RISE Campaign FAQ

Racism, sexism, and chauvinism at MIT

What does sexism at MIT look like?

Sexism exists everywhere, but it can be especially rampant in environments where women and nonbinary people are underrepresented. This places academia, and particularly a STEM-dominated institution like MIT, in a prime position for sexism to manifest at all levels.

We can see this issue reflected in MIT's results from a 2019 survey conducted by the Association of American Universities (AAU). At MIT, 47% of female graduate students - nearly double the rate of male graduate students - and 62% of TGQN (transgender, genderqueer, and/or non-conforming) graduate students have experienced sexual harassment since entering graduate school. Out of those graduate women who have faced sexual harassment, 35% of them were harassed by a faculty member, 83% never reported to an office or program about it, and 58% reported suffering negative personal consequences from that harassment. While the magnitudes alone are troubling, we find that the situation is worse at MIT than at other peer institutions in some aspects. For example, the survey discovered that **graduate students at MIT are more than three times as likely to suffer sexual harassment at the hands of their advisor**, compared to the national average. These statistics show there is a **massive** problem on our campus.

Sexism manifests in many different ways, from seemingly small, everyday behaviors to systemic forms of exclusion and marginalization. It can look like a graduate student who always comments on a female colleague's appearance in a way that is inappropriate and obviously targeted, or judgement of a woman's values based on how she chooses to express herself outwardly. Sexism is a professor who refuses to learn and use someone's preferred pronouns, or

unknowingly assigns more non-research lab tasks to their female students than to their male students. Sexism is also deep, structural barriers as well.

Even if you aren't directly targeted by harassment, abuse, or discrimination, it will still have a negative effect on you and your colleagues by creating a more hostile working environment and by depriving us all of the full potential of our colleagues who are targeted. There is no place for chauvinism, harassment, or discrimination of any kind in our insititute. It is in our hands to fight against these issues in ourselves and our colleagues until we have created a new culture at MIT which reflects the potential of so many brilliant minds coming together, with respect and dignity for all.

What does racism at MIT look like?

As in society generally, racism at MIT takes many different forms, and it is exacerbated by power imbalances, particularly the severe power imbalance between advisor/PI/professor and advisee/graduate researcher/student. Extensive institute and departmental surveys emphasize that experiences for URM students at MIT are alarming. The 2018 MIT Climate Survey showed that URM graduate students reported bias/discrimination as a source of stress at rates three times higher than non-URMs. Similarly, the 2019 Graduate Enrolled Student Survey claimed that URM students reported cost-of-living, self-confidence, and social-isolation as barriers to their academic progress at nearly twice the rate of non-URMs. URM students also did not feel as if they were part of the climate at MIT and believed they needed to work harder than their peers to be perceived as legitimate at twice the rate of non-URMs.

We can find additional examples of racism from the BGSA Petition to Support Black Lives at MIT, some of which are listed below.

- "Department staff told students during orientation to immediately call the police on anyone walking in the building who 'didn't look like they were students'"
- "As a GRA, I've had to call for medical transports for students and the cops show up (armed) every time and make unfounded accusations and verbally abuse students in the name of 'collecting facts'"
- "MITPD would always establish a secure perimeter around MIT property during Cambridge Carnival, which made me feel like I couldn't be Carribean and affiliated with the Institute at the same time."
- "My friend knocked on his neighbor's door in a graduate dorm. She called the police on him. The police refused to believe he was a student and made him exit the building and questioned him."

What about other forms of marginalization, harassment, and discrimination?

Our campaign has set out an ambitious set of demands to tackle issues of sexism and racism at MIT. However, that is not the end of our fight and we recognize that students face other forms of margnalization, harassment, and discrimination which are not directly or extensively addressed in our current demands. The campaign aims to fight most directly on the issues of racism and sexism at this time and to do so not in a manner which provides for narrow or temporary solutions, but which instead seeks the root cause of these issues and aims to address them. We are working to build a framework for community engagement, accountability, and student empowerment which will lay the groundwork for future campaigns which will focus on other forms of oppression on our campus.

It is also worth noting that there is significant overlap between different forms of marginalization across different dimensions of identity. For example, a disproportionate number of URM students are also first generation or low income (FGLI) students; as a result, our demand to introduce fee waivers for URM applicants which are not means-tested would support some FGLI applicants who may currently fall through the cracks. While this is certainly not a replacement for advocacy which is fully centered on FGLI students, it does demonstrate how these demands make progress towards addressing other forms of marginalization. In a similar vein, our demands to strengthen or introduce new institutional sites of student advocacy, such as department-level DEI officers, are not inherently limited to combating racism and sexism, and they can be utilized as points of leverage in future student advocacy efforts.

We hope to work with any and all dedicated student advocates who want to improve our campus. Please reach out to us if you would like to speak about how we can work together to fight for the issues that you care about. Your perspective is incredibly important to us, especially if you feel that we have left it out of our discussion so far.

This isn't my problem, why should I care?

While harassment and discrimination may not have directly impacted you, it likely has affected the lives of your colleagues; it has prevented many people from ever even becoming your colleagues. The extra burden of harassment and discrimination detracts from mental and physical health, which can have severe ripple effects on career and educational achievement. It also causes feelings of betrayal, which can lead to targets of harassment and discrimination withdrawing from their work in order to protect themselves.

These issues ultimately affect everyone. As is stated in the NASEM Report, "the cumulative effect of sexual harassment is significant damage to research integrity and a costly loss of talent in academic science, engineering, and medicine. Women faculty in science, engineering, and medicine who experience sexual harassment report three common professional outcomes: stepping down from leadership opportunities to avoid the perpetrator, leaving their institution, and leaving their field altogether." From our experience, we know this is true for racism and other forms of exclusionary chauvinism and discrimination. This loss in talent prevents academia from being a true meritocracy. As an institution, we believe in a collaborative scientific endeavour in which we support each other to reach new achievements together. We cannot thrive in an environment where individuals and groups are undercut by prejudice and it is the duty of all of us to welcome all into science equally.

Harassment and discrimination serve as additional barriers into a field that disproportionately affect racial, national, sexual, and gender minorities. We should all strive to create an academic environment in which truly anyone can succeed, regardless of their background, the prejudice of those around them, and, perhaps most importantly, the structural impediments that face marginalized groups today. If we want to achieve a diverse and inclusive environment, we need to actively work to break down these barriers.

Additionally, our own structures must value equity for us to justify our work. We cannot expect the research enterprise of MIT to truly make progress on reducing global suffering and inequity if our practices consistently fail to address the abuses of power and hostility on our own campus. Our university must ensure that our work is produced in an environment which is consistent with our values and our stated goals, or those goals will be lost. We all believe in making a better world, but change must start at home.

