

Dean for Graduate Education

This is the first academic year since the change in the leadership of what had been called the Office of the Dean for Graduate Students. Under the extraordinary guidance of Dean Isaac Colbert, the scope of the office's activities had expanded to include many aspects of the graduate experience, especially graduate policy and procedures and the evolving reality of the graduate community. As we formulated plans to build on that earlier history, it became clear that the office name did not adequately reflect its educational mission. With that in mind, the name of the office was changed to the Office of the Dean for Graduate Education (ODGE).

Office of the Dean for Graduate Education

The mission of ODGE is to support and enhance the education of MIT's graduate students. The vision of the office is to make graduate students' experiences at MIT transforming, thereby developing the next generation of scholars and leaders who will create new knowledge, innovate in ways that serve society, and educate succeeding generations.

Consistent with this broad mission, ODGE:

- Works with departments and other academic units on the recruitment and inclusion of graduate students, particularly expanding the number and academic success of underrepresented minority and women students
- Works with the Committee on Graduate Programs to develop, review, and administer graduate student policies and procedures
- Collaborates with Resource Development and the Alumni Association on fund raising and stewardship
- Provides immigration-related and other assistance to international students
- Provides and administers central graduate fellowships and responsibly stewards internal and external funds entrusted to the office for that purpose
- Advocates for graduate student issues that improve education and the overall quality of the graduate experience
- Provides support for meaningful living and learning experiences on and off campus in conjunction with the dean for student life
- Provides support for improving processes such as graduate admissions, student financial services, and career counseling in conjunction with the dean for undergraduate education
- Provides a venue for resolving individual problems facing graduate students

This year, we have been formulating a strategic plan that is consistent with our mission. The plan has four major themes, each with a set of coordinated goals and priorities. The four areas are briefly summarized below.

Diversity

ODGE must serve as a catalyst for attracting a more diverse graduate student body into all of our graduate academic programs and provide all students with support in various forms so that they are academically successful. We are guided in our vision by the 2004 faculty resolution that called for MIT to increase the number of underrepresented minority graduate students by a factor of three within a decade.

Our overall strategy consists of two parts: partnering with academic departments to improve the quality of recruiting and mentoring, and developing programs operated from our office to support diversity at MIT.

ODGE'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, ODGE 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, 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 an 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 MSRP as MIT's premier recruitment tool for underrepresented minority students. Since then, the committee has continued to serve as an advisory board for 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 program. Additional committee members have included 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 Isaac Colbert (former dean for graduate students).

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 to, are admitted, and decide to enroll in MIT's graduate programs.

Since the expansion of MSRP in 2005, more departments and programs throughout the Institute have expressed interest in participating, and the 2006 class included interns who worked in architecture and comparative media studies. Each of the five MIT schools agreed to a five-year commitment to fund a number of the interns. MSRP continues to build lasting relationships within the MIT and broader Boston community. Our community service day met with great success as we participated in eight different activities throughout the Boston/Cambridge area (locations included the Greater Boston Food Bank, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, Roxbury YMCA, and Cambridge Cultural Bazaar). In addition, we participated in another successful visit to the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and have had several activities with the Graduate Student Council. As a way to further engage the departments, this summer we set up formal visits with graduate officers, graduate administrators, and current students in the departments in which MSRP interns have expressed an interest. Janet Fischer was successful in organizing 10 such discussions.

Key to the success of 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.

MSRP has also been successful in engaging alumni of the program who currently attend MIT as graduate students. We hosted several events and dinners to bring the alumni together and continue to provide resources for their success.

Perhaps the most significant change within MSRP has been the addition of Monica Orta, who serves as the primary coordinator for the program and ensures execution of day-to-day activities.

Converge

ODGE continues to identify and develop opportunities to engage departments and programs in targeted outreach. Converge, the graduate preview weekend, 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 resources in 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.

ODGE 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 Scholars

The most recent development is the award 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, the Berkeley, Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco campuses of the University of California, 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, selected from 1,700 applicants—attended the summer program in 2007. All of the students convened at a mid-summer symposium to meet their counterparts from other universities and hear presentations from leading scientists in academia and industry.

As one of the 10 host institutions, MIT will host 25–30 summer research interns in its Amgen-UROP Scholars Program each year. In addition, 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.

Graduate Community

Today's graduate students actively seek opportunities to interact and share knowledge and experiences with fellow scholars both within and outside their departments. MIT has made considerable strides in providing a vibrant environment for living and learning. However, the transformation of our graduate studies from a collection of individual labs and academic programs into a true "community of citizen-scholars" is still very much a work in progress.

