

Demands Section 2: Increase Resources for Education and Support

**Demand 2A - Expand educational programming and
training**

**Demand 2B - Hire DEI officers for departmental
accountability**

**Demand 2C - Provide Institute-wide support for
anti-oppressive research and labor**

Why change is needed

After decades of MIT leadership talking about improving the climate and culture at MIT for groups historically marginalized in academia, we would certainly expect to see a far more progressive campus than we find today. This naturally raises the questions of what has been missing from these crucial efforts to create a more welcoming and inclusive campus for all? Our leadership espouses progressive politics around issues of sexism, racism, and other forms of chauvinism, so if we assume this is not just empty rhetoric, then we know the intention to address these issues is there. However, the culture of MIT can never be built on leadership alone. What we are really missing is the necessary engagement with the entire MIT community and meaningful accountability to continue to make progress.

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 engagement with meaningful accountability. 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, requiring the meaningful dedication of resources and empowerment of advocates to bring to fruition.

To give a snapshot of how harassment and discrimination appear on our campus, we offer the results of the 2019 Association of American Universities (AAU) survey from MIT. The [survey](#) found that 47% of women graduate students and 62% of TGQN (trans, genderqueer, questioning, nonbinary) graduate students have experienced sexual harassment in their time as a student at MIT, as shown in Table 5.1. This shamefully high rate of sexual harassment makes it abundantly clear that action is needed to change the institutional culture and climate around harassment. Importantly, [over half](#) of those women (58%) and TGQN (54%) students found that this harassment negatively affected their academic performance, program, or environment. The [NASEM report](#) reviews educational outcomes from sexual harassment, and the report finds that as a result of sexual harassment, students drop classes, change advisors, and withdraw from the university. Harassment and discrimination are undeniably a threat to a healthy learning environment and even academic integrity itself.

Specifically for graduate students, sexual harassment is associated with posttraumatic symptoms, diminished sense of safety, and worsened physical and mental health. Negative health outcomes most commonly include depression and anxiety. In addition to negative psychological outcomes,

sexual harassment is also [linked to cardiovascular reactivity](#), a response associated with [coronary heart disease and immune functioning](#), as discussed in the [NASEM report](#). We came to this university to advance the knowledge of humankind, not to have harm inflicted on our minds and bodies.

Experiences for URM students at MIT are similarly 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.

MIT leadership sees these disturbing statistics as well as we do, but they fail not only to dedicate resources to the issue, but even to reflect on them and to hold themselves accountable. The NASEM working groups remain fresh in our minds as a reminder of this failed model.

In response to the NASEM report, the Chancellor's Academic and Organizational Relations (AOR) Working Group recommends that MIT take a holistic approach to promoting a positive culture and climate, and in this approach they recommend that MIT incorporate values, expectations, resources, reiterative assessment, accountability, and recognition of excellence. We certainly agree that a holistic approach is necessary, but we so far fail to see the new implementation team (tasked with compiling recommendations for the implementation of the previous groups' recommendations) taking any real steps towards meeting their charge. The issue of pervasive harassment and discrimination is not going to disappear because the leadership neglects to treat it. Further, the NASEM working groups are not the first instance of this failed approach to changing campus climate and culture.

In fact, for decades, MIT has been aware of systemic gender discrimination. In 1999, Lotte Bailyn, Chair of MIT Faculty at the time, [noted](#) that "the key conclusion that one gets from the report is that gender discrimination in the 1990s is subtle but pervasive." Since then, many reports on gender discrimination have been written; for instance reports were published in [2010](#), [2011](#), [2014](#), [2016](#), and [2019](#). In 2014, in the first [study](#) of sexual harassment on campus, 17 percent of women and 5 percent of men who were undergraduate students reported being sexually assaulted on campus (Table 2.2).

Despite ongoing internal research dedicated to studying harassment and discrimination, we know that the problem persists at MIT. One reason is that recommendations which are years old remain at minimal or no progress because working groups and committees at MIT are not accountable to

actually implement these recommendations. We can see from the [ICEO Recommendations Scorecard](#) that only 39% have been completed. Further, we can see that many of the changes that have been made are the more symbolic or easy to implement suggestions, leaving most of structural work untouched.

There have been some instances of improvements. MIT students, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds, are often burdened with pushing for these improvements to the culture and climate of the Institute. We are proud to say that many of the major improvements in recent years to culture and climate at MIT have involved student advocates pushing for change and finding support and partnership amid faculty and department leadership. However, because of the quick turnover rate of graduate students, institutional knowledge of how to effectively make change at MIT is that much more challenging to create and retain. This leaves students at a major disadvantage to even begin to navigate the complex bureaucracy and makes it easier for the administration to ignore student-driven issues. In the face of these repeated advocacy pushes at the department- and Institute-level which result in little to no change, we must consider alternatives that will more effectively educate, engage, and empower stakeholders while compensating them for these efforts and creating accountability for those in power to act.

To combat the pervasive issues of harassment and discrimination on our campus, MIT must dedicate significant resources to expand educational programming, engage the entirety of the MIT community in these conversations, hire climate and culture experts to provide accountability in the departments and for the Institute as a whole, and devote funds for anti-oppressive research and student compensation for DEI engagement to acknowledge the value we place on this important work.

