A message from President Charles M. Vest

As a community, a campus and a culture, MIT has always been defined by the ideals of innovation and improvement. While other schools may have cultivated (or inherited) an atmosphere of timeliness and serenity, the Institute has grown and thrived in an atmosphere of ferment and activity. All of us at MIT believe that we are moving relentlessly forward into a future of our own making — a future that we are determined to make better than our past, both for our students and for the world as a whole.

In short, we believe in the idea of progress. We also therefore accept the necessity of change, since, as historian Henry Steele Commager once observed, “Change does not necessarily assure progress, but progress implacably requires change.”

Our physical campus is, in many ways, a visible manifestation of MIT’s commitment to a better future through innovation and the development of new knowledge. Though never entirely quiescent, there are times when our campus building program is particularly ambitious — times of intense intellectual ferment, creativity and opportunity.

It has long been a goal of the Institute to provide more housing for our students, particularly our graduate students. At the same time, the City of Cambridge has as one of its highest priorities an increase in the supply of housing affordable to diverse populations in Cambridge. These goals are coming together in a new housing initiative by MIT. The Institute will create housing for more than 1,100 undergraduate and graduate students in new and renovated buildings and thereby free up additional rental units within the overheated housing market in Cambridge.

Campus Housing

One of the major emphases of MIT’s Task Force on Student Life and Learning was to create a stronger sense of campus community. The housing initiative will mark a big step in this direction — by making it possible for all first-year students to live on campus and by providing housing for a significant number of graduate students. The three campus housing projects include:

- the 150-bed undergraduate residence on Vassar Street;
- renovation of the building at 224 Arborway Street — a former storage warehouse — into housing for 120 graduate students;
- construction of a new building on the lot at Sidney and Pacific streets for approximately 600–700 undergraduate students.

When these new residences are occupied, MIT will be able to house nearly 50 percent of its graduate students in Institute-sponsored housing.

We are eager to get all three of these projects underway. Plans for the graduate projects are moving forward; we have recently hired architects and are refining the program, based on the substantial consultation that took place with graduate students in 1997 about plans for graduate housing. The undergraduate residence, unfortunately, is delayed by an appeal of the special permit granted to the project by the city’s planning board, and we are working to resolve this matter as quickly as possible.

We are very pleased to be able to enhance our campus community in this way at a time when the demand for housing in Cambridge is particularly high. Many of the students who will live in our new residences are now renting in Cambridge, and this initiative should help reduce the pressure on the housing market and thus help achieve one of the city’s highest priorities.

Affordable Community Housing

MIT’s commitment to enhancing the affordability of housing follows from a history of contributions made over the past three decades.

In the 1970s, MIT constructed 700 turnkey units of housing for the elderly in three neighborhoods in Cambridge.

During the 1980s and 1990s, as part of the University Park development, MIT made a commitment to build 400 units of housing, including 150 units of affordable housing. The total number of units has climbed to 650 — over 50 percent more units than originally proposed. The affordable housing is distributed among the buildings along Brookline Street.

The Institute continues to explore ways to help reduce housing pressures in Cambridge as we enter a new decade. This housing initiative is the first step in what we expect to be a multi-pronged program to address the need for affordable housing by members of the MIT and greater Cambridge communities.

Overview of Campus Construction

This document is a special report from the Office of MIT President Charles M. Vest. The complete report, “Building the Future,” can be found in the June 2000 issue of MIT Technology Review.
Campus construction overview: infrastructure renewal and new buildings

Guggenheim Laboratory (Building 33)
The Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics is currently renovating its facilities to create a new 18,000-square-foot Learning Laboratory for Complex Systems, which will bring faculty and students together around the synthetic product development process. **Approximate construction period:** June 1999 – August 2000. Architect: Cambridge Seven Associates.

Undergraduate Residence
This Progressive Architecture Award design winner will house 150 undergraduates. Incorporated into the design are public and private spaces for the residents including study lounges, areas and computer rooms. The building is designed in an open plan — open to light and air, and open to the residents who will live, work, eat, study, and be entertained within its welcoming spaces. **Approximate construction period:** September 2000 – August 2002. Architect: Steven Holl Architects and Perry Dean Rogers & Partners.

