

Office of Undergraduate Advising and Academic Programming

The [Office of Undergraduate Advising and Academic Programming](#) (UAAP) sets a standard of excellence in providing quality student-centered services to all undergraduates to enhance their academic success, social adjustment, and assimilation to the Institute. To achieve that vision, UAAP provides programming, access to Institute resources, and services that recognize the needs, diversity, and uniqueness of students at MIT. This includes coordinating freshman preorientation and orientation programs, facilitating academic advising and mentoring relationships, cultivating learning skills, providing academic and personal support through Student Support Services (S3) and Student Disabilities Services (SDS), and promoting leadership development. Additionally, UROP management, operation, and oversight are UAAP responsibilities, as are the coordination of IAP and staff support to the Committee on Academic Performance. UAAP plays a leading role in the DUE student experience strategic theme.

New Initiatives

In response to the faculty-voted motion in spring 2013 that all freshmen have a faculty advisor or mentor, 142 faculty were recruited, and 70% of the members of the Class of 2018 were advised by faculty. Simultaneously, UAAP staff consultants supported these faculty members, serving not only as resources but also as back-up when faculty were unavailable. Six faculty-freshman receptions were hosted to facilitate engagement between these groups.

In spring 2014, MIT hosted the Accommodating Eating Disorder in Higher Education conference, with almost 70 professionals attending from the New England region. The conference included presentations on a litigated case study and current best practices. The audience's assessment of these presentations was stellar, with an overwhelming request that we sponsor future conferences.

The office cosponsored, with DiOnetta Crayton, a Leader to Leader (L2L) cohort mentoring project (Mentoring@MIT) for staff and graduate students; Ed Bertschinger served as the executive sponsor. The office will advise and work with the project team to accomplish this initiative by October 2014.

The office organized and offered a two-part professional development series for UAAP staff and our collaborators across campus; attendance at both programs approached 40 individuals. One program was led by Stephanie Pinder-Amaker and Catherine Bell of McLean Hospital and the other by Sarah Rankin from the Division of Student Life (DSL) and Barbara Baker, senior associate dean for students.

As the Amgen Scholars US program office, we managed the content development and layout of the Amgen Scholars annual report and converted it from print to a dynamic electronic version. In addition, we strategically distributed the document to an expanded audience in the United States and Europe.

The office worked with Academic Media Production Services (AMPS) to produce five videos showcasing the UROP experiences of a diverse set of students. These videos serve not only as a resource for recruiting students but also as a fund development tool capturing students' opportunities for new discovery under the guidance of MIT faculty.

In support of international immersion experiences for students, UAAP offered to support all faculty who engage undergraduates in research activities abroad, funded 48 MIT International Science and Technology Initiatives (MISTI) UROP placements, and supported 42 traditional International Research Opportunities Program (IROP) experiences for summer 2013 (these students will work in 21 countries).

The MISTI collaboration was a hybrid experiment, with MISTI identifying global research opportunities for students and UAAP funding qualified IROP projects. UAAP continued to participate in fund development efforts and stewardship with respect to UROP gifts and endowments, as well as funds from the Amgen Foundation, the Lord Foundation, the Baker Foundation, the Class of 1959, and the Good Samaritan/Mitzvah Fund. This year, we were particularly successful in securing three expendable gifts supporting the Student Emergency Fund.

Functional Enhancements

With the Teaching and Learning Laboratory, UAAP developed a student experience survey to assess trends in UROP participation and outcomes. All undergraduates were invited to complete this survey assessing their UROP experience, and 42% did so.

Survey highlights include the following:

- Nearly 60% of respondents indicated that at least one of their UROP faculty supervisors was familiar enough with their work to provide a letter of recommendation.
- Over 60% of respondents indicated that UROP participation helped them understand the nature of research and experimentation in a particular discipline.
- More than 70% of respondents indicated that UROP participation helped them gain much more (18.1%) or more (52.6%) confidence in working as a member of a research team.
- Over 65% of respondents indicated that UROP participation helped them gain much more (25.3%) or more (41.2%) confidence in feeling better prepared for graduate school or a professional career after graduation.

With Information Systems and Technology, the office worked to complete a comprehensive database for all UAAP functionalities, including supporting freshman advising, fifth week flags and academic performance, Student Support Services, and Student Disabilities Services. The underlying platform and all advising-related functionalities were launched in spring 2013, and the final phase was completed in spring 2014.

During the 2014 IAP, 536 noncredit activities and 110 for-credit subjects were sponsored by departments, interdisciplinary laboratories and centers ILCs, administrative offices, Association of Student Activities groups, and nonstudent groups.

As part of our continued effort to engage faculty in freshman advising, we hosted six receptions involving 108 faculty and approximately 300 freshmen. Additionally, to support the academic success of first-year students, we sponsored 28 learning strategy and academic programming sessions. Finally, we hosted 34 additional events at which faculty discussed academic challenges, selecting majors, graduate school, first-generation student experiences, and personal stories of career pathways.

