

Dean for Graduate Students

Five years ago, or thereabouts, this report noted with a mixture of both trepidation and hope the somewhat fractious national landscape characterizing relations between graduate students and their institutions. Significant concerns about unionization movements abounded, and some troubling developments (even in private universities) threatened to change graduate education in unwholesome ways. How times have changed! Over these years, the union movement, never truly a comfortable bedfellow with graduate students, has subsided, if not wholly faded into obscurity. The leading universities, with MIT often at the forefront, have moved rapidly to reexamine and then reshape the experience for their graduate students. Today, what was once a genuine oxymoron—the notion that graduate students should have a life and feel less exploited—is more a reality than ever before as we recognize what today’s students expect from a first-rate graduate education.

If we expect our graduate students to become genuine leaders in their fields, to be engaged and effective citizens of the world, and to reflect the virtues and values of an MIT education, then it remains our duty to educate the whole person. Departments and labs continue to do their part in this process, socializing their students within their respective academic disciplines and research environments. It is increasingly true that the Institute has provided venues and programs, physical infrastructure, and other opportunities for our students to engage and learn from one another outside of traditional departmental boundaries. They can now more easily encounter the rich diversity within their ranks, take advantage of differing perspectives and life experiences, and use many opportunities for “priceless encounters” to prepare themselves for the world in which they will live, work, and perhaps lead.

This dean has been pleased to use MIT’s bully pulpit to raise awareness of the shift in graduate students’ expectations and to reflect those realities in the Graduate Students Office (GSO) activities. Nothing short of a sea change has occurred here. New residence halls were and are being built, with community-building and support needs firmly in the mix. Scores of experiments in strengthening existing communities and creating new ones have been implemented, and explorations continue. Graduate students have worked in close cooperation, if not always in total harmony, to effect meaningful policy and programmatic changes that have a positive impact on their lives.

It is not uncommon now for an admitted graduate student to comment that key factors in the decision to matriculate at MIT were a visible and supportive graduate community, superb graduate housing, and a pervasive feeling that MIT cares about them. It’s a wonderful note upon which this dean can reflect in the years ahead, in grateful remembrance of people who worked so effectively and collaboratively toward such positive and lasting change. This report summarizes essential activities of the past year and reflects an ongoing effort to capitalize on recent trends in support of graduate life.

Isaac M. Colbert
Dean for Graduate Students

Graduate Students Office

Academic year 2006–2007 has been a memorable one for GSO, especially in light of the dean’s decision to retire from MIT at the end of the fiscal year. Five key themes characterized the year:

- Preparing for the dean’s departure and selecting a successor
- Getting the new Committee on Graduate Programs off to a good start with a full agenda for the year
- Moving forward with detailed requirements for a new graduate residence hall in the northwest sector
- Clarifying GSO priorities and funding needs for the developing fundraising campaign
- Crystallizing staffing and operations for the new Amgen National Program Office

Committee on Graduate Programs

At the start of the fall term, the new Committee on Graduate Programs (CGP) developed its agenda for the year. Chaired by Professor Melissa Nobles and staffed by Barrie Gleason of GSO, the committee discussed a long list of topics to explore related to the functions of GSO, graduate policy issues at MIT, and graduate education writ large. Operational matters have been delegated to the dean, who continues to convene graduate officers and administrators several times a year to consider students’ academic progress and take consequent administrative actions. With this division of roles, both groups functioned smoothly during the year, and the new model should be effective going forward.

The CGP discussed and approved a proposal from the Sloan School of Management for a new degree specification, the master in finance (MFin). Sloan appears to be examining its market to identify opportunities for tailoring its master’s degree offerings. The committee also approved the proposal for the creation of an interdepartmental graduate (PhD) program in microbiology. While a degree in microbiology has always existed, there has been no program as such.

Community

The hallmark of the year for the graduate community was the groundbreaking event for NW35, to be named Ashdown House, while the original residence of that name will be repurposed for undergraduate housing. As the year progressed, a number of construction cost challenges jeopardized the project, threatening at one point to reduce occupancy significantly. In the end, however, the residence will go forward as planned, with substantial community facilities and beds for approximately 530 students. When the hall opens in the fall of 2008, more than 1,700 graduate students will reside in the northwest area, bringing new life and new opportunities to further improve the experience of graduate students on campus. Moreover, an objective articulated by graduate students 15 years ago (to house 50 percent of graduate students on campus)

will be very nearly achieved. The focused, if sometimes boisterous, advocacy of graduate student leaders has been instrumental in holding the Institute to its commitments regarding the new residence and the successful transfer of the Ashdown community to its new home.

