

Office of Major Agreements

The Office of Major Agreements (OMA), established in 2007, reports to the Office of the Executive Vice President and Treasurer (EVPT). Its initial mandate was to support the MIT community in pursuing educational and research opportunities beyond the Cambridge campus (especially outside the US), and in negotiating and implementing nonstandard business relationships (i.e., not sponsored research or gifts). Over the years, this has translated into both an international focus (e.g., working on major partnership agreements) and a domestic focus (e.g., the creation of service agreements with local affiliated entities).

Today, OMA's support for the community is provided in several ways:

- Helping to negotiate agreements for new international partnerships and programs, particularly their financial and business aspects;
- Coordinating problem-solving efforts related to policies, processes, and procedures that affect international program implementation;
- Leading or contributing to cross-cutting efforts to facilitate international operations—for example, through the new International Safety and Security program; coordinating the establishment of a new Institute subsidiary, MIT International; and supporting the Office of the Associate Provost for International Activities; and
- Staffing and supporting the work of the International Coordinating Committee (ICC).

Accomplishments and Initiatives

OMA's focus over the past year has been on the following activities and projects.

International Strategic Planning

Under the leadership of the associate provost for international activities, MIT is undertaking a strategic planning exercise on its international activities. Since the fall of 2015, OMA has been working closely with the Office of the Associate Provost, providing a range of project management, logistical, and data support. For the first (discovery) phase of the strategic planning exercise, this support has been primarily focused on information gathering and analysis, particularly in terms of background data on MIT and peer institutes' international activities and processes, along with interviews and discussions to understand faculty and student interests and needs. This first stage of the strategic planning exercise will continue through the remainder of 2016 and is expected to be complete by early 2017. It will be followed by an implementation phase to strengthen MIT's capacity for international engagement and impact.

New Organizational Tools for International Operations

Over the past several years, OMA has worked, along with many other offices at MIT, to expand the organizational toolkit available for MIT faculty, students, and

administrators in pursuing their international goals and activities. This was manifested in the creation of two legal entities in the first half of 2016: MIT International and the MIT Hong Kong Foundation.

MIT International—a wholly owned nonprofit subsidiary of MIT—was incorporated in May 2016 to support the Institute in several ways as its international activities increase: to facilitate and support human resource needs related to working abroad, to allow separation of investment activities from education and research activities in foreign jurisdictions, to mitigate tax risks and ease regulatory compliance, and to develop and propagate international operations expertise and best practices. Immediately following incorporation, the subsidiary was put to use in the creation of a foreign entity that would carry out MIT programs (the Hong Kong Foundation). Another early use for the subsidiary might be the seconding of MIT employees to MIT International (or the subsidiary might make direct hires) so they can work in a foreign country. Control and use of MIT International is maintained by a board and officers, with the associate provost for international activities serving as the president.

The MIT Hong Kong Foundation—also a wholly owned, nonprofit subsidiary of MIT in Hong Kong—was incorporated in June 2016 with two principal goals: to raise charitable funds for MIT from Hong Kong, and to facilitate MIT operations in Hong Kong, initially through the MIT Innovation Initiative’s Hong Kong Innovation Node.

In the case of both entities—MIT International and the MIT Hong Kong Foundation—OMA led multi-departmental working groups charged with their design, development, and implementation. This ongoing process, which has been active for several years, has included identifying and articulating business needs; working with senior leadership [particularly in the Office of the Associate Provost for International Activities, the Office of the General Counsel (OGC), and the EVPT] with regard to governance and utilization; and coordinating operational considerations across the many MIT domains and administrative groups involved in setting up and operating these entities (groups that deal with human resources, finance/accounting, treasury, tax, resource development, legal issues, sponsored programs, and so on).

International Safety and Security

In June 2015, MIT created and hired a program manager for a new International Safety and Security program, based within OMA. This hiring came at the conclusion of a several-year project on international emergency management at MIT that addressed Institute-wide challenges regarding international crisis preparation, response, processes, and services. The position was explicitly charged with leading the development and implementation of MIT’s international travel emergency preparedness strategy, training, policies and procedures, and response plans. The position was also intended to be a central resource to support the needs of students, faculty, and staff while they were traveling or working abroad on behalf of MIT.