How do we compare to other schools?

2 in 5 MIT graduate will experience sexual harassment or violence, according to the 2019 AAU survey. (This refers to sexual harassment from anyone on campus, including classmates, advisors, and staff.) While this rate is close to the national average, MIT advising stands out as particularly bad. stands out as a particularly poor environment for suffering sexual harassment at the hands of an advisor. Graduate sudents report that they suffer from sexual harassment at the hands of their advisor at a rate **3x higher** compared to the national average. This type of harassment and discrimination across power imbalance is even more damaging and support a toxic culture, as described below ("What about student-to-student problems?").

Why isn't Title IX or IDHR enough?

The current offices at MIT, previously the Title IX and Bias Response office and now the Institute Discrimination and Harassment Response office (IDHR) are stretched far too thin. This isn't their fault. It has to do with university's priorities.

Title IX is a federal law against discrimination on the basis of sex from educational activities or related activities receiving federal funding, encompassing essentially all of higher education in the United States. Historically, introducing Title IX (T9) offices on campus was a critical step in the right direction for addressing gender harassment and discrimination on campus. While we welcome their efforts, the evidence shows that these offices are just not enough. Many universities' efforts, according to the NASEM report, have focused on 'symbolic compliance with current law and avoiding liability, and not on preventing sexual harassment.

The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) is a national collective of research academies in the United States. In November 2018, NASEM released a consensus study report, "**Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine**" under the oversight of the Committee of Women in Science, Engineering, and Medicine (CWSEM). The findings were not groundbreaking. Much of what the report contained was already widely acknowledged and documented elsewhere.

What stood out was that such an authoritative body as NASEM was putting forth proof of the pervasiveness of sexual and gender harassment and discrimination in academia, in addition to the clear and dramatic negative impacts that this has on the climate of academia and especially the personal health and professional impacts on women and minorities working within it. The American Association of Universities (AAU) 2019 survey on Sexual Assault and Misconduct, taken by 33 colleges and universities, clearly shows the prevalence and persistence of harassment at MIT, in addition to the unique degree of abuse involving institutionalized power imbalance.

At MIT, the T9 office has now merged with HR to form the Institute Discrimination and Harassment Response office (IDHR), an office with a similar mission and mode of operation to T9. These offices are undeniably filled with people who care very deeply for the mission of combating violence, harassment, and discrimination, and we are grateful for their dedication. We believe that they are structurally limited by the processes that they work within and the limited resources that they receive for this mission. It is our goal to raise up the work they are already doing and ensure that the administration treats their mission at MIT to reduce harassment and discrimination as the top priority that it should be.

What is institutional betrayal and why does it matter to me?

Simply put, institutional betrayal occurs when an institution or those who most prominently represent it break trust with its community members. MIT leadership has unfortunately broken the community's trust too many times, leaving a broad sense of betrayal and a lot of work to do if they hope to rebuild that trust.

In recent decades, our understanding of traumatic experience and their impact on people has been shifting and expanding to encompass many unfortunately common experiences, such as childhood abuse and systematic failures of our shared insitutitions. One factor which has gained greater recognition is the role that institutions play in response to traumatic experiences and the impact that a failed response can have on individuals. Institutional betrayal encompasses both abuse by people who represent the institution themselves, such as priests in the church or football coaches at Big Ten schools, and the failure of the institution to respond to these abuses adequately.

Abuse in a trusting relationship, such as an advising relationship between a student and their advisor, can lead to more severe negative consequences for the target. Not only must a student face abuse across a power imbalance, but this sense of betrayal is known to amplify the negative outcomes for mental and physical health. Further, if that student then goes to the administration to report this and is instead told that they shouldn't report this for some reason, that is a second betrayal which can compound the betrayal and trauma for the target. MIT is an institution on a hill, calling on higher values and goals, naming itself a home and community for its members. MIT has created an environment which fosters a sense of trust for all community members in its language. However, its practice has made it clear to many of us that we are not valued equally at the institute and abusers further up the ladder can abuse those below them. Beyond these individual cases, there is a widespread sense that the MIT leadership has lost the trust of the community. Indeed, many of us feel that recent decisions have betrayed our trust that the administration will act in our best interests and have failed to live up to our shared values.

We call on MIT to live up to this high standard that their rhetoric sets because we know that a different MIT is possible and, for many of us, it is necessary.

Where can I go to talk to someone about my experiences of harassment or discrimination?

If you are looking just to talk to someone about your experience, the office of Violence Prevention and Response (VPR) is one of the most popular resources on campus among students

and they will always do their best to help you or anyone that you might be concerned about. You can also call their hotline at (617) 253-2300 if you want to talk to someone.

MIT Mental Health and Counseling is also an invaluable resource on campus that we encourage people to reach out to. You can contact them to get therapy on campus if available or get a referral off campus. As of September 2020, we now have 52 free off-campus therapy sessions a year on the Extended Student Health Insurance which we encourage all students to take advantage of if you would like to start to talk with a mental health professional about your experience.

The Institute Discrimination and Harassment Response office (IDHR) is a new office which has replaced the functions of the Title IX office. You have the option to either informally or formally report, and you can specify the type of disciplinary action you are seeking for your case. If you would like to speak with someone about reporting an incident of misconduct, harassment, or discrimination, then contact this office to learn more about the next steps.

If you would like to speak with one of your peers, many departments have REFS, who are trained resources that make themselves available for peer counseling. They can be an invaluable resource and should be able to speak with you and refer you to professional resources on campus if you would like.

You can always reach out to the campaign if you want to learn more about any of these resources or would like to talk about your experience. Email us at rise4mit@gmail.com.

Campaign Questions

What is happening with the Support Black Lives at MIT petition from BGSA and BSU?

The Support Black Lives at MIT (SBL) petition was released in June this year in response to the national uprising and MIT's own failure to make serious progress on many of the 2015 BGSA Recommendations. In response to the petition, there was a massive showing of support for the demands (1) to make strategic commitments at the highest level to implement the 2015 BGSA Recommendations with participation by BGSA leadership, and (2) to call for greater transparency and accountability around MIT PD. To read more about the campaign updates from these specific efforts, go to the "Support Black Lives Updates" tab on this site.

RISE is a complementary effort which aims to expand on the process started by the SBL petition this Summer. We have continued to think about the demands brought forward in 2015 and have now further detailed them to ensure timely and effective implementation. Additionally, we have expanded on that platform to address other areas which were not originally included in the 2015 Recommendations but which, upon receiving community feedback, we realize are critical components to fighting anti-Black racism at MIT, such as hiring and disciplinary issues.