Demand 2A - Expand educational programming and training

The demand

1. Develop and implement an implicit bias training.
 - a. ICEO and IDHR will be responsible for the development and implementation of this training. Their offices must receive financial support from the Institute for training development, such as for hiring experts in implicit bias education and for compensation of MIT students, staff, and faculty of color who work as consultants to help make the training most effective for the MIT community. Graduate student, undergraduate student, and staff representatives must be closely involved in the development, implementation, and review of this training.
 - b. The total time to implementation must be no more than one year.
 - c. Training must be administered to all members of every department every 2 years, to allow all students on campus to receive this training regardless of their program length. Additionally, this will allow for repeated training for faculty, staff, and students in longer programs.
 - d. Additional tailored training must be administered to all members of hiring, recruitment, and admissions committees every 2 years (see Demand 1).
2. Increase funding to IDHR, VPR, and ICEO to allow campus-wide administration of harassment and implicit bias trainings.
 - a. These funds are necessary for the hiring of additional education specialists, who will be instrumental in expanding and tailoring trainings for faculty, staff, and students. Funding must be sufficient for hiring enough staff to train every department every 2 years. With the current training only available to 1-2 departments per year, many students will graduate before receiving any training. With only one education specialist each in IDHR and VPR, and no education specialists in ICEO, the task of training the entire campus is impossible.

- b. For campus-wide implementation of the harassment training, the Institute must fund a minimum of 5 additional education specialists, including 2 in IDHR and 3 in VPR, as these offices have run harassment trainings in the past.
 - c. For campus-wide implementation of the implicit bias training, the Institute must fund at least another 5 education specialists, including 2 in IDHR and 3 in ICEO, as these offices have been identified to administer the implicit bias training.
3. Publicly track training completion and reiteratively assess trainings and campus climate.
- a. For both harassment and implicit bias trainings, award training certificates with date of completion, collected in a publicly accessible record system.
 - b. The aforementioned training is meant to provide support, education, resources, and behavioral standards to all members of the MIT community. Therefore, to ensure their efficacy, the Institute must issue a pre-assessment and post-assessment to training attendees to determine if they found the training engaging and educational.
 - c. The long-term goal of these trainings is to alter campus culture and climate to be inclusive, safe, and healthy for all community members. Therefore, the Institute must also issue annual assessments of campus culture and climate.
 - i. These assessments must have data separated by department and training recipient (faculty, staff, or student) in order to determine which trainings require additional tailoring and modifications to improve efficacy.
 - ii. All results must be made public to allow for accountability.

Background and motivation

As stated clearly above, MIT has a lot of work to do before it can create a more equitable experience for all on our campus. Despite the work of many student advocates and administrators on these issues, there has been little progress. Why have these efforts not resulted in change? We know that different identity groups at MIT can experience the campus very differently from each other. People with more privileged identities or in positions of power do not have to navigate the same world of challenges that the disempowered and marginalized do at

MIT. As a result, those privileged individuals often do not see the challenges that others face or understand their own role in creating or perpetuating those challenges.

We have never seen the will from our leaders or much of our community to take these challenges seriously, reflect on them, or show willingness to change. We need to first establish a common basis of understanding and willingness to act if we are going to move forward. How can we develop a shared understanding of these clearly pervasive issues as well as a shared commitment to solving them? How can we facilitate these often very difficult discussions? We believe that training for all campus community members and facilitated conversations on these topics is the best approach.

Training is a valuable tool that can be used to communicate expectations for appropriate behavior. Training can also be utilized to provide the community with skills to intervene when harassment occurs. Developing expectations and skills through training provides the necessary foundation on which to create a campus free of harassment and discrimination. With the effective communication of expectations, there will be a basis for assessment, and upon assessment, individuals can be either held accountable for failing to meet expectations or recognized for their excellence in practicing the skills provided and working to improve Institute culture.

We agree with the recommendations of the AOR working group final report. The major question we have is why has MIT allowed these recommendations, like so many other working group recommendations in the past, to lay dormant rather than following through. There must be a recognition that fighting harassment and discrimination on our campus is not a secondary goal to be at best a topic of conversation when it is convenient and forgotten about when it is not. These issues are urgent and the human impact has gone on for far too long. It is time that these issues receive the attention, time, and resources that they deserve.

Implicit Bias Training Development

Perhaps unsurprisingly one of the recommendations from another NASEM working group, the Training and Prevention Working Group, is “further exploration on how to align messaging and training opportunities on the topic of unconscious bias.” The working group further found that several offices, such as IDHR and ICEO, have fielded requests for implicit bias training but are not currently equipped to accommodate such requests. A call for “further exploration” of how to develop or implement implicit bias training is simply not sufficient, however necessary it is as a first step. It does not constitute a recommendation of how to implement actionable, sustainable change in the development of implicit bias training. Despite whatever good intentions there must have been in outlining this recommendation, it follows troubling precedent in the history of working group recommendations – vague, with no possibility for accountability. How can one

measure how satisfactorily something was “explored”? These measures are simply not sufficient, good intentions without concrete commitment is simply not sufficient.

Despite federal regulations prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity, we continue to see high levels of implicit bias in academia along with disproportionate underrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities. In the [2019-2020 academic year](#), of all enrolled graduate students 2.1% were African American, 5.5% were Hispanic or Latino, 0.13% were Native American, and 11.5% were Asian American. These statistics highlight the egregious underrepresentation of Black, Hispanic, Latino, and Native American graduate students at MIT; 13.5% of the [American population](#) is Black, 15% is Hispanic or Latino, and 1.5% is Native American. MIT also has a large population of International students, who constitute approximately 40% of all graduate students, themselves liable to face discrimination based on race and ethnicity. Even after adjusting graduate minority enrollment percentages to include only domestic students, MIT still lags far behind these national averages.

