

Office of Government and Community Relations

MIT has a unique commitment to its host city, the City of Cambridge, and cares deeply about the community of which it is proud to be a member. Reporting to the Executive Vice President and Treasurer's Office (EVPT), the [Office of Government and Community Relations \(OGCR\)](#) serves as a liaison to the City of Cambridge and coordinates a wide variety of outreach efforts that benefit the local community. From supporting nonprofit organizations to participating in neighborhood dialogue on public policy matters, MIT strives to be actively engaged in the vibrant civic life of the city. The office also acts as a liaison to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and supports the mission of the MIT Washington Office by reinforcing the efforts of the president, faculty, and administrators in their contacts with government officials and policy organizations.

The office is available as a resource to the Institute community for matters related to government or the community of Cambridge. It is also a resource to MIT's neighbors who seek guidance in their interactions with the Institute. OGCR is a communications link, a catalyst for action, and a resource for both MIT and the external community and is committed to promoting productive collaboration in all of its public interactions.

Support of Nonprofits

OGCR is charged with managing the Institute's relationships with local nonprofit organizations. The office supports area agencies through financial donations, hands-on assistance, the use of MIT facilities, and engagement on boards and committees.

The office made direct donations to approximately 65 nonprofit organizations in the broader Cambridge area. Monetary contributions supported a diverse range of nonprofit activities including community events, k-12 programming, and housing assistance. This year, the office was honored to sponsor the Kendall Community Group fundraising event featuring award-winning documentary film maker Byron Hurt, who spoke about local challenges in food insecurity and gentrification. MIT is proud to be a founding member of the Kendall Community Group, which for more than 30 years has fostered close ties and resource-sharing between the Kendall business community and three nonprofit organizations in The Port neighborhood.

OGCR also makes in-kind contributions by donating or subsidizing the use of MIT facilities for nonprofit events. The office continued its collaborations with the Campus Activities Complex, the MIT Media Lab, the Office of the Registrar, and MIT Athletics to provide space for 60 community-oriented events in academic year 2019. These events brought visibility to MIT and fostered positive relations between the Institute and its neighbors.

OGCR staff continued to work with the Community Art Center and the MIT Investment Management Company (MITIMCo) on the Creative Current project, which consists of community-created public art murals at the Kendall Square Initiative construction site. This year, office staff collaborated with the Community Art Center to develop the creative vision for a mural called "Handle the Vision," and assisted in planning several neighborhood events to solicit community input for design elements. The mural was erected along Main Street and celebrated with an unveiling party that brought together local public officials, community leaders, and the Kendall Square, MIT, and The Port communities.

OGCR also looks for strategic ways to partner with MIT departments to increase nonprofit engagement. In 2019, the office worked with the MIT Office of Sustainability (which led data collection efforts), the Department of Facilities, MIT Dining, and contracted partners Bon Appetit and Restaurant Associates to create the MIT Food Rescue Program. The program focused on weekly leftover food collection at Maseeh Hall, Simmons Hall, the Forbes Café, the Sloan Marketplace, and the Samberg Conference Center, with other dining halls sending surplus food to these locations as it became available. The food was donated to the nonprofit agency Food for Free to distribute to local families facing food insecurity. Now that the program is in place, the MIT food rescue team is developing ways to use the [Sustainability Data Pool](#) to capture food rescue metrics. The team will continue strategic expansion of this project and will implement a communication strategy for telling the MIT food rescue story.

Co-director Paul Parravano continued his work on the City of Cambridge's Community Benefits Advisory Committee. Established in 2016, the committee has worked to identify community needs where funds raised from development projects could best be used. As MIT's appointee to the board, Parravano has worked closely with other committee members to provide guidance and suggestions during the study and selection process. The committee has identified three top-tier needs: housing, financial insecurity, and mental health services. In late 2018, requests for proposals were issued to encourage local nonprofits to work collaboratively to develop innovative solutions to address the top-tier needs. In 2019, the committee awarded five planning grants and is poised to award larger implementation grants after the planning period of four to six months is successfully completed.