Another highlight of the year was the completion of round six of the Graduate Life Grants process. Interest continued to be strong, with 19 proposals generated and 14 funded. At this point, the dean has hardened activities that are budgeted collectively at about \$150,000 annually. Since interest in developing and enhancing community through these grant projects has not waned, planning for a seventh round was under way before the end of the academic year.

At the spring meeting of the Ivy League Plus group of graduate deans held at Yale University, Dean Isaac M. Colbert, associate dean Blanche Staton, and assistant dean Christopher M. Jones toured the university's graduate facilities at the McDougal Center and learned about Yale's well-developed McDougal Fellows program. That program engages many graduate students to support graduate life and provides them with modest funding. GSO plans to adapt the fellows concept to address MIT's ongoing plans for graduate life. Beginning in the summer of 2007 with a small cadre of graduate community fellows, GSO plans to explore how best to shape the program and direct student involvement. Over time, the fellows group could develop into a rich resource for student involvement and community development and as an important conduit for informing the dean about the graduate student experience.

Priorities

The dean's management team gave special attention to articulating priority areas for the GSO organization and for each senior staff member for the year. Our concern was to ensure that strategic efforts be realized and that GSO's work be more visible and recognized for its impact. As a part of that effort, all job descriptions were updated to reflect duties and responsibilities as they have evolved for each person and to more clearly detail the integration of work across the staff.

As the Institute's plans for the quiet phase of the Campaign for Students took shape, the team adopted the priority areas for the Dean for Student Life Fund, and within that framework, began to articulate concrete ideas to encourage donor funding for graduate students (public service, residential life, leadership development, professional development, religious life, wellness, and athletics, physical education, and recreation). Director of communications Barrie Gleason has developed effective collaborative efforts with peers in Resource Development and the Alumni Association, and communication strategies continue to evolve for the campaign. We plan to integrate GSO priorities into the mix to ensure that both graduate life and graduate fellowship needs are emphasized.

Amgen National Program Office

An exciting opportunity arose in the fall term for MIT to submit a proposal to serve as the national coordinator for a new foundation-driven diversity program. The Amgen Foundation solicited proposals from five universities, one of which would be selected to be the National Program Office (NPO) for a 10-site Amgen Scholars Program.

Colbert and Jones wrote what proved to be the successful proposal, while the MIT Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) simultaneously submitted a winning proposal to be one of the program sites. The dean is the principal investigator on the program, and Jones serves part-time as the director of the NPO.

To leverage the work of the NPO with the Institute's ongoing diversity recruitment efforts, we have structured a key staff position with overlapping responsibilities: a part-time role as coordinator within the NPO with additional responsibilities for coordination of the Converge program and minority recruitment travel to key conferences and national meetings.

Staff Activities

This past summer, Dean Colbert devoted several days to the National Science Foundation (NSF), serving on their Fellowship Program Review Committee. The committee conducted an extensive review of the NSF fellows program and made a number of recommendations to strengthen the highly successful program and improve its staffing resources. The dean also served as president of the Graduate Record Examination Board (GRE). Comprised of deans representing the graduate education community, the board directs expenditures for development of and improvements to the testing program, approves the GRE's ongoing research agenda and specific projects, and advises the Educational Testing Service about strategic issues. Finally, for much of the fall term, the dean hosted a visiting scholar from Tsinghua University in Beijing, China. Dr. Huiqin Liu supervises the graduate school at Tsinghua; she proposed spending time at MIT to investigate how graduate education functions here and how her university might emulate some good practices to improve its graduate operations. Culminating her successful visit, Dr. Liu led a discussion with a group of Chinese academic visitors to describe what she had learned while here. Her visit further strengthens the ties between MIT and Tsinghua.

In the financial area, there have been noteworthy changes. Thanks to Tatia Santiago's creative efforts, GSO's operation is much more efficient, with a simplified filing system and streamlined procedures for processing financial transactions.

Edward Ballo continues to represent GSO on the advisory board for the Department of Athletics, Physical Education, and Recreation, and on the Crisis Response Group, which grew out of a need to explore ways to combat increased sexually aggravated violence on campus and to raise awareness of resources.

In the area of professional development, Tatia Santiago has taken advantage of several financial and Information Services and Technology training classes, and she, Edward Ballo, and Heather Fry recently attended a session on tools for professional development.

Diversity

GSO's efforts related to Institute diversity include recruiting applicants from underserved and underrepresented groups, engaging departments and programs in targeted outreach, and developing programs to support students who matriculate.

The primary mechanism for recruiting applicants from underserved and underrepresented groups and for engaging departments and programs continues to be the MIT Summer Research Program (MSRP). However, over the course of this past year, GSO formally added Converge (a graduate pre-admissions preview weekend) and the Amgen Scholars Program to its portfolio.