What happened with the mental health insurance demands?

During the Summer of 2019, grad student mental health was a topic of national conversation. According to national studies, 39% of graduate students suffer from depression and 41% suffer from anxiety. And MIT, with its high-pressure, competitive environment, is sadly no exception to this trend. According to the 2019 Enrolled Student Survey, 1 in 3 MIT grad students have felt so depressed that it is difficult to function, 9 in 10 have felt overwhelmed, and 2 in 3 have felt isolated. These numbers are unacceptably high and demanded a response. Our response was to start Graduate Students for a Healthy MIT, a grassroots student advocacy group that aims to improve the lives of all on our campus by making it a healthier place to live, work, and learn.

To raise awareness and reduce stigma around the issue, we began by writing op-eds of familiar struggles for grad students at MIT, putting out informational posters, reaching out to meet with dozens of student groups, and writing a petition which we would bring throughout campus to talk with students about their experience with mental health. Our conversations made it clear that many students at MIT were struggling and that everyone had things that they wished could be changed, even if they were doing okay. Our campaign primarily aimed to improve coverage of and access to mental healthcare so we could begin to help all those who were struggling.

After just a few months of organizing across campus, the grassroots mental health campaign secured a major victory - an expansion of mental healthcare services on campus that will go into effect starting September of 2020. We won covered therapy sessions for outside referrals will increase from 12 to 52 for outside referrals, and copays for every session after the sessions that are covered will be reduced from $25 to $5 per session; trans health benefits, including hair removal and voice training; additional referral staff at MIT medical to make referrals more expedient and smooth; and overall healthcare plan cost will remain the same.

While this is an exciting victory, we also understand the fight is not over. Namely, we must address the structural issues that exacerbate and cause issues such as mental health concerns. Although many factors contribute to the growing graduate mental health crisis, one major root cause stands out. Unsupportive and dysfunctional advising relationships is cited as one of the strongest predictors for poor mental health outcomes. These relationships are at the heart of graduate education and, when healthy, can be fruitful for everyone involved. However, instead of elevating students' scholarship, a recent MIT-administered quality of life survey found that for two out of five graduate students, their relationship with their advisor is an obstacle to their academic success. We must start to address and compensate for this inherent power imbalance, and we need your help.

Thank you to all those who signed our petition, helped get signatures, poster in your department, and talked to your friends and students in your labs to get the word out about this critical issue and campaign. We also want to give a special shout out to our more than 25 student group co-sponsors who really uplifted, supported, and helped organize with us!

Why do students need to take action?

We want to emphasize that we would not have been able to secure our insurance victories without the collective effort of the graduate student community. Our campaign took the fight to the departments, to the groups, and to the labs. We went lab to lab to obtain petition signatures, but more importantly to talk to graduate students about the struggle with mental health at MIT, to discuss how we can work together to improve mental health care at MIT, and how people can get involved. It was through this process that we were able to come together, identify what issues we faced, and discuss how it could be done.

These problems have been an issue of life at MIT for many decades, with institute reports and committees making recommendations for decades. However, despite the awareness of the problem, these past approaches to creating change have rarely resulted in meaningful change. With our approach through building broader support and engagement, we were able to secure a major victory in just a matter of months!

How can I get involved?

There are lots of ways that people can get involved! Here are a few.

- Stay up to date with our mailing list
- Attend an info session to meet some of our organizers and ask any questions
- Connect with our organizers working in your department
- If you are a member of a student group, set up a meeting between our organizer and your student group to discuss working together
- Join our Thursday meetings at 7pm virtually (grad students only, please!)
- Reach out to other grad students and faculty to build support
- Write an op-ed about your experience with racism and sexism at MIT
- Run a departmental event with us to raise awareness
- Meet with departmental leadership together to help negotiate our demands

If you have any questions at all about these ways to get involved, questions for us, or ideas that you'd like to share, reach out to grads4healthymit@gmail.com and we'll get back to you right away.

Why are you being this confrontational?

We would always prefer to have allies and work in collaboration with administrators who share our concerns and urgency for these critical issues. In particular, we have already found strong allies for instituting the changes in this campaign through conversations with various support offices on campus, including VPR, IDHR, and various departmental leaders. Working in collaboration with well-aligned university employees is fruitful, and we are always looking for additional opportunities for this kind of collaboration. Everyone's participation will be necessary if we hope to change MIT's culture.

At the same time, through our experience interacting with MIT, both as organizers and as students seeking support, we often find that we have greater urgency to address these issues than our administration. For a variety of reasons, the priorities of some administrators in creating robust anti-harassment and discrimination mechanisms often do not align with the priorities and needs of the students who are most sharply affected.

It is clear from experience that we need to pressure those administrators who have the power and resources to help us to actually do so. The most compelling way to demonstrate the urgency and

pervasiveness of harrassment and discrimination is by making this campaign a grassroots and inter-departmental one and by always remaining firm in our demands for concrete change. We must be assertive of our community's needs and push for what we know is right.

Won't my advisor be upset with me if I support this?

These demands are to support the community as a whole, by providing advisors with the resources to know how to counter harassment and discriminatory behaviors. We know there are many great advisors, but even a well-meaning advisor can unintentionally perpetrate harassing behavior or allow it to go unchecked in their own group. By increasing and publicizing training for advisors, advisors will know how to provide the support they would like to give their labs and students. Additionally, the faculty panel that handles harassment and discrimination cases is currently limited only to tenured faculty members, meaning untenured faculty are also at risk of not having their interest represented in these cases. The demands of this petition offer meaningful justice to both the complainant and the respondent; a representative panel allows the interests of both sides to be considered, rather than just the interests of tenured faculty.

If you are concerned that your advisor would actively retaliate against you for supporting these demands, that is probably an indication that you need these demands. The nature of the power imbalance in current advising relationships is what undergirds the possibility of retaliatory or even petty behavior from faculty towards their students. That power imbalance is in part exactly what we hope to address with our campaign. There is also safety in numbers. These demands are very popular across our campus and you will not be alone in supporting them. We encourage students to talk together about how to approach conversations with professors about these demands and to seek their support collectively.

What about student-to-student problems?

Student-to-student, or peer harassment, is a problem and a common type of harassment that students face given the ratio of students to faculty. As such, part of our platform is to expand student support services and training. We all need to reflect on our position in MIT and the privileged position that some of us find ourselves in compared to those of us who face significant obstacles due to racism, sexism, and other forms of chauvinism. While peer-to-peer harassment must be addressed and we plan to advocate for reforms on the student Title IX process in the future, we believe that it is critical that we address harassing and discriminatory behavior by faculty because abuse across power imbalances are more difficult and risky to report while the infrastructure to do so is less defined. This has long-term implications as a graduate advisor will serve as a reference and potential academic collaborator for even decades past the end of a formal advising relationship.

