this alliance provides an appealing collaboration for MIT’s current and future PIs.”

Since earning his PhD, Saleh worked with McKinsey and Company consulting on strategy, marketing and pricing, purchasing and supply management for clients in the telecommunications, energy, and mining sectors. “Coming from a hard-core science and engineering background, the experience was an eye-opener,” he said. “I found that while engineers often have a product-centric perspective, reality is much more interesting and complex. Products are always embedded in systems and organizational structures and serve particular needs in their market environment. If one wants to have an impact, all these things must be taken into account.”

Saleh, who earned a Diplôme d’Ingénieur in Aeronautics and Astronautics from the French Ecole Nationale Supérieure de l’Aéronautique et de l’Espace, will focus his energies on facilitating and contributing to current alliance projects and proposing strategic directions for new projects. He will also continue his own research in issues of flexibility in system design. “I’ve been looking at how to embed flexibility in the design of complex engineering systems, examining the drivers and the tradeoffs in designing for flexibility, and studying optimal design lifetimes for complex engineering systems. These system level attributes fit into the field of systems thinking that ESD is heralding.”