[Implicit bias can result in](#) holding racial and ethnic minorities to higher standards to confirm their competence, attributing their accomplishments to luck, assuming they hold a low-status position, and targeting discriminatory comments and actions. It leads to severely reduced opportunities for underrepresented minorities, toxic and abusive work environments and classrooms, and bias in publication, hiring, and tenure. For instance, [studies show](#) that people of color must reach a higher level of ability to be considered equally competent to their white peers. These inequitable standards can contribute to a toxic work environment and have downstream consequences on one’s career trajectory. Continually facing this bias and abuse causes significant deterioration of health and wellbeing and ultimately leads to high rates of attrition for racial and ethnic minorities in academia, particularly in science.

To build representation and increase retention in order to build an inclusive scientific community, we must utilize tools to combat implicit bias at MIT. Implicit bias training that employs perspective taking and promoting bias literacy [have shown promise](#), but have not been widely implemented often due to lack of trained facilitators. This lack of resources for the hiring or development trained facilitators is the precise reason why we do not have such training at MIT. Given the power and status of MIT, it is the responsibility of the Institute to lead in the fight against racism by immediately committing to providing the resources towards the development of implicit bias training. Just as it professes to lead in technological innovation, MIT needs to now lead in promoting safety and equity among students and eradicating institutionalized racism and sexism. In order to bolster diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, MIT must first and foremost take seriously the immediate allotment of resources for proactive measures to combat bias in admissions, hiring, promotions, and its community.

As noted, implicit bias training has been shown to be promising, but has yet to be implemented in a serious capacity. Within MIT, ICEO and IDHR, or any other such offices that concern themselves with discrimination, must immediately concern themselves with the resource allotment for and hiring of trained facilitators and DEI officers for implicit bias training development. Whether these DEI officers are hired/operate on departmental levels or not, the Institute must ensure all departments have equitable and sufficient access to resources to conduct implicit bias training and aid in the development of the program. All departments should be required to institute biennial mandatory implicit bias training, as well as compose, and make publicly available, criteria to measure the success of such training. In addition, any member of any hiring, recruitment, admissions, or placement committee must be mandated to undergo biennial tailored implicit bias training, and the resources for such an undertaking be made available. It is critical that MIT recognize that the burden of addressing implicit bias has historically fallen on underrepresented minorities (URMs) in the Institute, often students, who suffer most under institutional and systemic racism. The failure to provide adequate resources is not just unacceptable, but actively propagates the very same problems and toxic environments that necessitate implicit bias training to begin with.

Tailored Training for Different Populations on Campus

It is important to be intentional about the content and delivery of these trainings, such that they effectively demonstrate how to recognize and respond to harassment and bias, as well as how to create a climate to reduce harassment and bias. Historically, MIT and other institutions have approached these trainings only as a means of protecting themselves against legal liability. In order to deliver an effective training to change the institutional climate around harassment and discrimination, the [NASEM report](#) recommends training that is catered to specific populations, is conducted using live qualified trainers, and describes standards of behavior clearly. One wouldn't put a senator and a DMV employee through the same public servants ethics training. There is no reason why we should imagine that harassment and discrimination training should be the same for students, professors, and administrators. They will all experience these issues differently and we must acknowledge that.

This recommendation to conduct training live is also supported by [research in organizational psychology](#), which shows that in-person training mediated by a human instructor is more effective than online training. However, despite these clear findings, the majority of MIT training remains online. The on-boarding training for undergraduate students, graduate students, and employees includes online training through EverFi. Many of us have now gone through this generic and immemorial training, yet even many of us who care deeply about these issues can hardly tell you what we learned from it. Unfortunately, we have even anecdotally heard of professors who have their administrative assistant click through the training for them. While this

is an extreme example, it is illustrative of the absolute inefficacy of cookie cutter online training and the lack of accountability that comes with it.

While there are in-person trainings offered on building an inclusive culture, healthy and unhealthy relationships, and bystander intervention, the Training and Prevention Working Group found that most in-person trainings are not required and there is far from sufficient capacity at this time to make them available to a significant portion of our campus. Additionally, their report states that the purpose of online trainings is information dissemination, whereas the in-person trainings have potential for building skills and standards of behavior. With this in mind, the Training and Prevention Working Group recommended that, while online training should be continued as a baseline training, in-person training must be drastically expanded, as these are currently only delivered to a small percentage of the MIT community.

Specifically, the Training and Prevention Working Group recommends the expansion of departmental lab-by-lab training. This training, developed by the Chemistry and Chemical Engineering departments in collaboration with IDHR and VPR, covers policies, bystander intervention, resources, reporting options and assistance, how to build an inclusive working/learning environment, and activities for better utilizing diversity of thought. Following its development, this training was implemented in the Chemistry and Chemical Engineering departments, and was remarkably well received. 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 attended the training, over 95% rated the content, level of interaction, facilitators, and overall training as good, very good, or excellent, with less than 5% rating the training as fair or poor. In the follow up survey, 87% of respondents indicated that they would recommend the training to other departments in its current form or with minor changes. Thanks to the work of student advocates and faculty allies, we now have a more scientific assessment of these trainings. We must see this kind of care and dedication replicated at the highest levels of the Institute to ensure widespread and effective training.

Unfortunately, since the Institute has failed to take steps toward implementing an implicit bias training, we do not have any data on the efficacy of an in-person training at MIT. However, given [research](#) on the subject as well as recommendations by the Training and Prevention Working Group, an in-person workshop will be the most effective format for an implicit bias training. As with the harassment training, the implicit bias training must be tailored to individual populations on campus to best support the needs of students, professors, and staff.

