

# MIT Alumni Association

## Overview

As the world weathered the extended headwinds created by the Covid-19 pandemic and other major societal challenges, the [MIT Alumni Association \(the Association or MITAA\)](#) moved forward, pivoting and adapting as necessary but never wavering from its Strategic Plan vision: to engage and inspire the global MIT community to make a better world.

The foundational partnerships between the Association, its Board of Directors, key Institute leaders, and with many dedicated volunteers and donors continued to help keep the MIT community of alumni and friends close and engaged through fiscal year 2021 (FY2021), and in some cases the protracted need for virtual events and gatherings fostered increased connections.

Flagship events, traditionally held on the MIT campus but now offered virtually, drew attendees who typically might not be able to travel to Cambridge but could log on from home to engage with their peers in a digital space. The Association was able to nimbly and proactively invite outstanding alumni and MIT faculty experts to speak to the pressing issues of our time. Individuals looking to philanthropically support meaningful organizations in 2021 that were on the frontlines of problem solving and progress found an ideal community in the Institute's students, faculty, and staff.

At the close of FY2021, 63% of living alumni had engaged with MIT in one or more of the ways noted above. In addition to sustaining relationships with the engaged 88,820 MIT graduates, the Association continued to foster connections with students and Institute friends, including parents, postdocs, and non-alumni donors.

## Highlights

The MIT Annual Fund raised \$89.8 million in FY2021 from 36,165 donors—the highest dollar total on record, including the best dollar total for cumulative gifts of \$100,000 and below during the MIT Campaign for a Better World.

MIT Tech Reunions, MIT's largest gathering of alumni each year, went virtual for a second year and broke its FY2020 record by welcoming more than 5,060 attendees around the globe, and saw \$44 million raised by reunion classes.

The MIT Alumni Leadership Conference (ALC)—celebrating those alumni and friends who contribute their time and talents to Institute and alumni committees, clubs, groups, classes, and programs—was held online in FY2021, with the pivot to virtual enabling the event to offer a weeklong program that drew a record 1,994 attendees.

The Association participated in the Institute's second virtual Commencement event with a video to the Class of 2021, featuring alumni from around the globe offering a welcome to their new peers.

On December 1, Giving Tuesday engaged more than 2,000 donors, who contributed nearly \$1.1 million to the Institute.

The Institute saw 17,996 alumni, students, and friends contribute their time and talents as volunteers, in service to helping the MIT community make a better world.

In its fifth year, the MIT 24-Hour Challenge, held on March 11, was scaled for impact based on our work-from-home coordinating efforts and focused on raising critical, timely support for MIT students, programs, and unrestricted funds. The virtual give-a-thon, which also featured 37 microchallenges, raised \$3.4 million from 7,486 donors in a single day, aided by the efforts of 650 volunteers who supported the effort.

The MIT Alumni Association completed development of a new brand identity, set to debut in fall 2022, following a year-plus engagement with premier creative firm Pentagram that included key contributions from the Alumni Association Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers and partnership with Institute senior leaders.

In alignment with the Institute's commitment to developing a Strategic Action Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, the Association launched the MIT Forum for Equity, a virtual-event series that engaged more than 3,802 alumni and friends in dialogue around social justice, antiracism, and more.

While no trips ran in FY2021, the Alumni Travel Program held five educational webinars led by MIT faculty. Four were managed by the MITAA, with a total of 304 participants. A fifth larger-scale virtual event, focusing on the total solar eclipse in Argentina, was in the form of a webcast and was managed in part by MIT Video Productions. There were 1,175 total unique live views from 770 alumni who signed on. In addition, a total of 62 MIT travelers enjoyed time together, reminiscing about their travels during trip reunions held via Zoom.

Celebrating a time-honored tradition, the Association's first Brass Rat Melt ceremony drew more than 275 alumni online to receive a behind-the-scenes tour of the making of the iconic class ring that students get in their sophomore year. Alumni and friend gifts to the Brass Rat Financial Assistance Fund made it possible for members of the Class of 2023 to receive their rings, regardless of financial circumstances.

The MIT Campaign for a Better World pivoted its global tour event series to online, garnering a collective, international audience of 8,451 for three events focused on science, health, and sustainability, respectively.

