



MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY  
**GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL**

**Statement on Gender Equality**

The MIT Graduate Student Council (GSC) represents the 6,800 graduate students of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in all matters concerning their welfare, academic and professional development opportunities, and overall health. Therefore, we strongly support measures that aim to encourage gender equality at institutions of higher learning, in the workforce, and in everyday life.

It is particularly important that initiatives are taken to close the gender gap in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields, given that STEM skills in the workforce promote innovation and economic growth.<sup>1</sup> As of 2014, only 19.8% of Bachelor's degrees and only 22.8% of Doctoral degrees were awarded to women in STEM subjects.<sup>2</sup> This is reflected in MIT's graduate student body, which consists of only 34% women.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, **we would like to thank all parties actively addressing these challenges, for example by passing the INSPIRE Women Act (H.R. 321)**, which supports mentorship programs at NASA to encourage girls to pursue careers in science and technology. Programs such as those supported by this Act will encourage the next generation of female STEM students and professionals, as women and girls consistently cite female mentors as one of the top reasons they have remained in STEM fields.<sup>4</sup>

The gender gap present in STEM education also propagates into the workforce. As of 2015, the science and technology workforce was comprised of only 28.4% women.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, we encourage all policies that incentivize women to take leadership positions in STEM fields and facilitate the professional development of graduate women as they enter the workforce. Consequently, **we would like to thank all parties involved in passing the Promoting Women in Entrepreneurship Act (H.R. 255), which supports entrepreneurial programs for women.**

While educational and professional development initiatives geared towards girls and women are key to increasing gender diversity in the STEM fields, there remain open challenges. For example, we support policies that would provide affordable childcare and strengthen maternity leave policies, along with paid parental leave provisions. In addition, we emphasize the important role of affordable and accessible healthcare in career advancement of women. In particular, comprehensive healthcare enables women to make choices regarding reproductive healthcare (short- and long-term contraceptives, cancer screenings, STI/STD testing), and to safely explore the range of options surrounding pregnancy, childbirth, and neonatal care.

In summary, **we would like to thank the members involved for passing the INSPIRE Women Act and the Women in Entrepreneurship Act, and encourage future policies that support women in STEM fields.**

*Prepared by the External Affairs Board on behalf of the MIT Graduate Student Council.*

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<sup>1</sup> National Science Foundation 2014 report Revisiting the STEM Workforce: A Companion to Science and Engineering Indicators, p.9

<sup>2</sup> National Science Foundation 2017 report on Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering, p.7

<sup>3</sup> <http://web.mit.edu/facts/enrollment.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.cdwnewsroom.com/women-in-stem/>

<sup>5</sup> National Science Foundation 2017 report on Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering, p.13