Preliminary Report of the GSC & UA Student Joint Task Force on the Presidential Search
to the Corporation Presidential Search Committee
Public Version

The Student Perspective on the MIT Presidency
The Student Perspective of the State of MIT, Qualities and Priorities, and Nominations for the 17th MIT President

Graduate Members
Alex Evans (Chair)
Bryan Owens Bryson (Chair)
Ellan Spero (Chair)
Neelkanth Bardhan
Amy Bilton
Loreonna Buck
Aalap Dighe
Nada Hashmi
John Kendall Nowocin
Addison Stark
Dong Wang

Undergraduate Members
Amanda David (Chair)
Patrick Hulin (Chair)
Kimberly Sparling (Chair)
Liyan David Chang
Ravi Charan
Alex Ghaben
Ellen McIsaac
Lindsey Osimiri
Arun Saigal
Jeffrey Sperling
Executive Summary

The Graduate Student Council and the Undergraduate Association (UA) were charged by the Corporation to provide representative student feedback on the issues surrounding the selection of the next MIT president. A Student Advisory Committee (SAC) to the Corporation Presidential Search Committee, consisting of a total of six graduate and undergraduate student members, was formed through the GSC and UA nominations process. In order to support the SAC, the GSC & UA Student Joint Task Force on the Presidential Search (TFPS) was formed, consisting of a total of 21 graduate and undergraduate student members, including the members of the SAC. These students represent a broad cross-section of MIT, consisting of men and women, domestic and international students, under-represented minorities and members from diverse disciplines.

A number of methods including town hall meetings, focus groups, paper questionnaires, web forms and informal discussions were utilized to define, from the students’ perspective, the values of MIT, the important issues facing MIT, and the qualities and experiences subsequently desired in the next President. Simultaneously, the TFPS researched nearly 300 candidates nominated by students and the task force with respect to the student-determined presidential qualities. Multiple undergraduate and graduate students reviewed each candidate, and a series of group discussions on the top 60 candidate’s background, accomplishments and ideology was held with the full TFPS after being thoroughly researched and discussed by two independent groups consisting of two undergraduate and two graduate students.

The TFPS identified five key areas that students expressed opportunities and challenges for MIT in the future, specifically, MIT values and culture, education, student wellness and balance, campus planning and investment, and external relations. In accordance with this perspective, students desire the next MIT President to set priorities to address these challenges and opportunities.

For the qualities of the next MIT President, students, in general, desire the next president to embody every imaginable positive trait. To narrow it down, the most commonly requested character traits revolve around being an experienced leader that is personable and understanding. MIT students want a president that will confidently balance the figurehead role while still being accessible to students. Perhaps most importantly, the president needs to understand the history, values and student community of MIT.

This report represents the work of the TFPS thus far, and should by no means be considered as an end point. The TFPS is eager to stay involved in the selection process and welcomes any further requests from the Corporation for information and feedback.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** .................................................................................................................. 1

**TABLE OF CONTENTS** ................................................................................................................. 2

**GSC & UA STUDENT JOINT TASK FORCE ON THE PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH** ......................... 3

- **BACKGROUND** .......................................................................................................................... 3
- **Membership** ................................................................................................................................. 3
- **TFPS Timeline** .............................................................................................................................. 4
- **Community Outreach** .................................................................................................................. 5
- **Candidate Research** ...................................................................................................................... 5

**THE STATE OF MIT: THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE** ..................................................................... 6

- **MIT Values & Culture** ................................................................................................................ 6
- **Excellence** .................................................................................................................................... 6
- **Diversity** ....................................................................................................................................... 6
- **Innovation & Entrepreneurship** .................................................................................................. 6
- **Collaboration** .............................................................................................................................. 7
- **Competitiveness** ......................................................................................................................... 7
- **Student Engagement** .................................................................................................................. 7

**The MIT Education** ..................................................................................................................... 8

- **Classroom Learning** .................................................................................................................. 8
- **Teaching & Mentorship** ............................................................................................................. 9
- **MITx** ........................................................................................................................................... 9
- **Tuition & Costs** .......................................................................................................................... 10

**Student Life** .................................................................................................................................. 10

- **Student Wellness** ...................................................................................................................... 10
- **Community & Resources** .......................................................................................................... 11

**Campus Planning & Investment** ................................................................................................. 12

- **MIT 2030** .................................................................................................................................... 12
- **Community Space** ...................................................................................................................... 12
- **Investment & Fundraising** .......................................................................................................... 13

**Involvement in the Nation & the World** ....................................................................................... 13

- **Global Challenges** .................................................................................................................. 14
- **International Initiatives** ............................................................................................................ 14
- **Public Service** .......................................................................................................................... 14
- **Public Policy** ............................................................................................................................ 14
- **Ethical Leadership** ................................................................................................................... 15

**Desired Qualities of the Next President** ...................................................................................... 16

- **Introduction** ............................................................................................................................. 16
- **Qualities** ....................................................................................................................................... 16

**Management & Organizational Structure** .................................................................................. 16

**Community Engagement & Vision Planning** ............................................................................... 17

**Internal vs. External Candidates** .................................................................................................. 17

**Fundraising & Financial Management Experience** ....................................................................... 17

**Relations & Connections** ............................................................................................................ 17

**Experience with Academia** ......................................................................................................... 18

**International Experience** ............................................................................................................ 18

**Appendix I: GSC & UA Resolution to Establish Joint Student Task Force on Presidential Search** 19
GSC & UA Student Joint Task Force on the Presidential Search

This section outlines the mission, organizational structure and composition of the GSC & UA Student Joint Task Force on the Presidential Search (TFPS). It also provides insight into how the task force conducted its research and derived the recommendations provided in subsequent sections.