As with our efforts in the areas of recruitment and inclusion, our approach is to work through our partnerships across the entire MIT community. Given the maturity of many of our graduate students and the small size of the ODGE staff, our strategy in the area of building a vibrant graduate community is to tap into student talent and creativity whenever possible.

This year, ODGE introduced the Graduate Community Fellows program. Fellows are graduate students who work with individual staff on projects that enhance graduate community, for which they receive a modest stipend. Five students participated as fellows this year to support programs for international and women students, diversity efforts, and the Graduate Student Life Grants program.

Support and Development for Graduate Women

With the creation of the Graduate Community Fellows program, the office was able to offer a fellowship opportunity and apprenticeship to a graduate woman student interested in supporting programmatic efforts to enhance the experience of graduate women students at MIT. This addition greatly increased the office's capacity to plan and

execute events and activities for the benefit of a broader segment of the population of graduate women over the course of the 2007–2008 academic year.

Path of Professorship

The second Path of Professorship weekend workshop for graduate and postdoctoral women who aspire to academic careers was held October 26–27, 2007, at the Faculty Club. In the interest of serving more students, workshop capacity was increased from 45 participants to 65. Within eight hours after the registration website went live, all seats were filled. Past participants have recommended the workshop to their peers, and faculty have done the same with their students. Indeed, the value of the workshop has been evident in the evaluation forms completed by participants, who, while offering suggestions for enhancements, have agreed without exception that this event must continue.

This past year, the workshop planning team comprised an undergraduate woman, two graduate women, a postdoctoral fellow who served as the coordinating member, and the senior associate dean for graduate education. More than 20 faculty women in science and engineering from area institutions participated as speakers, and more than one-half were from MIT. The program was designed to provide participants with an opportunity to:

- Learn key strategies for applying and interviewing for academic positions
- Learn the importance of networking and how to do it with peers and superiors
- Gain insights from deans and department chairs about how to negotiate an offer
- Obtain advice from faculty on steps to take now and during the hiring process to ensure that the tenure-track years are as smooth and successful as possible
- Acquire information on the characteristics of different types of universities
- Acquire skills to negotiate for resources and fair treatment
- Obtain advice on balancing work and life in the 24/7 academic world

According to participants' ratings, the most popular sessions were those on work-life balance, creating a compelling application for a faculty position, and guiding principles for becoming a "quick start" professor. One participant sent a note expressing her appreciation: "The speakers in this workshop were all so great. It is even difficult to simply describe how inspiring it is for me when these great people I look up to shared their experience and wisdom of how they handle different problems in appropriate ways. It was also just very encouraging to find out that so many people are having similar struggles and questions and there are so many supports out there."

As a follow-on to the Path of Professorship event, and in response to expressed interests and perceived needs, ODGE offered two mini-workshops designed to promote the success of women graduate students. The first session, on conflict resolution, emphasized skills for addressing and resolving problems in the academic environment; a second session provided a review of the rigors of dissertation writing and strategies to help research students understand themselves as writers.

MentorNet

ODGE continues to provide the infrastructure and funding for MIT's partnership with the MentorNet e-mentoring program to increase diversity in science and engineering. Since 1998, 307 MIT students, predominantly women graduate students, have been matched in MentorNet's one-on-one mentoring program, which provides mentors who work in industry and the academy in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields. In 2007–2008, 32 students, postdocs, and junior faculty benefited from mentoring relationships, and 131 graduate students, postdocs, and junior faculty are currently active in the MentorNet community (using resources). In 2003, MentorNet began encouraging academic mentoring and, since that time, 48 graduate students and junior faculty have been matched with faculty mentors. MIT alumni have been avid supporters of the program, and 131 are currently active, many as mentors.

With respect to demographics, the largest numbers of participants are from electrical engineering and computer science, biological/biomedical engineering, mechanical engineering, chemistry, and biological science. In terms of ethnicity, 125 Asian American, 18 African American, 12 Hispanic, 1 Pacific Islander, and 124 other students, postdocs or junior faculty have reported using MentorNet.

This past year, MentorNet chose an MIT graduate student in chemistry for the cover of its annual report.

Graduate Women's Reading Group

The Graduate Women's Reading Group offers a monthly forum for graduate women students to meet, share ideas, and discuss issues they face in their lives in a supportive and relaxed setting. ODGE purchases the book of the month based on book club recommendations and vote by the students. Led by a graduate student in the Health Sciences and Technology (HST) program, the reading group has made a positive difference in the graduate experience of 15 women each year for the past five years.

