Chancellor for Academic Advancement

President Rafael Reif created the position of chancellor for Academic Advancement (CAA) in October 2013, naming Professor Eric Grimson to the post. This ad hoc position supports MIT's ongoing capital campaign, with primary responsibilities including: serving as liaison to link the campaign (including current and potential donors) with faculty and students; gathering information on departmental and school needs and goals; providing strategic advice to the president and other senior leadership on campaign priorities and efforts; partnering with deans, the chancellor, the provost, and the president to create strategies for donors; and especially in interacting extensively with potential donors both nationally and globally.

Activities within the Chancellor for Academic Advancement's Office

Since the official launch of the campaign in May 2016, the chancellor has extensively engaged with deans of the academic schools, student life deans, the chancellor, the vice chancellor, the provost, and the president to coordinate department, school, and Institute needs and aspirations with campaign priorities and activities. The chancellor has also engaged with department heads and with individual faculty, gathering information to be used in discussions with prospective donors, and arranged for contact between individual faculty and donors as appropriate. The chancellor works closely with Resource Development staff on these topics, often serving as a conduit between faculty and development staff, and between potential donors and development staff or faculty members.

As identified priorities and needs for the campaign have evolved—especially around capital projects, scholarships and fellowships, faculty support, and emerging research opportunities—the chancellor has worked with development staff and others to develop strategic plans for fund raising. These include strategies for specific projects, as well as strategies for cultivating particular critical donors. During the past year, in addition to regular interactions with current and prospective donors, particular attention was focused on MIT's Quest for Intelligence, on capital projects, and on student support through undergraduate scholarships and graduate fellowships.

Since a primary objective of the CAA position is to engage the Institute with prospective donors—alumni, parents, and others unaffiliated with MIT but who share its vision—the majority of the chancellor's time has been spent in meeting with such prospects.

In addition to on-campus visits with prospects, the chancellor has travelled extensively to represent the president and the Institute to alumni groups, to individual alumnus and alumna, to parents, and to other friends of the Institute. Travel within North America over the past year included visits to Austin, the greater Boston area, Boulder, Chicago, Denver, Greenwich, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Naples, New York City, Paramus, Philadelphia, Portland, Princeton, San Diego, San Francisco, Sarasota, Seattle, Tampa, Vancouver, and Washington. In addition to domestic travel, international visits over the past year have included Abu Dhabi, Amman, Beijing, Dubai, Gutersloh, Hong Kong, Jakarta, Jeddah, Kuala Lumpur, London, Riyadh, Seoul, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Singapore, Stockholm, and Taipei.

The Chancellor held 292 in-person meetings with donors (compared with 294 the previous year and a three-year average of 280 visits), including 98 visits with highly rated prospects (compared with 106 the previous year and a three-year average of 90 such visits). He also participated in 36 Resource Development or Alumni Association events (compared with 42 the previous year), including hosting a campaign road show event in Chicago. Expectations are similar for next year's activities, as the campaign focus expands to campaign capstone gift conversations with principal donors and engagement with new unaffiliated prospective donors.

W. Eric L. Grimson
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