MIT Five-year Strategic Action Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (2021-2026)

DRAFT, March 2021

Dear members of the MIT community,

What follows is the first draft of MIT's Five-year Strategic Action Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and we invite your input. Please review it carefully and consider how well it reflects your hopes for MIT to be a welcoming and inclusive environment for living, learning, working, and doing research. Your input to this plan and the processes it describes are crucial to our success: please send us your thoughts and reactions via email (deistrategicactionplan@mit.edu) or through the feedback functions on the plan's website: deiactionplan.mit.edu.

As MIT's leaders noted when they announced the release of this first draft: "Much of the decision-making at MIT is decentralized. As an organizational strategy, this matches the intellectual and creative freedom we cherish. However, decentralization presents special challenges when we need — as we do now — to make meaningful change together... We therefore encourage every member of the MIT community to read the draft plan and offer your questions and ideas."

We need your input.

We are interested in hearing from everyone — from the members of our community who are already engaged in plans to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, from those who are actively engaged in this work every day, and from people for whom this is unfamiliar territory. We hope this plan offers encouragement, and we want the insights, expertise, and ambitions of our entire community to inform MIT's commitments so these efforts can be more lasting and effective.

The comment period on this document will be open until April 30. We expect to share a final plan by the end of the semester.

Sincerely,

John Dozier, Institute Community and Equity Officer
Maryanne Kirkbride, Deputy Institute Community and Equity Officer
Tim Jamison, Associate Provost

P.S. Based on some early inputs, we have already developed a frequently asked questions page on the plan's website. With your help, we will continue to develop this resource.

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Introduction

What is the focus of the Strategic Action Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?

The events of 2020 laid bare the deep inequities in our society. These challenges and the desire to address their impact at MIT are not new, but today we feel a new urgency for action. As a leading educational and research institution, MIT is motivated to embrace this moment, reflect on its own history and origins, and focus its attention on the issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion on its own campus and beyond. By shaping a new generation of MIT graduates and improving our ability to understand and act on humanity's great challenges, the changes we make in and for our own community will also reverberate beyond MIT.

MIT recently released a summary of the Institute's commitments to community. Today, we seek to build on past progress with a campus-wide plan that will set a unifying direction for the important work that remains. Many academic, research, and administrative units are already developing innovative plans to address these challenges. An Institute-wide plan will offer a platform for coordinating, assessing, and elevating these efforts as never before.

As President Reif wrote in his July 2020 letter to the community: "We have a historic opportunity to accelerate the transition to a more just and equitable future."

What actions do we need to take to get there?

Becoming the community we aspire to be requires every person at MIT reflect on how opportunity has both benefited them and shaped their success. Knowing that opportunity is not evenly distributed, we must also seek to understand the impact of these differences on how we live, learn, and work together. And we need to accept the responsibility to identify and eliminate practices and policies that promote or result in marginalization. Simultaneously, we must create and institutionalize new systems and behaviors that promote equity, value differences of both opinion and origin, and unite us all in the mission of MIT.

This plan seeks to engender and build a sense of community across the Institute. An important step in that process will be confronting the historical, institutional, interpersonal, and cultural practices that adversely impact women and underrepresented racial groups at MIT. The Institute currently identifies members of a "racial/ethnic underrepresented" group as: "a U.S. Citizen who self-identifies as Black/African-American, Hispanic/Latinx, Native American or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander." In this plan, we use a broader set of attributes — including socioeconomic status, religious beliefs, gender identity, veteran status, sexual orientation, disability, and other identity characteristics — to understand the composition of our community. The plan also creates a framework for interpreting and affirming the importance of all identity characteristics in context within specific academic, research, and administrative units. **The Institute will develop and use this knowledge to create the conditions and serve as a foundation for success for all members of the MIT Community.**

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1. MIT ICEO Committee on Race and Diversity definitions.

We will organize our inquiry and action plans around three strategic priorities:

Composition: MIT can only fulfill its mission by serving as a magnet for the widest range of talented people. The composition of our community of students, staff, postdocs, faculty, and of our leadership should reflect a commitment to diversity. Establishing Institute-wide objectives, defining practical steps for achieving them, expanding formal mechanisms to collect identity data beyond race, ethnicity, and gender, and setting clear criteria for success will empower us to see ourselves more clearly and make real progress.