Logins to the Infinite Connection—the alumni's virtual home at [alum.mit.edu](http://alum.mit.edu)—held strong at 58,408, and the number of website visitors was more than 760,000.

The MITAA's Parents Association hosted more than 1,172 family members of MIT undergraduate students during the online Family Weekend.

The MIT Alumni Advisors Hub had more than 6,013 alumni and student members on this online platform that connects advisees with advisors for quick one-on-one professional coaching session.

To engage younger alumni, the Association launched the Brass Rat Chats series, in which alumni shared their professional journeys with more than 370 peers from the last 10 years.

The District I CASE Circle of Excellence Awards, which recognize excellence in programs in educational advancement internationally, honored the Association with five awards: a gold for the MIT 24-Hour Challenge Pivot; silver for the MIT Volunteer Summit; silver for the Virtual Tech Reunions; bronze for the MIT Brass Rat 2020 Instagram Story, and bronze for “The Most Useful Thing I Learned at MIT” video. In addition, the Association received Platinum Finalist Recognition for Best Practices in the Measurement of Alumni Engagement.

### Quick Facts

At the end of FY2021, living MIT alumni totaled 142,887. Approximately 54% have graduate degrees only and 25% of undergraduate degree holders also have MIT graduate degrees. In addition, 25% of the living MIT alumni are female and 17% are international residents.

Alumni degrees broken down by school:

- School of Engineering: 48%
- School of Science: 20%
- Sloan School of Management: 19%
- School of Architecture and Planning: 7%
- School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences: 5%
- Other: 1%

Additional FY2021 data of interest:

- MIT or Association had 17,996 alumni and friends volunteers
- MITAA supported events drew 32,909 unique attendees who participated in 1,068 events—a year-over-year 6% increase that drew 17% more unique attendees than FY2020.
- The MIT Annual Fund raised \$89.9 million—the highest dollar total on record.
- The Association maintains contact information for 96% of alumni, exceptional in the advancement world.

## Annual Fund

For the past 80 years, the annual engagement of the global MIT community—alumni, students, parents, and friends—has strengthened the Institute and supported its greatest advancements. The financial footing that makes MIT the extraordinary place of education, research, and innovation it is today relies on generous annual support, and in this closing year of the MIT Campaign for a Better World, gifts from donors, with counting capped at \$100,000, was record breaking.

Highlights from the Annual Fund that contributed to an extraordinary year included a strong Giving Tuesday comparable to the previous year’s best, with more than 2,000 donors contributing nearly \$1.1 million to the Institute on Tuesday, December 1. Later, on March 11—Pre-Pi Day, an unofficial holiday for the MIT community—the MIT 24-Hour Challenge saw 7,486 alumni, students, and friends contribute \$3.4 million to one or more of 37 microchallenges supporting education, research, and innovation at the Institute, despite the chaos associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Annual Fund fundraising results this year:

- Raised \$89,817,011—the highest dollar total on record.
- MIT received donations from 36,165 alumni, students, parents, and friends.
- MIT hit an alumni participation rate of 20.2%, representing 26.5% undergraduate and dual-degree undergraduate alumni, and 14.7% graduate student exclusive alumni.
- With an increase of \$1.81 million beyond FY2020, 17,218 donors contributed \$19.35 million to unrestricted and scholarship through the annual fund.
- While working remotely throughout FY2021, the Annual Leadership Giving team contacted 7,600 alumni, including significant conversations and Zoom visits with nearly 700 individuals. These efforts resulted in 812 gifts totaling \$5.85 million.
- The student philanthropy program generally depends on students being able to gather on campus, and given the disruptions imposed by the pandemic, efforts to fundraise with students was limited primarily to crowdfunding “cause-based” digital appeals, which yielded modest results. 231 undergraduate students and 161 graduate students made gifts this year totaling \$65,940.
- Similarly, the Tech Caller program, which can usually employ 50–70 students, was on hiatus until March, when a stalwart group of eight students made the trek to W98 to make calls and send text message reminders.
- Class- and affinity-based fundraising efforts engaged more than 225 volunteers. Five classes set new reunion milestone records, including four dollars-raised records and a 50th-reunion participation record. Reunion class giving under the first year of more inclusive counting since the last reunion, totaled \$159 million, inclusive of nearly \$500,000 for the class scholarship funds.