Events for Minority Women

In an effort to be responsive to minority women who have expressed an interest in having more opportunities to network with women who share a common cultural experience, ODGE hosted events to help foster community and provide a supportive environment outside the lab. As many as 22 women attended events revolving around dinner and conversation, an evening at the theater, and pottery painting on a Saturday morning. Emails, cards of gratitude, connections made across departments and areas of research expertise, and the emergence of friendships and peer mentoring relationships have all affirmed the value of these events.

Focus Groups

Understanding barriers and contributors to the success and satisfaction of graduate women students is critical to building a competitive advantage for MIT in attracting and graduating the most talented women PhDs from all backgrounds. To that end, ODGE began conversations with groups of women graduate students to explore their feelings about the Institute, what is working well, and what changes they would recommend to enhance the quality of their experiences as students and community members.

Extensive summaries of the discussions are in hand, and the office expects to broaden the conversations over the next year in order to include more groups, and ultimately, to produce a document that can inform Institute, department, and program efforts, as well as community standards in the future.

Graduate Financial Support

In an increasingly competitive environment for attracting the best and brightest students, MIT must take aggressive action to ensure appropriate graduate student support and maintain excellence in graduate programs. Graduate student funding, especially fellowship support, is an essential priority. This will require considerable new resources, largely because MIT has fewer fellowships (as a percentage of our graduate student size) than many, if not all, of the universities with which we compete.

Graduate Fellowships

ODGE continues to work closely with graduate administrators to provide information and assistance to graduate students regarding fellowship opportunities. By enabling graduate students to concentrate on their research, fellowships continue to play an important role in helping them achieve their goals.

This year, the number of Total Corporation Fellowships for incoming graduate students from Africa increased from three to six, for a total of \$360,000.

Two new fellowships were made available: the American Society for Engineering Education's Science, Mathematics, and Research for Transformation (SMART) Program fellowship (\$64,986 for one student) and the Vietnam Education Foundation graduate fellowship (\$66,571 for two students). In addition, the Jean Gaillard Memorial Fellowship is an endowed fellowship administered at Harvard University but open to both Harvard and MIT students from France.

An ever-increasing number of MIT graduate students are supported by National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Defense Science and Engineering Graduate (NDSEG) fellowships. This year, 286 NSF fellows and 92 NDSEG fellows were enrolled, compared with last year's enrollments of 200 and 83, respectively.

The annual tax workshop continues to be a valuable service for US citizens and permanent-resident students at MIT.

Improving Business Processes

The most critical improvement in how ODGE conducts its business from a strategic perspective is the migration of current, largely ad hoc processes (often supported by home-grown software systems) into a new student information system. This includes support for the work of the International Students Office in handling transactions associated with the Department of Homeland Security's Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), online petition handling, and integrated support for graduate fellowships and research assistant and teaching assistant appointments. Various ODGE staff members (as well as people in all of the academic departments with

graduate programs) now spend an inordinate amount of time coping with disconnected information technology systems. These efforts should be put to better use, providing improved services to graduate students and faculty.

ODGE's detailed strategic plan will be finalized in the fall of AY2009. It will reflect input from all of the constituencies served by ODGE, who, together, sustain and enhance MIT's excellence in all aspects of graduate education.

Steven R. Lerman
Dean for Graduate Education
Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering

More information about the Office of the Dean for Graduate Education can be found at <http://web.mit.edu/odgel/>.

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 that facilitate adjustment to a new academic and cultural environment. The office assists students in maintaining their legal status in the United States, provides support for their dependents, and promotes their integration into the MIT community at large. In addition, ISO advocates for awareness in the community of issues that concern international students.

MIT has had a substantial international student population for many years. In 2007–2008, MIT had 2,883 international students on campus, an increase of 96 from 2006. In addition, more than 600 spouses and children accompanied these students. A total of 112 countries were represented. Asian countries continue to dominate MIT's international population, with students from the People's Republic of China at the top of the list. In 2007–2008, more than 26 percent of the overall MIT student population was international. At the undergraduate level, almost 9 percent of students were international. At the graduate level, 38 percent of our students were international, an increase of nearly 2 percent since 2006.

The Institute retains enormous appeal to the best and the brightest around the world in nearly all science and engineering fields. This past academic year, all 900 or so matriculating students, who could identify funding resources, arrived by registration day.