Belonging: MIT can best achieve its goals by creating a community in which all people feel they are connected to each other, can do their best work, and can thrive as members of a community with a sense of shared purpose and agency. By cultivating empathy, civil discourse, inclusion, and engagement, we can amplify our historic strengths as a problem-solving institution and turn them towards society's collective well-being.

Achievement: MIT will ensure equity is central to its assessments of all students, staff, postdocs, and faculty. For all members of our community, we will chart equitable pathways to success and minimize barriers to achievement.

How will we know our plan is working?

First, by defining and promoting the characteristics of a community that fosters equity and nurtures a sense of belonging, and by creating an action plan that ensures concrete progress towards developing such a community, we will position ourselves to build a better MIT.

Second, by establishing an overall context and framework, the plan will enable and empower every academic, research, and administrative unit to create its own effective plan of action, tailored to its area or discipline, with localized objectives, processes, and outcome metrics.

Third, by measuring our progress against the goals that will emerge from this plan, as well as those created at the local level, and by assessing the performance of programs and initiatives MIT has committed to, this plan will institutionalize practices of accountability.

Lastly, as the plan is put in practice, MIT will gather feedback from the community to continually improve and refine its efforts.

People do their best work when they have a strong sense of belonging. Creating an MIT community that is inclusive, invites and emphasizes engagement, and celebrates the achievements of all its members is our central goal.

A Model for Action

The Strategic Action Plan provides a framework for pursuing three strategic priorities (Composition, Belonging, and Achievement), six institutional commitments, and a range of programs and initiatives that will be executed across MIT's academic, research, and administrative units. This document also articulates an initial outline of the infrastructure, resources, and processes required to implement the plan, and it describes a process for setting measurable goals for each commitment.

With the support of senior leadership, the plan is structured to provide an Institute-wide model for action and change over the next five years. It took shape through extensive conversations with a wide variety of members of the MIT community, and this deliberate dialogue continues. All members of the MIT community are welcome to provide feedback on the ideas expressed in the plan at any time.

The creation of this plan is only one step; further progress depends on the creation of localized, context-specific plans and programs in each academic, research, and administrative unit at MIT. Recognizing both the urgent need for shared progress and the reality of the Institute's decentralized structure and culture, the plan both offers broad definitions for composition, belonging, and achievement while it sets the expectation that these terms will be defined in context at the local level

Many academic, research, and administrative units have already designed and launched plans and programs that are making meaningful progress to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This plan is designed to support, include, amplify and offer context for those efforts (some of which are noted specifically in this plan). For units at earlier stages in the process, this plan offers guidance in identifying goals and suggests an effective path to achieving and measuring them.

As we implement this plan and assess how well it works, we expect to learn from the process and to uncover new ideas. To make the most of this learning process, the plan will need to be flexible. This holds true for more localized versions too.

The Strategic Action Plan is MIT's attempt to deliver an explicit, directional, and aspirational set of *actions* for MIT. Its objective is to enable the Institute to claim and hold itself accountable to a leadership role in addressing issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion for *all* members of its community.

Composition

MIT can only fulfill its mission by serving as a magnet for the widest range of talented people. The composition of our community of students, staff, postdocs, faculty, and of our leadership should reflect a commitment to diversity. Establishing Institute-wide objectives, defining practical steps for achieving them, expanding formal mechanisms to collect identity data beyond race, ethnicity and gender, and setting clear criteria for success will empower us to see ourselves more clearly and make real progress.

1 **Commitment:** Increase the number of underrepresented[2] **graduate students, postdocs, staff,** and **faculty** at MIT.

Graduate Students: Programs/Initiatives

• Each academic program will document its graduate admissions process and selection criteria; work with deans, department heads, and program leaders to ensure there are holistic processes for admissions decisions Institute-wide (to include the evaluation of using GRE scores for admissions). *(In progress) (See Infrastructure and Resources regarding recruitment and application system needs to support this.)*

 » Provide all faculty participating in graduate admissions decisions with implicit/unconscious bias, diversity, recruitment, and outreach training.

 » Develop an Institute-wide approach to supporting recruitment and yield activities for underrepresented students.