Baker House
This undergraduate residence, designed by Alvar Alto, has been comprehensively restored on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary. The replacement of all windows will take place in the next phase of construction in the summers of 2001 and 2002. **Approximate construction period:** April 1996 – August 2002. Architect: Perry Dean Rogers & Partners.

Chiller 6 CUP Expansion
The Central Utility Plant will be expanded to support the Stata Center and other new facilities on campus. **Approximate construction period:** October 1999 – October 2000.

Vassar Street Utilities
The installation of new utility lines (steam, chilled water, fire protection, electrical and telecommunications ducts) will support the new undergraduate residence, the new sports and fitness center, and the Stata Center. **Approximate construction period:** February 2000 – October 2002. Engineering firm: S E A Consultants Inc.

Sports and Fitness Center
A sports and fitness center, to be built between the existing Johnson Athletics Center and the Stratton Student Center, will include a 50-meter pool, seating for approximately 450 spectators, recreation and team locker rooms, a health fitness center, a sports medicine training facility, an equipment desk, and a laundry room. The barbecue pits currently on the site will be relocated for future use. **Approximate construction period:** Fall 2000 – May 2002. Architect: Roco & Dinkeloo and Sasaki Associates.
Random Hall
This undergraduate residence will undergo a renovation as part of the Fire Safety Systems Renewal Program. The safety program will upgrade, where necessary, all fire alarms, sprinklers, fire stops, doors, and egress lighting to ensure better safety on campus. Approximate construction period: June – August 2000.

duPont Athletic Center
The renovation to the duPont main locker rooms will accommodate athletes during the construction of the new sports and fitness center. Approximate construction period: June – August 2000. Architect: Sasaki Associates

Surface Enhancement Project
This resurfacing project continues the state’s enhancement of Massachusetts Avenue. Construction plans include a new pedestrian plaza in Lafayette Square at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Main Street. Approximate construction period: Spring 2001 – Fall 2001. Sponsor: Massachusetts Highways Department.

Massachusetts Avenue Storm Drain Project
The City of Cambridge will install large drainpipes that will provide significant drainage improvements over the existing system. The improvements should relieve overflow problems during heavy rain storms. Approximate construction period: June 2000 – Spring 2001. Sponsor: Cambridge Department of Public Works.

Albany Street Garage
The renovation to this parking facility will include the replacement of deteriorated columns and repair of the driving and parking surfaces. Approximate construction period: June – September 2000.

East Campus
This undergraduate residence will have renovations to its fire alarms, sprinklers, fire stops, doors, and egress lighting as part of the infrastructure renewal effort to improve safety in campus buildings.

State Center
The 350,000-square-foot Ray and Maria Stata Center for Computer, Information and Intelligence Sciences will create a gateway to MIT at the northeast sector of the campus. The building includes office and research space, a “student street,” a large lecture hall, four classrooms, a child care center, and a new fitness space adjoining the existing Alumni Pool. Approximate construction period: May 2000 – Fall 2003. Architect: Frank O. Gehry and Associates.

Dreyfus Building (Building 18)
Laboratory facilities and infrastructure in this Department of Chemistry building will be renovated and modernized in order to meet today’s research demands and to enhance life-safety systems. Approximate construction period: Summer 2000 – August 2001. Architect: Goody, Clancy & Associates.

Media Lab Expansion
The Media Laboratory will expand on a site adjacent to its existing facilities in the Wiesner Building. The new structure will house a range of research and educational programs relating to the future of information and learning technologies and their application for both everyday life and creative expression. Prior to construction, utility relocation will occur in the adjacent streets. Approximate construction period: Spring 2002 – December 2003. Architect: Fumihiko Maki & Associates, with Loers Winnefeld Associates.
The committee’s objective is to guide the overall development of the campus and its facilities. Although the Building Committee has existed for many years, it was revitalized after the report from the Task Force on Student Life and Learning revealed the need for major building initiatives.

In order to involve the community in the planning for new facilities, the Building Committee established a client team for each project. With some of the larger projects, a member of the client team is invited to be a member of the project team, which is the group that determines uses of the building. That way, they have first-hand involvement with the decisions made about their space.

Who’s in charge of managing the new construction projects, and are there principles of campus development that are guiding the new projects?