MIT Summer Research Program

Since its first summer in 1986, the MSRP has worked tirelessly to increase the pool of minority students who pursue graduate degrees. During this time, MSRP has seen more than 90 percent of program participants go on to pursue advanced degrees. With a goal of encouraging and preparing students to pursue graduate degrees at some institution of higher learning (not specifically at MIT), MIT was able to capture 17 percent of the 400 program participants.

A faculty committee, commissioned in 2004 by then-provost Robert Brown, was charged with redesigning the MSRP as MIT's premier recruitment tool for underrepresented minority students. Since then, the committee has continued to serve as an advisory board for the MSRP. Working with this committee, chaired by Professor Paula Hammond of the Department of Chemical Engineering, Christopher Jones (assistant dean for graduate students) has continued to implement important changes in the MSRP. Additional committee members include Professor Steve Bell (biology); Professor Eric Hudson (physics); Professor Tayo Akinwande (electrical engineering and computer science); Karl Reid (Office of Minority Education); Janet Fischer (Office of the Provost); and Dean Isaac Colbert (GSO).

During the program's redesign, MSRP articulated its mission: to promote the value of graduate education, to improve the research enterprise through increased diversity, and to prepare and recruit the best and brightest for graduate education at MIT. As a direct result of the redesign, there has been an increase in the number of MSRP participants who apply, are admitted, and decide to enroll in MIT's graduate programs. In the most recent admissions cycle, 28 interns applied to MIT graduate programs. Nearly 50 percent (13) were admitted to at least one department. An impressive 85 percent (11) of those who were admitted plan to enroll in MIT in the fall of 2007, the largest number in the history of the MSRP.

With the expansion of the MSRP in 2005, more departments and programs throughout the Institute expressed interest in participating, and the 2006 class included interns who worked in architecture and comparative media studies. Each of the five schools agreed to a five-year commitment to fund a number of the interns.

Key to the success of the MSRP is faculty participation. Since 1986, more than 150 faculty members from a range of Institute departments have served as direct mentors to almost 500 MSRP interns. Faculty involvement included program design, intern selection, matching interns with projects, and academic interactions. MSRP continued to have a significant academic component in which faculty conducted weekly lunch seminars on their research.

Converge

GSO continues to develop and seek out opportunities to engage departments and programs in targeted outreach. In 2006, the graduate preview weekend, Converge, hosted 26 students. Of the 21 students eligible to apply to MIT programs, 17 applied, five were admitted, and three intend to enroll in MIT in the fall. The program seeks not only to encourage the highest caliber students to apply to MIT, but also to shift the overall perception that potential students have of MIT. While here, students meet with faculty members, interact with graduate students, explore the MIT community, and are exposed to aspects of the Greater Boston area. As in previous years, students were selected by a faculty committee chaired by Professor Samuel Allen of the Department of Materials Science and Engineering.

GSO continues to work with departments and programs to take better advantage of preview weekends held each spring. Most departments encourage admitted students to come to the Institute to meet faculty and students and get an early introduction to the program. We have begun discussions with a number of departments to bring many of the underrepresented and underserved students to campus at the same time. This collective welcome and orientation builds greater excitement about attending MIT among admitted students.

Amgen

The most recent development is the awarding of two \$1 million grants to host and run the new Amgen Scholars Program. Amgen Scholars is a \$25 million, eight-year program through which selected undergraduates attend one of 10 prestigious universities for an intensive summer research experience in a scientific field. Sites include the California Institute of Technology, Columbia University/Barnard College (a joint program), Howard University, MIT, Stanford, University of California–Berkeley, University of California–Los Angeles, University of California–San Diego, University of California–San Francisco, and the University of Washington. Participants are immersed in research directed by some of the nation’s top academic scientists. The Amgen Foundation, together with the 10 program partners, announced the program and invited applications in fall 2006; the first “class” of Amgen scholars—nearly 260 students in all—will attend the summer program in 2007. All of the students will convene at a mid-summer symposium to meet their counterparts from other universities and hear presentations from leading scientists in academia and industry.

MIT is serving as the National Program Office for Amgen Scholars. The National Program Office oversees operations of all 10 institutions and works to promote the program at the national level. MIT also serves as one of 10 host institutions; MIT plans to host 25–30 summer research interns each year in its Amgen-UROP Scholars Program.

Response to the Amgen Scholars Program has been enthusiastic: more than 2,000 applications have been received for 2007.