 » Assess, develop, and enhance coordinated bridge programs such as MSRP that increase the number of students who elect to attend graduate study at MIT and elsewhere. *(In progress)*

• Expand the number of MIT graduate fellowships (and coordinated fellowship programs) to support the recruitment and retention of students who enhance the diversity of their academic disciplines. (See Commitment 6)

• Review and evaluate coordination with external graduate fellowship programs.

• Develop a coordinated, Institute-level strategy for cultivating and enhancing alliances with minority-serving institutions and historically Black colleges and universities.

Postdocs: Programs/Initiatives

• Provide all MIT PIs who make postdoc hiring decisions with implicit/unconscious bias training and learning opportunities to incorporate best practices and include consideration of contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion to the search process.

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2. The Institute currently identifies members of a "racial/ethnic underrepresented" group as: "a U.S. Citizen who self-identifies as Black/African-American, Hispanic/Latinx, Native American or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander." In this plan, we use a broader set of attributes — including socioeconomic status, religious beliefs, gender identity, veteran status, sexual orientation, disability, and other identity characteristics — to understand the composition of our community.

- Work with school and college deans to catalog each department, lab, and center's hiring practices and establish Institute-wide processes and standards for the hiring of postdocs.

- Work with school and college deans to coordinate and expand existing programs that support postdoc recruitment and success.

Staff: Programs/Initiatives

- Provide all hiring managers on staff searches with implicit/unconscious bias training and learning opportunities to incorporate best practices and include consideration of contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion to the search process.

- Promote and operationalize existing Institute-wide standards, criteria, and guiding principles for equitable staff searches.

- Actively pursue and more effectively utilize current Affirmative Action data and goals in all staffing categories, including leadership and management.

Faculty: Programs/Initiatives

- Provide all faculty participating in faculty search committees with implicit/unconscious bias training and learning opportunities to incorporate best practices and include consideration of contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion to the faculty search and hiring process.

- Develop and implement a mechanism for following the academic careers and post-graduate success of top underrepresented undergraduate and graduate students and postdocs that will enable or inform a search committee in future years.

- Actively pursue and more effectively utilize Affirmative Action data and goals associated with new faculty hires.

- Schools, the college, and academic departments will document faculty recruitment and pipeline development efforts and work to develop and implement programs that increase the number of underrepresented candidates in faculty searches.

2 **Commitment:** Assess and strengthen our recruitment of underrepresented **undergraduate students**.

Programs/Initiatives

- Assess and expand as needed our recruiting efforts for underrepresented undergraduates, including through work with established programs and partners. *(In progress)*

- Assess STEM outreach/pipeline programs and evaluate coordination among them; develop and implement plans to address opportunities and shortcomings.

Belonging

MIT can best achieve its goals by creating a community in which all people feel they are connected to each other, can do their best work, and can thrive as members of a community with a sense of shared purpose and agency. By cultivating empathy, civil discourse, inclusion, and engagement, we can amplify our historic strengths as a problem-solving institution and turn them towards society's collective well-being.

3 **Commitment:** Critically engage with and empower the MIT community on the **value of diversity, equity, and inclusion.**

Programs/Initiatives

• Develop and broadly disseminate an MIT values statement. *(In progress)*

• Develop and execute a communications strategy that supports the value of diversity, equity, and inclusion and reaches all MIT stakeholders, internal and external. *(In progress)*

• Develop and maintain a repository of diversity, equity, and inclusion resources designed to amplify the role of engagement, empathy, social analysis, civil discourse, mentoring, advising, and inclusion as institutional values. *(In progress)*

• Develop coordinated and consistent staff, faculty, postdoc, and student onboarding and orientation processes that reinforce MIT's commitment to being and becoming a leader in diversity, equity, and inclusion. *(In progress)*

• Develop criteria for recognizing and acknowledging contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion at MIT as part of annual performance evaluations, merit-based awards, and advancement decisions for all staff and faculty. (See Commitment 6)

• Reward and acknowledge students who participate in specific project-based roles related to advancing Institute goals for diversity, equity, and inclusion; for example, through awards and using the Graduate Community Fellows program as a model.

• Increase support for and coordination of community-led programs and events that encourage the examination of issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

• Catalyze innovative new programs that seek to integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion concepts into programs of study and campus life. *(In progress)*

4 **Commitment:** Reinforce positive interactions among members of the MIT community to foster and promote an **enduring sense of belonging**.