Background

The formal charge of the Student Advisory Committee (SAC), as given by the MIT Corporation is:

- To provide the Corporation with a representative student perspective on the challenges facing MIT;
- To comment on the experience and personal qualities that should be found in the next President;
- To provide nominations of specific individuals for the MIT Presidency; and
- To provide additional input throughout the developing process until the next President is selected.

The charge and the responsibility for organizing the committee were given to the leadership of the MIT Graduate Student Council (GSC) and the Undergraduate Association (UA), following President Susan Hockfield's announced resignation. Accordingly, the GSC and UA devolved the same charge upon a representative group of students, led by the SAC, hereafter referred to as the Student Joint Task Force on the Presidential Search (TFPS).

We recognize the importance of this task, as this is an opportunity for student input to be formally incorporated into the search for the next MIT President. As such, significant effort has been invested in relaying a student perspective that is informative, accurate, and constructive to the search process. What follows in this report is a description of the Task Force, its work and recommendations.

Membership

The GSC Nominations Committee, a standing committee of the GSC chaired by the GSC Vice President, selected the three graduate student members of the SAC. An ad hoc Selection Committee made up of the UA Vice President and the UA President chose the three undergraduate student members of the SAC.

The members of the SAC selected the membership of the TFPS with a great deal of care given to representativeness and the ability of potential members to solicit feedback within the community. In accordance with joint resolution of the GSC & UA (see Appendix 1), thought was given to a balanced representation of academic discipline, gender, race and ethnicity, and citizenship. The twenty-one-person committee is made up of women and men, domestic and international students, underrepresented minorities, single and partnered students as well as representatives from fraternities/sororities and a dozen different academic programs and departments.

All task force members were chosen after completing an application and interview with either the Nominations or Student Advisory Committee and agreeing to confidentiality with respect to the names of potential candidates. The TFPS membership is shown in Table 1.
Table 1 - Membership of the Task Force for the Presidential Search

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate Members</th>
<th>Undergraduate Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neelkanth Bardhan</td>
<td>Liyan David Chang ’12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Materials Science &amp; Engineering</em></td>
<td><em>Electrical Engineering &amp; Computer Science</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy Bilton</td>
<td>Ravi Charan ’14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Aeronautics &amp; Astronautics</em></td>
<td><em>Mathematics</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorenna Buck</td>
<td>Amanda David ’13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Biological Engineering</em></td>
<td><em>Management</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aalap Dighe</td>
<td>Alex Ghaben ’13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mechanical Engineering</em></td>
<td><em>Chemical Engineering</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex Evans</td>
<td>Patrick Hulin ’14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Earth, Atmospheric, &amp; Planetary Sciences</em></td>
<td><em>Mathematics</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nada Hashmi</td>
<td>Ellen McIsaac ’12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Technological Innovation, Entrepreneurship &amp; Strategic Management</em></td>
<td><em>Materials Science &amp; Engineering</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Kendall Nowocin</td>
<td>Lindsey Osimiri ’14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Electrical Engineering &amp; Computer Science</em></td>
<td><em>Biological Engineering</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryan Owens Bryson</td>
<td>Arun Saigal ’13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Biological Engineering</em></td>
<td><em>Electrical Engineering &amp; Computer Science</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellan Spero</td>
<td>Kimberly Sparling ’12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Science, Technology and Society</em></td>
<td><em>Civil and Environmental Engineering</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addison Stark</td>
<td>Jeffrey Sperling ’15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mechanical Engineering</em></td>
<td><em>Undeclared</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dong Wang</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Urban Studies &amp; Planning</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TFPS Timeline**

We were informed that the goal of the Corporation is to install the new President in the summer of 2012. This aim has informed the efforts of the TFPS. The following timeline describes the group’s work over the last month:
March 1, 2012  Planning process began
March 4, 2012  SAC & TFPS structure finalized and SAC membership selected
March 8, 2012  Applications open for TFPS
March 11, 2012  TFPS membership selected
March 12, 2012  Student opinion acquisition began through forums, community outreach, and online feedback forms
April 6, 2012  Preliminary report released and public comment requested

Community Outreach

In order to obtain feedback from the student body, a number of different methods were used. Six town hall meetings were held to allow students a chance to voice their opinions in an open, public forum. During these forums, students were provided with an overview of the MIT administrative structure and the role of the President, followed by the opportunity to respond to the questions: “What do you see as MIT’s values,” “What are important issues for MIT to address in the future”, and “What qualities/characteristics do you want in a president?” Additionally, students were encouraged to submit names of potential candidates for consideration for the next MIT President. Students who did not attend the forums also responded to the aforementioned questions via one of two websites (UA and GSC), or through paper questionnaires conducted during GSC General Council and other meetings. For a number of the departments not represented on the TFPS, focus groups were held to gather their input. In addition, feedback was collected from informal discussions with students and groups.