We also want to highlight here the necessity for this type of ongoing assessment of the efficacy of training and of facilitated conversations on the same topics. It is unfortunately common for

schools to not assess the efficacy of their own training because they are concerned that they may find that their training is not being done effectively. It is clear in the NASEM report that in-person anti-harassment and discrimination training can have major benefits for the overall climate, but we must be serious about making sure we do it right, otherwise we risk taking a superficial “check-box” approach to training solutions instead of seriously dedicating to determining how best to make it work for the wide ranging MIT population.

While this in-person training represents a promising route forward, VPR and IDHR currently lack resources to implement harassment training on a larger scale than just a few departments a year. In fact, other departments have requested this training but have not received it, as the demand currently far exceeds the capacity of VPR and IDHR. Similarly, various offices such as IDHR and ICEO have fielded requests for implicit bias trainings, but are not equipped with the resources to accommodate these requests. In their report, the Training and Prevention Working Group notes that in order to implement these trainings, additional support and trainers will be needed. The problem is not so much that MIT doesn't see a path forward to creating a campus with less harassment and discrimination, it is simply a lack of political will to devote the resources to it. On the scale of MIT, these resources are pretty insignificant. Assuming well-compensated professional staff, expanding the training and prevention program to the entire campus would require on the order of \$1-2 million per year, or ~0.1% of [MIT's total employment expenses in 2019](#). In fact, this number's negligibility raises more questions about why it hasn't happened already.

In delivering such training on harassment and implicit bias, it is essential to consider which audiences will benefit most from these training sessions. The lab-by-lab harassment training was given to the entire lab, including students and faculty, however, the training was tailored to student interactions and scenarios. Therefore, there remains a gap in training for faculty and advisors on harassment. While harassment of students based on gender and race can be perpetrated by any member of the community, such harassment is particularly heinous when it comes from faculty due to their position of power over students. All community members must be treated equally as valued contributors to research and learning at MIT, however, due to the historically toxic culture in academia, such equal treatment is often not given. We see these toxic attitudes reflected in the openly racist and sexist *Angewandte Chemie* article published in June 2020. Despite its subsequent retraction, the fact that such a blatantly discriminatory article was peer reviewed and accepted demonstrates the continued prevalence of bias and discrimination in academia today. Particularly troubling was the assertion that skills can only be transferred to a student given [“unconditional submission of the apprentice to his/her master.”](#) This statement is abhorrent, especially in the use of “master,” a word deeply rooted in slavery. The fact that an article equating the relationship between faculty and students to that between masters and

apprentices can pass peer review in a highly-regarded journal speaks to the breadth of discrimination and abuse by professors.

Harassment and discrimination by faculty is a pervasive issue as shown by this article, but is of particular concern among the MIT community due to the high rate of harassment by faculty. As revealed in the [2019 MIT AAU survey](#), of all MIT graduate women who experienced harassment, 35.3% reported harassment was by a faculty or instructor (Table 5.4). In comparison, the [2019 aggregate AAU survey](#), which includes data from 33 universities, shows that of all graduate women who experienced harassment, this was done by a faculty or instructor 24% of the time (Table 36). This demonstrates the need for an additional training tailored to MIT faculty. In fact, tailored training for faculty, staff, and students has been recommended by the Training and Prevention Working Group, but no actionable items for development and implementation were included in the working group report. Acknowledgement that training is needed is insufficient. Without development and implementation, there will be no shift in the culture and climate of MIT, and harassment and discrimination will continue at the alarmingly high rates currently seen at MIT.

MIT's current policies and procedures

Implicit Bias Training

There is no widely available implicit bias training for all members of the campus community. The only similar training is an online 45-minute Diversity and Inclusion training required for graduate students upon matriculation. As previously described, online trainings are insufficient and ineffective in creating culture change. For faculty and staff, there is no required training related to bias, diversity, or inclusion. According to the Training and Prevent Working Group report, implicit bias trainings were given to approximately 60 staff (0.5% of all staff), 63 students (0.5% of all students), and 12 faculty (1% of all faculty) in the [2018-2019 academic year](#) by HR and ICEO. However, this report also states that although several offices fielded requests for implicit bias trainings, they were not equipped to accommodate these requests. It is evident that more resources are needed to develop and tailor this training to be implemented widely across campus. MIT has [promised](#) to hire more educators to meet the demand for targeted education, however, we have yet to see any such staff hired.

Harassment training

All of MIT's mandatory training is currently online and required at on-boarding. This has been a long-time requirement for undergraduates, graduate students, and staff, but was only introduced

to faculty in 2018. The training is designed to take one hour or less. Due to the lack of reiterative assessment, it is impossible to determine if these trainings have helped in changing campus climate and culture. However, in reality these trainings were not meant to change campus climate and culture, rather they were intended for information dissemination. Upon arriving on MIT's campus, many members of the community never receive training again. This presents another issue in actively improving campus culture, as without continued training and assessment we will remain unable to evaluate changes in climate and culture. Many students remain on campus for five years or more. Professors may be part of the MIT community for decades. It is blatantly clear that one training over the course of decades is insufficient, not to mention the fact that professors received no training until two years ago. There are various trainings offered by IDHR and VPR on bystander intervention, gender equity and equality, and healthy and unhealthy relationships. However, these offices are severely overextended and unfortunately are unable to widely implement current offerings, as we've seen requests for training denied due to lack of sufficient staff. Despite [MIT's promise](#) to expand both in-person and online trainings, we continue to wait for this promise to become a reality. While we recognize the distinct challenge of conducting in-person trainings during this pandemic, we emphasize the need for a [trained human instructor to increase training efficacy](#) (whether that is in-person or virtual), rather than continuing training by click-through modules.