OGCR staff serve on the boards and committees of many local nonprofit organizations, including the Cambridge Community Foundation, Just-A-Start, and the YMCA. In 2019, Government and Community Relations Associate Anya Bear was asked to serve as chair of the board of directors of Cambridge School Volunteers.

Civic Engagement

OGCR is responsible for managing the Institute's relationship with Cambridge and Boston civic organizations. This past year, OGCR staff represented MIT on the boards and committees of the Boston Chamber of Commerce, the Central Square Business Association, the East Cambridge Business Association, the Kendall Square Association, the New England Council, and the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce. The office's continued engagement in Kendall Square has deepened with Co-Director Sarah Gallop serving as board chair of the Kendall Square Association. In her fourth year, Gallop has overseen the implementation of the association's strategic priorities—diversity, equity, and inclusion, transportation, and placemaking. Co-Director Paul Parravano increased his engagement with the New England Council, which has resulted in increased interaction with federal and state leaders in the region.

Educational Initiatives

Over the past few years, the City of Cambridge has placed an increased focus on developing educational opportunities in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics for its residents. MIT shares this goal, and had announced the creation

of a new position, a k-12 outreach administrator, as part of the MIT 2016 celebration. Outreach Administrator Rohan Kundargi started work in AY2019 and began building relationships with the MIT and Cambridge k-12 communities to create a network for engagement. Through this initial listening tour, he identified an opportunity to introduce all Cambridge Rindge and Latin School first-year students to education in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. By coordinating with Cambridge Public School teachers, the MIT App Inventor, and the MIT Playful Journey Lab, Kundargi co-produced the first Freshman Tech Experience event, which introduced more than 500 ninth-grade students to computer science careers and opportunities.

The office continued its partnership with the Lemelson-MIT Program in advancing a Pathways to Invention k-12 outreach initiative at Fletcher Maynard Academy in The Port neighborhood. Using Lemelson-MIT's expertise and curriculum as a foundation, the program introduces students to making and inventing, and to the many college and career paths that develop from innovation. The program had a successful second year and is looking to expand to the rest of Cambridge as the Lemelson-MIT Program begins building its community programming in East Cambridge's Foundry Building.

Local Government and Neighborhood Relations

Maintaining productive and open communications with public officials and governmental bodies is an essential part of the work of OGCR. Office staff continued to provide critical information to the city through the compilation of the annual Town Gown Report and its presentation to the Cambridge Planning Board. In addition, the office coordinated MIT's preparation for public hearings and meetings before various governmental boards on a broad range of topics such as graduate housing, the city-wide Envision Cambridge plan, local resiliency initiatives, Grand Junction transit stakeholder planning, the Ames Street bicycle path, and renovations to the MIT boathouse.

OGCR staff continues to be heavily involved in the planning and outreach process for the redevelopment of the Volpe Center site. The office secured a number of crucial Cambridge approvals during the year, including approvals of tree removals and curb cuts. Staff continue to work with MITIMCo, city officials, and residents to advance MIT's vision for a reimagined Volpe parcel.

OGCR provided political guidance for all of MIT's development projects, including the Kendall Square Initiative, the Volpe Center headquarters, the Vassar Street dormitory, and the Metropolitan Warehouse Storage site. This support included strategic planning, internal and external communications, providing updates to city officials, participation in hearings, and interactive meetings for the MIT and Cambridge communities.

State Government Relations

OGCR continues to forge relationships with Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker's administration. In 2019, the office further connected members of the governor's cabinet and state agencies to research and policy activity around campus, especially the Massachusetts Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. The office hosted two groups of staff from the commonwealth's Department of Public Utilities and Department of Energy Resources for a campus visit and tour of the new central utility plant.

Additionally, OGCR coordinated several MIT faculty panel appearances with regional and national organizations of public utility commissioners.

Office staff worked with internal and external colleagues to manage MIT's response to Massachusetts legislative initiatives. OGCR continued to partner with senior MIT leadership, peer institutions, and the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Massachusetts to provide feedback on such legislative issues as sexual misconduct, higher education financial oversight, and land use.

