Chancellor for Academic Advancement

President L. Rafael Reif created the position of Chancellor for Academic Advancement in October 2013, naming Professor Eric Grimson to the post. This ad hoc position supported MIT's capital campaign, with primary responsibilities including serving as liaison to link the campaign (including potential donors) with faculty and students, gathering information on departmental and school needs and goals, providing strategic advice to the president and other senior leadership on campaign priorities and efforts, and interacting extensively with potential donors both nationally and globally. While the campaign officially ended on June 30, 2021, it is anticipated that the Chancellor for Academic Advancement will continue to work in the capacity described above to secure philanthropic support for new or unmet priorities of MIT.

Activities within the Chancellor for Academic Advancement's Office

Since the official launch of the campaign in May 2016, Grimson has worked closely with the deans of the academic schools and of the College of Computing, the dean of student life, the chancellors, the provost, the chair of the Corporation, and department heads to coordinate department, school, and institute needs and aspirations with campaign priorities and activities. He has engaged with departments and with individual faculty, gathering information to be used in discussions with prospective donors and arranging for contact between individual faculty and donors as appropriate. He also works closely with Resource Development staff on these activities and often serves as a conduit between faculty and development staff as well as between potential donors and development staff or faculty members.

Identified priorities and needs for the campaign include but are not limited to capital projects, scholarships and fellowships, faculty support, new initiatives, and emerging research opportunities. As these have evolved, Grimson has worked with development staff and others to create strategic plans for fundraising, including specific projects and strategies for cultivating and soliciting critical donors.

Since a primary objective of the position is to engage the Institute with prospective donors—alumni, parents, and those unaffiliated with MIT but who share its vision—the majority of the chancellor's time has been spent in meeting with such prospects both on campus and during travel to their home regions.

During this past year, the Institute's pandemic-related travel ban has significantly changed the chancellor's mode of operation. In previous years, Grimson traveled extensively to represent the president and the Institute to alumni groups and individual alumni, parents, and other friends of MIT. Such travel has not been possible for the past year, which has required the chancellor to rethink how his office engages with prospects; as a result, he pivoted to telephone calls and telepresence meetings.

Over the past year, the chancellor held 121 real-time, one-on-one personal video visits. He also hosted two major online campaign events, one on discovery and basic science and one on health; each event reached more than 3,000 alumni and friends (3,627 and

3,296). In addition, a virtual meeting hosted by the Parents Leadership Council reached 350 attendees and an experiment virtualizing Tech Breakfast reached 100 attendees.

Expectations for next year's activities are tempered by uncertainties about the duration of the pandemic as well as the extent of its devastating economic consequences on donor enthusiasm and travel restrictions. It is expected that the chancellor will reinitiate travel to meet with donors and prospects, and much of the activity will initially center on donor stewardship of campaign gifts. Where appropriate, he will also initiate contacts with new unaffiliated individuals and with alumni who were not actively engaged during the campaign. He will also cultivate prospective donors to support priorities that remain partially unfulfilled from the campaign.

W. Eric L. Grimson
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