What are other universities doing?

Implicit Bias Training

Currently, Vanderbilt is leading in the implementation of implicit bias training. Vanderbilt provides implicit bias training as a [part of every faculty search](#). In addition, they have committed to providing [customized training](#) to all faculty, staff, and leaders of student organizations. This effort began at Vanderbilt Medical Center, where over [4,500 faculty and staff](#) have been trained in the last 5 years, before being extended to the full university. Though other universities lag behind, there has been a push at some schools to implement implicit bias training for members of faculty recruitment committees. This training is now required for faculty recruitment committees at [University of Nevada, Reno](#) and recommended at [Carnegie Mellon](#).

Harassment Training

At [UMass Amherst](#) provides a notable example of significant progress toward implementation of in-person training. All new employees are required to complete an in-person harassment and discrimination. In addition to this on-boarding training, they offer a three-hour in-person training on sexual harassment to all UMass Amherst employees. Further, the [Equal Opportunity](#) office

provides tailored training to meet the needs of specific populations on campus. Berkeley has begun to move toward in-person training as well, requiring [in-person sexual harassment training](#) for all students. Berkeley has also [committed to gather data](#) in order to ensure that their training is contributing to a positive climate and culture change, rather than simply meeting legal requirements.

Another university that has mandated in-person sexual harassment training is [Maryland Institute College of Art](#) (MICA). At MICA, this training has been an integral part of the campus conversation and culture since 2013. After being rolled out by the HR and Title IX offices, the training started with just a few attendees, including allies and supporters of Estevanny Turns, the staff member who developed and administered the training. Over time, conversation about the training grew on campus, and high-level administrators attended the training, including the president. Upon seeing the impact that this type of training could have on campus culture, the president instituted the training as a requirement for all employees. [Washington Adventist University](#) has seen similar success of a shift in campus culture by requiring in-person sexual harassment training for all staff, faculty, and students. Though these types of in-person requirements are still relatively rare up to this point, this leaves space for MIT to lead in implementing these trainings, as it is clear that they fundamentally impact campus culture and climate.

Demand 2B - Hire DEI Officers for departmental accountability

The demand

1. Create an Institute-funded, department-level position independent of administration and faculty influence who will work with students to understand the climate and practices in the department.
 - a. Each department will be allocated at least one Diversity Officer. If Diversity Officers are shared across departments, then the departments must share *multiple* Officers (e.g. 3 departments can share no fewer than 3 Diversity Officers), and there must be a distinct Officer based in each department.
 - b. This position will report to and coordinate through a higher authority than the department, such as the ICEO.
 - c. This position will be given adequate Institute-level funding, support, and staff to carry out DEI-related initiatives (see Demand 2C on student support for this position).
2. Create a committee to fill this position which involves students and faculty from the respective departments.
 - a. The committee will involve equal representation from both students and faculty, and all votes between students and faculty will count equally.
 - b. Committee members will be elected via a voting procedure open to all members of the department.
 - c. The committee will solicit applications, interview candidates, and make a final hire within three months time.
 - d. The committee will open anonymous feedback mechanisms to gauge the Diversity Officer's impact on department climate and culture and report its findings to the ICEO.

- e. The committee will conduct a biennial review of the DEI Officer to provide feedback on performance and determine whether or not continued employment is appropriate.
3. This position will be responsible for evaluating potentially discriminatory practices such as admissions, qualifying exams, oral exams, hiring, and tenure.
 - a. The position will be given access to any and all relevant data (department/Institute survey data, acceptance, graduation, and retention rates, outcomes on qualification exams, etc.) requested and will make this data publicly available to the community.
 - b. If required data does not exist, this position will have the power to engage students and faculty to create surveys/forums to collect the data.
4. This position will have the ability to influence policy changes regarding admissions, qualifying exams, oral exams, hiring, and tenure.
 - a. Based on internal evaluations, this position will recommend necessary changes to eliminate discriminatory practices in the department.
 - b. This position can launch a mandatory review of specific practices highlighted as problematic through data collection.
5. This position will be granted the power to raise objection to decisions on the above practices, which can then be reviewed by the ICEO.
 - a. This position will keep department administration accountable for internal goals.
 - b. This position will submit a public yearly report to the ICEO detailing department progress on DEI initiatives and proposed next steps.
6. Current MIT policies that prevent enactment of any of the above points must be re-evaluated and changed accordingly.
 - a. All data relating to department climate, faculty hiring and tenure, graduate student retention and graduation, qualifying exams, etc. must be publicly available.

- b. The hired DEI officer will be empowered to influence faculty hiring and tenure decisions.

Background and motivation

While mandatory anti-harassment and anti-bias training will push MIT in the right direction, they alone will not address the Institute's systemic failure to create an inclusive climate for underrepresented minorities and women. 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 around these topics. The Institute has launched numerous working committees that spend valuable time and money drafting recommendations, but too often, these recommendations do not translate into action. The recommendations are not implemented, the students who push the administration to consider these changes graduate, new students—with little knowledge of MIT's bureaucracy—take their place, and the cycle repeats.

This trend, present far too often in MIT's recent history, emphasizes two key points. First, the lack of follow-through from administrative stakeholders, combined with the high turnover rate of active graduate students, necessitates a formal mechanism to retain institutional memory. Second, MIT's persistent use of the working group model, which raises awareness for issues at our university without actually solving them, requires greater accountability to ensure that the administration follows through.