A We just hired two outstanding people to lead our construction efforts. Deborah Poody, director of capital project development, and Paul Cury, director of capital construction. Both have a wealth of background in building design and construction.

Currently, they’re working on a process of establishing and coordinating a construction management team.

One of their top priorities is to develop policies and procedures manual for our campus, and that work has begun.

Our campus is obviously in an urban setting, so we didn’t have a lot of green space to begin with. Now, the construction work has eliminated even more of it. When the new buildings are finished, will MIT be paying attention to making those areas greener?

A Yes, we are developing an integrated landscape plan that will not only provide green spaces but also will connect the campus more effectively. There will be places for people to congregate outside and spend time in a relaxed way, something we need more of at MIT.

In the meantime, the construction work will temporarily consume some of the grassy areas on campus. When that occurs, it will be kept to a minimum and plans for restoration and enhancement of that space will be an explicit part of the project.

Traffic around campus has been heavier lately, both because of MIT’s construction work and the city’s projects. Do you have any suggestions for commuters?

A It’s true that our campus projects as well as the city’s work on the Massachusetts Avenue storm drain will affect traffic patterns and inconvenience drivers. MIT’s utility work on Vassar Street will all create delays. For these reasons, I encourage more members of our community to use public transportation, if that’s an option for them.

There also seems to be a lot of renovation work being done on campus. Who makes decisions about which of those projects are funded and the schedule on which they’ll be renovated?

A The Committee for Review of Space and Planning makes decisions about both capital projects, and that work has begun. The Committee for Review of Space and Planning (CRSP), makes those decisions. Chaired by Chancellor Larry Bacow, CRSP is charged with developing the capital budgeting strategy and ensuring the most strategic use of the Institute’s physical and related financial assets.

The deans and vice presidents assist in prioritizing the requests for space changes from academic and administrative areas, and CRSP respects those priorities. The committee then guides the allocation of Institute funds for approved projects. CRSP is actually responsible for the assignment and allocation of all space on campus.

Recently, MIT’s senior officers and the Executive Committee of the Corporation made a commitment to significant infrastructure renewal in order to preserve the integrity of our older buildings. This work isn’t always as visible as new construction, but it’s no less important.

improve our existing physical plant. In such projects as the rehabilitation of Building 33 for the Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics, a systematic renovation of classrooms throughout the original Brossom buildings, and a thorough upgrading of the Chemistry Department’s Building 18, we are working to provide faculty and students with the facilities they need to support cutting-edge educational and research activities into a new century. This commitment to physical plant renewal also extends to our residential halls — where we have made significant investments in projects at Baker House and Sever Hall as well as to less visible but equally vital areas such as our campus-wide safety systems.

New Academic Facilities

Second, we are working to provide new facilities designed to support the multi-disciplinary research and educational programs that are driving our agenda for decades to come. Notable among these new facilities is the Ray and Maria Stata Center for Computer, Information and Intelligence Science. Work has already begun on this 350,000-square-foot facility, which, in a link to MIT’s innovative past, is rising on the site of Building 20. The Media Lab, the Artificial Intelligence Laboratory for Computer Science, the Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, the Laboratory for Information and Decision Systems, and the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy. In addition to the Stata Center, we are in the planning stages for new facilities to support activities in the Media Lab, the Sloan School of Management, and the neurosciences.

New Campus Life Facilities

Third, and of equal importance, MIT is committed to the construction of several buildings that significantly enhance the Institute’s residential, athletic and recreational resources. Foremost among these are: a new undergraduate residence hall on Vassar Street on West Campus, a major new sports and fitness center adjacent to the John A. Paulson Pavilion, and at a later phase in the construction plan, a new graduate residence hall. In the meantime, we are moving ahead with plans to renovate Building NW10 at 224 Albany Street in order to provide housing for approximately 120 graduate students.

Information on these projects and more may be found in the centerpiece of this special report.

The Challenges Ahead

The pursuit of such a wide-ranging program requires us to exercise special care in the planning and coordination of all construction activity, and to make every effort to impact of public and private construction projects adjacent to the MIT campus. There is no question that it will prove challenging to our everyday lives — and we will do our best to mitigate the inconvenience it causes.