

Office of Major Agreements

Overview

The [Office of Major Agreements \(OMA\)](#), established in 2007, reports to the Executive Vice President and Treasurer. Its initial mandate was to support the MIT community to pursue educational and research opportunities beyond the Cambridge campus (especially outside the United States), and to negotiate and implement 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 collaborative agreements), as well as a domestic focus (e.g., the creation of service agreements with local affiliated entities).

Today, OMA provides support to the community by:

- helping to negotiate agreements for new international collaborations and programs, particularly in regard to financial and business aspects;
- coordinating problem-solving efforts related to policies, processes, and procedures that impact international program implementation;
- leading or contributing to cross-cutting efforts to facilitate international operations (e.g., through the International Safety and Security program, coordinating the analysis and establishment of new MIT international entities, and supporting the associate provost for international activities); and
- staffing and supporting the work of the International Coordinating Committee.

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 conducted a strategic planning exercise on its international activities, culminating in the release in May 2017 of the report, *A Global Strategy for MIT*.

During the reporting period, OMA worked closely with the associate provost, providing a range of project management, community outreach, logistical assistance, and data support. The first two phases (discovery and development) of the strategic planning exercise were completed. OMA support was 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 gauge faculty and student interests and needs.

In addition, a set of detailed implementation plans was prepared, which will be further refined and then operationalized during an implementation phase to strengthen MIT's

capacity for international engagement and impact. Since the release of the report, OMA has shifted focus to the implementation phase, primarily supporting the new program to create region-specific platforms for cultivating, facilitating, and coordinating faculty- and institute-level collaborations in targeted countries and regions.

International Safety and Security

In June 2015, MIT created (and hired a program manager for) an International Safety and Security program within OMA. This came at the conclusion of a several-year project on international emergency management at MIT, which addressed Institute-wide challenges regarding international crisis preparation, response, processes, and services. OMA was charged with leading the development and implementation of MIT's international travel emergency preparedness strategy, training, policies and procedures, and response plans, as well as serving as a central resource to support the needs of students, faculty, and staff while traveling or working abroad on behalf of MIT.

During the reporting period, international safety and security highlights and accomplishments included:

- implementing MIT's travel risk policy, including managing and responding to 208 incidents abroad involving MIT travelers;
- leading, as business process owner, the continued development of the MIT Travel Registry, including an ongoing pilot and business process assessment (largely for organized student programs) prior to full implementation;
- 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 into MIT's travel risk planning and communications considerations for safe travel abroad for individuals with diverse expressions of gender and sexuality.

International Coordinating Committee

The International Coordinating Committee (ICC) is co-chaired by the directors of the Office of Sponsored Programs and OMA, and comprises two working groups: one on negotiation of international agreements, and one on policies and procedures relating to international programs.

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, which is accomplished in a variety of ways. During FY2017, ICC achievements included:

- Assisting in the negotiation of international agreements, ranging from small, single-principal investigator, limited-scope projects to large, multiple-participant, multiyear, comprehensive institutional collaborations. The negotiations work was carried out by principal investigators and MIT departments, labs, and

centers in close conjunction with central offices represented within the ICC (primarily the Office of General Counsel, OMA, Resource Development, and the Office of Sponsored Programs). All agreements in negotiation under the ICC's auspices were tracked in a database to facilitate internal committee communication.

- Continuing a cultural training project 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. OMA was responsible for project management, working closely with human resources and the MIT International Science and Technology Initiatives. A cultural training software tool (GlobeSmart) was launched, and the team continued to pursue and develop other resources and training.
- Refining and continuing to utilize the International People Placement process (previously the Human Resources Officer International process), designed to provide single point-of-contact assistance to MIT departments, laboratories, and centers needing to post or hire employees outside the United States. The process aggregates internal resources (e.g., regarding employee benefits, taxes, export control, information technology, visas, and such) and includes a review process for making recommendations and defining a range of options for overseas employment. The process will be modified and incorporated into the operating procedures for the MIT International subsidiary, with its initial priority expected to be facilitating and supporting Human Resources needs related to working abroad. Central Human Resources and OMA have taken the lead on this project, working closely with the office of the Vice President for Finance, the Office of Sponsored Programs, and the Office of the General Counsel.
- Continuing to offer information sessions for the MIT community on topics related to international program operations, including one on cultural awareness. Various experts from across MIT were convened to present at the sessions as an ongoing outreach effort to help those at MIT engaged in, or impacted by, international work.

Tools for International Operations

Over the past several years, OMA has worked to expand the organizational toolkit available for MIT faculty, students, and administrators in pursuing their international goals and activities. This was manifested particularly in the creation of two legal entities incorporated in 2016, MIT International and MIT Hong Kong Foundation.

MIT International is a nonprofit subsidiary of MIT created to support its international activities by facilitating human resource needs related to working abroad, allowing separation of investment activities from education and research activities in foreign jurisdictions, mitigating tax risks and easing regulatory compliance, and developing and propagating international operations expertise and best practices.

The MIT Hong Kong Foundation—also a wholly-owned, nonprofit subsidiary of MIT in Hong Kong—was created 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.

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