ISO remains concerned that students feel welcome and valued, not only within the MIT community but in the nation as a whole, as they contend with a more security-minded America. In weekly strategy meetings, the staff considers new initiatives for outreach to keep students informed about the latest regulatory alerts, and to address and validate their personal concerns in day-to-day interactions with the MIT community and beyond.

In the face of new federal reporting requirements, which include providing data to the US Department of Homeland Security on international students for as long as three years after graduation, community-building activities and programs are more important than ever.

Admissions

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

In 2007–2008, international undergraduate applicants were up by 1 percent, while international graduate applications decreased by 1 percent (source: Office of the Provost, Institutional Research). In addition, an increasing number of foreign universities and foreign governments have sought to establish exchange programs with the Institute. In the next few years, MIT will welcome new groups of students from Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Israel in formal exchange programs.

The number of visiting students invited to the Institute by MIT faculty grew to nearly 500 in 2007–2008. The Broad Institute and the School of Engineering sponsor the vast majority of the visiting students on campus, often extending stays to 24 months, the maximum period allowed for foreign nationals in this category. Visiting students present unique challenges since they rarely fall under the purview of a particular department. As with all international students, they must comply with the US government's SEVIS mandates. Because they arrive throughout the year, bypass the normal admissions process, and often come at short notice, they are particularly vulnerable to SEVIS compliance issues. In the past year, some visiting students have had serious legal, cultural, and medical issues. Because they are tuition exempt, visiting students do not have easy access to the institutional support resources in place for regular students. To address these growing concerns, ISO held a special workshop in March 2008 for faculty and staff who host visiting students in order to educate the community about the policies and procedures that govern this unique international constituency. Visiting student coordinator Natasha Murphy further refined specialized orientation sessions for incoming visiting students.

Advising

Advising is at the core of ISO's responsibility to MIT's international students. The vast majority of 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 in a day. Whether by appointment, the ISO HELP line, or through the website, prospective students, admitted students, current students, and graduates have kept ISO staff busy providing legal and personal advice. Beyond immigration advising, ISO staff routinely provide information about such difficult issues as domestic violence and academic integrity.

In April 2008, as mentioned, the US Department of Homeland Security established new academic institutional reporting requirements, mandating that schools track employment and personal data on international alumni for up to three years after graduation. As a result, telephone appointments with MIT's foreign national graduates rose to six per day in May 2008 alone. While ISO immigration and cultural advising

focused in past on current international student population, ISO staff are now required to address the legal needs of an additional constituency: the 500 or so international graduates who remain in the United States after completing their studies at MIT.

Programs

ISO is legally mandated to provide immigration information to all new students and to verify that 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 can register and receive an MIT ID only after they have attended the ISO orientation. To accommodate graduate internationals arriving at the Institute throughout the summer, ISO held daily immigration sessions so that students could more quickly participate in MIT community life. After participating in international orientation, graduate internationals join their domestic colleagues in the graduate orientation activities sponsored by the Graduate Student Council (GSC). ISO staff actively participated in many GSC events in 2007.

All international students, regardless of age, degree program, or familiarity with life in the US, 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 and MIT Medical presentation, and updated information about spouses&partners@MIT, elementary schools in the Boston area, and English language classes, address these needs. Newly admitted students often find answers to many practical questions and concerns before arriving in the US by accessing the ISO website. For graduate students, collaborative efforts established last year with GSC continued on Graduate Student Day and in Grad School 101 and 201 seminars.

ISO is responsible for International Freshman Orientation. While only 9 percent of the undergraduates at MIT in 2007 were international, they required ISO services at a disproportionate rate compared to their graduate counterparts, especially with respect to immigration compliance issues. Orientation materials have been enhanced to address this reality, and ISO continues to explore ways to reinforce legal obligations to members of our international undergraduate population throughout their stay at MIT.

International Freshman Orientation also highlights an underserved population at MIT: US citizen admits who have spent almost their entire lives abroad. Funding constraints have not allowed us to accommodate this growing number (nearly 30 last year) of students in orientation activities. Together with the Office of the Dean for Student Life, ISO will find ways to address the needs of this unique population on campus.

The International Freshman Mentor Program, currently in its tenth 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 and continuing to airport pickup and many year-long 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.

The Host to International Students Program (HISP) provides 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 2007. Since the program has limited financial resources, participation is restricted to international undergraduates. However, HISP coordinator Janka Moss continued to bring new families into the program and has created new opportunities and events for HISP participants to enjoy. HISP encourages positive, lifelong relationships for those internationals who participate.