Support and Development

Path of Professorship

Building on the success of last year's Forward to Professorship (F2P), GSO created and sponsored Path of Professorship (PofP), a 1.3-day workshop for graduate and postdoctoral women who are considering academic careers. While F2P is an established program funded by an NSF grant, with a cadre of faculty presenters from across the country and a curriculum for a broad audience, MIT's PofP is tailored to meet the specific needs of MIT students. Additionally, in an effort to reduce cost and support the sustainability of the program, PofP exploited the tremendous local faculty talent, bringing together women faculty from diverse colleges and universities in New England (public and private, large and small, those focused on research and those focused on teaching). The goals of the program remain the same: to inspire and prepare women to pursue tenure-track faculty positions and, ultimately, to increase the presence of women faculty models and mentors for young girls.

In the October workshop, the curriculum had three main themes: Finding Your Place in Academia, Getting the Position You Want, and Surviving Your First Year as Junior Faculty. Over the course of the workshop, 45 graduate students and postdoctoral fellows benefited from the expertise and wisdom of 23 distinguished women faculty on topics ranging from negotiating for what you want and networking for success to preparing a compelling teaching and research statement and preparing for the interview.

One indication of the value of this workshop has been the decision participants made to continue related discussions throughout the year by bringing in speakers for lunch seminars and inviting women who were not able to attend the workshop. Perhaps the most powerful testimonial came from a PhD candidate in chemical engineering—she sent this note of thanks after receiving an offer to join the faculty at Yale:

Thank you for your support and the Graduate Students Office's support for the Path of Professorship workshop. I attended the workshop last October, and it was the best experience I have had at MIT. The workshop gave me the confidence to interview, negotiate, and get a job offer. It is my sincere hope that this program will continue at MIT so that other graduate and postdoctoral women can enjoy the same support and positive community that I have had here.

The demand for this program has far exceeded the current capacity. Going forward, it will be important to think strategically about how to increase capacity. The newly appointed dean of science Marc Kastner has expressed an interest in supporting this program in order to facilitate the participation of more women in science. In addition, Dr. Sandra Peterson from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, who heads the Northeast Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP), has expressed an interest in partnering with the GSO in order to provide opportunities for participation by students who attend AGEP member institutions.

MentorNet

Since GSO began its partnership with MentorNet in 1998, 271 MIT students have been matched with mentors, 44 of whom were matched with faculty members. Of the total, 36

were matched since July 2006, and 30 have had more than one mentoring relationship. Currently, there are 134 students, postdoctoral associates and junior faculty in the MentorNet community. PhD students who have benefited over time from the mentoring services of MentorNet number 131.

Since MentorNet recently expanded its focus to include underrepresented minority students, GSO has worked with minority undergraduates, particularly African American males in the Chocolate City living group, to encourage their participation in MentorNet. The goal is to increase the interest in graduate education among this pool; more mentoring may be helpful in this regard.

MentorNet has the capacity to serve more students and would benefit greatly from the addition of MIT faculty and minority alumni as mentors. The ongoing challenge is to communicate MentorNet's value more broadly to target constituents and to leverage services to the extent possible.

Graduate Women's Group

The lunch gatherings of this group of more than 400 women graduate students continued to be popular and well attended. Some students invited postdocs in their research groups to join them for lunch, and their presence enhanced the conversations and community building that occurred. Postdocs bring a unique perspective and have often been able to offer advice and encouragement to the students, as well as answer questions about the postdoctoral process and experience.

This year, a group of MIT's alumnae, under the aegis of the Association of MIT Alumnae (AMITA), attended a few lunch gatherings to speak with the students about their paths through MIT's graduate programs and their career experiences. The students were extraordinarily grateful for the opportunity to connect with these successful women, and future collaborative efforts are under discussion between associate dean Blanche Staton and the leadership of AMITA.

At the request of a few students in the Women in Chemistry group, the associate dean held a special lunch event for women in chemistry only. Approximately 25 women attended, and all were eager to hear about resources for students who want to discuss issues, concerns, and interests with someone outside of their department.

Under the leadership of a PhD student in the Health Sciences and Technology Program and with 15 members, the Graduate Women's Reading Group has been quite active for a few years now. Throughout the academic year, the group convened monthly and will continue during the summer.

Supporting Minority Graduate Students

The Power Lunch and Latino Graduate Student Receptions have both been effective in bringing together and lowering barriers to social and cultural connections among graduate students of color across the Institute. These events have also provided unique opportunities for students to meet and talk informally with faculty and administrators of color.

At the request of graduate women of color, GSO continued to sponsor dinners with associate dean Blanche Staton, offering students opportunities to share experiences and concerns that they were less likely to raise in mixed company. The associate dean served in an advisory capacity this year to the Caribbean Club, which hosted its first major conference, and to the Black Women's Alliance, an undergraduate group trying to improve the climate for and the student experience of young women like themselves at MIT.