From July 2015 to June 2016, international safety and security highlights and accomplishments included:

- Continuously updating and implementing MIT's travel risk policy;
- Expanding security management resources;
- Managing and responding to more than 60 incidents abroad involving MIT travelers;
- Working with key stakeholders to establish and promote best practices across the Institute regarding international safety and security;
- Conducting baseline risk assessments for high-risk travel destinations and advising students, faculty, and staff accordingly on threats and mitigations; and
- Incorporating considerations of safety in other countries for travelers who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer into MIT's travel risk planning and communications.

International Coordinating Committee

The ICC was sponsored in 2012 by Executive Vice President and Treasurer Israel Ruiz and Vice President for Research Claude Canizares in response to the rapid growth in volume and complexity of international activities at MIT. That growth brought a need to address the resulting administrative and operational challenges across MIT, which involved tax matters, legal issues, cultural differences, and regulatory considerations, as well as security questions, compliance issues, intellectual property, foreign currencies, export controls, and so on. The directors of the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) and OMA co-chair the ICC, which has two working groups—one on negotiation of international agreements, and one on policies and procedures relating to international programs. The ICC Negotiations Group meets approximately biweekly, with about 15 members who represent six offices and departments; the Policies and Procedures Group meets approximately quarterly, with about 22 members who represent 17 offices and departments.

The overall goal of the ICC is to strengthen and coordinate the business support for international activities provided by MIT's administrative and academic areas. It does this in a variety of ways, with the following highlights during academic year 2016:

- The ICC assisted in the negotiation of international agreements, ranging from small, one-year, limited-scope projects with one principal investigator to large, multiple-participant, multiyear, comprehensive institutional partnerships. The negotiations work is carried out by principal investigators and MIT's departments, laboratories, and centers, in close conjunction with central offices represented in the ICC (primarily OGC, Resource Development, and OSP). All agreements that are being negotiated under ICC auspices are tracked in a central database.
- The ICC conducted [information sessions](#) for the MIT community on topics related to international program operations, including international safety and security, sending students abroad, tax support for international students and scholars, and cultural awareness. Various experts from across MIT made

presentations at the sessions, as an ongoing effort to help those at MIT who are engaged in, or affected by, international work.

- In response to community interest, the ICC launched a cultural training project with three goals: to empower and enable faculty, students, and staff doing international work; to equip the MIT community (with its large international contingent, including visitors) to be mindful of, and responsive to, cultural differences; and to facilitate planning for successful interactions. The work included defining priorities and different user groups and identifying a portfolio of resources with input from the community – with OMA taking the lead on project management, working closely with Human Resources (HR) and MIT International Science and Technology Initiatives. One resource, a potential software tool (GlobeSmart, currently in use by the Sloan School of Management), was assessed and pilot tested; the team will continue to pursue and develop other resources.
- The ICC also refined and continued to use the Human Resource Officer International (HROI) process. This process is designed to assist MIT departments, laboratories, and centers that need to post employees outside the US. It includes a review process for internal decision making and for defining a range of options for overseas employment. The HROI process will be modified and incorporated into the operating procedures for the new MIT International subsidiary; the initial priority is expected to be facilitating and supporting HR needs related to working abroad. Central HR and OMA have taken the lead on this project, working closely with the Office of the Vice President for Finance and OGC.

Personnel

The founding director of OMA, Jim Morgan, retired in 2014, and was replaced in June 2015 by Robin Lemp (previously with the MIT Skoltech Initiative). Also in June 2015, Todd Holmes was hired as the first International Safety and Security Program Manager – a new position within OMA. Two other existing vacancies were filled during academic year 2016: in September 2015, Tammy Greenwood joined OMA as an administrative assistant, and in March 2016, Linda Dionne joined as a program manager. With Assistant Director Magdalene Lee and Director, Special Projects Cecilia Wardle, the full complement of OMA staff at the end of the reporting period was six.

Robin Lemp
Director