Additionally, faculty members set an example to the rest of their group, department, and even discipline of what is acceptable behavior, such that bad behavior by faculty members sends the message to everyone else that they can, and maybe even should, do the same. If a faculty member is regularly discounting the work of women, students of color, international students, or any marginalized group, that will send a clear message to the group that it is acceptable or even correct to discriminate along these lines. Rather, we hope to see faculty playing a more positive role and we are confident that they can. They should take an active role in addressing peer-to-peer harassment and discrimination in their own groups by stepping in to defend those who are targeted and making it clear that such behavior will not be rewarded or tolerated.

Admissions and Hiring

How bad is underrepresentation at MIT?

Over the last 15 years, MIT's Institutional Research Office reports that the percentage of underrepresented minority (URM) graduate students has remained largely stagnant. Specifically, over this time period, the percentage of Latinx students has increased by only 2% whereas there has been no progress for Black, American Indian or Pacific Islander graduate students. Such trends are worse for faculty - for the past five years, MIT has made no progress in the percentage of URM faculty. Furthermore, climate surveys highlight that underrepresented students feel less accepted and supported as compared to other groups - such sentiments are magnified when one takes into account intersectional identities such as women and queer URM students. The McGee report gives specific voice to the biases that graduate students of color face during their time at MIT including: direct discrimination, alientation by faculty and peers, and stereotype threat.

In 2015, the MIT Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA) presented seven recommendations to leadership. The first recommendation called on MIT to "develop and implement a ten-year plan to increase the number of underrepresented minority graduate students, in particular Black graduate students." This recommendation was not new - in fact about ten years prior, the 2004 MIT Faculty Policy Committee (FPC) White Paper and the unanimous resolution committed to the recruitment of URM faculty and graduate students*. It called for the Provost, Academic Deans, Dean of Graduate Education, and Department Heads to take all necessary and sufficient steps to increase the percent of underrepresented minority faculty by roughly a factor of two (2) within a decade and underrepresented minority graduate students by roughly a factor of three (3) within a decade.

Although MIT has been successful in increasing the number of URM undergraduate students, the decentralized nature of graduate admissions, where each department handles their own admissions processes, has hindered the progress for increasing URM graduate students. The FPC noted that by not increasing URM numbers, MIT will "miss the fastest growing pool of talent in the nation and ultimately will be unrepresentative of the groups that will become the economic engine of the US." Similarly, the BGSA noted that "***increasing the number of URM graduate students is an important catalyst for creating a culture at MIT that lives up to its values of diversity and inclusion***." Ultimately, without a centralized plan, efforts and practices to do so are fragmented, variable, and without an accountability structure. For consistent, year-to-year improvement, MIT stakeholders (e.g. Office of the Provost, ICEO, Deans of Schools and College of Computing, Departments Heads, etc.) need to be coordinated and committed, to ensure a plan is created and executed.

* It should be noted that similar goals were expressed in MIT's Presidential Committee on Race and Diversity (1994), the Report of the Initiative on Faculty Race and Diversity (2010), the Inventing our Future Website (2011), and the recent Diversity Summit (2012).

What is wrong with grad admissions at MIT?

Graduate admissions at MIT are decentralized, with each department having complete control over its own admissions process. There are no institute-wide standards for equitable admissions processes nor mechanisms of accountability or transparency for the processes used in each department. This is problematic because many of the metrics that are used to evaluate prospective students are inherently biased, leading to the systematic exclusion of groups that are traditionally underrepresented in higher education. For example, many studies have found that the GRE, which is required by many graduate programs at MIT, is actively biased and exhibits deep disparities in test performance based on gender, race/ethnicity, citizenship status, and monetary resources (Miller 2019, ETS 2018, Langin 2019, Powers 1986, Dixon-Roman 2013).

Similarly, grad admissions biases are incurred from hiring processes that involve scientific nepotism. Some professors exclusively hire, or are more willing to hire, students that are a part of their academic genealogy or that of a collaborator. A major problem in these cases is that lack of diversity is perpetuated amongst these research groups. This can be due to implicit biases against members of URM groups, which then leads to disproportionate hiring of overrepresented students when nepotism is involved. Another problem in these cases is that students who are members of a professor's genealogy are put in a position of privilege over otherwise-deserving candidates who may be more qualified for the position.

It is clear that there is a problem with MIT graduate admissions processes given the fact that the demographics of MIT graduate students do not reflect the diversity of the United States. Since 2010, the population of Latinx students has only increased by 2%, while the populations of other URM groups, including African Americans, Indigenous Americans, and Pacific Islanders have not increased at all (MIT Office of the Provost).

To combat these issues, MIT must develop a 10 year plan to increase representation of URM groups, develop institute wide standards for equitable admissions processes including bias training for those involved in these processes, and include student voices in the graduate admissions process.

What is wrong with our current faculty hiring practices?

Hiring and promotion are two critical processes that shape academia now and into the future. Faculty hiring and promotion is a process involving many factors to assess the capability of the

candidate and their fit for the institution. However, in the many factors that are considered, the bias of faculty members evaluating the candidates is introduced in a multitude of ways. With the long history of male dominance of academia and underrepresentation of people of color, this problem recreates itself through bias in the hiring and tenure process, often introduced unconsciously.

With increasing awareness of the underrepresentation of groups across academia despite growing representation in the applicant pool, scholars have developed a set of evidence-based practices to fight bias in faculty hiring processes. We have the tools that we need to solve this problem clearly laid out in front of us. The only thing that we lack is the political will for MIT to institute them in its own practice.

This is not a new problem to our community or even to our leadership. The 2010 Hammond Report on faculty diversity made it clear to the campus that we have a serious issue of underrepresentation that must be addressed and provided many of the same recommendations that we are advocating for now. Despite the ten years that have passed since, the ICEO found only 30% of the recommendations have been implemented, many partially, and the number shows that we have seen a very modest increase in faculty representation for women and people of color. The report calls for a reassessment of the issue every five to ten years to see what progress has been made. That reassessment is now overdue. More importantly, MIT leadership must go beyond reassessment and move to institute these proven practices to combat bias in faculty hiring now.

What would be different about having students involved in hiring decisions?