With a generous donation from Roger Jeanty '72, ISO inaugurated a series of monthly international teas in fall 2008. With colorful cultural/holiday themes ranging from a post-Ramadan Middle Eastern tea (October 2007) to a Chinese New Year's tea (February 2008), the Jeanty International Teas have been wildly successful. More than 200 international students attended the Cinco de Mayo International Tea in May 2008. With additional funding resources, we hope to continue this type of programming in which students can engage with one another in a fun and informal environment.

Graduate Community Fellows

To implement one of ODGE's strategic themes, Dean Steve Lerman funded a graduate community fellow in fall 2007, specifically for international graduate student programs and events. Clarice Aiello, the graduate community fellow for ISO, worked diligently over the past year to explore opportunities for community building among the international graduate student population. In April 2008, she organized the first Today's and Tomorrow's Leaders (TTL) lunches, bringing together international students from a cross section of nationalities, disciplines, and interests. Through the fellows program, we anticipate that future interactive forums such as TTL will provide additional opportunities for community building among our international graduate students as well as their domestic counterparts.

Danielle Guichard-Ashbrook
Director and Associate Dean for Graduate Education

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

Graduate Student Council

GSC's activities over the past year were many, varied, and by all accounts successful. Two broad goals guided the council's efforts: to make the MIT graduate student experience a more satisfying one and to make GSC a stronger organization. To that end, this year's council deployed a number of exciting new programs and worked collaboratively with offices across the MIT campus to bring several key advocacy priorities to fruition. The traditional activities of GSC were performed with distinction, and several of the new initiatives started in 2006–2007, particularly in the council's internal operations, were improved. At this time, GSC possesses a strong template for an active, successful, and respected student government, and taking this model forward

should allow future executive committees to explore other visionary initiatives to better serve the graduate community. A summary of GSC's activities follows.

Advocacy

Advocating on behalf of MIT's entire graduate student body is the central role of the council. This year's advocacy efforts demonstrated the value students bring to MIT's decision-making processes.

GSC's annual stipend recommendation to the MIT administration is a strong example of collaboration. Each year's recommendation is based on a cost of living analysis produced from surveys and government inflation statistics. The most recent Cost of Living Survey was conducted in 2002, with only a partial refreshing of this data in 2006; thus, the decision was made this year to resurvey the entire graduate body. The survey, designed to measure both income and expenses, was administered with the help of the Office of Institutional Research. Subsequent analysis showed that the average graduate student faced 3 percent inflation during 2007–2008; many graduate students still relied on savings, credit card debt, and gifts from relatives to meet their expenses; and the cost of off-campus housing was roughly on par with the cost of on-campus housing. These findings were presented to the Dean's Group in February, resulting in a stipend increase of 3.5 percent.

One common question for GSC regards dental care options for graduate students. Data from this year's cost of living survey showed that most graduate students do not have access to dental insurance and thus defer dental care. In the survey, a dental plan offered by Delta Dental was presented; more than three-fourths of the students said they would enroll in the plan. These results were also presented to the Dean's Group, and a decision was made in the spring for MIT to adopt this plan for the 2008–2009 academic year. Although the plan is mainly a preventative and diagnostic plan, it is the first time that MIT has provided such an option to graduate students, and it creates an opportunity to gather the more accurate data needed to offer more comprehensive coverage. (The 3.5 percent stipend increase includes 0.5 percent to offset costs for the dental plan.)

Two recent situations serve as examples of decisions with a large impact on students and student life made with very limited input from those affected: the January announcement that Green Hall would be converted from graduate to undergraduate housing in summer 2008 and last May's announcement of a summer fee for use of MIT's athletic facilities. Following these announcements, GSC and the Undergraduate Association (UA) Senate jointly passed a resolution calling for corrective action. MIT's primary response was the creation of a task force on student engagement to examine how students should be involved in decisions that affect student life and to bring student leaders and key administrators and faculty members into regular and structured conversation.

The value of adding breadth to a graduate education outside of one's core concentration is now well recognized. To facilitate this, the MIT faculty voted at their March meeting to adopt a P/D/F grading option for non-core graduate subjects for a five-year trial period. P/D/F does not supplant listener status; rather, it provides a more accountable yet less stressful route to acquiring an interdisciplinary graduate program. This successful

outcome of a student-conceived initiative was the result of two years of effort, research, and lobbying by GSC.