- The William Barton Rogers Society, which stewards annual leadership donors making annual gifts of \$2,500 to \$100,000, recognized 6,044 alumni and friends.
- Comprising donors who give for five consecutive years to the Institute, the 1861 Circle honored 17,436 alumni and friends—2,158 of whom have given every year since graduation, including one donor who has given for 74 years consecutively.
- The team managed 38 volunteer Class Stewardship Agents, who wrote more than 8,500 thank-you notes.
- The Annual Fund Board was an active partner in assessing data and recommending changes that carry the program over the threshold from the campaign into FY2022, with three notable and related shifts that add to clarity, community, and inclusion. The MITAA Board of Directors voted on a bylaw shift to anchor the nomenclature and new branding in Annual Giving and extended that to donor recognition for loyalty and leadership giving. Donors who give three consecutive years (rather than five) will be recognized as Annual Giving Loyalty Circle donors and annual donors of \$2,500 or more will be members of the Annual Giving Leadership Circle.

MIT thanks all Annual Giving donors.

## Alumni Relations

Alumni Relations develops and fosters an interactive global MIT community through quality programs and services designed to increase support for, awareness of, and interest in MIT.

Through this work, Alumni Relations engages its constituents to generate future volunteers, leaders, and donors. We serve as the connector for alumni, students, and friends to each other and the Institute.

- In a pandemic year requiring pivots across the entire Alumni Association, the Alumni Relations team produced or supported more than 1,000 virtual events around the world engaging in excess of 32,000 alums and worked with greater than 17,000 alumni volunteers.
- The Alumni Relations team supported three online MIT Better World Campaign events this year attended by more than 1,800 alumni.
- After pivoting to virtual engagement in spring 2020, the Class Programs team continued to see rapid growth in non-reunion-year programming and event registrations, with 54 non-reunion-year events produced. It also piloted a “decade vs. decade” competition online, convened its first Class Connections calls among volunteer leaders, and produced seven Cardinal and Gray Society events drawing nearly 2,000 registrants.
- The Class Programs held a second virtual MIT Tech Reunions weekend in June 2021, with 116 events attracting more than 5,060 alumni registrants.

- Alumni Relations contributed to the online 2021 Commencement and helped to produce videos for the online Commencement “preshow,” an online Commencement celebration kit, and the 2021 Class Book.
- The Alumni Relations Events team served as logistics and technical facilitators for the growing portfolio of online programs produced in FY2021 on Zoom and managed relationships with online event vendors to test new kinds of virtual engagement offerings. The team also standardized event intake and management processes.
- Collaborating with dozens of Association colleagues and campus and volunteer partners, Alumni Education convened in excess of 40 virtual forums and research competitions, drawing more than 25,000 registrants and improving quality ratings of the Faculty Forum Online series by 62%.
- With support from MIT’s Institute Community & Equity Office’s MindHandHeart Community Innovation Fund, Alumni Education launched the MIT Forum for Equity series in July 2020 and convened 16 important discussions on equity across the year. More than 6,000 alumni registered for these events on topics ranging from Black Lives Matter to Women and Leadership, four of which became coproductions with California Institute of Technology, Harvard University, and Wellesley College alumni associations.
- The Alumni Outreach team convened online regional ambassador meetups for individuals fulfilling a unique volunteer leadership role for community-supported development and guidance.
- The Alumni Relations team successfully transitioned alumni outreach work into the virtual environment, including initiatives such as the EAPS Explores series, bimonthly “super admin” Encompass group, volunteer manager roundtable, and regional meetups for microcommunities.
- The team convened MIT Alumni Association Collaborator meetings, a monthly gathering to increase awareness and covalent opportunities across the organization.
- The Student and Alumni Relations (STAR) team supported the continued growth and innovation of the Graduate Alumni Council, convening graduate alumni-specific events with the Departments of Chemical Engineering, Comparative Media Studies/Writing, Mechanical Engineering, and MIT Technology and Policy Program, and coproduced Professional Development After Hours events with Alumni Career Programs.
- The STAR team helped offer Independent Activities Period programs, mentoring, and other new events for graduate students and alumni.
- The STAR team engaged MIT10 alumni and volunteers in record numbers in FY2021, with record registrations for ALC, Pi Reunion, career programming, and non-reunion class years.
- The Affinity Groups program launched MIT First Generation Alumni and the MIT Chinese Alumni Groups, supported dozens of affinity/shared interest group

virtual events, and strengthened connections with campus partners who work with student affinity groups.