Candidate Research

From the responses received, a master list of nearly 300 candidates was compiled from student suggestions and the task force with respect to the student-determined presidential qualities. To minimize the possible influence of biases inherent within the TFPS, the basic candidate information and references were provided to TFPS members and each member separately indicated candidates that should be further considered. Following this initial process, nearly 60 candidates remained and a series of group discussions on each candidate’s background, accomplishments and ideology was held with the full TFPS after being thoroughly researched and discussed by two independent groups consisting of two undergraduate and two graduate students. This was done to ensure that a more complete assessment of the candidate’s record on both groups’ issues could be obtained. A short presentation report was prepared for each. These reports were presented to the TFPS along with a recommendation as to whether they should be kept on the list. This recommendation was based on whether the candidate possessed qualities/priorities that students had expressed that they wanted in the next President and whether the candidate seemed sufficiently prepared to address the challenges and opportunities facing the Institute in the future. This list was condensed and prioritized by the full membership of the TFPS, with the most preferred candidates designated and submitted to the MIT Corporation.
The State of MIT: The Student Perspective

In this section, we describe pivotal challenges and opportunities pertaining to the current state of MIT. These descriptions are based on interactions with students and responses from surveys.

MIT Values & Culture

We, as students of MIT, cherish, respect and seek to preserve the values of MIT as evident in the better aspects of our community’s culture. Most revered among these values are excellence, diversity, innovation, collaboration, competitiveness, and meritocracy. We desire these values to permeate all aspects of MIT, including research, teaching, education, and student life.

Excellence

A commitment to excellence is a quality that serves as a common thread throughout the discussions within the student community about the values that drive the MIT experience. This concept brings together many of the often disparate aspects of campus life at MIT, both as a standard to maintain as well as a goal to continually pursue. Students continue to cite the high quality of research, the place of MIT as a global leader in individual disciplines, and the opportunity to be taught by prominent scholars in a distinctively keen peer group as reasons why they continue to value their time at MIT. With these aspects, as a well-established foundation, attention to excellence within the student learning experience was identified as an area for growth in the coming years at MIT. This type of excellence, though taken in the context of globalization (increased international opportunities, competition, online etc.), is firmly focused on the residential campus experience, both within and outside of the classroom. Students were especially interested in increased interaction with faculty including informal mentoring opportunities. They also cited improvement of common spaces for social activities and the importance of large flexible common areas for activities such as conferences and dances.

Diversity

MIT recognizes the need to address increasing diversity to promote inclusion and retention at both the faculty and student level. A recent report from the faculty emphasizes “broadening and deepening the talent pipeline and improving mentoring of faculty hires” and recognizes the need to recruit from a broader range of schools.

For students, a commitment to diversity goes beyond measuring the number of bodies in categories and creating special interest groups, but also creating an inclusive environment where difference, both personal and disciplinary background, is valued as an important part of learning, community building and creative approaches to problem solving.

Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Since its founding, MIT has been a catalyst for some of the world's most successful innovators and entrepreneurs. It has been long recognized by students that there are precious few institutions in the world that value the entrepreneurial spirit as much as MIT. Accordingly, the student body of MIT has applied this spirit to pushing the boundaries of entrepreneurial opportunities and education through the creation of such high-profile programs as the MIT 100K and the Clean Energy Prize.
Students value these efforts and support efforts of the Institute to improve the recognition of student innovation and entrepreneurship as a major part of academic achievement. Students also highlighted a need for greater promotion and support for entrepreneurial activity through dedicated space endeavors such as startup incubators, and more interaction with innovative leaders outside of MIT.

**Collaboration**

It is the belief of students that MIT must continue to build on, foster and value interdisciplinary study and research. While MIT as an institution has continued to develop robust interdisciplinary centers it is in their home departments that students must gain final approval of their course of study and research. The Institute should strive for minimization of departmental isolation, since it is this type of bureaucratic hurdle that can prohibit MIT’s students from contributing to the grand challenges and their own development.

Students want a “fostering of industry and cross-university connections.” Competition for a fairly static pool of federal funding for science and engineering has and will increase substantially. The increase of partnerships with industry and universities can ensure that MIT is more financially stable. This increase will help in maintaining a stronger student involvement in essential and practical research that could impact the world. In addition, it will help in “building future leaders and not just excellent engineers” that will succeed in their careers. MIT has some programs, Industrial Liaison Program, Gordon Engineering Leadership, and etc., which work with industry, and must continue to expand this approach by investing resources to make it more long term sustainable. This combined with cross collaboration with other universities can ensure being more competitive in an increasingly global world. A vision and action of increased industry and cross-university partnerships has far-reaching impacts and will help MIT continue to be leader in the future.

**Competitiveness**

MIT’s ability to attract and retain the highest caliber of students and faculty is critical for the health of MIT, as an intellectual community and a global leader at the forefront of research and education. Students often cite a desire to work with people who are at the cutting edge of their fields, and to have challenging peers, as a major reason for selecting MIT.

**Student Engagement**

MIT makes big decisions that significantly affect students’ lives for years to come, and so even during the busiest weeks, students have a strong desire to be engaged early in the decision-making process. From the other perspective, effectively soliciting and substantively incorporating student opinions can help administrators make more informed decisions.

Students have been and are actively engaged on Institute committees where faculty and administrators have found their voices helpful. However, students feel that a few recent landmark decisions lacked their input, and as a result many students feel alienated from administration. The distrust between students and administrators will require a broad and sustained effort to fix, and should be a priority in the near future.

Prior successes have stemmed from transparency and early engagement with key stakeholders, and successful administrators have built goodwill through active participation in key student events.
Accordingly, developing strategies for improved transparency and communication in decision-making processes should be made a priority.