In December, GSC and the UA Senate debated and passed a joint resolution calling for the establishment of Standing Committee on Investment Responsibility, to set guidelines for responsible investing practices that account for the social, environmental, and corporate governance effects of MIT's investments. The motivation for this body was the preceding year's debate on divestment in response to the events in Darfur, Sudan. Questions were raised as to what future actions could be taken before calling for divestment. This resolution was then presented to the MIT administration and members of the MIT Corporation, and is still under consideration.

The on-campus lottery and housing program can efficiently house about 35 percent of the graduate student population. For the other 65 percent, however, finding off-campus housing can be a tedious and inefficient process. GSC worked with the Off-Campus Housing Office to create a new way for MIT students to search for off-campus housing—Rent Monkey. Rent Monkey (<http://rentmonkey.mit.edu/>) tracks rental information provided by MIT students for MIT students. It catalogs listings and sublets, as well as past rents and residence descriptions, aids students in finding roommates, and helps students in the market contact landlords directly instead of incurring realtor fees.

The August 2008 opening of the new Ashdown residence (NW-35) in the northwest corridor will increase by 50 percent the number of students living in that part of campus. While a 40 percent increase in Northwest Shuttle capacity will shoulder some of the extra demand, complaints of overloaded shuttles from all northwest dorms are expected to increase. GSC worked with the Parking and Transportation Office and the Charles River Transportation Management Association to move the EZRide shuttle stop in front of Sidney-Pacific to make this service more useful, particularly for students commuting to the east side of the campus.

Funding for Students and Groups

Another key role of GSC is enabling the growth of graduate community through the disbursement of funding to students and student groups from across MIT. Funding this year was distributed through many of GSC's traditional channels, and three new initiatives were started to augment these channels.

Recognizing that graduate students participate in a broad array of artistic and sporting activities, sometimes at a very high level, the council initiated the Athletic and Performance Activities Grant to help students pursue these activities at competitive levels. This grant represented the first of its kind on campus, and was tremendously popular: in its first four-month offering, it received requests for more than \$40,000. Through this grant, students who excel in sports, music, and dance were able to travel and compete around the nation.

In addition to securing a dental treatment plan available to all students, GSC laid the groundwork for a fund to support those students who may require extensive and costly treatment. GSC, along with Dr. Ed Seldin of MIT Medical and Dean Steve Lerman,

created the Catastrophic Dental Fund. This fund is a long-term project: the next step is a concentrated fundraising drive in the years ahead to generate sufficient endowed principal to begin helping students.

Among the types of events the council wished to encourage this year were those organized collaboratively between two or more existing student groups. The Collaboration Reward specifically set aside funding for this purpose. Eleven events were funded, ranging from social to academic events, such as movie screenings and joint research talks. More extensive publicity, particularly promoting the easy process with which these funds were awarded, would broaden the reward's impact in the future.

To support graduate student professional development, GSC again this year offered a travel grant program. Travel grant funds were intended to enable students to present their work at research-related conferences, primarily when their research supervisor was unable to support the travel. Fourteen students were supported during the fall, IAP, and spring, and the council's practices for awarding this money were improved by another year of experience doing so.

The GSC Funding Board is the primary funding source for more than 100 graduate student groups. The Funding Board was given \$132,000 to distribute, allowing an average allocation of between \$350 and \$500 per group in each of the four funding cycles. New policies included funding of one event per group at a location off campus to encourage exploration of the greater Boston area, funding of speaker honoraria to assist events that offered more than just food, and focusing on smaller student groups that lacked other sources of income for their operations. A number of financial training sessions were held throughout the year to educate groups about all of the funding options available.

Two special allocations from discretionary funds enabled worthwhile projects that benefit all of MIT. Support was given to the student-organized Global Poverty Initiative conference held in April, which attracted more than 1,000 student participants from across the country. Another allocation supported the 2008 Congressional Visit Days, which allowed a number of MIT students to communicate directly with their congressional representatives regarding the benefits of funding scientific research.

Events

In addition to enabling others to build community, GSC endeavors to do so itself, using its size and broad reach to host both social and resource events open to the entire student body.

The most prominent addition was the Two Dollar Tuesdays (later named Two Dollar Dinners, after difficulty in finding space on Tuesdays). Held once a month, these dinners were created to be a low-cost dining option for graduate students. More than providing cheap food, the intent was to foster interaction across social circles and to demonstrate sufficient interest in a more comprehensive graduate dining program. Six dinners were organized, with attendance ranging from the initial 125 to more than 200 for the final dinner, and every event was sold out. Several dinners had a theme, with various events

featuring guest appearances by faculty, administrators, and graduate alumni from around the area.