- The Association's first Brass Rat Melt ceremony drew more than 275 alumni online to receive a behind-the-scenes tour of the making of the iconic class ring that students get in their sophomore year.
- The Alumni Career Program's MIT Alumni Advisors Hub acquired 6,013 alumni and students signups by the end of FY2021, and over 13, 545 alumni logged in to the MIT Alumni Job Board.
- The STAR team hosted the first ever Graduating Student Leaders event, bringing together student leaders on campus and alumni volunteers to educate soon-to-be alumni on volunteer opportunities with the MITAA. They also enhanced the Dinner for 12 Strangers program, partnering with the Office of the First Year, Division of Student Life, and Resource Development (RD) to host over 70 virtual dinners with students and alumni.
- The STAR team hosted MIT's first Virtual Family Weekend, with 84 virtual events, including 61 DLC events, and strengthened parent connectedness via town halls, new parent orientations, and webinars.
- The MIT Alumni Career Program launched a new MIT Alumni Career Fellowship, a 30-day online program that drew a first-year cohort of 182 alumni.

## **Strategic Communications and Marketing**

The Strategic Communications and Marketing (SCM) team leads and executes marketing and content strategies to help the MIT Alumni Association meet its goals of engaging its constituents with the Institute and with one another.

### **Key Accomplishments**

- Completed development on a new brand identity, set to debut in fall FY2022, following a year-plus engagement with premier creative firm Pentagram that included key contributions from the Alumni Association Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers and partnership with Institute senior leaders.
- Developed and built out a new digital marketing track in the SCM team.
- Worked with partners to drive traffic to the MIT Alumni Association website, with 760,400 visitors.
- Completed more than 1,000 communications and marketing projects in support of the MIT Alumni Association.
- Provided key marketing support for the MITAA's signature events as it pivoted to virtual again, including the ALC, Family Weekend, the MIT 24-Hour Challenge, and Tech Reunions.

- Launched marketing efforts to support new FY2021 programs, like the Forum for Equity series, the Brass Rat Chats, the MIT Alumni Career Fellowship Design program, the Brass Rat Melt Ceremony, the MIT Career After Hours series, and a Welcome, New Alumni! toolkit.
- Partnered with Institute colleagues on the distribution and collecting of alumni feedback to a number of presidential letters on key community topics, including continuing Covid-19 updates, the launch of Climate Action Plan 2.0, the Strategic Action for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and more.
- Produced ongoing e-newsletter series like Tech Connection, Volunteer View, and Parents News.
- Logged 409,653 Slice of MIT blog views—a 27% increase year-over-year.
- Saw the Association’s YouTube channel views climb to more than 1.5 million views—increased more than 250,000 since FY2020.
- Co-led with MITAA Information Services the second year of the MIT Insights Forum, a virtual focus group of 1,700 alumni offering up valuable perspective and insights on the MIT alumni experience.
- Produced or consulted on 14 original videos to support the MITAA’s engagement goals.
- Increased social media followers on Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram.
- Supported promotion around three Better World virtual events.
- Partnered with the MIT News Office and MIT central communications to promote alumni-specific content on their main channels, including the Daily email and the mit.edu home page.
- Liaised with the MITAA Board Legislative Advocacy Ad Hoc Committee to produce programming for the Legislative Advocacy Network, including hosting webinars and publishing an article on the program in MIT Technology Review’s MIT News magazine.
- Continued to implement recommendations from the Strategic Change Implementation Committee sprint on brand and communications—a major focus of the MITAA Strategic Plan.
- Led creative development of President L. Rafael Reif and Mrs. Reif’s holiday e-greeting, with increased collaboration with the President’s Office and MIT Video Productions.
- Devised email marketing strategies that contributed to nearly 71,000 alumni clicking on links in emails.
- Provided editorial lead-up and round-the-clock social media coverage for MIT Tech Reunions, ALC, MIT 24-Hour Challenge, and Giving Tuesday.