The MIT Education

The current student population believes that the quality and content of MIT classroom education is significantly higher than the average level in most universities across the country. Although it is easy to be less than enthused about the day-to-day MIT workload, undergraduates and graduates alike take pride in the academic rigor of the Institute. Students relate the quality of education of the institute to this culture of constantly being challenged and encouraged to question, experiment, prove, innovate, and apply principles that may or may not have been formally taught. UROP positions, start-up opportunities with faculty and fellow students, and lab classes such as 2.009 are integral to the MIT experience. Further, trade courses such as glassblowing and blacksmithing provide an outlet for creativity and exploration. Students believe that for MIT to continue to educate with great efficacy, a holistic approach to the MIT education must be considered, including classroom learning, teaching and mentorship, online learning initiatives (i.e. MITx), and the associated costs.

Classroom Learning

Most MIT students feel strongly that this culture of peer-to-peer learning, practical “doing” rather than passive “listening” contributes to the holistic MIT experience. This is what makes MIT unique as a school; embodying the “mens et manus” spirit in the educational sphere. Another aspect of MIT’s education is the dynamic nature and the rapid pace at which its educational content is updated to reflect new information, which exposes MIT students to the frontiers of research in their respective fields. With this educational system, it is important for MIT faculty, staff, and administrators to function as coaches that kindle students’ curiosity, and encourage collaboration.

Many students feel that MIT has slowly morphed into a research institution primarily, and classroom education has shifted to a secondary focus. There is a growing sense that the tenured faculty in the Institute are no longer motivated to “teach for education’s sake”, and are driven more by the need to churn out patents and papers at an incredible pace to stay competitive. Some remedial measures that have been broadly suggested by the student community are: (a) At the institutional level, there is an urgent need to develop certain metrics for evaluating and rewarding good educators (faculty) beyond the usual metrics for research output. (b) Students could benefit by hiring Lecturers who enjoy teaching, and are not pressured by the “publish or perish” mentality. Such measures will help reinforce MIT’s value for education.

Another area where all students have voiced their concern is the design of the course curricula and the isolation of departments, providing limited interdisciplinary interaction. The curriculum at MIT seems to be very free and open, not requiring many prerequisites, and thus, leading to significant overlap among courses. Students opine that MIT will need to determine the right balance of structure and freedom in its course design, in order to provide the best education possible. Moreover, students are concerned with respect to the minimal communication and interaction between schools and within schools; this is seen as detrimental to the innovation and start-up culture of the Institute. Students would like to see initiatives which bridge some of the physical and social disconnects between these diverse communities, and help accelerate the engine of entrepreneurship and interdisciplinary interaction.
Teaching & Mentorship

As information, education, and credentials increasingly become available via non-traditional means, from MITx and other ventures, faculty are and will remain the centerpiece of any model of residential education. In light of this, MIT must rethink the model by which students and faculty interact. Students have expressed concern that many faculty members and advisors are inaccessible. Where necessary, resources must be allocated and incentives aligned to promote student-faculty interaction. MIT must put serious thought into its graduate and undergraduate advising system, teaching, UROP, and especially the balance between tenure-track faculty and adjunct faculty or lecturers.

The current advising system does is underperforming as a service to students. Undergraduate and graduate students alike have expressed a need for more regular and personal feedback from advisors. While programs like UROP foster student-faculty interaction over research, life advice is harder to come by as undergraduates have reported having seemingly uninterested or unavailable faculty advisors and some freshmen are not even advised by faculty. A report in 2009 found that quality advice varied across departments, each implementing different advising models. Beyond desiring more periodic feedback, graduate students generally desire time and opportunity for choice in advisor selection. Plus, graduate students supported the provision of career development resources either within their departments or outside their departments to assist in the development of the skills required to be successful in a variety of careers.

With regard to teaching, MIT must commit to good teaching—meaning best practices—designed to help students learn and become excited about the material, rather than simply a way for a professor to meet his or her teaching requirement. Many faculty members do make an effort to be good teachers, preparing and delivering lectures well, as well as making themselves accessible outside the classroom. This should be encouraged and appreciated through the right incentives from MIT regarding promotion and salary.

MITx

Many students feel that the values driving the development of MITx (the Institute’s latest, free, online learning initiative) are central to the wider Institute community. The stated goals of MITx—increased accessibility to learning, using the latest technologies to further enhance the learning experience—are aligned very closely with MIT’s larger institutional goals of meritocracy and excellence in education. However, many students expressed concerns regarding MITx. Students, especially undergraduates, are concerned that MITx certificates may devalue their MIT degree through MITx certificates serving as a proxy for MIT degrees in the job market. Additionally, since an MIT degree represents both a temporal and financial investment, students feel that MIT degrees should indicate a greater mastery of knowledge than a certificate from MITx.

These concerns stem from a deep passion for residential education and hope for continuous improvement in this realm. Undergraduate students value the realization of Institute values such as collaboration, innovation, and pursuit of knowledge in their campus residential systems. There is also a strong belief that such residential systems foster the entrepreneurial spirit and gives rise to new technologies. Beyond residential living groups, students are concerned with preserving the relevance of a physical campus with the increase in online learning initiatives. Nowhere else than a physical campus does the potential for MIT’s motto, “mens et manus” have the potential to be realized.
and we believe the Institute must be committed to developing and enhancing a residentially based education.