Federal Relations

OGCR works closely with MIT's office in Washington, DC, to support MIT president L. Rafael Reif in interactions with federal officials and to further MIT's mission at the national level. Working with MIT's Washington office, internal communications groups, the Association of American Universities, and the wider MIT network, OGCR has been heavily involved in establishing connections for future collaboration within the federal executive branch. There have been many successful contacts and meetings.

OGCR arranged many meetings with congressional leaders to provide opportunities to communicate MIT's position on questions related to higher education during MIT president Reif's multiple trips to Washington, DC. Those meetings focused on MIT's interest in the value of federal research funding, competitiveness in innovation policy, and economic development through innovation.

The office worked closely with the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, which acted as the lead organizer for the Business for Federal Research Funding Coalition's annual two-day lobbying event that emphasizes the importance of federal research funding to local economies and businesses. OGCR also hosted governmental officials on campus for tours and events. In November, OGCR coordinated a meeting between President Reif and Massachusetts Senator Edward Markey following the senator's lecture on environmental public policy to the MIT Environmental Solutions Initiative.

Communications

Building on the previous year's development of a graphic and branding identity, the office launched a new website reflecting the new design and scheme. Ashley Kennedy updated and reorganized the office's web content to reflect the office's three major constituencies—Cambridge residents, nonprofit organizations, and the MIT community. Additionally, the Town Gown Report and the MIT in Cambridge Impact Report were translated from print layout to web format to make that information more accessible.

OGCR continues to reach out to its neighbors through Twitter and NextDoor. In its second year, the office's handle doubled its reach, generating 66,000 engagements. The office also maintained regular communications with the Institute's abutting neighborhoods—Cambridgeport, East Cambridge, Wellington-Harrington, Central Square, and The Port—regarding MIT projects and initiatives. Office staff responded to numerous media inquiries regarding Kendall Square, the Volpe Center project, MIT's payment in lieu of taxes, real estate taxes, building projects, student housing, and other town and gown-related issues.

Internal MIT Relations

OGCR staff served on several Institute committees and groups, such as the planning committee for the Martin Luther King, Jr., Breakfast, the Transportation Committee, Community Giving, Information Group, the Employee Resource Group on Persons with Disabilities, and the Communications Operations Group. Additionally, OGCR staff provide regular detailed updates to the EVPT to keep senior leaders better informed of OGCR's work.

OGCR staff collaborated extensively with MITIMCo, the Office of Sustainability, the Department of Facilities, the Department of Student Life, the EVPT, and MIT Human Resources on a range of policy and community outreach matters to develop a consensus on MIT's approach. Staff provided strategic guidance to offices and departments advancing Cambridge-based projects.

In 2018, OGCR spearheaded a project to operate a farmer's market booth at the Kendall Discovery Market in Kendall Square plaza (a partnership between MIT, Boston Properties, and DW Ventures). Branded as the Inspiration Station, the office sought out 18 departments, laboratories, and centers across campus to staff the booth with short, engaging demonstrations or experiments. Staff conducted an analysis of the market's impact, outlining the initiative's pros and cons and sharing data with Open Space Programming as a precursor for its work.

Community Service Fund

After two years of engaged and productive leadership, Faculty Chair Helen Elaine Lee stepped down from her position to pursue academic interests. As always, OGCR staff managed the Community Service Fund application and disbursement process, which awarded grants to nearly 20 local nonprofit organizations and student projects.

OGCR and the Community Services Office are exploring a merger between the Community Service Fund and Community Giving to promote greater collaboration and direction for fundraising and grant allocations. The proposed merger would elevate the visibility of the Community Service Fund and combine the energy and passion of both boards toward a single goal of raising funds to support MIT volunteerism. Professor Jared Curhan from the Sloan School of Management will serve as the new board chair to oversee the possible merger and advise on the efficacy of the new structure.

Sarah Gallop
Paul Parravano
Co-Directors