Statement on Student Privacy

The MIT Graduate Student Council (GSC) represents the 6,800 graduate students of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in all matters concerning their academic environment and wellbeing. The GSC firmly supports policies that forbid university faculty and staff from demanding information from students, including account credentials for electronic or online services, that could be used against the students in any university process, including the university disciplinary process.

H.158, presented by Representative Kenneth Gordon, and S.991, presented by Senator Cynthia Creem, are designed to protect the privacy of students at universities in Massachusetts. These bills prevent universities from requesting access to students’ social media accounts by requiring credentials or compelling “friending.” These bills penalize universities that overstep this boundary.

Allowing students to control what information the university sees about them is essential to a mutually trusting environment. The disclosure of account credentials also poses a major cyber security risk and makes it easier for an attacker to compromise an account. In the interest of protecting student privacy, the MIT GSC urges all members of the legislature to support H.158/S.991.

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