Programs/Initiatives

• Develop and implement an Institute-wide mentoring program that will design, deliver, and evaluate mentor and mentee training using theoretically-grounded, evidence-based, and culturally-responsive training interventions for faculty, staff, postdocs, and students.

• Create a Wellbeing Lab to emphasize and coordinate health-promotion efforts across campus; strengthen DAPER's formal academic wellness offerings; and develop campus-wide messaging about self-care, self-compassion, respect, relationships, and resiliency. *(In progress)*

• Work with student and administrative leaders to identify and create opportunities and mechanisms for cultural student groups to convene, such as shared spaces and events, including signature annual events.

• Meet students' urgent financial needs, including addressing food insecurity. *(In progress)*

• Implement recommendations from the external review of public safety operations to increase the sense of wellbeing and safety among all members of the MIT community. *(In progress)*

• Implement NASEM working group recommendations, including those that address the negative effects of power dynamics and the unsupportive behaviors that can result from power imbalances. *(In progress)*

• Engage leadership to hold faculty and supervisors accountable for creating and sustaining environments that encourage collegiality, respect, and value for all staff, students, postdocs, and faculty.

• Expand visibility of and create opportunities for employee engagement, such as Employee Resource Groups.

• Support faculty and supervisors through a coordinated training program that emphasizes how to build trusting relationships, manage across differences, employ coaching strategies, facilitate difficult conversations, and provide effective feedback.

• Increase the accessibility of our information and communications technology, including implementing the recommendations of the Digital Accessibility Working Group.

5 **Commitment:** Support academic **research, scholarship, and collaborations** regarding diversity, equity, inclusion, social justice, and related topics at MIT.

Programs/Initiatives

• As noted in President Reif's letter to the community in July 2020: "make a combination of immediate investments in antiracist research at MIT, totaling $1 million, and seek additional sources. The goal is to seed new research, amplify existing research, create links between related efforts across MIT and establish connections with research at other institutions."

Achievement

MIT will ensure equity is central to its assessments of all students, staff, postdocs, and faculty. For all members of our community, we will chart equitable pathways to success and minimize barriers to achievement.

6 **Commitment:** Close achievement gaps and advance equity in all forms of success among underrepresented **undergraduate students, graduate students, postdocs, staff,** and **faculty** at MIT.

Undergraduate Students: Programs/Initiatives

• Launch an undergraduate advising program to augment current advising structures by offering comprehensive academic and co-curricular support for students from acceptance through graduation, with an emphasis on adding staff with expertise in supporting students with a wide range of backgrounds, identities, and needs.

• Expand the 5th-week flag (early alert) system to apply to classes beyond the first-year core.

• Determine if there are differences in participation rates and outcomes in experiential learning programs and develop strategies for addressing any areas of concern. *(In progress)*

Graduate Students: Programs/Initiatives

• See mentoring program, Commitment 4.

• Provide transitional funding and create mechanisms to maximize students' continued success during periods of transition between sources of funding, advisors, or other. *(In progress)*

• Charge an ad-hoc Institute-wide committee to lead a study of graduate program progression (e.g. qualifying exams, grades) and outcomes (e.g. papers, job placement, salaries) in each department, and recommend actions that address inequities for implementation.

Postdocs: Programs/Initiatives

• See mentoring program, Commitment 4.

• Continue to provide opportunities and ensure equity of access to programming for personal and professional development.

Staff: Programs/Initiatives

• Develop mechanisms to ensure broad participation in professional development opportunities for staff across the Institute.

• Create a transparent process and mechanisms for career development pathways.

• Develop criteria for recognizing and acknowledging contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion at MIT as part of annual performance evaluations, merit-based awards, and advancement decisions for all staff and faculty. (See Commitment 3)

• Convene a working group to study salary and promotion equity and make appropriate recommendations.

Faculty: Programs/Initiatives

• Enhance and scale faculty onboarding process to communicate the Institute's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as clear guidelines to promotion and tenure.

• Review and evaluate existing tenure and promotion criteria and revise them to better promote and incentivize equity, faculty peer and student mentoring, student outcomes, and contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

• Develop faculty resource groups modeled after Employee Resource Groups.

