

To Provost Schmidt, ICEO Dozier, Dean Chandrakasan, Dean Malvalvala, Dean Sarkis, Dean Nobles, and Dean Schmittlein,

There is a clear and present need for our Institute to undertake the work of improving the diversity, equity, and inclusivity (DEI) of our campus. We have been pleased to see commitments from leadership recognizing the need for a coordinated, systemic strategy with active support from across the Institute to bring about systemic change. Our students, staff, and faculty have shown their active support for this change across campus as well. We believe that one of the critical ways to bring about this change is through the hiring of department-specific DEI officers. This is not a new need, but one that has been recognized at the Institute level since 2010 in the Hammond Report,¹ the 2015 BGSA Recommendations,² and in conversations throughout the Institute this past summer.

We are adding our names to this effort, in response to urges from student leaders, to represent the palpable support for structural change that is being championed across our communities at the faculty, student, and staff levels.

As department, lab, and center (DLC) leaders, we aim to fulfill our duty to our research communities as they call for meaningful change, but we need resources and financial support on a scale only available from the central administration. 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.^{3,4,5} As students, faculty, and staff across the Institute struggle to manage their overflowing plates, it is clear that we must expand our institutional capacity to do DEI work if we want this work to be done in a sustainable and lasting manner.

To this end, departments need dedicated DEI officers who have the capacity to hone in on the complexities of each of our communities' unique needs and research ecosystems. These DEI officers will need to identify the most effective strategies for their department and build relationships with students, faculty, and staff. They may need to attend field-specific conferences and maintain relationships with peer department heads at other institutions. MIT's research community has thrived with specialization; effective DEI work will require the same specialized focus on the nuances and challenges of each of our individual departments.

Funding remains a key barrier to our ability as departments to expand capacity for this DEI work. Due to funding and hiring limitations, some departments are planning to share DEI officers amongst them. However, DEI officers that are *shared* across departments, rather than simply working collaboratively across departments, face structural limitations which severely limit their potential impact. Specific times of the year, such as admissions season, will bring about a large workload for DEI officers, especially if they are shouldering the work for more than one department. Departments that have committed funds to hiring their own DEI officer are unsure how long they can sustain the funding for the position. True systemic change requires long-term commitment that is tailored to our unique departments; our communities fear that current efforts will fall short of this.

We believe there are multiple avenues available for sustainably funding dedicated departmental DEI officers, including drawing on a very modest portion⁶ of unrestricted endowment assets; a centrally coordinated fundraising effort supported by the Institute's Office of Resource Development, the Schools of Science and Engineering, and the relevant departments within these schools; and supplementation by repurposing existing DEI funds and financial commitments for shared DEI officers. Using these methods (or a combination thereof) to raise the funds at the Institute level for hiring departmental DEI officers will ensure that these positions can be created to last. Our Institute has embarked on truly impressive fundraising projects in the last few years alone, including for the College of Computing and MIT.nano. If the Institute can commit even a small fraction of the financial and administrative resources that it has procured for scientific endeavors, we can meet this Institute-wide call for change.

We believe that dedicated and experienced professionals in DEI, focused on serving the needs of our individual departments, can better coordinate across the institute to effectively implement the Strategic Plan being developed by the ICEO and Associate Provost. We believe the Strategic Plan can represent a new direction for Institute initiatives, but only if the groundwork is laid for meaningful implementation and coordination. If we plan to make DEI officers central players in addressing DEI issues and an integral part of our community, we must ensure they are supported and equipped with the resources they need. We agree with President Reif's statement that "systemic change will require a coordinated, systemic strategy, with active support from across the Institute,"⁷ and we thus ask to meet with you so that we can create this system of active, coordinated support for departmental DEI officers.

We come to you to express our support for this request, driven by the students, staff, and faculty of our departments. We ask that you please consider this request and work with the student advocates who have brought this issue forward.

Signed,

RISE

Prof. Troy Van Voorhis, Department Head, Chemistry

Prof. James DiCarlo, Department Head, BCS

Prof. Laura Schulz, Associate Department Head, BCS

Prof. Rebecca Saxe, Associate Department Head, BCS

Prof. Nicholas de Monchaux, Department Head, Architecture

Prof. Terry Knight, Associate Department Head for Strategy and Equity, Architecture

Prof. Alan Grossman, Department Head, Biology

Biological Engineering REFS

Biological Engineering Graduate Board

Biological Engineering Undergraduate Board

Biological Engineering Application Assistance Program

Society of Underrepresented Biologists and Biological Engineers Executive Board

Womxn of Materials Science

Graduate Materials Council

DMSE DEIC Graduate Student Working Group

Society of Undergraduate Materials Scientists

Graduate Womxn in Chemical Engineering

Chemical Engineering Graduate Student Advisory Board

Diversity and Inclusion in Chemical Engineering

HST Student Diversity Ambassadors

HST Joint Council

HST Women's Group Coordinators

Diversity & Inclusion in IMES/HST (DIIMES) Learning Group (Staff)

Chemistry Alliance for Diversity and Inclusion Executive Board

Chemistry Graduate Student Committee

Chemistry REFS

Women in Chemistry Executive Board

Architecture Student Council

National Organization of Minority Architecture Students

Graduate Womxn in Physics

Physics REFS

Physics Graduate Student Council

CSAIL Student Committee

CSAIL Postdoc and Graduate Student Council

Biology REFS

Biology Diversity Community (BDC)

MIT Kavli Institute for Astrophysics Anti-Racism Task Force

MIT Student Section of the American Nuclear Society (ANS)

1. [The Report on the Initiative for Faculty Race and Diversity](#)
2. [The 2015 Recommendations — MIT BGSA](#)
3. Grim, J. K., Sánchez-Parkinson, L., Ting, M., & Chavous, T. "[The Experiences of Academic Diversity Officers at the University of Michigan](#)". *Currents*, 1(1), 131-150 (2019).
4. Griffin et al. "[Graduate Diversity Officers and Efforts to Retain Students of Color](#)", *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 53(1), 26–38 (2016).
5. R. A. Leon. "[The Chief Diversity Officer: An Examination of CDO Models and Strategies](#)", *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 7(2), 77–91 (2014).
6. To give an overestimate: hiring 12 dedicated officers as level 8 employees with mid-level pay and with a \$75,000 annual operating budget, taking into account 7.7% payroll tax, would cost roughly \$2 million per year. Assuming a 5% return on investment, this would require earmarking only 0.42% of the endowment's unrestricted net assets in 2020 (see [Table 31A](#)). This cost can be reduced further using a multi-pronged funding model as specified above.
7. [Letter regarding efforts to address systemic racism at MIT](#)