There are many benefits to incorporating graduate students in the hiring process. One of the goals of an academic institution is to recruit prospective scholars, and the feedback of current students gives clarity to the mentorship and studies that will attract young researchers. Furthermore, given the higher rate of turnover for students compared to faculty, it is not uncommon for the graduate student population to be more diverse in culture and background. This provides a distinct lens through which to view faculty candidates and the hiring process that will eventually lead to the desired faculty diversity. Finally, this process is beneficial to students as it allows them to gain perspective into the nature of the academic hiring process. As a whole, student involvement not only benefits faculty in their ability to make the decision, it also benefits the professional development of the students themselves.

What would this look like? One model is to have a graduate student panel or lunch with the prospective candidate. This is something that is currently being done in the Department of

Biological Engineering and in AeroAstro, for instance. However, graduate student feedback alone is insufficient, since it is all too easy for the department to undervalue or dismiss entirely the opinions of graduate students. It is important to also add student representatives on the hiring committee to allow for the student perspective to have real weight and influence throughout the process.

How is diversity connected to sexual harassment?

It is impossible to disentangle gender-based harassment from the general struggle against harassment and discrimination of all kinds. We simply cannot hope to tackle sexual harassment in a meaningful way *for all students* without also demanding (in a concrete way) equity and inclusivity for people of color, international students, LGBTQIA+ status, disability status, and all marginalized groups.

The severe power imabalnce between advisor/PI/professor and advisee/graduate researcher/student makes the threat of systemic harassment and discrimination a reality for all graduate students, particularly those who are women, gender minorities, and POC. At the same time, it is well known that people of color are even more likely to be subject to harassment or discrimination in the workplace, and academia is no exception. Furthermore, research has shown that women of color are often uncertain whether they are being marginalized in a particular instance because of their gender or because of their race, demonstrating the impossibility of separating these forms of harassment. By the same token, international students are especially vulnerable to harassment due to the precariousness of visa issues and general immigration status.

Diversity cannot stop simply at the presence of women, gender minorities, or people of color on our campus. Working in an environment where you are marginalized often means being unable to bring “your whole self” to work and conforming to majority behavior and expectations others put upon you. This burdens marginalized groups further and creates additional obstacles to their success in academia.

Studies show that sexual harassment is far more likely to occur in a generally hostile environment. In fact, organizational culture is the strongest predictor of high incidence of harassment in the workplace. It is necessary therefore to combat all forms of oppression and marginzliation on our campus if we hope to address any one form of hostility, chauvinism, harassment, or discrimination. Creating an environment that equally and actively values the safety and contributions of all people, and demonstrates that fact through representation at all levels, is critical to creating a less hostile environment for everyone.

Climate and Resources

Why is training important?

Training focused on preventing harassment and discrimination or on recognizing implicit bias are important because we need to establish a shared understanding of the issues that we face and establish clear expectations for behavior together. Without this type of community wide engagement, we will not be able to meaningfully shift our organizational climate and culture.

The culture and climate of MIT is built on the beliefs and behaviors of its community members. Any genuine efforts to improve our culture and climate will require that we have meaningful engagement with all community members, including students, faculty, and staff. Further, since we all recognize the difficulty and complexity of these issues, we cannot allow efforts to combat racism and sexism to occur in bursts and jolts. Instead, there must be sustained efforts with meaningful accountability for ongoing engagement and progress. Issues of engagement and accountability are too often pointed to by the administration as the challenges that they cannot overcome. We reject this logic and instead say that engagement and accountability are in fact the solutions, which require the meaningful dedication of resources and empowerment of advocates to bring to fruition.

While initiatives to recruit women and POC to academia are becoming more and more common, those who enter academia continue to be met by harassment and left without institutional support. As a result, women and POC are effectively pushed out of academia through lack of recognition and devaluation of their work compared to their male and White colleagues. Members of our community approach this and other problems with varying levels of shared understanding or expectations of how we should treat each other. Training on harassment and discrimination as well as implicit bias can be utilized as a means to create a greater shared understanding and expectations for behavior. Beyond basic understanding, training can also provide skills to community members who wish to proactively build a positive organizational climate. In order to create inclusion and equity of women and POC in academia, it is essential that we work to improve organizational climate, as this is the best predictor of harassment according to the NASEM report.

Don’t we already have online training?

How many times have you rushed through the slides of an online training just to get it over with? The stark truth is that online training in its current state is not engaging. It is able to communicate the legal concerns around harassment, but it fails to tap into the underlying cultural practices that allow harassment to continue. Many online trainings reinforce gender biases, and

studies have found that such training can actually increase proclivity of trainees to harass others. Additionally, online training is often standardized to train students and faculty across a broad range of disciplines, while in reality the way harassment manifests in a classroom or an office can be vastly different than harassment in a laboratory or fieldwork setting, such that methods of intervening and addressing harassment differ.

In-person training allows for a higher level of engagement, and it creates a space for people to ask questions and learn from each other. Literature in organizational psychology suggests that social (rather than passive) diversity training leads to greater behavioral outcomes. Such a training that is held in person can also be customized to suit the group receiving the training. An in-person training has been developed in the Chemistry department, and covers a wide range of topics including policies, bystander intervention, resources, reporting options and assistance, how to build an inclusive working and learning environment, and activities for labs to better utilize the diversity of thought within their group. This training has been well received by those who have attended the training so far. As reported at the ASEE Virtual Conference At Home with Engineering Education by Volpatti et al. in her talk entitled 'Promoting an Inclusive Lab Culture through Custom In-Person Trainings within an Engineering Department,' of those who completed the training, 95% felt there was an appropriate level of interactivity, which is much more difficult to achieve in an online training. According to the follow-up survey, 87% of participants agreed that they would recommend this training to other departments. We have seen large demand for this training and at this point, demand for the in-person training exceeds the capacity of VPR to deliver the training to interested groups. Based on the initial response, we see the expansion of this in-person training as a promising step toward reducing harassment at MIT.

Why do we need to bring in DEI Officers?

In recent years, departmental and institutional initiatives have increased the awareness of underlying culture and climate issues at MIT, often through survey data, committee reports, and conversations resulting from a heightened national visibility and openness around these topics. Awareness of an issue is not enough to solve it, though, as one must go from a general awareness to identification of a more specific, root problem and then finally a translation of the problem into targeted, meaningful solutions. Thorough execution of this hefty process requires a lot of time and expertise that no average MIT student or faculty has. Just think: we would never ask a political scientist, say, to analyze experimental data on gene expression in mice. Thus, presuming that faculty or a student committee in the Biology department could effectively analyze extensive climate data and come up with targeted solutions to complex, systemic problems of gender, culture, etc. is ludicrous.