## Information Systems and Volunteer Services

The Information Systems and Volunteer Services (IS&VS) team seeks to deliver value to alumni and other constituents by providing data input, analytics, online services, and volunteer services that strengthen opportunities for philanthropic, online, and face-to-face engagement.

In addition, IS&VS supports the organization's infrastructure by providing world-class technology support to our staff.

In FY2021, Volunteer Services was moved over into Alumni Relations to align with that department's goals to engage volunteers and grow the talent pipeline for future volunteer leaders.

## Volunteer Leadership Development

Volunteers continue to power the MIT Alumni Association and all its activities. Every club and class activity, every interest and affinity group, and every mentor and internship opportunity are made possible because of the countless hours alumni and friends devote to MIT.

The FY2021 statistics reflect this:

- Volunteers worked on behalf of MIT and the Alumni Association: 17,996
- Alumni volunteers: 17,017
- Non-alumni volunteers: 979
- International volunteers: 13%
- Female volunteers: 35%
- Donors: 42%

The Association thanks all MIT volunteers.

The Alumni Leadership Conference, held virtually September 21–26, drew a record 1,994 attendees logging in from around the world. The event included Institute leaders, faculty, students, and volunteer speakers; workshops designed for volunteer roles; and, for the first time, a broadcast of the Leadership Awards Celebration.

## Infrastructure and Operations

The Office of Records maintains MIT's database of records documenting contact and other information for alumni and friends of MIT, with key results in FY2021:

- Recorded 50,710 gifts/pledges—a 19% increase in the number of gifts recorded by the Office of Records.
- Recorded 85,477 biographical updates; the team fielded more than 8,500 help inquiries from internal constituents, alumni, and donors.

Web, Database, and Support Services for the MIT Alumni Association also logged several achievements in its efforts to support its programmatic partners' goals. In FY2021, the team:

- Increased personalization and customization of the Alumni Association website, with initial focus on the home page. (added a "Give Again" button and event personalization.)
- Coordinated a receipting and pledge-reminding project team to align receipting across the Office of Records and Recording Secretary's office.
- Continued Advancement Technology Roadmap Committee, moving toward the replacement of Advance as the database-of-record software; focusing on technical debt and positioning team for readiness for new software.
- Implemented new virtual platforms for the Family Weekend, Tech Reunions, and ALC.
- Created a Better World Service scoreboard for recording and reporting on MIT alumni service to the world.

## Governance

In FY2021, Charlene C. Kabcenell '79 served as the 126th president of the MIT Alumni Association Board of Directors and Annalisa Weigel '94, '95, SM '00, PhD '02 served on the Board as president-select.

## Board Highlights

- Worked with MIT Alumni Association CEO Whitney T. Espich and senior Association Staff to deliver on MITAA priorities during year three of the MITAA Strategic Plan
- Collaborated with MITAA staff to help navigate the virtual engagement reality created by the pandemic
- Contributed meaningful input to the Institute's efforts around developing the Institute's Strategic Action Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and its creation of an MIT Values Statement
- Participated in the development and selection of the Alumni Association's new brand identity
- Promoted the Alumni Association's fifth annual MIT 24-Hour Challenge
- Partnered with RD to deliver three MIT Better World Campaign roadshow events online
- Served as ambassadors for key Institute messages with their peers and networks
- Made the volunteer pipeline more visible to the Board and its selection committees and offered feedback on potential rising talent

## Finance and Operations

The Finance and Operations (F&O) team supports all program areas by providing financial strategies and tactics and operations oversight to support the annual and long-term commitments and aspirations of the Alumni Association.

### Budget Summary

In FY2021, the Association's total expense budget reduced to \$15,726,755, in alignment with a cross-Institute 3% budget reduction. The budget included \$1,879,709 allocated for subscriptions to MIT Technology Review. The budget was funded by \$15,266,413 in General Institute Budget funds and program revenues of \$460,320. The spending controls and hiring suspension resulted in an end-of-year surplus of \$2.1 million dollars, which was returned to the MIT Budget Office. The Association did not draw from its reserves in FY2021.