The 2007 Career Fair, organized jointly with the Class of 2008 and the Society of Women Engineers, was the most successful yet. With representatives from approximately 300 companies and more than 2,500 students attending, the fair was the largest student-run event on campus. Financially, the fair again exceeded revenue expectations for the three partners, though whether this trend continues and how the partners manage such revenues are open questions for the year ahead. Lengthy discussions were held after the fair about aligning it with an Institute holiday to make student participation easier. After much debate, a Monday Career Fair was found impractical and several key members of the MIT administration opposed moving the existing student holiday; thus, the fair will be held on its traditional date in the coming year.

Following last year's difficult debate on how GSC should promote diversity at MIT, a two-day event was held this year to keep the topic in the collective consciousness of students and the GSC. Featuring speakers Stephen Young and Vijay Prashad, the Diversity Colloquium challenged participants to think about micro-inequities in communication and what a multicultural campus should look like in the future. Both speakers generated compelling discussions and positive reviews. Building on this event to revitalize GSC's diversity subcommittee and determining how to partner with other Institute-wide diversity initiatives should be immediate goals for the council.

With last year's inaugural edition a success by all measures, the second Grad Gala was held in early May with an outdoor reception at Edgerton House and a dinner and dance at the Park Plaza Hotel. The event's 700 tickets sold out more than a week earlier than last year and some \$6,000 in external sponsorship helped defray the total cost. The Grad Gala is the sort of event the council is uniquely positioned to host, and hopefully it will remain a fixture on the community's calendar for years to come.

Another event GSC is well suited to hosting is the official Institute Orientation for all incoming graduate students. More than 1,500 new students were welcomed to MIT, with a special focus on international students, who represent almost 40 percent of the graduate student body, and international culture. New events were featured, such as an international festival and several cultural nights, as well as services such as the Airport Shuttle and an issue of the *Graduate Student News* specifically welcoming foreign students. Old favorites such as Dance Fusion, a Boston Harbor cruise, and a White Mountains hiking trip were complemented by new additions such as a photo scavenger hunt and the Orientation Olympics. Academic and resources events, such as Grad School 101 and the Info Booth, rounded out the schedule.

Other GSC activities that made the year more enjoyable included excursions to local cultural and sporting events, the ever-popular Acoustic BBQ, beach and amusement park trips over the summer in collaboration with several of the on-campus graduate dorms, and two Harvard-MIT parties. The annual GSC ski trip was the largest ever, with some 550 students enjoying an IAP weekend in the snow at Sunday River. On the resource side, workshops on handling difficult conversations and income tax preparation, along with an international student mixer, were held as part of

the Professional Development Series. In partnership with the MIT Careers Office, the popular Academic Career Series was presented last summer for those students considering careers in the academy.

Continuing the practice of the past couple of years, GSC targeted a number of events at those students who reside off-campus. Activities such as a dedicated brunch series, mixers at local restaurants, and joint social events with on-campus groups, as well as resources such as a weekly email digest, were organized by and for off-campus students. While these gains are encouraging, the council still needs to do more outreach to this largest segment of the graduate student body.

The Muddy Charles Pub is a meeting place for many graduate students. The pub continued its cultural Muddy Mondays series, offering food and drink from around the world in partnership with student groups from the featured country, and popular Weekly Wednesday series. This year the Muddy began hosting interdepartmental socials, at which two or more departments socialize and exchange ideas in a relaxed and informal setting. Plans are also underway for writing a Muddy Charles Pub history book, chronicling the personalities and stories that have made the Muddy memorable since its opening in 1968.

GSC Operations

As mentioned, GSC has now developed a sustainable template for an active and successful student government. A number of the practices developed last year to improve transparency and participation were continued and improved upon, and several problem areas were directly addressed.

The council's total budget for the year proposed revenues and expenditures of almost \$400,000. Considerable effort was made early in the year to revamp the procedures for tracking individual line item expenditures, resulting in more accurate management of GSC's finances that will hopefully endure into the years ahead. GSC is still heavily dependent upon Career Fair revenues to support its operations. A request last spring to buffer the council with a portion of the increased student life fee was, however, denied. The search for additional funds to provide this buffer, whether from sponsorship, the Institute, or some other source, should be a top priority.