Further, it is unrealistic to expect faculty to have or give the time necessary to execute such a process, and the burden often falls on students who must take time away from their research and/or personal time to perform this service work without compensation. Students have very limited power and are at risk of exposure or retaliation for speaking openly to department administration about their experiences or trying to advocate for aggressive solutions. National or institute-wide reports and recommendations can help, but to most effectively address the problem we need department-specific solutions, as each department has its own culture, practices, and problems.

Having a full-time, dedicated Diversity Officer (DO) in each department at MIT would alleviate the immense administrative burden of DEI initiatives from students and faculty and shield students from compromising positions by acting as an intermediary between students and faculty. A full-time DO would also significantly streamline DEI initiatives, as they could draw upon their DEI-specific expertise and experience in diagnosing problems and running initiatives. DOs would also maintain a long-running and intimate knowledge of initiatives that have happened at MIT, which would help to save time, avoid unnecessary duplication of work, and iteratively improve upon strategies over the long-term. Crucially, as full-time, long-term, and dedicated DEI experts, DOs would also provide accountability for department and MIT faculty and leadership to actually follow through on the DEI proposals and initiatives developed by DOs, students, faculty, and Institute committees.

Accountability and Protections

What is the current process for dealing with abusive advisors and why doesn't it work?

Right now, the guidelines for filing complaints about abuse aren't clear, and the processes for resolving them are fractured, variable, and often informal. This uncertainty often deters students from pursuing change, either by reporting the abuse and/or seeking a new working arrangement, which results in students staying in an advisor-advisee relationship that is abusive or even just a poor match. The confusing and often variable process wastes students' time and can leave students more vulnerable to abuse in the interim or indefinitely. Even if a student reports the abuse, the process by which complaints against faculty are handled is murky and consists of many major barriers to cases being resolved in our favor.

Where would you go if you experienced abuse? If you were subject to racial or sexual harassment or discrimination, your complaint might fall under the scope of MIT's newly formed IDHR. You should not feel reassured, however, because this office's resolution process suffers from several critical flaws. In Section 3 of our demands, we outline these shortcomings at length, but some of the major ones include a lack of anonymity when reporting abuse, an adjudication board made up only of faculty, no guarantee you will see the outcome of your case, and no meaningful protections from retaliation.

Regardless of the outcome of your complaint, if you choose to switch labs after the ordeal, you are not guaranteed any funding and must scramble to find new accommodations. A student in this situation is left feeling vulnerable and anxious, which can lead to poor decisions such as joining a new lab that is not a good fit.

The non-transparency, inconsistency, and injustice inherent in the processes needed to deal with an abusive advisor are unacceptable, and we can do better.

Why is it important to have no time limit on reporting complaints against faculty/staff?

Those who have suffered from abuse may understandably hesitate to report what they have experienced. Not wanting to relive trauma or face additional threats from an abuser, who may still be an advisor, are key reasons for waiting. This is why it is critical for MIT to clearly state in their Complaint Resolution Policy that there is no time limit for reporting complaints of misconduct and that the passage of time is not a valid reason for the advisory board to deny the

investigation of a formal complaint. Such a policy will remove yet another barrier to reporting and holding faculty and staff accountable for any harassing, abusive, and/or discriminatory practices.

Why should the reports to the advisory panel be anonymized in the complaint resolution process?

Anonymizing the investigator's report that is given to the advisory panel for review and subsequent determination of any policy violation is important for two main reasons: preservation of privacy and prevention of bias in the ruling.

First, anonymization eliminates concerns of privacy and confidentiality associated with the process, particularly with the addition of students and staff to the advisory board. The report given to the advisory panel can often include very personal, private information about both the complainant and respondent. Removing the association of names with those details minimizes the chances of any private information spreading and coloring the relationships between the complainant or respondent and those who see the report as well as, in the case of an unfortunate breach of policy, anyone else outside of the process who may learn details of the case.

The second reason for report anonymization is to limit the chance of bias based on any reputation or status the complainant or respondent may have. For example, one can imagine a situation where a well-known and/or influential professor is the respondent in a case: the association of their name with the report could sway those on the advisory panel to rule differently based on the respondent's reputation and/or fear of retaliation. While it is the job of the Associate Provost to assign impartial panel members to avoid any conflicts of interest and biases, some complainants or respondents may have reputations that span the majority of the university, making true impartiality impossible while names are associated with the review and ruling of the case.

For these reasons, we demand that anonymization of all reports to the advisory panel and any decision-maker who is assigning punishment be added as official, required policy to MIT Policy 9.8 for Complaint Resolutions.

Why is it important to have students on the advisory board and panels which review and rule on formal complaints against faculty/staff?

At present in MIT Policies and Procedures 9.8, faculty respondents receive separate treatment, and a hearing presided over by a 3-person panel drawn from a pool of trained faculty members.

This creates the potential for bias in the outcome of the case. For instance, faculty may be more sympathetic to their peers than the average person or they might feel pressured to be lenient due to the respondent's reputation. Diversifying the panels to include students and staff helps keep the panel fair and accountable. Further, diversification of the panel reflects better representation of *all* the participants of the case, since the complainant is usually not faculty.

Harassment persists in environments that are isolating, have power differentials, and due to perceived institutional tolerance of such behavior. From the 2019 AAU survey, which reports the prevalence of sexual harassment at MIT, we find that MIT has higher levels of harassment perpetrated by faculty members, instructors and advisors than its peers. Of graduate women who experienced harassing behavior at MIT, 35.3% reported that the offender was a faculty member or instructor (Harvard 25.5%, Stanford 22.2%, Yale 30.6%, AAU aggregate 24.0%), and 11% reported that the offender was their advisor (Harvard 3.6%, Stanford 4.2%, Yale 5.2%, AAU aggregate 4.6%).

Notably, the recent NASEM Report on the Sexual Harassment of Women in Academic Sciences, Engineering and Medicine provides recommendations to dismantle such environments. In particular, recommendations 4, 5, and 15 call for "improving transparency and accountability", "diffusing hierarchical and dependent relationships between trainees and faculty", and "making the entire community responsible for reducing and preventing sexual harassment." Power differentials can be reduced when community members are treated in an equitable manner. The power discrepancy between faculty, staff and students is clearly evident in the fact that while all groups can be victims of harassment, students and staff are excluded from the panel that oversees the disciplinary process. However, student and staff participation in policy and discipline already exists when the student is a respondent. The Committee on Discipline (COD), via MIT COD Rules and Regulations XVII.A, "consists of six elected members of the Faculty, three undergraduate and two graduate students, the Vice President and Dean for Student Life, and the Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate and Graduate Education, ex officio, or representatives as designated by the Vice President/Dean and Vice Chancellor." (Unfortunately, students do not serve on the COD sexual misconduct subcommittee). Absence of student panelists for sexual misconduct cases of all types, in contrast with faculty members being present for all disciplinary hearings, illustrates an institutional belief that students are not equal members of the community.

