# 2014 MIT Incoming Freshman Survey

During the summer of 2014, the MIT Survey of New Students was administered to all incoming first-year students. 954 students completed the survey for an 86% response rate.

This year’s survey asked students about their academic interests, expectations for college, high school activities, background, academic preparation, college search process, finances, and post-graduation plans. Below are some of the findings.

## Expectations for College

Students reported they were most likely to major in: Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (14%), Computer Science and Engineering (10%) and Biological Engineering (9%).

41% of respondents were confident or very confident that the major they currently are planning to pursue would be the right major for them.

When asked how interested they are in opportunities outside of the classroom, the activities that received the highest percentage of “very interested” were having an internship (78% of respondents), working with a professor on a research project (77% of respondents) and joining a student club or organization (68% of respondents).

## How important is it that MIT provide you with the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunity</th>
<th>Not important at all</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Essential</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to discover and pursue your intellectual passion</td>
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<td>Opportunities to develop skills valuable in the workforce</td>
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<td>Skills for lifelong learning</td>
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<td>Deep expertise in a specific discipline or area of study</td>
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<td>Space and equipment to pursue personal creative projects</td>
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<td>Opportunities to interact with faculty outside of class</td>
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<td>A global perspective</td>
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<td>Contact with individuals whose backgrounds (e.g., race, socioeconomic status, nationality, sexual orientation) are different from your own</td>
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<td>Experiences that help you develop and clarify a personal code of values or ethics</td>
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<tr>
<td>A broad liberal arts education</td>
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Preparation for College

53% of respondents reported they are “very well prepared” or “quite well prepared” to succeed academically at MIT.

Students were more confident about their preparation to get along socially at MIT with 72% feeling “very well prepared” or “quite well prepared.”

40% of respondents felt very well prepared to live away from home, but were less confident about selecting courses (16% “very well prepared”) and managing time effectively (16% “very well prepared”).

The average number of colleges students applied to is 8. 88% of students said they were accepted to their first choice school and 87% of students said that MIT was their first choice school.

Tell us how well each of the following statements describes you as a student

- I prefer courses that arouse my curiosity, even if they are difficult.
- Getting the best grades I can is very important to me.
- I am willing to work hard in a course to learn the material, even if it won't lead to a higher grade.
- I prefer to learn through hands-on activities (labs, studios, etc.).
- I often take time to follow up on interesting things that are mentioned in class.
- I prefer classes with lots of discussion.
- When I do well on a test, it is usually because I am well-prepared, not because things come easily for me.
- I prefer to work things out on my own rather than ask for help.
- My favorite classes are those that deal with facts rather than interpretation and analysis.
Paying for College

58% of respondents reported receiving financial aid from MIT.

17% of respondents reported receiving a Pell Grant this year.

23% planned to take out a personal student loan to help finance the first year of college and 64% reported being not at all or only a little concerned about family’s ability to pay their college tuition.

Post Graduate Plans

64% planned to pursue a graduate or professional degree after completing a bachelor’s degree. Only 2.5% answered negatively while the other 33.5% reported not being sure.

64% of respondents also indicated they have a particular career in mind they would like to pursue after college.

The top advanced degrees anticipated include: PhD (50%), Master’s degree in Engineering (46%) and Master of Science (30%). Other areas include master’s degree in business (21%), a medical degree (17%), law degree (1.5%) and Master of Arts (1.1%).
High School Background

73.6% of respondents attended a public high school, 26.4% attended a private school and .2% were home schooled.

12% of respondents reported attending a high school outside of the United States.

57% of respondents attended an all or nearly all white or mostly white high school.

87% reported taking at least one AP Course and 85% of respondents took at least one AP exam.

8.3% of respondents completed a full IB diploma.

59% agreed strongly that they would have taken more science and math classes if their high school had offered them. 49% reported that they strongly agree they would have taken more advanced classes if their school had offered them.
When asked about high school activities 93% of respondents held a leadership role in a student group, club or team. 55% played one more varsity sports and 53% held a leadership role in a club or team outside of school. 5% of respondents reported having started a company either alone or with others.

27% of respondents held a job for pay during their senior year, the majority working 1-10 hours a week.

75% of respondents reported having to find a balance between schoolwork and other aspects of life during high school.

**Student Backgrounds**

10% of respondents were not a citizen or permanent resident of the United States and 23% report a language other than English as their native/first language.

When asked to describe political views 45.5% described themselves as liberal or very liberal, 9.7% as conservative or very conservative, 24.5% as moderate/middle-of-the road, and 20.4% as something else or have not thought that much about it.

62% of respondents reported having at least one parent who completed a graduate or professional degree.

6% of respondents reported a parent as attending MIT for undergraduate or graduate studies.

### 2014 MIT Incoming Freshman Survey: Open Ended Responses

At the end of the 2014 MIT Incoming Freshman Survey, students were asked two-open ended questions: “What are you looking forward to the most in your first year at MIT?” and “What worries you the most?” Below are some the key themes along with representative quotes from student responses. Responses were coded by key themes and phrases.