We have seen that the administration recognizes the shortcomings of MIT's current culture, and even recommends solutions to mitigating them. As early as 2010, MIT's [Report of the Initiative for Faculty Race and Diversity](#) stated that “the hiring of a person who can focus on increasing the pipeline, the formation of networks and issues such as climate can be essential to advance diversity efforts on the department or school level.” This administrative recommendation was followed up by the [2015 BGSA Recommendations](#) calling for “the appointment of a Diversity Representative in each department.”

It was not until 10 years after the initial recommendation that the administration finally committed to action. In a [February 2020 letter](#) to the MIT community, the administration stated they would hire a dedicated DEI staff member for each of the 5 schools. There was little follow-up to this announcement, presumably because of the COVID-19 pandemic, until the administration restated this commitment in their [July 2020 letter](#) to the MIT community. With no details on the timeline of this announcement or information on who would fund such a position,

it is difficult to interpret this announcement as anything but a repackaged response to the current climate.

At best, the prolonged inactivity on this issue results from the MIT administration's incredibly slow pace at enacting substantive change. At worst, it is an indication of apathy towards graduate student well-being. Regardless, the end result is the same: inaction. While the administration claims that they are still defining the responsibilities and support mechanisms for the position, their hesitation to involve graduate students in this conversation does not support this excuse.

Following the continued inactivity from administration, students across schools, departments, and programs have begun advocating for hiring their own DEI officer. This list includes but is not limited to: [Electrical Engineering and Computer Science](#), [Chemical Engineering](#), [Biological Engineering](#), [Materials Science and Engineering](#), Mechanical Engineering, [Harvard-MIT Health Sciences and Technology](#), Institute for Medical Engineering and Science, [Biology](#), Brain and Cognitive Sciences, [Media Lab](#), and [Sloan](#). Once again, the drive to push change comes from students.

Both students and members of the administration recognize the value in including climate and culture experts in important decisions. However, there is disagreement on logistical issues regarding the position. MIT thinks that a single representative for each of the five schools is enough. In the following sections, we will dissect why this is not the case--**MIT must commit to hiring culture and climate experts at the department level.**

Critiques of the Current Approach

The current working model for DEI at MIT relies on ad hoc student- and faculty-run initiatives that are inherently disorganized, inefficient, and lacking in accountability for follow through on deliverables. Among other things, the inefficiency arises from relatively fast (ca. 5 year) student turnover and insufficient coordination between departments, both of which cause poor institutional memory of what has and has not worked.

The fact that the university often relies on faculty and students that are untrained or inexperienced in DEI issues means that these working groups are often ill-equipped to properly diagnose and redress systemic and ingrained inequity. Extremely slow responses and rare follow-through can be attributed to the fact that faculty are measured by their research productivity, not contributions to DEI initiatives or student support. Because of this incentive structure, diversity professionals are needed at the department level in order to maintain institutional knowledge and engage with faculty to develop solutions that match the specific situation of each department and discipline.

Beyond these inefficiencies, these student- and faculty-led initiatives are extremely time-consuming, uncompensated, and disproportionately run by URM students and faculty, imposing the pernicious “[Minority Tax](#)” that takes away time that they might otherwise have spent on research, classes, and teaching (i.e., advancing their career). For URM students, it is worse because these initiatives often put them in vulnerable or professionally compromising positions when directly discussing and negotiating sensitive issues with faculty, who hold direct professional power over the students as advisors, committee members, references, or simply as influential members in their field.

Benefits of Department Diversity Officers

Having a full-time, dedicated Diversity Officer (DO) in each department at MIT would alleviate the immense administrative burden of DEI initiatives from URM 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.

The success of this approach hinges upon allocating sufficient financial and staff resources to DEI efforts, including in particular the hiring of department-level DOs, who are uniquely positioned to substantively enhance diversity and equity by (1) establishing personal relationships with students and faculty, (2) developing discipline-tailored DEI programming, and (3) alleviating the Minority Tax. Finally, we note that centralized coordination between department-level DOs, school/college-level DOs, and the ICEO, would naturally facilitate a highly organized, strategic, and accountable DEI approach—across all departments—that is simply not possible with the ad hoc, decentralized approach currently implemented at MIT.

MIT's current policies and procedures

Since a department here at MIT has already recognized the benefits of a department-level DO, it is instructive to learn from their experiences with the position. In the fall of 2019, the Aeronautics and Astronautics (AeroAstro) department hired Denise Phillips as their inaugural Diversity Officer. Denise's primary responsibilities revolve around programming that engages students and faculty in new and impactful ways. She hosts a monthly Blind Spot series where speakers facilitate DEI-related discussions, and these sessions are well-attended by members of the department. During Thanksgiving, she held a dinner for members of the community who could not travel home. She is also heavily involved in the department recruiting weekend, where she organizes and leads events specific for underrepresented minorities and women.

Above all, Denise is a student advocate with an advisory position to the department leadership. In conversations with faculty and students, Denise serves as a liaison and helps facilitate discussions that otherwise go poorly, helping pass student initiatives. For example, she helped the student group AeroAfro secure funding to send students to conferences to recruit URMs. Her success at this role is likely a result of her 20+ years of experience in administrative student affairs.

Clearly, the department-level DO position has been a positive experience for the AeroAstro community. There are however, a few criticisms brought up by the students regarding the position as it is currently structured. First, Denise is currently stretched too thin. As one of the only Diversity officers at MIT, she is asked to serve on many Institute committees. At MIT, this problem can be mitigated by introducing this position to other departments. The fact that these issues are emerging at MIT reinforces the conclusion in the [literature](#), that a DO position must be adequately staffed and supported to be successful. Second, while the AeroAstro students were fortunate that Denise is such a strong student advocate, the hiring process had no student involvement. Since her role involves close work with student groups, it is imperative that the hiring of such positions in other departments involves student voices.