**Tuition & Costs**

While MIT has done an admirable job in holding back the rise of tuition, and kept growth in line with peer schools, MIT should lead the way in making a concerted attempt to further restrain growth, or even cut tuition prices. For financial aid, MIT should focus on students having a difficult time matriculating: traditionally, this has been low-income families but more and more includes middle-class and international students as well.

Graduate students in professional programs said the burden of tuition is growing as the federal government has now changed its policy towards the accrual of interest on student loans while in graduate school. Rising tuition and increasing student debt continue to impact professional students, especially alumnus in the public and non-profit sectors. Charging a reduced rate for students exclusively working on thesis research may alleviate financial pressures on students and laboratories alike. Graduate students pointed to peer universities that charge a reduced rate for graduate students involved purely in thesis research and said that changes in this cost structure may alleviate financial demands on laboratories allowing for faculty to take on more graduate students.

**Student Life**

It is no secret that MIT students are under a lot of pressure and maintaining a healthy work-life balance is a major challenge. Healthy living and non-academic interests are often overlooked due to the stresses of problem sets, examinations and research. This is a major problem, especially for students new to the MIT environment. Many undergraduates indicated that heavy workloads cause major stress and limited their ability to be involved in other activities. Many graduate students stated that their research advisors expected to often work during weekends, evenings and holidays. In addition, many students reported that their advisors view non-research activities as a waste of time and do not value a well-rounded student. As a result, many graduate students feel that if he/she has not been consistently in the lab/office for their entire graduate career, that he/she has not performed adequately. MIT must consider methods to improve student work-life balance and ensure the health and mental well-being of their students.

We recognize that some aspects of MIT culture necessitate improvements for stronger alignment with MIT’s core values. Most notably, many students identified student wellness coupled with community and resources as areas necessitating significant refinement and improvement.

**Student Wellness**

Overwhelmingly, students feel that student wellness is a prevalent issue on MIT’s campus. In the wake of three undergraduate student deaths in the past year, it is particularly important for the MIT community and the Institute to address the issue of student wellness. Students had a wide array of opinions on the matter. Students acknowledge the existence of many mental health and support resources across campus, but have diverse opinions on the effectiveness of these resources. More specifically, students are concerned about the restructuring of Student Support Services, closing of Nightline, and other policy changes across the Institute affecting the availability of mental health and student support resources. Some students also note that the resources for peer support are also very limited; they say that it is difficult to know how to help a friend or a classmate in need.
Furthermore, the changes to the structure of Student Support Services (S^3) caused the undergraduate student body to be wary of the service as a whole, thereby decreasing the effectiveness of the service. Part of this attitude derives from a cultural stigma associated with seeking help at Student Support Services and, more broadly, throughout MIT. Many students do not feel that S^3 or other resources are available throughout an MIT student’s career, but more just when things have become far too difficult to bear. However, even when students are in difficult situations, they are still hesitant to use Student Support Services because of a common perception of inefficacy and bureaucracy. Some examples of perceived bureaucracy include incidents of graduate resident tutors trying to help a student in need and encountering significant roadblocks to information. Additionally, many students have expressed that MIT Mental Health takes approximately a week to respond to a student request for help, when a solution may be required in a shorter time frame. Finally, Student Support Services is largely marketed to undergraduates, although graduate students at MIT would also benefit from the resources provided by this office. Student support services and MIT Mental Health should focus their efforts on being proactive stewards of balanced lifestyles, peer support, and healthy communities.

Going forward, students would like MIT to take a comprehensive approach that leverages our entire community to support the wellness of students at MIT. Students believe that this is not an area where the decisions should be made on the basis of cost and extant resources, but instead on the basis of impact, inclusion, and thoroughness. Students also believe that the faculty is an integral part of the wellness equation and the promotion of a balanced lifestyle.

**Community & Resources**

Many graduate and undergraduate students highlighted the lack of community as a major issue for MIT. The lack of a sense of community can lead to students feeling alone, especially during stressful times that often occur in an environment like MIT. Campus communities and groups provide an essential outlet for stressed students, enabling them to explore their passions such as dancing, debating, and hacking in a welcoming environment outside the classroom.

The lack of community space is a major concern among students. It is not uncommon to find groups of students dancing in open campus spaces at all hours of the night because space is unavailable otherwise. Many graduate students, especially those living off-campus, complained of lack of student community on campus and linked this to a lack of space dedicated to the graduate community. The Stratton Student Center houses a lot of student groups and activities, but the facilities are limited. Providing adequate community space where students can relax, pursue their passions, form relationships, and come up with the next billion dollar idea should be a priority for the future of MIT.

The inclusive and supportive climate and resources available on campus are integral to maintain and enhance MIT’s competitive standing among its peers. This has implications in many aspects of student life, from including physical workspaces and equipment, mentoring, and personal and career support and increased accessibility to childcare.
Campus Planning & Investment

From its construction in 1910, MIT’s Cambridge campus has been continually evolving. Now, with the inception of MIT 2030—a master plan for the campus and surrounding areas owned by MIT—the Institute is on the cusp of extensive changes. MIT 2030 calls for major renovations on campus, the construction of new academic buildings, and the development of Central Square and Kendall Square properties.

Students agree that renovation is definitely needed in most parts of campus. Over the years, the Institute has accumulated a large debt of deferred maintenance on its buildings, which risks the safety of students as well as scientific innovation. In 2008, 400°F steam at 200 psi exploded from a lower basement pipe of Building 66. It was only the fortunate timing, late Friday night of the Halloween weekend, that prevented an institutional tragedy. Such incidents highlight the need for renovation and continued maintenance of academic buildings.