Freshmen were advised by 142 faculty along with 20 lecturers, five researchers, and 39 administrators, including those who led 54 freshman advising seminars. A total of 408 students participated in advising seminars. Advisors were matched with 205 associate advisors who served as peer mentors to the first-year students. In addition to new advisor training and orientation advisor training for fall registration, a program, Mental Health and Support Resources for Students, was offered.

Training and development of associate advisors was an articulated priority. Twelve different programs were strategically offered to 205 associate advisors throughout the academic year.

UAAP completed a comprehensive review of its web publications and enhanced and streamlined content and navigation.

Together with the Office of the Dean for Graduate Education, we presented the Academic Distress Roadshow to 17 departments.

With colleagues from DSL, we created and finalized internal protocols for two complex and timely topics: policies regarding assistance and service animals and modification of the meal plan.

With the assistance of students, we created a video of students who use disability services as a tool to promote these services.

The three recipients of the UAAP 2014 Institute Convocation Awards were professor Anne McCants (Arthur Smith Award for Contributions to Student Life and Learning), professor William A. Tisdale (Baker Foundation Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching), and professor Frans Kaashoek (Earl M. Murman Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Advising).

Student Support Services

The deans in S3 had 5,224 contacts, including appointments, significant telephone conversations, and walk-in visits, over the academic year. This represented a 6% increase from the previous year. Given our experience, we anticipate 5,000 or more contacts annually. Walk-in times expanded to include an additional two hours per day during critical times at the end of term; the figure above includes 1,277 walk-ins.

S3 processed 99 withdrawals (49% medical and 51% voluntary), as compared with 113 last year, and readmitted 87 of 137 applicants for readmission (64%).

Fifty percent of the Class of 2014 used S3's services sometime during their undergraduate experience.

Student Disabilities Services

SDS had 811 scheduled appointments with students and actively accommodated 329 undergraduate and graduate students (a 42% increase from last year).

There was an increase in the complexity of student needs for required accommodations and services, including those for students with hearing, vision, and mobility impairments and students with learning disabilities.

Seventy-four students required temporary accommodations, and 65 students were employed to help support academic accommodations for these students.

In response to student requests, SDS sponsored seven group events that provided additional support to students.

UROP Activities and Funding

In summer 2013 and the fall and spring terms of 2013–2014, 52% of UROP students were female. Of undergraduates graduating in 2014, 88% participated in at least one UROP project; 84% (206 of 244) of graduating underrepresented minority students participated in UROP.

During this period, 4,670 UROP projects were completed. Sixty-nine percent of these projects were paid experiences, as compared with 67% last year.

UAAP provided \$4,161,384 in direct funding. Its direct funding budget is comprised of endowment income (38%), expendable gifts (20%), general Institute funds (40%), and foundation grants (2%). The UROP book-value endowment is \$16.2 million, represented by 55 named endowed funds and nine named gifts.

Faculty allocated \$4,355,006 in support of UROP, an increase of 4% from last year. Fifty-eight percent of MIT faculty mentor and supervise UROP students, and UROP remains the primary opportunity for students to engage with faculty outside of the classroom.

Future Plans and Initiatives

The following are UAAP initiatives for AY2014:

- Submit two proposals to the Amgen Foundation, one to continue to host Amgen UROP scholars for summer research and the second to serve as the global/US program office for the Amgen Scholars Program during 2015–2018, coordinating the activities of 17 universities in the United States, Europe, and Japan.
- Continue to work to accomplish the goal of ensuring that every freshman has either a faculty advisor or mentor and work with the freshman learning communities and OME to facilitate faculty mentorship.
- Define programming to engage students with faculty mentors and identify a strategy to add value to the UROP experience. UROP faculty supervisors will be surveyed to gain an understanding of what they view as advantages and/or challenges in serving as research mentors to undergraduates, how faculty define

- mentoring, and how faculty develop relationships with students to the point where they know them well enough to provide references.
- With the intention of facilitating the early engagement of first-year students in UROP, support a Freshman Pre-Orientation Program (Discover Undergraduate Research).
 - Continue to work with the Office of Leadership Giving with the intention of fully endowing MIT's Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program.
 - Produce, with AMPS, video profiles of a diverse group of first-generation students and faculty. This product not only will be a tool for admissions recruitment but also will continue to raise the visibility of the First Generation Project and inform the MIT community.
 - In collaboration with Information Systems and Technology, develop online systems for both the readmission and Freshman Pre-Orientation Program application processes.
 - As a follow-up to the working group review of the International Students Office (ISO), partner with ISO to ensure a successful international student orientation and define additional UAAP programming that meets the needs of this cohort.
 - In the context of additional educational resources being delivered online, support the formation of a strategic initiative to examine and address the issue of electronic accessibility for students with sensorineural disabilities.

Staffing Changes

This year two individuals resigned, two senior staff retired, and one individual was separated from MIT. The hires (all replacement hires) included Tom O'Connor, administrative assistant for the Student Disabilities Services team; Meghan Campbell, staff associate for the Student Disabilities Services team; Gerardo Garcia-Rios, assistant dean for the Student Support Services team; and Meghan Kenney, assistant dean for new student programming. Nicholas Kaempf was promoted from administrative assistant to staff associate (as a replacement). A search is ongoing for the administrative assistant position.

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