What are other universities doing?

Existing Structures

The hiring of diversity officers at higher education institutions is not a new phenomenon. 15 years ago, there were diversity officers present at at least 120 institutions around the [country](#). While many of these programs are headed by a chief diversity officer in senior leadership, the structure of the diversity office at these institutions has varied. In 2007, [Williams and Wade-Golden](#) found that 45% of institutions had a collaborative officer model where diversity initiatives were largely centered around one officer. The success of diversity programs relied on the charisma and motivation of this individual, and they often found themselves stretched thin and at odds with the strategic directions that different academic units were taking. The rest of the institutions in this 2007 study built a more robust organizational structure where, in addition to a chief diversity officer, further positions were created to support diversity initiatives. 17% of institutions employed the “portfolio divisional” model where many units fell under the chief diversity officer, enhancing their role at the university.

Generally speaking, [studies](#) have [repeatedly demonstrated](#) that the most important predictor of success in university DEI initiatives is for the university to substantively and sufficiently invest in both staff and financial support to effectively administer these efforts. Though the “portfolio-divisional” model provided more resources to push diversity initiatives on campus, it still drew a separation between diversity professionals and academic units. Several diversity officers [reported](#) that by making diversity its own “area,” their universities were deprioritizing it by not incorporating DEI into strategic and budgeting priorities.

More recently, several institutions such as [UC Santa Barbara](#) and the [University of Michigan](#) (UM) have created diversity officer (DO) roles that are integrated into academic departments. At UM, they found that hiring DOs for every academic unit was a key part of their 2015 push to improve diversity, equity and inclusion in their University. At a decentralized institution like MIT, **it is particularly important to embed diversity officers in the departmental leadership** because that is where many important decisions relating to graduate admissions, student funding and faculty hiring are made.

Why are Department DOs Successful?

Department-level graduate DOs are known to facilitate URM student success and substantively improve department diversity, equity, and inclusion. This success, as determined by both the [2016 study](#) of graduate DOs at 14 institutions and the [2019 UM study](#), is generally rooted in a

multifaceted approach by the DO that emphasizes (1) cultivating personal relationships with students, (2) working directly with faculty, and (3) developing a departmental climate that broadly fosters both diversity and integration.

The key to URM student retention and success in doctoral study, according to the theory of [Lovitts](#) and [elaborated upon](#) within the context of graduate DOs, is academic integration and socialization within their discipline of study, where a substantive sense of belonging fosters interest in remaining in academia. Department-level DOs directly foster URM student success by facilitating this integration through developing personal relationships with URM students, as well as creating tailored programming and workshops which create a more equitable program. Importantly, and alarmingly, faculty often [do not provide this critical student support](#); therefore, the personal and discipline-specific nature of these DEI initiatives require a dedicated department-level DO, who is intimately familiar with the needs of students in a particular discipline and whose primary responsibility is student well-being.

The need for department-level DOs is further reflected by the [UM study](#), which found that “disciplinary legitimacy” is crucial for DO efficacy. Indeed, intimate knowledge of the discipline-specific context, academics, expectations, career trajectories/options, and department faculty/staff, is vital to tailoring DEI initiatives to the specific needs of URM students in each department. Department-level DOs may also draw upon their personal relationships with students and faculty to cultivate and coordinate productive collaborations and deep engagement throughout the department. This is **categorically impossible** with school/college-level DOs because of their inherent detachment from the specific people and needs of a department. This underscores the need for department-level DOs, **in addition to** school/college-level DOs.

The experiences of the DOs at UM further highlighted that it is important to have DOs from varied backgrounds ranging from community organizing, to academic positions, to student affairs positions, because of the range of strengths, ideas, and approaches conferred by these diverse prior experiences. The hiring of DOs at the departmental level allows for professionals from these distinct backgrounds to be present at the Institute, building a diverse team that is better prepared to serve the full array of challenges that emerge when dealing with diversity, equity and inclusion.

Given the complexity and scope of systemic inequity in academia, DEI leaders require advanced knowledge, experience, and competencies to administer effective initiatives. Indeed, the [UM study](#) found that these were the most important qualities in an effective graduate DO. This knowledge, experience, and competency is crucial to analyzing the complex issues at hand and running the myriad of DEI initiatives, such as trainings, surveys, program evaluation, and events planning. **Advancing DEI at MIT warrants trained, dedicated, department-level DEI professionals to coordinate department efforts.**

Demand 2C - Provide Institute-wide support for anti-oppressive research and labor

The demand

1. Support the work of anti-oppressive scholars within our community.
 - a. The one million dollars pledged by President Reif on [July 1st](#) must be increased to two million dollars per year awarded on an annual basis for a minimum of five years to accommodate a larger scope of research (i.e., other anti-oppressive topics in addition to anti-racist work).
 - b. Funds will be awarded to deserving projects through an annual grant submission process, judged by a committee of MIT's renowned anti-oppression scholars.
2. Compensate graduate students engaged in the ideation and execution of DEI initiatives at the department level through partial fellowships.
 - a. These fellowships will be funded at the Institute level.
 - b. The fellowships will be awarded for around 10 hours per week per student, with research advisors, faculty, and department leadership understanding there is an equivalent reduction in that student's research hours per week during the duration of the fellowship.
 - c. The number of fellowships per department will be variable, awarded proportionally to the department's graduate student population, with at least one fellow for every 50 graduate students.
 - d. These student fellows will work with their department's DEI officer (see Demand 2B).

