



# Graduate Student Council

of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

## General Council Meeting Agenda

July 3, 5:30 PM in 32-155

- I. Introduction, Dinner, New Faces (5:30 – 5:40 PM)
  - a. Quorum Check
    - i. Some clickers were not working – some numbers were updated on the Council Reps List spreadsheet. Some clickers corresponded wrong numbers.
    - ii. Total #: 34 (we did not hit quorum)
  - b. Approval of June GCM Minutes
    - i. Did not reach quorum
2. 66.gsc.2 – Updates to the GSC Policy Platform (5:40 – 5:55 PM)
  - a. JR:
    - i. The GSC has a policy platform that lists the positions of the GSC and lists what the EAB advocates for; we can't advocate for a policy that's not on the policy platform list.
    - ii. Typically we have pushes for working on advising and mentorship; we thought it would be good to add some ideas to address this. Right now, professional development and advising are not on the policy platform (these were originally handled by administration).
    - iii. Things like surveys of outcomes and job placements, plus sexual harassment, are being added to state-level agendas.
    - iv. Having/passing these updates will allow us to work on these.
    - v. We are not voting on this right now; the procedure is that we propose them at a GCM, and vote at the next GCM
    - vi. PDF will be on the website.
    - vii. Q: Are these things that apply to the MIT administration or to the government?
      1. A: This applies to governments, but could apply to NGOs and the like.
      2. A (PS): With the new statements process, other committees than the EAB can pass statements. Any statement has to be related to something on the policy platform. Advocacy-wise, though, we don't have internal restriction within MIT.

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3. A: If we wanted to publish something in the Tech, then we have to go through the statements process.
- viii. Q: Is it possible to add restrictions to the scope to only encompass things that are at the state/federal level?
  1. A: This can help with data collection/storage; there is a wide variance between departments, for example. We don't have a clear picture of what the problem looks like, whether it's an MIT-only problem, etc. Also it could be useful to have information on professional outcomes: placements in jobs, etc.; rankings like US News are flawed at best. I am unaware of proposed policies to actively regulate advisor-advisee mentorship.
- ix. Q: Would these policies be more for generating data, or for changing policy on a government level that affect these relationships? For #3, I'm not sure how "policies that foster wellbeing" would look like.
  1. A: Part of it is that people are starting to look at hours worked for graduate students in terms of well-being as part of why we put healthy and productive work life balance on there
  2. A (from audience): One thing it addresses that can be regulated is parental leave.
  3. A: I've heard of some labs here where some labs only let you take half a weekend off. I don't know of any general policy that is concerned with this. A lot of it is about data collection – if there is data collected now, maybe 10-15 years from now there will be pushes to do something with that data, during which we can revisit that point.
- x. Q: Do these policies regulate what you can advocate *against* as well as what you can advocate *for*?
  1. A: Yeah, we can't deal with topics that are not on the policy platform. Basically you don't want people just choosing items to select left and right, so we have to have things on the policy platform.
  2. Comment (from audience): In practice, it seems that there's no real accountability for what goes into the policy platform; for example, in this amendment, there



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are some things that people would be on board with, and stuff where that might not be the case.

- a. A: I don't think this amendment process is completely expansive; if this didn't exist, I would have already gone ahead and wrote a statement.
- b. Comment: Have you already written a statement?
  - i. A: No. If you're interested in working on statements, let me know. We only start working on a statement if we have a justification for it.
  - ii. A: Another example – last year, there was a policy platform about climate change. There are many things we could have advocated for in the past; but we didn't because there was nothing to advocate about on the policy platform.
  - iii. A: You can submit amendments – contact me and let me know. What you see here was drafted by ~a dozen people within the EAB and ExComm (I myself only wrote #1)

xi. PS: If you have comments, email [gsc-eab@mit.edu](mailto:gsc-eab@mit.edu). You can also just google GSC EAB.