Following last year's practice, council meetings again focused primarily on debating resolutions modifying and updating the GSC budget. The advantages of this approach include increased transparency to the representatives and a regular exercise of parliamentary debate so that the council is ready to respond when called upon to consider any weighty external matters.

For its 2007–2008 edition, the *Graduate Student News* adopted a new and positively-received style, while still retaining the magazine feel it had adopted over the past couple of years. For the first time, the magazine hired a student worker to assist with layout, providing editors more time to focus on the substance of the publication. Content features included issues affecting graduate student life, regular updates from the council, and profiles of restaurants and other destinations in the surrounding city and region.

This year the Association of Student Activities (ASA) undertook a major review of its physical infrastructure, reallocating a large percentage of its office space, bolstering security and expanding storage capacity for student groups. New information technology infrastructure was also purchased to improve the reliability and flexibility of the ASA database and to allow more ASA paper applications to be moved online. Thirty-five new student groups were recognized this year, and a review of the recognition and classification process was initiated, to be completed in 2008–2009. In addition, some \$200,000 was distributed through the Large Event and Assisting Recurring Cultural and Diversity Events funds in support of almost 100 campus-wide events.

Finally, a redesign of the Grad Rat, the official class ring for MIT's graduate students, was undertaken this year by GSC and will be unveiled early in the 2008–2009 academic year.

Leadership Development

Another ongoing goal of GSC is development of leadership in the student body, as a useful component of graduate education and also to perpetuate the council. The graduate student Leadership BBQ was held in early fall, shortly after orientation. The event brought together about 125 graduate students who were leaders or potential future leaders in GSC, departmental student groups, or graduate dorms along with some prominent administrators and alumni. The Leadership BBQ served as a way to thank current leaders for their contributions to graduate life and to encourage others to take on more active roles. Another goal was to foster interaction between disparate groups to encourage collaborative events and a mixing of social circles. A second Leadership BBQ was held in spring, and future versions are intended for the year ahead. While this event series is a great start, a thorough investigation of other ways that the council can encourage leadership development should be undertaken in the year ahead.

Transition

This past year saw transitions in one of the key offices with which GSC interacts and within the council's own support staff.

Last summer, Professor Steve Lerman assumed the role of dean in the Graduate Students Office (later renamed the Office of the Dean for Graduate Education). The dean for graduate education is the council's primary contact and champion in the MIT administration; building a relationship with the dean and introducing him to the work of GSC was made a top priority and should yield a very productive working relationship in the years ahead. GSC was also afforded a firsthand look at some of the dean's proposals for improving graduate education at MIT and looks forward to the changes he will implement.

The council bade farewell this past year to both of its longtime administrative assistants, Emmi Snyder and Nancy Kelly, as they moved on to other positions at the Institute. For many students, GSC administrators are the council personnel they are most familiar with, given their time spent in the office supporting GSC meetings and activities, processing reimbursements, and answering students' questions. Very capable new staff members Imani Ivery and Laura Thomas have joined the council and will hopefully provide the same high level and long duration of service as their predecessors.

Awards and Recognition

The National Association of Graduate and Professional Students last fall recognized GSC with a Program Award for the *Graduate Student News*. The award commemorated both current and past members of the magazine staff for consistently producing a high-level publication and particularly acknowledged the 2006–2007 staff for their efforts.

A number of council members were recently recognized by MIT for their contributions to the Institute, in part for their efforts at the 2008 Student Leader Awards and the 2008 Awards Convocation. The 2007 Career Fair directors, including Sarah Barkow, Romain Lévy, and David Opolon from GSC, were presented the Common Ground Award for successfully organizing last fall's fair. The Legacy Award was given to Housing and Community Affairs Committee co-chairs Tanguy Chau and Robert Wang for their accomplishments in leading the council's advocacy efforts. GSC treasurer Mireille Akilian was presented a Distinguished Dedication Award for her service to the council and several other campus activities. Kevin McComber, co-chair of the Activities Committee, and Shan Wu, past GSC vice-president and current biological engineering representative, were each recognized with a William L. Stewart, Jr. Award for their many efforts to improve student life at MIT.

Looking Ahead

Following the successes of the past few years in advocacy and reorganizing how the council manages its internal affairs, GSC is now poised to take on some more visionary projects. Groundwork has been laid for investigating how GSC should interact with the graduate alumni body and on future graduate housing expansion for MIT, but much of the work on these subjects lies ahead, and more such opportunities to improve graduate student life certainly exist. The council's track record is now well established, and its future will only be brighter.

Leeland Ekstrom
President

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