A campus planning initiative must include renovations to current infrastructure, flexibility for future growth, and new student life infrastructural improvements—expansion and renovations in dormitories, affordable off-campus housing units in the Kendall/Central area, growth of communal and cultural space, and the promotion of a vibrant and healthy surrounding community.

MIT 2030

In addition to renovations of academic buildings, MIT 2030 calls for commercial development of some of the surrounding areas. Many students worry that allowing private companies and corporations to lease MIT land long-term will inhibit the growth of the Institute in the future by preventing the expansion of the academic and research campus. Moreover, careful planning and analysis of future needs will be key to creating buildings that can accommodate yet to be invented lab equipment.

Students urge the Institute to take a more holistic approach to MIT 2030 and to focus on more than just MIT’s academic infrastructure and any commercial development of the surrounding areas. The development of the area around MIT greatly impacts student life. The development of the area surrounding MIT, such as Kendall Square and Technology Square, has left the area sterile without dining options or places for students to relax. In addition, the safety and lack of development of the Central Square area has long been a concern of many graduate students, who often commute home alone and late at night. Safety issues also extend into campus with many robberies in this past year in dorms and the graduate housing of the Northwest corridor. Many students feel that MIT needs to ensure that the MIT campus and surrounding areas are safe and livable for students.

A major area of concern for graduate students is that Cambridge is already experiencing record low rental vacancy rates (lower than most parts of Manhattan). As a result, many students have been forced to move farther off-campus. These students often feel a lack of connection to the MIT community and have much less access to the campus resources. Unless the plan calls for housing units that parallel the number of jobs being created in Kendall and Central Square, affordable housing for students near campus will further dwindle.

Community Space

Community space at MIT plays a central role in enhancing student life and facilitating student-student and student-faculty “water cooler conversations” that many believe are so critical to
collaboration and innovation. These shared spaces also play a key role in enhancing the sense of cohesiveness at MIT. Many students have expressed a need for concerted effort and creative thinking about policies to revitalize existing space and build new spaces going forward that promote interdisciplinary and student-faculty interactions, include healthy dining options, and provide for group and individual workspaces.

There are some places that are designed to foster interaction and visibility such as the Stata Center, the new Sloan building, and the Media Lab. The increasing development of such places is a trend students would like to see continue. The infinite corridor, in contrast, is no longer fit for this job. It was once a place with open doors and where people congregated and shared ideas; now it is little more than a cattle corral. The student center is the most visible community space on campus. However, many students have expressed concerns over the state of the building and the need for renovations. Additionally, this building is used primarily by undergraduate students, who also identify a desire to interact with faculty outside of formal class structures and for community spaces to facilitate in this capacity. Many graduate students, in fact, have expressed the need for separate graduate student space, similar to space at our peer institutions, that promotes interaction between graduate students across disciplinary boundaries as well as between students and faculty.

**Investment & Fundraising**

Students recognize that the overall financial health of MIT is a critical component in the success of the Institute, most notably in teaching, research, and financial aid. Accordingly, students recognize that investment strategy and fundraising initiatives are necessary to the financial health and success of the Institute. Such initiatives benefit members of the MIT community and also secure MIT’s reputation as an institution committed to excellence in science and engineering. Thus, it is vital that MIT continue to expand these initiatives to enable MIT to remain at the forefront of research and education.

With the increasing prioritization of investment and fundraising, many students are becoming increasingly concerned that the investment strategy is in conflict with the educational and research priorities of the Institute, specifically with respect to development plans in Kendall Square and the surrounding communities, and campus planning. Many feel that investment priorities with a direct community impact necessitate broad community engagement.

**Involvement in the Nation & the World**

Most students agree: given its expertise in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, MIT is in a unique position to tackle national and global issues from an analytical perspective using some of the world’s best and brightest minds. The analytical perspective is important—often MIT has made some of the greatest headway by applying a rigorous scientific outlook to world problems. As one example, the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) uses randomized evaluations to test and improve the effectiveness of programs and policies aimed at reducing poverty with great success.

In order to maintain our national competitiveness, it is also important for MIT to be deeply involved with the push for cementing the United States’ global competitive advantage. MIT should continue to focus on the highly profitable services industry. However, MIT should also place a greater emphasis on education and research in the manufacturing sector, in order to accelerate the US
economy. In this regard, students admire President Hockfield’s involvement in the Advanced Manufacturing Partnership, and hope that such initiatives are continued. Students have also expressed an aspiration to see MIT take the pioneering steps towards tackling societal problems such as healthcare, energy, water and food crises. In this dynamic world order, we need a strong leader with a firm vision who can steer MIT to adapt itself to unforeseen challenges, by channeling our collective competitive spirit.

Global Challenges

Besides poverty, some other global challenges undergraduate and graduate students would like to see MIT tackle are: global warming, healthcare and health epidemics, population growth, clean and renewable energy, food and water availability, and education. They believe that technology—one of MIT’s major innovative strengths—can be leveraged to help solve these problems.

International Initiatives

As the United States becomes more connected to other countries through overall globalization, it is important that MIT maintains pace with such globalization. President Hockfield has paved the way for a future with many international alliances, starting with our new initiatives with the Russian Skolkovo Foundation and Shanghai Jiao Tong University and this trend should be continued. Current international programs, including MISTI, MIT-Singapore Alliance, and IROP, offer great opportunities for students to impact the rest of the world, but there should be a continued support from the Institute to provide more educational and professional prospects for students.