Graduate Fellowships

Over time, the impact of unfunded and underfunded first-year graduate students has resulted in more and more students exploring fellowship opportunities. Fellowships are also attractive because they allow students to concentrate on their research without the distractions of a research assistant or teaching assistant position.

MIT remains the university most often selected by NSF and National Defense Science and Engineering Graduate (NDSEG) fellows. MIT currently enrolls 215 NSF fellows and 87 NDSEG fellows, compared with last year's 202 fellows and 85 fellows, respectively.

During the past year, three new fellowships were introduced at MIT:

Total corporation fellowships for incoming international graduate students from Africa (\$180,000 for three students)

African/South African recruitment fellowships for continuing graduate students (\$112,000 for two students)

Howard Hughes Medical Institute Gilliam Fellowships for Advanced Study (\$41,000 for one student)

In collaboration with the Teaching and Learning Laboratory, the GSO held the annual teaching workshop to support teaching effectiveness at MIT in September, with 120 teaching assistants in attendance. The annual workshop continues to be a valuable resource for new and continuing teaching assistants.

In February, the GSO sponsored the annual tax workshop for students who are US citizens and permanent residents, with 250 students in attendance.

Isaac M. Colbert, Dean for Graduate Students

Christopher Jones, Assistant Dean for Graduate Students

Blanche Staton, Associate Dean for Graduate Students

Brima Wurie, Fellowships Administrator

More information about the Graduate Students Office can be found at <http://web.mit.edu/gso/>.

International Students Office

The mission of the International Students Office (ISO) is to help the international student population at MIT fulfill academic goals by providing services and support programs facilitating adjustment to a new academic and cultural environment. The office assists students in maintaining legal status in the United States, provides support for dependents, and promotes integration into the MIT community at large. In general, ISO advocates for awareness in the community of issues salient to the international student.

MIT has had a substantial international student population for many years. In 2006–2007, MIT had 2,787 international students from 112 countries, accompanied by 623 spouses and children. Asian countries continued to dominate MIT's international population with students from the People's Republic of China at the top of the list. South Korean numbers dramatically increased over the past two years, and Singapore made the "top 10" list for the first time, due primarily to the healthy expansion of the Singapore-MIT Alliance. In 2006–2007, more than 25 percent of the overall MIT student population was international. At the undergraduate level, 9% of MIT's students were international, up from 8% in 2005–2006. At the graduate level, 35% of our students were international, down from last year's 37%.

International students continued to apply to and matriculate at MIT in significant numbers. The Institute retains its enormous appeal to the best and the brightest around the world in nearly all science and engineering fields. This past academic year, all of our 800 or so incoming students who accepted offers of admission and could identify funding resources arrived by registration day. The oft-discussed visa problem for international students was not a significant factor at MIT. Our students got their visas and arrived at the Institute in timely fashion.

ISO remains concerned that students continue to feel welcomed and valued, not only within the MIT community but also in the nation as a whole as students contend with a more security-minded America. Therefore, ISO's ongoing commitment to enhance all services for the international population continues to be the primary focus of our work. In weekly strategy meetings, the staff developed new initiatives for outreach with the purpose of keeping students informed about the latest regulatory alerts, as well as addressing and validating their personal concerns in day-to-day interactions in the MIT community. In February 2007, with our Chinese New Year's Open House, ISO inaugurated a series of what will become monthly teas celebrating particular groups in our richly diverse international community. More than 75 students and staff attended the inaugural event. Through a generous grant from an international undergraduate alum, such popular ISO events will be formalized in the fall of 2007. The Kailath International Student Fund supported international periodical and journal subscriptions, which are available in ISO for our students and visitors to enjoy.

International exchange at MIT received much focus by senior administration in 2006–2007. Between the release of the Report on the Undergraduate Educational Commons (which emphasized the importance of international experience) and the explosion of new international exchanges across labs and departments, the year was ripe for new opportunities to enhance global citizenship among our community and

beyond. Individual MIT faculty members sought out the advice and assistance of ISO to establish these new exchanges. In addition, associate dean Danielle Guichard-Ashbrook received and oriented international delegations from the Higher Educational Ministry of Pakistan, the University of Tokyo, CCTV-2 (China's largest prime-time media outlet), and a US Department of State-sponsored contingent of foreign journalists.

As MIT moved forward with initiatives to encourage and promote international experience for its student body, ISO was frequently consulted as the critical resource on campus for dissemination of US policy and procedure pertaining to international students. ISO director Guichard-Ashbrook gave presentations to the Academic Council, the Committee on Student Life, the Cambridge-MIT Exchange, the Singapore-MIT Alliance, the MIT Washington Office, the Committee on Academic Performance, Student Support Services, Campus Police, and MIT Medical.