Infrastructure and Capacity

In order to execute an Institute-wide implementation of the Strategic Action Plan, MIT will need central and distributed processes and investments to effectuate and evaluate activities and goals associated with all three strategic priorities. Investments should be carefully sequenced to allow for continuous evaluation of new and existing programs, as well as to determine their effectiveness and facilitate reprioritization where and when it is warranted.

Shared needs across all strategic priorities

- Develop, or adapt and implement, resource development strategies to support diversity, equity, and inclusion-related needs at MIT (graduate fellowships, mentoring and advising programs, etc.) *(In progress)*

- Develop localized diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plans for each academic, research, and administrative unit that articulate each unit's specific commitments, programs, and goals in the context of the Institute's Strategic Action Plan. *(In progress)*

- Develop and implement a process to assess and adapt diversity, equity, and inclusion-related programming to ensure dynamic management in order to achieve goals.

- Support the implementation of each academic, research, and administrative unit's diversity, equity and inclusion plan with dedicated staff. *(In progress)*

- Develop and implement operational schedule, structure, and processes that ensure frequent and regular interaction and information-sharing among Diversity Officers, Assistant Deans, and other staff who work directly on diversity, equity, and inclusion issues. *(In progress)*

- Implement regular reporting as allowed by law and policy to the MIT community, the MIT Corporation, and MIT Visiting Committees on diversity, equity, and inclusion goals as defined in the Strategic Action Plan and/or unit-based plans.

- Provide support for MIT research and scholarship on diversity, equity, and inclusion. (See Commitment 5)

Composition

- Catalog and assess current recruitment and pipeline efforts for undergraduate and graduate students, postdocs, staff, and faculty. *(In progress)*

- Expand categories of identity data formally collected from MIT community members to include characteristics such as gender beyond the binary, religion, disability, first-generation, veteran status, etc.

- Replace or update the current online graduate recruitment and application system with a robust, cloud-based, enterprise platform. (See Commitment 1 - Graduate Students)

Belonging

- Mentoring program (See Commitment 4)

- Wellness Initiative (See Commitment 4)

- Continue to support cultural student groups (See Commitment 4)

- Increase support for urgent financial needs (See Commitment 4)

- Integrate core diversity, equity, and inclusion questions into all internal surveys that assess well-being or the sense of community at MIT (Quality of Life, Pulse, etc).

- Improve the utilization of bias reporting (through IDHR) and other bystander interventions.

- Reviewand update where needed MIT policies and procedures related discrimination and harassment.

- Catalog and assess current programming focused on the retention of undergraduate and graduate students, postdocs, staff, and faculty.

Achievement

- Undergraduate advising program (See Commitment 4)

- Develop and implement new processes and systems that recognize contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion at MIT as part of annual performance evaluations, merit-based awards, and advancement decisions for all staff and faculty. (See Commitment 3)

- Enhance professional development opportunities for staff. (See Commitment 6)

- Improve the collection and anonymized reporting of completion- or exit-survey and interview data for students, staff, postdocs, and faculty.

- Transitional funding. (See Commitment 6) *(In progress)*

- New execution capacity to deliver on related commitments:

  » Expand the 5th week flag (early alert) system (See Commitment 6)

  » Develop reporting tools for equity in salary and promotions

Initial Implementation Steps

The Strategic Action Plan is a working document that will evolve rapidly, especially over its first year, as it is presented to the community and other plans from academic, research, and administrative units are developed or refined.

Below is an outline of the process for gaining community input and implementing the plan:

• This draft will be shared with the MIT community via deiactionplan.mit.edu. The document will be broadly promoted within the community and offer a range of mechanisms for feedback on its content and direction.

• Planning co-leads and the DEI Steering Team will convene a series of public engagement sessions with the MIT community to gather input on this plan and to solicit ideas and inputs that may be more appropriately included within the strategic plans of administrative, research, or academic units.

• Community inputs will be consolidated and reviewed to determine where they can be most effectively implemented (i.e., Institute-wide, within a particular school or DLC, etc.).

• Accountability for programs and initiatives will be determined and assigned; many programs and initiatives will have shared ownership among administrative, research, and academic units.

• Senior administrator owners will collaborate to establish measurements and goals for each program and/or commitment.

• Once accountabilities and goals have been established, a final version of the plan will be circulated to the community for input and comment.