

Personal Statement

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As a first year EECS graduate student, I quickly identified numerous aspects of the EECS department that need to be improved. Two months into my first semester, I approached Dr. Arthur Smith with the idea of holding student focus groups to determine whether other first year students were experiencing the same types of problems that I experienced. I wanted to collect feedback from a large number of students and take that feedback back to the department to improve the program for next year. Soon after, I connected with the GSA and determined that many of its goals complemented mine.

I quickly became joint orientation chair and organized a number of Open House activities with Brandon Pierquet. These successful activities attracted the attention of numerous faculty members, causing the department to look to us to create a new orientation program.

Right now, the EECS department appears to take wonderful care of students who enter the institute knowing exactly what they want to do, but makes life extremely difficult for those who do not. This needs to change. The department needs to become a more welcoming place for all incoming students. It also needs to do a better job of addressing the concerns of current students and providing communication between different research groups. Here are some of the major areas that need to improve:

- **First Year Offices** – All first year students should have offices to help them meet other students, acclimate themselves to the MIT environment, and feel connected to the life of the department.
- **Orientation** – The EECS needs to start having orientation events for its incoming students so that new students can meet one another and begin developing a community amongst themselves before classes start.
- **First Year Seminars** – First year students enter with many questions about the department, classes, and research, and frequently do not know who to go to for answers. Adding an hour-a-week seminar would provide ongoing advising throughout the first year, teach students about research opportunities at MIT, answer students' questions about the school, help first year students meet one another, and guide students as they search for a research advisor or thesis topic.
- **Lab Tours** – Informal student-run lab tours would help incoming students and students searching for a PhD advisors become acquainted with a lab before they approach a specific professor. These tours, run by 5th or 6th year students, would give students a low-key way of learning about current research in other laboratories.
- **Inter-Lab Seminars or Poster Presentations** – Many student have very little idea of what goes on in other labs. Either departmental seminars or a departmental poster presentation would help students learn about other research groups and encourage collaboration.

- **Better Communication between Area II and the Other Areas** – Many students are interested in multiple areas, but the current divide within the department sometimes makes it difficult for students to move between EE and CS.
- **TA Workshops** – Continue this extremely popular event.
- **Social Gatherings** – Successful social gatherings that appeal to numerous students within the department would encourage interaction among students in different areas and labs in a social rather than professional context.
- **Student Input** – Students in EECS should be able to voice their opinions and have their ideas be heard. The GSA should focus on collecting student feedback, acting on it, and on communicating it to the department. Facilitating the GSA's function as a liaison between the students and the department will be one of my primary goals as president.
- **EECS Website** – Many of the research portions of the website are out of date or broken. This can make it extremely difficult for new students to learn about professors' research. The website should be updated to provide current information about research opportunities.