Outside of the MIT community, we see other forms of precedent for student (and staff) involvement. Jury duty is a legal obligation for individuals over 18 years of age. At the state and federal level, such individuals are eligible and recognized as capable jurors for Title IX and civil cases involving harassment, in addition to criminal juries in cases of violent sexual crimes. At Yale University, complaints of sexual harassment (no matter the respondent identity) are addressed by the University-Wide Committee on Sexual Misconduct (UWC). The UWC

"provides an accessible, representative, and trained body to answer informal inquiries and fairly and expeditiously address formal complaints of sexual misconduct… The UWC consists of about 30 members drawn from faculty throughout the schools of the University; managerial or professional employees; postdoctoral associates or fellows; and students from Yale College and the graduate and professional schools." With appropriate vetting and training, it is unclear why student community-members should not be included in service at the institute level. Furthermore, to be a truly representative body and to maintain equity and an environment of mutual respect, students (and staff) should be included in disciplinary cases involving faculty and staff, as complainants and/or respondents.

Why is it important to let the complainant know the outcome of the case?

Reporting the outcome of a case to the complainant is important for a few key reasons. One reason is to make sure the complainant has some closure to the process and knows that the case was taken seriously and some justice was found. Knowing the outcome allows complainants to feel that the time, effort, and emotion they put into the process of reporting and investigating their complaint, as well as the risks doing so may have put on their career or personal relationships, were worthwhile and valued. Hiding case outcomes can also give the larger community the impression that the institute takes no action in response to complaints, which discourages reporting and enforces a lack of trust between the institute and its community. This can also strongly signal to perpetrators of discriminatory or abusive behavior that their actions were acceptable to the institute. When we consider that outcome reports to the complainant are standard in cases with student respondents, a policy of hiding outcomes for cases with faculty and staff respondents implies the institute values the protection of their faculty and staff over the privacy, safety, and wellbeing of their students. The justification for why the outcomes should be treated differently based on the status of the respondent is unclear, though current policies are overly focused on legal compliance, allowing MIT to fall back on "confidentiality" to increase secrecy around reporting outcomes for cases of gender discrimination or sexual harassment.

Why is it important to have outcomes of complaint resolution cases published?

Publishing the outcomes of complaint resolution cases is a matter of transparency and accountability. As the NASEM report states: "Transparency and accountability are crucial elements of effective sexual harassment policies." Publishing case outcomes shows the community that the institute takes complaints seriously, which encourages people to report and discourages people from violating policy and particularly helps prevent repeat offenses. Current

policies are overly focused on legal compliance, allowing MIT to fall back on "confidentiality" to increase secrecy around reporting outcomes for cases of gender discrimination or sexual harassment. Institutions have been enabled in hiding details of the adjudication process by citing a need for protection of privacy and confidentiality, as the NASEM report explains: "Various legal policies, and the interpretation of such policies, enable academic institutions to maintain secrecy and/or confidentiality regarding outcomes of sexual harassment investigations, arbitration, and settlement agreements…This lack of transparency in the adjudication process within organizations can cover up sexual harassment perpetrated by repeat or serial harassers." Institutions should value the safety of their community over the privacy of perpetrators. Annual reports from Stanford and Yale show exemplary transparency in detailing the outcomes of all formal complaints.

Why do you care so much about retaliation?

Retaliation, and the fear thereof, is recognized by the NASEM report as one of the significant factors contributing to low reporting and high prevalence of sexual harassment. The power imbalances in academia make it especially difficult to report retaliatory actions, which can range from creating a hostile environment to petty behavior and exclusion to being fired. In order to truly change the culture of MIT and reduce advisor harassment and discrimination, barriers to reporting incidents must be removed. Another facet of retaliation is that for speaking up on behalf of others and making "whistleblower" complaints. We should not need to fear consequences for promoting the well-being and protection of university employees and students. A clear and fair process for reporting retaliation incidents, in addition to maintaining a zero-tolerance policy for retaliation, is crucial for appropriately punishing misconduct of any kind and sending the message that this behavior is unacceptable at MIT.

What is transitional funding? Who would pay for it?

Transitional funding is support provided to students to cover their costs of continuing as a student, including tuition, stipend, and healthcare, if they are switching between advisors. Unfortunately, one of the reasons why abuse can go on unchecked in an academic setting is that students can feel powerless to the situation they are in. They may feel trapped with their advisor, leaving them really only with the options of putting up with a toxic situation and all of the negative consequences of ongoing abuse, report the situation and risk retaliation with no guarantee of positive change, or drop out of their program. We can and should do better.

Fortunately, some programs at MIT guarantee transitional support, as in AeroAstro with a recently revised policy in recognition of this issue. Many other departments often do cover transitional funding for their students when push comes to shove. And at the institute level, the

Office of Graduate Education can at times offer to fill in support when it is not guaranteed by the department. However, there is still no institute-wide guarantee of transitional funding and many of these individual departments either cannot or refuse to offer a guarantee to their students that they will cover students' needs. This is harmful for students because without a guarantee, or even a basic understanding of the process for switching groups and finding support, they will often stay in a bad situation, stuck with the dilemma laid out above.

Guaranteed transitional funding at the institute level, something that the MIT NASEM working groups agree should be a priority, will mean that students will not feel trapped in an abusive situation, or even just a bad fit for the student and advisor, and will empower students to stand up for themselves and make the right decisions.

Funding Equity

Don't we get paid enough?

Funding packages vary considerably across the MIT graduate community. A majority of PhD students receive 12-month stipends ("full appointments") for the entirety of their graduate program, which do meet living wage thresholds for single students in the Boston area, as calculated by the 2020 Graduate Student Council Stipend Working Group using the Department of Urban Studies' Living Wage Calculator. However, a minority of students receive sub-12-month stipends ("partial appointments"), for example 9- or 11-month packages. **Partial appointments do not meet living wage thresholds for the Boston area and negatively students' wellbeing.** A minority of students are also on limited funding packages, i.e. have guaranteed funding for 4 or 5 years when degree completion actually takes 5 to 7 years. **Gaps between guaranteed funding and expected time-to-degree also negatively impact students' wellbeing as well as MIT's peer competitiveness.**

Programs that offer partial appointments and limited-year funding packages largely cluster in the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (SHASS) or School of Architecture and Planning (SA+P), in fields which have less latitude for federal or corporate funding than the Schools of Science or Engineering. Students in those programs have to spend inordinate amounts of time to individually secure internal or external research funding, internships, or other sources of support so they can make a living during summers without a stipend or during the years after their funding package runs out. This takes away time from their research, adds time to degree completion, and prevents internal funding parity.

