

Office of the Associate Provost for International Activities

The Office of the Associate Provost for International Activities (OAPIA) supports and develops international engagements that contribute to MIT's mission of advancing the frontiers of knowledge, educating tomorrow's global leaders, and bringing knowledge to bear on solving the world's great challenges.

The associate provost advises the president and the provost on existing and new international policies and programs, consults with faculty on the development of international activities, helps to shape major new international initiatives involving multiple MIT units, and works with MIT administrators to design and implement these activities effectively and efficiently.

The associate provost sponsors the International Advisory Committee, co-sponsors the International Coordinating Committee (ICC), and serves on the Senior Risk Group, along with the vice president for research and the general counsel, established earlier this year to oversee the Institute's engagements in elevated-risk countries. He serves on the governing board of the Singapore-MIT Alliance for Research and Technology (SMART), the governing board of the MIT Portugal Program, and the board of trustees of the Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology (Skoltech). Programs overseen by his office include the Institute's collaboration with Skoltech and the Singapore University of Technology and Design.

Accomplishments

MIT China Summit, Beijing, November 2018

In November 2018, MIT convened the MIT China Summit in Beijing, China. Hosted by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the event brought MIT faculty members together with some of China's most influential leaders in industry, government, and academia to discuss some of the most exciting topics at the frontiers of science and technology and the role of research and education in shaping tomorrow's world. The summit's plenary conference was opened by MIT President L. Rafael Reif and featured 15 leading MIT professors, together with prominent Chinese scientific and business leaders. More than 650 attendees from academia, industry, government, and NGOs traveled to Beijing from all over the world to participate.

The day before the plenary conference, MIT hosted a series of satellite events and activities around Beijing that provided a snapshot of different facets of MIT and its engagements in China. The China Future City Lab at the MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning held a symposium with 150 attendees on new urban developments in China. MIT Professional Education held an inaugural "Leading Innovation" workshop with more than 50 MIT alumni, industry, and academic leaders. MIT Sloan Global Programs held its inaugural International Faculty Fellows conference at Tsinghua University. The MIT-China Innovation and Entrepreneurship Forum hosted a pitch event with MIT-affiliated start-ups. The Institute hosted MIT Better World (Beijing), a special reception for alumni from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Report

In October 2018, following the assassination of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, President Reif asked the associate provost to conduct a reassessment of MIT's institute-level engagements with entities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In December 2018, he issued an interim report, with input from MIT faculty, students, staff, and alumni, as well as the MIT International Advisory Committee and external experts on Saudi Arabia and the region. The report recommended continuing the Institute's existing engagements with private Saudi donors and with Saudi Aramco, King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology, and the majority-state-owned company Saudi Basic Industries Corporation—as long as faculty principal investigators were willing to lead them. The December report was sent to the MIT community with an open invitation for comments.

In February 2019, the associate provost wrote a [final report](#) with a summary of the comments submitted by the MIT community. The final report restated the findings of the original report with additional recommendations for President Reif to consider, including a call to strengthen MIT's internal processes for reviewing and evaluating agreements in and with countries with problematic political, civil, and human rights records. President Reif wrote a [letter](#) to the MIT community accepting the recommendations of the two reports and also requesting that the faculty officers create an ad hoc interdisciplinary committee “to consider further questions about how we might approach international engagements in problematic countries.”

International Strategic Plan Implementation

In May 2017, the associate provost released “A Global Strategy for MIT,” which included several recommendations for strengthening MIT's international engagements. A two-year implementation plan was developed outlining five major initiatives and projects. These included the development of new MIT Partnerships for a Better World (the related China Summit is described above), a project to expand MIT's Global Classroom, a review of the cap on international undergraduate admissions, the reconstitution of the International Advisory Committee, and the establishment of a new external advisory committee. Most of this implementation plan is now fully complete; the remainder will be completed by end of the calendar year.

Administrative Initiatives

New Review Process for “Elevated-Risk” International Proposals

In April 2019, the vice president for research and the associate provost for International Activities announced a new review process for “elevated-risk” international proposals. Given the increase in quantity and scope of global collaborations, this new effort was launched to strengthen MIT's internal processes for evaluating and structuring international agreements. Currently, engagements with China, Russia, and Saudi Arabia have been identified as meriting additional faculty and administrative review by the International Coordinating Committee, the International Advisory Committee, and the newly-created Senior Risk Group. This new review process is designed to enable MIT to engage with the world effectively, with responsible management of risks and in keeping with the values of the MIT community.

Personnel Information

Daniel Hastings stepped down as CEO and director of SMART, a position he had held since 2014.

Eugene Fitzgerald was appointed as the new CEO and director of SMART in February 2019.

Elizabeth Dupuy began a new role as the director of global partnerships and senior advisor to the associate provost. She was previously the director of the China Summit.

Jennifer Camacho joined OAPIA as the manager of external relations in May 2018.

Diana Dao joined OAPIA as an administrative assistant in January 2019.

Goals

Latin-America Summit

OAPIA will continue to advance MIT's commitment to international collaboration by capitalizing upon the momentum from the overwhelming success of the MIT China Summit to host an equally engaging and productive summit in Latin America in November 2020.

Communications and Website

OAPIA also plans to implement a clearly defined and robust communications strategy to better provide stakeholders with consistent messaging and relevant information. Accordingly, the MIT Global Website will be completely revamped and the new site is slated to go live in 2020.

International Strategic Plan Implementation

The two-year implementation plan will soon be complete and OAPIA's focus will move to other recommendations from the Global Strategy report, as well as additional efforts in areas initiated in the two-year plan. For example, phase three of Global Classroom will be underway to implement the many recommendations of the project to improve the global program offerings and administration. Additionally, the recommendation to strengthen tools and support for faculty engaged in international work will be addressed this coming year. The initiative will be in conjunction with the ICC website phase two project where faculty input will be sought to understand the information and tools they would find helpful.

Richard K. Lester
Associate Provost