Admissions

ISO plays a pivotal role in the legal admission of international students, issuing the immigration documents required for appropriate student visas and port-of-entry inspection.

In 2006–2007, international undergraduate applicants were up by 7%, while international graduate applications remained constant: 52% of graduate applicants to MIT were international (source: Office of the Provost, Institutional Research).

The visiting students category continued to pose challenges from a legal and practical perspective. The number of visiting students invited to the Institute grew to nearly 400 in 2006–2007. These students are unique because they rarely fall under the purview of a particular department. As with all international students, visiting students must comply with Department of Homeland Security (DHS) requirements, but because they arrive throughout the year, bypass the normal admissions process, and often come at short notice, they are particularly vulnerable to DHS compliance issues. In the past year, we have had a record number of cases of visiting students with serious legal, cultural, and medical issues. Because they are tuition-exempt, institutional support resources in place for regular students are not easily accessible to visiting students.

Last year, ISO expanded its specialized orientation programs for both visiting students and the faculty who invite them. To address growing concerns, the Office of the Vice President for Research funded a full-time position in the ISO to deal exclusively with these students. Hired in January 2007, Natasha Murphy ably advises administrators and faculty regarding the policies and procedures that govern this unique international constituency on campus.

Advising

Advising remains at the core of ISO's responsibility to MIT's international students. The vast majority of ISO staff time is spent in individual appointments with students seeking confidential advice and counsel. Typically, the four ISO advisors have as many as eight student appointments per day. Whether by appointment, the ISO help line, or through the website, prospective students, admitted students, current students, and graduated

students (who seek our counsel long after Commencement), have kept ISO staff busy providing legal and personal advice. Students also come to ISO with underlying concerns about cultural adjustment and worries about political tensions back home. Beyond immigration advising, ISO staff routinely provides information to international students about such difficult issues as domestic violence and academic integrity.

Orientation Programs

ISO is legally mandated to provide immigration information to all new students and to verify they have appropriate legal status. Required orientation programming for all incoming foreign national students ensures that we fulfill this important statutory responsibility on behalf of the Institute. In collaboration with the Registrar's Office and the MIT Card Office, incoming students are permitted to register or receive an MIT ID only after they have attended ISO orientation. To accommodate graduate internationals who arrive at the Institute during the summer, ISO provided daily immigration sessions in the summer of 2006 so that students could participate in MIT community life shortly after their arrival on campus. After international incoming graduate students participate in international orientation, they join their domestic colleagues in the graduate orientation activities sponsored by the Graduate Student Council (GSC). In August 2006, Danielle Guichard-Ashbrook presented the welcoming keynote address, "What Every Graduate Student Needs to Know," at GSC's orientation program. Continued creative collaboration with GSC throughout the year, such as on the seminars Graduate School 101 and 201, provided opportunities for international and domestic graduate students to come together as a rich and cohesive graduate community.

All international students, regardless of age, degree program, or familiarity with life in the United States undergo a period of cultural adjustment. They and their dependents require information about their new surroundings, culture, and community. Orientation activities such as the Campus Police Workshop, the MIT Medical presentation, and updated information about Spouses&Partners@MIT, elementary schools in the Boston area, and English language classes address these needs. ISO's website was critical in assisting our students in addressing many practical questions and concerns prior to arrival in the United States.

ISO is responsible for Freshman International Orientation. While only 381 of the undergraduates at MIT were international, they required ISO advice and services at a disproportionate rate compared to their graduate counterparts. In particular, academic integrity is a topic we continue to address in our undergraduate orientation programming.

The International Freshman Mentor Program, currently in its ninth year, has become a mainstay of freshman orientation. This program matches incoming international freshmen with upperclassmen long before their arrival in the United States. Strong bonds develop between student and mentor, beginning with email correspondence while the student is still at home, to airport pickup, to many yearlong mentor-organized activities. The mentor program has been staffed and organized entirely by volunteer students (both domestic and international upperclassmen) and program founder Paulette Schwartz.

Host to International Students Program

The Host to International Students Program (HISP) has remained vital in providing new students with supportive emotional and social ties to MIT community members and their families. More than 250 students and community members participated in HISP in 2006–2007. Because of limited resources, the program is not able to expand at this time, and participation is limited to international undergraduates. However, HISP coordinator Janka Moss continued to bring new families into the program and created new opportunities and events for HISP participants to enjoy. HISP provides many formative experiences and encourages positive, lifelong relationships for those internationals who participate. We anticipate seeking new funding resources so that our graduate international population can participate in HISP, as well.

Danielle Guichard-Ashbrook

Director and Associate Dean for Graduate Students

More information about the International Students Office can be found at <http://web.mit.edu/iso/>.