**What are you looking forward to the most in your first year at MIT?**

60% of respondents expressed excitement about making friends and meeting new people. 16% specifically expressed that they were looking forward to meeting and engaging with smart and passionate people, while 7% said they were looking forward to meeting people with diverse backgrounds.

“I’m looking forward most to meeting new, interesting people and the new experiences and knowledge that I will gain.”

“Meeting new people, being among the most intelligent and dedicated students on the planet, and discovering my passions.”
“Meeting new people from diverse backgrounds with whom I will share a mutual intellectual understanding.”

“Learning from the other students and being surrounded by people who are also highly motivated and excited to be together at MIT.”

Students were eager to start their classes (16%) and looked forward to learning (27%), opportunities for research (8%) being challenged (13%), and interacting and learning from faculty (9%). Some expressed that they were not challenged enough in high school.

“I look forward to the many resources MIT has to offer and the opportunity to explore different courses.”

“I look forward to getting to learn from some of the top scientists and taking classes that directly relate to the fields of science and mathematics that I am interested in.”

“I am most looking forward to taking classes that are intellectually challenging and that force me to find what really interests me in life.”

“Engaging in lots of areas of interest at a higher level than previously and the opportunity to learn new subjects not offered at my previous school.”

“I’m really looking forward to my classes that (I think and hope) will teach me things that will interest me (for a change).”

“Diving into new course material, new conversations, [and] enlightenment about how I want to spend my future.”

Some students were looking forward to the caliber of academics offered at MIT (13%) and spoke highly of the campus’ facilities, faculties, and strong academic reputation.

“I look forward most to experiencing the high-quality classes for which MIT is famous, and learning about science, engineering, and the liberal arts at the Institute. I also look forward to pursuing undergraduate research at MIT.”

“I’m looking forward to working with the excellent faculty and students of MIT. I want to leave my mark on the world, and I think the single best place to do that is at MIT.”

“To explore the vast array of opportunities with the greatest students in the world.”

“I hope to learn and grow a lot in my first year at MIT as I will not only get to be taught by world-renowned faculty but also get to live with the rich and dynamic community of MIT.”
As a new chapter in life begins some students expressed they were looking forward to a fresh start (6%), independence (11%) and self-discovery (7%).

“I am most excited for the freedom to make my own decisions at my first year at MIT. I want to prove to myself that I am a self-sufficient and capable young adult.”

“I’m looking forward to the year as an adventure: overcoming challenges, expanding my perspective, growing as an individual, and integrating myself in the community that is on this adventure with me.”

Other aspects of college life students eagerly anticipated were having fun (6%), intramurals & clubs (5%), athletics (5%), job preparation (4%), and the overall college experience (5%).

“Playing football, playing lacrosse, making new friends, having less rules, exploring Boston, getting to live with my friends “

“I anticipate the opportunity to explore different scientific fields in greater depth than was possible for me before and to, on the basis of this exploration, decide on my future major.”

“Expanding myself from my comfort zone both socially and intellectually in this diverse, challenging yet stimulating and vibrant atmosphere.”

“I’m looking forward to gaining knowledge that I can use to help others around the world and in my community. That’s what I aim to do.”

“Everything- starting college, learning about what I’m interested in, being away from home, making friends, playing volleyball, etc.”

What Worries you the most?

Academic performance was the biggest worry among incoming first-year students (53%). A small percentage were worried about academics in general, while others expressed specific concerns about workload and rigor (41%) and concerns about academic performance in comparison to classmates (10%).

“For most of my life, I’ve always been on top in my classes. But I am well aware that so are my classmates. I’m scared that I [will] not be able to compare to them intellectually or academically.”

“I’m most worried about the workload and the difficulty of the courses. I’ve had challenging classes in high school, but never something I felt I truly couldn’t handle, and I have a feeling that will change at MIT.”
First-year students also expressed concern about time management (20%).

“What worries me the most is the possibility of overestimating my capabilities and attempting to do more than I can do. I will try to carefully pay attention to this issue to attempt to avert it.”

“I think trying to find a balance between academic work, social activities, and the other activities that I may choose to participate in will be difficult.”

“Finding a way to balance my time between schoolwork and a social life.”

In addition to academic concerns, students expressed worry about being away from home, family and friends (11%) and about making friends at MIT and fitting in socially (23%)

“I am probably most worried about the transition to independent living and having to take care of myself more. Being away from home and the things and people I am familiar with will be a challenge.”

“I am worried about finding a strong group of friends. I am worried about not having a social life.”

“I am most worried that I will not be accepted into a peer group or feel like I belong.”

Other worries included managing stress (9%), residential life (5%), choosing a major (4%), costs (2%), the weather (2%) and lack of sleep (4%).

“Since this will be the first time in a long time that I share a room with someone else, I am slightly worried about how well we get along.”

“Academic intensity and stress, being away from family, eating and sleeping well, remembering that I too am smart when surrounded by smart people 24/7.”

“Not accomplishing enough of my career goals.”

“That I will put myself in so much debt and never be able to pay it even after getting an MIT diploma.”