Background and motivation

Anti-Oppressive Research

While MIT is historically known for its strength in STEM fields, there is an opportunity for MIT to also lead in the development of research that critically questions the ethical and sociological implications of the rapidly developing technologies and systems we are known for developing. For example, Ruha Benjamin critiques colorist artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms which are coded to respond better to lighter skin tones in her book titled “Race after Technology.” Another heavily critiqued technology is facial recognition software, which [has been shown](#) to drive brutal policing against Black bodies. MIT has a duty to engage with anti-racist and anti-oppressive work in parallel with the rapid technology development taking place at the school.

MIT already has many scholars engaged in anti-racism research, including but not limited to Professors [Craig Steven Wilder](#), [D. Fox Harrell](#), [Amah Edoh](#), [Michel deGraff](#), [Melissa Nobles](#), [Helen Elaine Lee](#), [Erica Caple James](#), [Danielle Wood](#) and others. However, when an institution does not offer the professors and graduate students engaged in this work the same resources or notoriety offered in STEM fields, it sends a message that this work is not valued at MIT. In President Reif’s [July 1st article](#), he committed to an initial one million dollars to fund anti-racist research and to “seek additional sources.” **We call on MIT to expand this commitment to fund a larger body of anti-oppressive research, allocating two million dollars of seed funding annually for five years, with the expectation for further renewal of the program.** This number was chosen through researching other entities at MIT that offer seed grants (e.g. [MIT.nano](#), [MITEI](#)).

Graduate DEI Fellowships

Hiring department-level experts, as discussed in Demand 2B, will go a long way to heal MIT’s systemic climate and culture issues, but without student voices and perspectives, the policies enacted by these Diversity Officers (DOs) will have no substantial basis. While we expect department DOs to engage students, faculty, and staff broadly, they are no replacement for the contributions from student advocacy and engagement. That being said, we must be mindful of the [Minority Tax](#), a phenomenon described previously (see Demand 2B) in which URM students disproportionately devote time away from their research towards greater advocacy, often putting them in academically and professionally challenging positions without any protections. However, these students’ perspectives are crucial to growing a diverse campus. To achieve inclusive climates throughout the Institute and in departments, students who take on these initiatives, especially URM students, must be allowed to do so in a structured manner that protects them from retaliation and compensates them for their efforts.

To ensure student voices are heard on DEI issues, protected against retaliation from disinterested faculty members, and compensated for their time and efforts, **MIT must create part-time department-level fellowships to fund graduate students who research and enact DEI initiatives.**

MIT's current policies and procedures

Anti-Oppressive Research

While research into topics of oppression or solutions to address bias are scattered throughout the Institute, there is hardly any funding at MIT allocated to specifically address these topics. One example is the [MIT and Slavery project](#), an undergraduate research course created in 2017 to explore racism and MIT's part in it via examination of primary source documents. Unfortunately, the project has received little attention since its [acknowledgment](#) by President Reif in 2018. Additionally, this project only focuses on our past role in these structural inequities rather than addressing the current issues we face. Recently, President Reif [announced](#) a commitment of one million dollars towards anti-racist research at MIT. While this is a step in the right direction, we would like to expand this program to also include other anti-oppressive research and commit to at least five years of seed funding.

Graduate DEI Fellowships

There are a few existing, compensated opportunities for students to get involved with diversity work at MIT that have already played an integral role in supporting DEI initiatives at the Institute level. One example is the Graduate Community Fellows (GCF) program, run by the Office of Graduate Education, which enables students to engage in a range of important DEI-related efforts. The OGE Diversity Initiatives GCF helps connect students across the Institute and provides professional development services, in addition to supporting the recruitment of undergraduates from minority-serving institutions. The Graduate Student Surveys GCF supports DEI initiatives across campus by looking at MIT's climate data to identify aspects of student life that require improvement. The Survey fellow also provides technical experience in administering student surveys in cooperation with Institutional Research. Recently, the department of AeroAstro has committed to creating two annual [Diversity Fellows](#) for student leaders to organize department-wide discussions, plan diversity initiatives, and support student affinity groups. The student Diversity Fellows will play an important role in advocating for and consolidating student interests for department administration while complementing the function of their existing DEI staff.

What are other universities doing?

Anti-Oppressive Research

Several universities have established fellowships or centers supporting antiracist and anti-oppression research. Columbia University recently announced the creation of the [Atlantic Fellows for Racial Equity](#), a ten-year, \$60 million fellowship program that will empower activists, writers, artists, and others fighting anti-Black racism in the United States or South Africa. In 2018, UPENN established [HEARD: The Hub for Equity, Anti-Oppression, Research, and Development](#). Our neighbors at Boston University have established the [Center for Antiracist Research](#) to convene researchers and practitioners from various disciplines to figure out novel and practical ways to understand, explain, and solve seemingly intractable problems of racial inequity and injustice.

Graduate DEI Fellowships

A few universities have created funded graduate positions to support students in their DEI-related efforts and promote the growth of inclusive campus environments. Princeton University has a [Diversity Fellows Program](#) in which graduate students are awarded part-time fellowships to “build community through programming, event planning, and recruiting events.” The position, which only requires a time commitment of 20 hours per month, awards students a stipend of \$5,000 in addition to other teaching/research fellowships. The fellows are provided a budget of \$1,000 to enact their initiatives, expected to implement 1-2 programs a month, and allowed to collaborate on larger events as well. Harvard University has a similar, LGBTQ-focused [fellowship](#). Students who participate in this program average 10-15 hours per week and are paid \$6,000 per semester.