MIT Skoltech Program

MIT, the Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology, and the Skolkovo Foundation have been collaborating since 2011 to develop Skoltech—a private graduate research university on the outskirts of Moscow, Russia. The collaboration has evolved over a sequence of phases. In the first phase, the partners worked together to design and develop Skoltech as a unique, world-class research university, embodying many of the principles and values of MIT. In the second phase, which began in 2016, the MIT Skoltech Program worked collaboratively to continue to develop Skoltech and the Skolkovo ecosystem through a targeted set of joint activities between MIT and Skoltech. Now in its third phase, which begain in early 2019, the program continues to focus on joint research projects between individual faculty members at both institutions. Other important features of the continued program include new entrepreneurship and innovation programs, collaboration with MISTI to connect MIT and Skoltech students, and a joint annual conference.

Research and Outreach Activities

Collaborative research continues to be a core element of the relationship between MIT and Skoltech. This year, new research projects were launched via the MIT Skoltech Pilot Program Projects, and existing projects in the Next Generation Program continued in the five Skoltech thematic program areas—life sciences and biomedicine; cutting-edge engineering and advanced materials; data science; energy efficiency; advanced studies—as well as other strategic areas.

The MIT Skoltech Program Pilot Grants support innovative research projects that include collaboration with Skoltech faculty and have the potential to benefit the development of Skoltech or the mission of the Skolkovo Foundation. This year, pilot grants have been awarded to 10 projects for two years, to researchers from eight MIT departments and programs who represent four schools.

The MIT Skoltech Next Generation Program (NGP) covers a range of academic and institution development activities and seeks to establish and promote mutually beneficial long-term bilateral collaboration in research, education, and innovation between Skoltech faculty members and their MIT counterparts through the largely research-driven projects. Nine NGP projects awarded at the end of last year also continued this year.

This year, more than 35 MIT faculty, together with researchers, students, and staff from across the Institute, participated in the collaboration to continue advancing the development of Skoltech as it grows deeper in its research activities and adds to its faculty.

As part of MIT's commitment to develop student and postdoctoral exchange and internship programs at and for Skoltech, the MIT Skoltech Program continued to support the MISTI MIT-Russia Program. This year, the program supported six virtual internships at Skoltech and at a Russian start-up, as well as an advanced Russian language course at MIT.

Joint MIT–Skoltech Conferences

The sponsorship and organization of joint academic conferences is a foundational core collaborative activity fundamental to our goal of growing interactions between Skoltech faculty and those at MIT. These are highly interactive and informative meetings in a mutually agreed upon set of areas in science, technology, and innovation.

MIT and Skoltech organized the fourth Annual Joint MIT-Skoltech Conference on October 13 and 14, 2020, which took place virtually to accommodate travel restrictions resulting from the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. This two-day joint workshop centered around nine recently awarded NGP joint research projects between MIT and Skoltech and featured a packed program of presentations by representatives from both institutions.

The first day of the workshop featured "Frontiers of Biological Engineering," an opening address by Angela M. Belcher—head of the MIT Department of Biological Engineering, James Mason Crafts Professor of Biological Engineering, and Materials Science and Engineering. On the second day of the workshop, opening remarks were made by Pekka Viljakainen of the Skolkovo Foundation. In addition to the opening address by Professor Belcher, the workshop included 12 speakers from MIT.

Program Governance

The MIT Faculty Coordinating Committee has overseen and facilitated MIT's planning and execution of the cooperative activities. The MIT Faculty Coordinating Committee members are Richard Lester, Japan Steel Industry Professor, associate provost for international activities, and chair; Bruce Tidor, professor of Biological Engineering and Computer Science and vice chair; Brian Anthony, director, Master of Engineering in Manufacturing Program; Munther Dahleh, William A. Coolidge Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science and director of the Institute for Data, Systems, and Society; Douglas Hart, professor of Mechanical Engineering; Phillip A. Sharp, Institute Professor, Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research; Carl V. Thompson, Stavros Salapatas Professor of Materials Science and Engineering. Program staff consisted of Deliana Ernst, assistant director; Natalia Billings, administrative assistant; and Chrissy Mullin, financial administrator. The program has been headquartered in E19.

The program has been responsible for managing MIT's activities with respect to the relationship with Skoltech—which includes organization of joint activities in addition to managing grant processes—and advising Skoltech on matters related to administration and research. Further information is at the MIT Skoltech Program website.

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