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Dear Colleagues,

In many conversations recently and in various other forums, I have been surprised by the assumptions some people have made and conclusions some have reached about the School of Engineering's policies as they relate to the issues Professor James Sherley has raised in connection with his tenure decision. Therefore, I feel it appropriate for me, as Dean, to comment on the tenure and grievance review processes.

In the School of Engineering, the senior faculty serve in an advisory capacity to the department or division head in the promotion and tenure process. Some departments authorize a standing committee to represent the faculty. Other units, such as the Biological Engineering Division (BE), as well as Civil and Environmental Engineering, Chemical Engineering, and the Engineering Systems Division, directly involve all of their senior faculty. Often, there is a clear consensus or even near unanimity among the faculty. In such cases, it would be extremely unusual for the department or division head not to accept the faculty's collective judgment.

After the BE faculty had completed its review of Professor Sherley's tenure case in December 2004, at the request of the Division Head, I reviewed the case myself. From my perspective, the decision was clearly correct on the merits, and the case had been handled fairly and in accordance with the Division's standard process. I did not see any evidence to suggest that racial discrimination or conflict of interest had played a role in the tenure decision. I told Professor Sherley this in a meeting on January 24, 2005. I also informed him of the availability of MIT's grievance process should he wish to pursue his claims that racial discrimination and/or conflict of interest were factors in the decision not to grant him tenure. Subsequently, Professor Sherley did avail himself of this process.

When a faculty member files a grievance, the senior administration, usually the Provost, in consultation with the chair of the faculty and the aggrieved faculty member, appoints a committee of faculty specifically chosen to review that particular grievance. In his January 29, 2007 letter to the MIT community (see <http://www-tech.mit.edu/V127/N1/1sherley/reif.html>), the Provost summarized this process, as used in Professor Sherley's case. MIT's grievance review policy is an integral part of the Institute's system of overall faculty governance. I am puzzled that some members of our community have come so quickly to the conclusion that the grievance review process was flawed. I have not seen the

reports that the Committee that investigated Professor Sherley's grievances issued, but I did meet with the Committee on two occasions and was impressed by its thoroughness. The Committee consisted of diverse and distinguished senior faculty members (none from the Biological Engineering Division) who took their responsibilities very seriously.

I could comment on several other issues raised in various communications concerning Professor Sherley's tenure case, but I understand that Professor Peter Dedon, in his role as Associate Head of the Biological Engineering Division, will be addressing these issues in a communication that he is preparing.

About half of the junior faculty members in the School of Engineering do not receive tenure. Such decisions are difficult, often painful, and are not taken lightly by any of the individuals involved. Having worked closely with Professor Lauffenburger for the last eight years during my tenure as Dean, I am confident that the process in BE was fair and just and that Professor Lauffenburger has fulfilled his responsibilities as Division Head in a manner that is entirely consistent with our very high standards of quality and integrity. As expressed in a recent open letter to the MIT community (see http://web.mit.edu/fnl/volume/sherley/be_sherley.pdf), a vast majority of the Division's senior faculty have publicly stated that they share this view. The 20 faculty who signed the letter included 16 of the 18 BE faculty members who were present and voted at the December 2004 meeting in which Professor Sherley's tenure case was considered.

I believe that as Provost, Professor Reif has similarly fulfilled his very difficult responsibilities in a manner that is entirely consistent with our very high standards. Having also worked closely with the Provost for the past eight years (previously in his role as Associate Head and then Department Head in EECS), I am confident that he too has been fair and just. I hope that the MIT community will emerge from this painful situation with an even greater commitment to our principles of excellence, integrity, and mutual respect.

I write to you with some trepidation since it seems that some of those involved in Professor Sherley's case have been unfairly characterized in ways that are less than flattering. Also, by my speaking out as Dean, the School of Engineering might be misunderstood in some eyes to be backtracking on its commitment to diversity. This is not the case. As I have stated in a recent School of Engineering newsletter, (see <http://web.mit.edu/engineering/enews/vol1no5-feature.html>), diversity is critical to MIT's and the School's educational mission: "Simply put, our diversity efforts are important to us because we believe they make MIT a better institution. Diversity is a matter of self interest." Diversity is also the right thing to do. I am proud of what the School has been doing to create a more diverse and welcoming community and I am proud of the programs we have put in place to enhance our diversity (see the newsletter article for examples). I also applaud the initiative that the MIT President and Provost have put in place to undertake a

comprehensive, rigorous, and systematic study of the impact of race on the hiring, advancement, and experience of under-represented minority faculty at the Institute. Even though I firmly believe that the Institute handled Professor Sherley's tenure case fairly, I also believe that we all can and must do more to create a more welcoming and diverse community. The future of the Institute, like the future of American society, depends on it.