During FY2021, the F&O team continued to provide responsive and effective service to all units in both departments, emphasizing collaborative planning and teamwork to meet departmental goals. Senior members of the F&O team supported RD associate vice president, COO, and the executive directors, as well as the MITAA CEO and the executive directors in managing the FY2021 strategic planning and budget allocation process. The team also provided key support to the MITAA CEO and implementing the strategic objectives of the MIT Alumni Association Board of Directors.

Also, in FY2021, the F&O team:

- Worked diligently with staff at all levels to complete their traditional duties and manage through the spending controls and hiring freeze, all while working remotely.
- Provided traditional financial oversight on Alumni Association signature work, completed talent share assignments for teams understaffed due to the hiring freeze, and continued our support to alumni volunteers.
- Continued critical on-site building management during the pandemic-created campus closure, managing the Covid Pass access system, collecting and distributing incoming mail, supporting overall gift operations, and supervising overall building management.
- Facilitated the distribution of computer and office equipment for all building staff who were working from home and responded to ad hoc requests for project support and as needed connections to W98 and the campus.
- Worked on several special assignments, including enhanced support to the CEO for special initiatives, worked with facilities teams to complete the design for and begin construction of a new alumni space on the Infinite Corridor, initiated discussions with the new CEO of the MIT Federal Credit Union to enhance the affinity agreement partnership; and provided support to the Advancement IT Roadmap Team, and reconvened the W98 Building Committee.

- Liaised with staff from the Office of the Vice President for Finance and Office of the Recording Secretary on quarterly updates of the comprehensive Campaign Cost and Gifts Forecasting dashboard; participated in the annual Educational Advisory Board Advancement Benchmarking Initiative; coordinated the collection of data and questionnaires from all advancement offices across the Institute on behalf of the MIT Tax and Global Operations Office in preparation for filing the 2020 IRS Tax Form 990; and participated in the annual Voluntary Support of Education survey managed through the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education.

## **Human Resources and Strategic Talent Management**

The Office of Human Resources and Strategic Talent Management (HR/STM) assists the senior teams of the MITAA and RD to attract quality talent, ensure their strategic engagement, and guide their performance and professional development in support of MIT's advancement goals.

The HR/STM team supports the work of all program areas within MITAA and RD relative to talent management, including staffing and retention, employee engagement, performance management, employee relations, diversity and inclusion, professional development, compensation, and rewards and recognition. In addition, HR/STM facilitates all organizational changes within RD and MITAA and drives the effort to create a comprehensive talent management strategy for the campaign and beyond.

In FY2021, the HR/STM team:

- Implemented the Gallup Q12 Employee Engagement survey. The survey gives every employee the opportunity to share information that helps the Association understand and improve commitment to the organization and its goals and enables each unit to identify areas of focus to improve levels of engagement and our work environment.
- Offered trainings on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Belonging topics, ranging from microaggressions to allyship to how to conduct difficult conversations, and more.
- Implemented a DE&I Pulse Survey and encouraged all groups to create a DEI action plan based on the results. The team compiled and distributed monthly DEI learning bundles on various aspects of DEI, from creating a culture of belonging to celebrating LGBTQ Pride to supporting our Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander colleagues, and more.
- Participated in the CASE Diversity Internship program twice during FY2021 by hiring interns from traditionally underrepresented groups to expand their career skills by working with the Office of Leadership Giving, Strategic Information Management, Alumni Relations, and the Annual Fund.

- Established a Talent Share program to support teams with staff vacancies due to the Institute hiring freeze, whereby staff with capacity in their workloads were loaned to other teams to assist with special projects.
- Continued the structured process for managing Performance Reviews by setting timelines for every stage in the process, from goal setting to midyear check-ins to year-end performance assessment. The team offered coaching sessions for both managers and staff on creating SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-bound) goals and conducting performance discussions.

**Whitney T. Espich**

**Chief Executive Officer, MIT Alumni Association**