Graduate Student Council

This past year saw many important developments at GSC. First, the Grad Gala, the largest new project in many years, was a great success, with about 700 graduate students and guests attending the sold-out event. Second, continued advocacy regarding the new graduate dorm (NW35) helped ensure that its scale would not be reduced, despite significant budget overruns. Third, new internal policies resulted in a more accurate budget, and it is to be hoped that will increase student involvement with GSC in future.

Events

The largest single GSC event this year was the Grad Gala, with a budget (including ticket sales) of approximately \$70,000. GSC is hopeful that funds can be found to ensure that the gala is an annual fixture of MIT graduate student life. Other new events included a summer picnic and a hypnotist comedian show. Recurring events, such as the GSC ski trip, the Acoustic Barbeque, and the Harvard-MIT parties were extremely popular. To encourage collaboration among graduate dorms and with off-campus students, several joint events were organized. Coordination problems with dorms, however, caused significant issues with the fall Harvard-MIT party; attention should be directed to improving GSC-dorm communication in the future.

Orientation 2006–2007 saw high participation, several new events, and significant positive feedback from participating students. New this year was the Carmen Sandiego Dance Party, which drew more than 900 people. Other innovations were a trip to Six Flags amusement park and an excursion to an orchard for an afternoon of apple, peach, and berry picking. Some events were held in collaboration with graduate residence halls; these included the Rock 'n Roast barbecue, outdoor movie screenings, Dance Fusion V, and the Orientation Carnival. Finally, the orientation committee spearheaded the Delano

Spring Orientation Party held in Walker Memorial, the first spring orientation event of its kind. The committee also continued perennially successful events such as the Boston Harbor cruise, the Prudential Skywalk, the welcome reception under the dome, and the orientation hiking trip.

On the academic side, the academic career series and the professional development series continued to provide valuable information to graduate students, while Grad School 101 and the International Mentorship Program served incoming students.

Advocacy

Although most of the problems with NW35 construction were resolved during 2005–2006, budget overruns prompted the administration to eliminate a floor (almost 100 beds) from the blueprints. Fortunately, this decision was reversed due to a combination of student and faculty pressure, personnel changes, and the realities of economies of scale. Continued vigilance is required to ensure that the administration does not change course without consulting students in the future.

For several years, the annual GSC stipends presentation to the administration has relied on 2002 data. In fall 2006, however, the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) initiated a new graduate student survey focusing on academic issues. OIR agreed to include cost-of-living questions on these ongoing surveys, which should produce a more consistent stream of data.

Some of this new data was used in the annual GSC stipend presentation, at which the administration approved the GSC's request for a 3.5 percent stipend increase, as well as lower health insurance premiums for students with families. Unfortunately, the student life fee continues to be billed to graduate students in such a way that they are forced to pay from post-tax earnings. This arrangement costs graduate students more than \$100,000 in taxes.

In 2005–2006, student activism drew attention to the rents paid by on-campus students. Over the summer, the dean for student life convened a subcommittee to examine the way rents were set and to make recommendations for future years. The committee, which included students from every graduate dorm, was given access to Housing financial data. A final report showed that demand for many on-campus room types has been steadily decreasing, and that family housing is becoming less desirable due to decaying infrastructure. Recommendations included more financial support for some aspects of the housing system and reassurance that rent increases do not outpace stipend increases. The rent increase from 2006–2007 to 2007–2008 was limited to 3.5 percent.

Another administration subcommittee was charged with examining the possibility of housing couples without children in single student dorms, and students suggested considering the issue of coed suitemates. The subcommittee concluded that efficiencies were unsuitable for housing couples, and that taking a bed away from an MIT student to house a nonstudent was also undesirable. The option of having coed suitemates drew a more positive response from the subcommittee but met with significant criticism from

some single graduate dorms. The conclusion was to pilot a program in Edgerton House and Tang Hall, whereby students in those dorms could request to live in a coed suite.

Dental care is a recurring topic, and despite significant effort on the part of a number of students both this year and last, tangible results are limited. MIT Medical did show some interest in discussing the possibility of using MIT Dental. Future advocacy in this direction could be productive.

In response to regular complaints, MIT Cable proposed major changes to the on-campus cable system. An initial survey of on-campus students showed widespread opposition to this proposal. A second survey established what channels were in highest demand and what students were willing to pay to obtain them. The lineup on MIT Cable is now improved, with 14 new channels.

Finally, cuts were proposed to the MIT shuttle network, but students persuaded the administration to reorganize the system to increase the level of service provided at the most popular times of day.