Students on partial appointments also experience consistent, cyclic financial uncertainty and stress, as evidenced by MIT's own 2019 Enrolled Student Survey (ESS). In response to the

question, “The extent to which cost of living is currently a source of stress for you,” 20% of respondents on partial appointments answered with “very stressful”, compared to 12.7% of respondents on full appointments. To the question, “The extent to which cost of living has been an obstacle to your academic success,” 24.2% of underfunded students responded with “a major obstacle,” as compared to 14.9% of students on full appointments. Finally, to the question, “The extent to which work/financial commitments have been an obstacle to your academic progress,” 12.4% of underfunded students who responded did so with “a major obstacle,” compared to 6.8% of those on full appointments. RISE advocates guaranteed 12-month stipends for all graduate students and internal completion fellowships so that this kind of internal income inequality, and resultant negative effects on student wellbeing, does not persist at MIT.

Additionally, even full-appointment stipends can translate to severe financial stress for students with families, international students, or students with financial obligations like college or medical debt. MIT’s stipends have historically been pegged to cost-of-living expenses for single, domestic students, which leaves very little margin for anyone who does not fit this category. Until 2020, MIT’s cost-of-living models excluded things like deferred costs (i.e. expenses foregone for lack of funds, like dental care); annual costs like travel home; or research costs that programs expect students to pay (i.e. Architecture students who must subsidize their own projects or Anthropology students who pay for their own fieldwork travel). Therefore MIT’s own cost-of-living models have consistently *underestimated* students’ financial needs. In addition to MIT’s ongoing support for international students and students with families, we advocate for guaranteed cost-of-living adjustments that take into account these kinds of expenditures.

How does funding work at MIT?

Funding at MIT varies widely by program, department, lab, or center. Many DLCs in the Schools of Science and Engineering draw their funding from a range of corporate grants, federal grants, donor funds, and Institute funds. In contrast, programs in SHASS and SA+P may draw some funding from external grants or donor funds, but also rely on MIT’s General Fund for a significant portion of their funding allocations. Some of these programs have little or no independent access to donor funds (Anthropology, for example, has no unique fundraising infrastructure). Due to this wide range of funding strategies, MIT’s administration has been reluctant to make centralized decisions on funding access. However, we believe that the Institute administration should *not* use its decentralized funding model as an excuse to deny a living wage to all students, especially given the negative impacts on student well-being, equity of access to education, and peer competitiveness that this policy perpetrates.

Why can't we fix funding issues with means-tested financial aid?

Means-tested financial aid, like MIT's current "Long-Term Financial Hardship" program, cannot address many of the individual stresses and structural inequalities that characterize funding inequity at MIT.

First of all, **means-tested programs do not guarantee access to a living wage**. By definition, they are meant to provide reimbursements or grants once a student is *already* in financial distress. They do not prevent financial distress from happening in the first place. They also rely on invasive and demoralizing financial assessments, in which students must submit their tax records, asset records, and other personal financial information in order to receive support. Means-tested financial aid only heightens stigma and stress, especially in a national context where non-citizens are discouraged from accessing federal aid. The fact is, at MIT, some PhD students can already depend on 12-month stipends *without* this kind of invasive assessment. So we believe that this access to a living wage should apply to any PhD student regardless of discipline or school.

Second of all, **means-tested programs do not rectify discrepancies in program funding**. Means-tested aid addresses financial stress as an *individual* problem, not a *structural* problem. But the programs with partial appointments draw large percentages of their funding from the Institute (rather than, say, corporate or government grants). Many of these programs have higher percentages of female, international, LBGTQIA+, and POC students than fully-funded programs in SoS and SoE. Therefore, income inequality at MIT is a problem created by the Institute itself in its decisions to under-fund SHASS and SA+P programs - decisions which also negatively impact our goals for diversity and inclusion. RISE believes that full funding for these under-supported programs would be a better, more equitable approach.

Third, **means-tested financial aid does not improve our peer competitiveness**. Peer institutions like Stanford and the University of Chicago offer 12-month stipends for all PhD students regardless of program or discipline. A wide range of our peer institutions - Harvard, Penn, Brown, Stanford, University of Chicago, Cornell, Yale, Princeton, UC Berkeley, etc - also offer internal dissertation completion fellowships. Indeed, MIT is the only university of its caliber which does not offer internal completion funding. Means-tested aid cannot substitute for our failure to compete with other leading universities on these fronts. Guaranteed 12-month stipends with guaranteed yearly cost-of-living increases and new completion fellowships are the only way to ensure that MIT continues to attract, retain, and support the best graduate students, especially those from under-represented backgrounds and marginalized disciplines.

What is anti-oppressive research and why is it important at MIT?

We think of anti-oppressive research as work that attempts to understand and dismantle systems of oppression. This work is increasingly important as the world confronts compounding crises of pandemic disease and endemic racism, and it almost uniquely happens in SHASS and SA+P programs. MIT's unequal funding decisions amount to "voting with their dollars" about which kinds of research and education are valuable to the Institute: it is a sad fact that MIT's underfunding of SHASS and SA+P programs functionally means a lack of support for anti-oppressive research which makes clear how power functions in various societies and cultures, including at MIT itself. PhD students in these programs advance collective knowledge on structural racism, including its impacts on the built environment; climate catastrophe mitigation; public health crises and disaster responses; social and ethical dimensions of computing in the US and abroad; processes of political change; and more. They TA humanistic and ethical courses, like the award-winning "MIT and Slavery" and Bioethics, that MIT lauds as fundamental to training well-rounded undergraduates and to understanding our own institutional history. They help develop crucial tools to measure and implement social equity, like the Department of Urban Studies' living-wage model. Meanwhile, none of these students meet the model's "survival wage" criteria.

The recent history of Western science is littered with examples of gross abuse and oppression of marginalized peoples - the Tuskegee experiments; nuclear testing in the American West and Pacific Islands territories; and MIT's own reliance on slave economies, to name a few. And emerging technologies, like advanced computing, still threaten to expand bias and supremacy. In light of past abuses and future hazards, MIT must equitably support its SHASS and SA+P programs, whose students push forward understanding, education, and interventions on these issues.

It is not enough that MIT fosters an inclusive environment for scientists of all colors, classes, and genders, because MIT is not *just* a technical institute. As a leading multidisciplinary university, it must also foster an environment for critical humanistic scholarship on pressing social issues like structural racism, sexism, and classism. Fostering that environment begins with funding equity.