Another issue is the lack of international outreach within the educational aspect of the Institute. Students believe that they would benefit immensely from more MIT-based opportunities to study internationally. Due to the specificity of MIT’s curriculum, this could be best addressed in a variety of ways, which are not limited to developing campuses abroad, initiating double-degree programs with international institutions, and constructing more comprehensive study abroad and exchange programs that will appeal to more students. Many other top universities have begun to focus on these international initiatives, making it even more imperative that MIT starts to consider our overall global outreach very seriously. However, some students also emphasize that the new leadership needs to look more inward; as such, MIT’s approach to change its plan of outreach must be built upon a healthy internal environment, and be tailored to the unique needs of the student body.

Public Service

Although it is not advised to mandate community service, many students see service as a valued outlet of MIT’s “mens et manus” motto. Students at MIT desire to make an impact for public good - whether it is in industry, academia, and/or communities. The continuing commitment to public service – community service work-study, education outreach partnerships, international development entrepreneurship, and many other channels – bridges the gaps between classroom learning, academic research, and real-world challenges, and enriches MIT’s quality of education and student life experiences. Resources that encourage and enable public service should be sustained, at the very least.

Public Policy

Due to its status as a leading research institution, public policy plays a large role at MIT. Many of the breakthroughs in technology that have occurred at MIT throughout the years, for example, radar, are the results of federal funding. The success of several current initiatives on campus is dependent
on collaboration with governmental bodies, including the Energy Initiative, and an initiative to boost American manufacturing. Federal agencies like Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) support innovative research in many different laboratories around MIT. With that in mind, students hope that MIT will continue its partnership with the government in years to come, and will help shape public policy to better support and enhance development in science, technology, and other areas of scholarship.

Besides research funding, public policy is beginning to play a larger role in education. For example, as international initiatives grow throughout the Institute, the problems of world poverty and health issues are becoming more apparent. While some students think MIT should be apolitical, most students, particularly those in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, feel that MIT should be able to leverage its reputation to have a greater impact on international policy issues, such as economic development.

**Ethical Leadership**

As MIT collaborates with external entities, a major emphasis should be placed on the ethical responsibilities and mitigation of possible conflicts of interest. The benefits of collaboration with others are numerous, but if it is at the risk of supporting questionable actions, then this risk is not worth the reward. Many times lucrative incentives from external entities can be tempting, but it is paramount that MIT stands firm on its position to be ethically responsible and lead by example. While MIT should not be a “police force” for corruption in external entities, MIT should not collaborate with external entities engaging in questionable actions and if dealings arise within well-established programs MIT should take the lead on corrective actions.
**Desired Qualities of the Next President**

In this section, we list the key qualities that students would like the next MIT President to possess. For the convenience of the Corporation Presidential Search Committee, we have distilled these qualities down to a list of the major recurring themes that arose in survey responses and forum discussions balanced by the perspective of the TFPS.

**Introduction**

The President of MIT is responsible for preserving and enhancing the endowments of the Institute, including physical, financial, intellectual, and personal aspects. The president must represent the Institute to both internal and external constituencies, and he or she is ultimately responsible for administering the entirety of the Institute. As the chief executive of the Institute, the president oversees a large budget, an expansive and expanding physical campus, and a significant number of employees.

**Qualities**

Students, in general, desire the MIT President to embody every imaginable positive trait. To narrow it down, the most commonly requested character traits revolve around being an experienced leader that is personable and understanding. MIT students want a president that will confidently balance the figurehead role while still being accessible to students. Perhaps most importantly, the president needs to understand the history, values and student community of MIT.

Ultimately, MIT students desire a president that respects students as adults for working diligently, provides an environment of trust and freedom to experiment with inventions and artistic expression in a responsible manner, views student engagement as a collaborative opportunity to evaluate problems and find solutions, and provides necessary resources and an environment that inspires community cohesion.

**Management & Organizational Structure**

The next president should have demonstrated finance and management experience and a successful track record therein. Furthermore, the next president should be adept at assembling a strong team of upper-level administrators who can support and direct the Institute’s initiatives.

From the concerns addressed in many students’ comments regarding the disparate nature in how the Institute addresses the student- and academic-side of MIT, the TFPS firmly believes the MIT organizational structure should be re-evaluated to provide congruency and integration of these two aspects that traditionally fall under the Chancellor and Provost, respectively. Such a re-evaluation may provide a more efficient organizational hierarchy to allow for MIT to achieve future goals, particularly with respect to student support services, student wellness, and residential education.
Community Engagement & Vision Planning

Many students express a desire for the next president to establish a comprehensive vision for the Institute by and with the advice of the faculty, staff, and students. Many students suggest the next president should be willing to apply the MIT values of innovation, creativity, and collaboration in setting a vision for MIT. Further, students desire a president that appreciates and envisions shared governance as a necessary contribution to the decision-making process.

With respect to MIT-wide changes, including major building projects or educational initiatives, students feel our new president should create space for open discussion and engagement with the student community. Accordingly, he or she should have significant, observable, and successful experience building consensus in large, diverse communities.

From the perspective of the student community, the president and senior leadership team should be both visible and approachable. This is a critical quality for not only building an integrated living and learning community, but also to ensure support for productive changes to the Institute. Even small gestures such as casual conversations in the infinite corridor, inviting randomly chosen groups of students to share a meal, attending community events and acknowledgement of student accomplishments go a long way in building this sentiment.