Budget

In the past, inaccuracies in the GSC budget have reflected underestimated Career Fair revenues, overestimated Institute support, and unrealistic line items. To align proposed and actual spending, retrospective financial statements were drawn up so that data on actual expenditures in the 2004–2005 fiscal year could be used to improve the accuracy of the 2006–2007 budget. In addition, a new, simplified format was introduced to make the budget easier to understand, with the goal of decreasing financial errors due to misinterpretation. Finally, financial regulations were added to GSC bylaws to clarify the process of approving and modifying the budget and the responsibility for approving disbursements. One measure of the success of these policy changes should be fewer unspent dollars to be carried forward.

Due to increased revenues, total funds available for student groups through the GSC Funding Board was increased to \$125,000, a level that had not been reached for several years. In addition, several short-term fellowships were funded through the MIT Public Service Center for graduate students with appropriate projects. Public service projects take place either during the summer or in the January Independent Activities Period.

After the 2005 decision to restart the GSC travel grant program, the first grants were made in fall 2006. For 2006–2007, \$15,000 was available to fund conference presentations for at least 15 students. Great care was taken to ensure that those funded would not otherwise have been able to travel to the conference. The grant program received a very positive reaction. GSC hopes sufficient funding will sustain the program in the future.

Graduate Student News

This year, the *Graduate Student News* (GSN) was mailed to all graduate students. Building on improvements made last year, the GSN featured expanded content of higher quality, drawing praise from administrators and students. To facilitate recruitment,

one recommendation is to hire one or more student workers to handle layout, allowing editors to concentrate on reporting and content, as well as further improvements.

Diversity

This year, an ad hoc diversity committee helped to organize several important events, including Converge (a preview weekend for minority students), an evening discussion session on race and identity, and Peer2Peer diversity training. There was considerable debate about whether to create a permanent diversity committee, but in the end this proposal was not approved. Identifying how the GSC could best handle diversity issues should be a priority for the coming year.

Representative Recruitment

Historically, only 60% to 70% of a total 82 GSC representative slots have been filled at any one time. In 2005–2006, fewer than half of the slots were filled, reflecting a general lack of interest in GSC. In contrast, for the 2007 officer elections, there were five nominations, and every GSC committee chair position was filled by election night. Representative participation has also returned to standard levels. A significant recruitment campaign in 2007–2008 could raise participation above 70%.

A related topic is that of student participation on Institute committees. In 2005–2006, a very dedicated recruitment campaign filled almost all available committee positions; however, many of those students chose to serve only for one year. Rather than spend large amounts of time recruiting students to serve on these committees, an internal policy change was made. Previously, GSC representatives were allocated \$500 per year for funding social activities, provided that they had good attendance at GSC meetings. Now, GSC representatives are allocated \$1,000 per year, but in addition to attending GSC meetings, they must also volunteer for an Institute committee or arrange an appropriate substitute activity. It is to be hoped that this incentive will ensure a steady supply of students interested in serving on Institute committees and increase the number of Institute committee representatives attending GSC meetings.

General Council Meetings

In many years, General Council Meetings (GCMs) were viewed as opportunities for committee chairs to inform representatives about planned activities and solicit volunteers. The 2006–2007 GCMs had a different objective, with the majority of meetings spent debating resolutions and little time spent describing activities under way. Instead of committee chairs merely announcing a new event, they were expected to submit a resolution adding a line item for each event to the GSC budget. This new approach was most evident when Career Fair revenues exceeded estimates by \$50,000. In previous years, those funds might have gone unused. This year, the decisions on which events to fund and how much to allocate to each event were made by GSC representatives.

A total of 34 resolutions were brought before the council, of which 23 passed as presented, seven passed with amendments, two failed, and two are still pending. This is a record amount of legislative activity. Of these resolutions, two were bylaw amendments, five concerned official GSC positions on issues, one established an ad hoc

committee, and the remaining 23 dealt with the budget. Goals for future GCMs could include diversifying resolutions presented beyond current financial issues, as well as encouraging representatives to speak and vote against resolutions when they are not in favor of them. Although the GSC summary of *Robert's Rules of Order* was significantly revised over the past year, representatives might still benefit from further training on parliamentary process.

National Association of Graduate and Professional Students

Continuing a long history of national recognition, the GSC received the Academic Governance Award for its advocacy regarding Building NW35 at the 2006 national conference of the National Association of Graduate and Professional Students (NAGPS). This year, the GSC also hosted the NAGPS regional conference for the northeastern United States, helping to build NAGPS support in an area of the country where membership has generally been weak. GSC members also traveled to Washington, DC, to support NAGPS lobbying efforts, and the possibility of purchasing a lifetime NAGPS membership is currently under discussion. For the coming year, the GSC should consider applying to host the 2008 NAGPS national conference.

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More information about the MIT Graduate Student Council can be found at <http://gsc.mit.edu/>.