Internal v. External Candidates

While there are conflicting opinions among the student body as to whether the next president should definitively be internal (i.e., of MIT) – as a former student, professor, or administrator, most students desire candidates that are of MIT, at least “in-spirit.” Most students commented on their desire for a president that understands and shares the values of MIT; the students advocating for internal candidates believe that only someone from within MIT can understand MIT. In pursuing discussions on this topics, students feel the President should be committed to enhancing our highly valued MIT culture, while simultaneously fostering change where necessary, to reconcile those aspects of our culture that do not resonate with our core values.

Fundraising & Financial Management Experience

In the recent past, MIT has seen significant growth in research initiatives, international programs, and needs of the physical infrastructure. The current national context as well, presents an increasingly challenging environment for research and education funding. Thus it is important that the next president possess the determination, creativity and charisma to be able to inspire potential donors to give to MIT and for current supporters to maintain and enhance their commitments. The next president should have previous experience with the personal relationship aspects of fundraising as well as managing a significant campaign from the financial and logistical standpoint.

Relations & Connections

As the leader and symbol of MIT, the president has responsibility for maintenance and cultivation of relationships outside the institute. While many students felt that professional experience as a government or corporate leader was not a fundamental prerequisite, existing connections to these sectors was preferred.

The ability to strengthen relationships with US policy-makers was highlighted. In this arena, the president should not only advocate for research funding, but also act as a champion for higher education as a whole, especially in the STEM fields. Leveraging pre-existing networks in the
corporate sphere for possible funding, connection to tangible outcomes for research, and job placement for graduates was also an important activity for the next president.

The student community also highlighted the potential for the president to take a more visible role as an academic leader outside of MIT and advocate for the value of institutions of higher education, and especially STEM fields on the national and international stage.

**Experience with Academia**

It is important for the president to not only be recognized as a leader in his or her academic field, but to be able to act as a bridge between disciplines. While there was diversity in opinion about a specific field of academic expertise that the president should process, it was clear that this person should have a clear understanding for the needs and challenges facing both elite research and teaching faculty and their students. Regardless of academic specialty, the president must be able to identify and support emerging topics and the forefront of research.

**International Experience**

As MIT continues to grow in Cambridge, it will also grow internationally, through partnerships with foreign partnerships, work abroad programs like MISTI, and also through the increasing amount of international students, staff and faculty. We hope that the next MIT President have some amount of international experience to not only sustain our current international collaborations such as the MIT Singapore Alliance, but to also expand MIT’s international interests so that students have increased opportunities to experience different cultures, and that the rest of the world can experience MIT.
Appendix I: GSC & UA Resolution to Establish Joint Student Task Force on Presidential Search

58gsc.10.1 – 43 U.A.C. 3.1
Resolution to Establish Joint Student Task Force on Presidential Search

Whereas, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is seeking its next president; and

Whereas, the Corporation has the sole authority for selecting the next President of MIT and has requested input from MIT students through a joint undergraduate-graduate student advisory committee for the Presidential Search; and

Whereas, the Graduate Student Council (GSC) has appointed Alex Evans, Ellan Spero, and Bryan Owens Bryson to the aforementioned committee; and

Whereas, the Undergraduate Association (UA) has appointed Amanda David, Patrick Hulin, Kimberly Sparling to the aforementioned committee; and

Whereas, the aforementioned committee has the authority to provide student opinion regarding the desired qualities, goals, and priorities of the next MIT President by the end of March; and

Whereas, the aforementioned committee has the authority to provide student opinion regarding names of potential candidates for the next MIT President by mid-April; and

Whereas, the prior version of the aforementioned committee provided for opportunities to solicit input from all students via forums and other means; and

Whereas, the Graduate Student Council and Undergraduate Association are committed to having a representative constituency involved in the process; and

Be it resolved, by the Graduate Student Council in meeting duly assembled and the Undergraduate Association:

That the creation of the GSC & UA Joint Student Task Force on the Presidential Search be affirmed and chaired by the joint undergraduate-graduate student advisory committee for the Presidential search.

Be it resolved, by the Graduate Student Council in meeting duly assembled and the Undergraduate Association:

That the GSC & UA Joint Student Task Force on the Presidential Search be comprised of twenty students, ten graduate students and ten undergraduate students, representative of the respective

TyShaun Wynter
UA President

Alex J. Evans
GSC President
community as determined by the joint undergraduate-graduate student advisory committee for the Presidential search.

**Be it resolved, by the Graduate Student Council in meeting duly assembled and the Undergraduate Association:**

That the GSC & UA Joint Student Task Force on the Presidential Search solicit input from all students via public forums and other means, educate students on the role of the MIT President, provide support for the aforementioned committee, and synthesize findings in a final report.

**Be it resolved, by the Graduate Student Council in meeting duly assembled and the Undergraduate Association:**

That the GSC & UA Joint Student Task Force on the Presidential Search report to the General Council of the Graduate Student Council and Council of the Undergraduate Association no later than May 15, 2012, regarding its findings.

Respectfully submitted,

Alex J. Evans  
GSC President

TyShaun Wynter  
UA President

Ellan F. Spero  
GSC Vice President

Amanda David  
UA Vice President

_________________________  ________________________
TyShaun Wynter              Alex J. Evans
UA President                GSC President