I. This will be available to vote on at the next GCM.

### 3. Commencement Update (5:55 – 6:25 PM)

- a. PS: There are 2 known options currently on the table; we want to present the options and get your general feedback.
  - i. This year, commencement was already different, since hooding was done separately for PhDs
  - ii. Very few people actually showed up, and they didn't get to walk across the stage on Friday.
  - iii. The change was not intended to be permanent; they wanted to see what the dropoff would be like between Thursday and Friday. So now they need a permanent solution.
  - iv. There is an issue in that people leave early, and the ceremony is long. The event is not ideal for people at the end, since no-one is there in the audience.



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- b. Q: Did you go to the PhD ceremony this year? PS: No
- c. Comment from audience: Have the commencement speaker speak at the end
  - i. Comment from audience: Might be embarrassing for the commencement speaker...
- d. Option 1: Have completely separate undergrad and grad ceremonies. What this means is that you'll have relatively long ceremonies, and everyone will still have the Killian experience.
- e. Option 2: Came from the higher admins (i.e. chancellor-level). Just have the speeches in Killian, then have degree conferral and hooding split by department/school, happening in parallel. So this means that the speeches ceremony ends up being fast, and since degree conferral is in parallel, it saves a lot of time. Downside, is that there's no Killian and not everyone gets to walk across the stage.
- f. Any comments?
  - i. Comment: I'm from a small department (linguistics & philosophy): this means that I would just go to the office and ask for paperwork. Sometimes it's so small since no one is walking (i.e. they are out somewhere in the world and can't come to the ceremony, or they have off-season graduation).
    1. PS: From what I've heard (do not take this as gospel): it seems that Dean Nobles wants to have a grad/undergrad SHASS ceremony. Note here that you're mixing grad and undergrad. Note that it's school/department (not just department)
    2. Same commenter: There should be some regulation about schools/departments not being able to do the ceremony on their own. Also, there should be an even level of funding.
  - ii. Comment: So the first option is basically what UMass Amherst does, and they have 26000 undergrads and even more grad students. This option (option 1) works for them. The best part was that advisors were able to hood their advisees.
    1. I don't like the second option because what if you want to graduate with your friends in other departments?
    2. The future should get rid of student disciplinary boundaries.



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3. PS: They also mentioned the commencement ceremony having a conferral for everybody, but no one necessarily going on stage.
- iii. Becca Black: In undergrad we had separate undergrad and grad – it was awful since every undergrad walked.
  1. We only had like 2100 undergrads.
  2. At Carnegie Mellon, each department stands up and everyone claps. At degree ceremonies, it's sometimes nicer to be at a small department since it's more special and your family gets to come and see your professors. But you have to pick a primary department to graduate in.
- iv. Comment: Just a concern: Do there have to be 2 commencement speakers?
  1. PS: Usually the speakers think it's for undergrads; a lot of them don't have grad degrees. You might have stature issues, but you might be able to get a better speaker for grads.
- v. Richard Zhang: How do you incentivize departments to hold their own ceremonies
  1. PS: I think small departments will get support from administration – according to Chancellor and Vice Chancellor, they won't leave departments on their own. However, it's not clear what the resource distribution would be.
  2. RZ: It would be great to have the resources provided; however, for example, the math department is constrained by resources, so if someone from top-down asked them to do commencement, there could be resistance/grudges from the department.
  3. RZ: Would it be in parallel, or staggered? PS: It would be parallel.
- vi. Comment: logistically, for the parallel ceremonies, has it been brought up where they will be?
  1. PS: They say they are working on it.



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- vii. Comment: For the second option, it is interesting to note that if the concern is size, and everyone has 4 guests, the same thing is going to happen at the joint speech commencement.
1. PS: In that case, they might reduce the number of guests.
  2. Comment: That's going to create hell when students have large families.
  3. Becca: has administration looked into schools that *do* do it this way?
    - a. PS: Right now it's just in planning phase, esp. since MIT is unique in that they only have one "nice" space (i.e. Killian court)
    - b. JR: Sometimes, they will just stagger the ceremonies over a few days, in the same location.
      - i. PS: MIT Events would dislike having like 5 ceremonies.
- viii. Comment: Why is there only one commencement? Is this just an American thing? If they had 2 commencements (i.e. a September one), people would just go to the earliest one.
1. PS: The issue might be getting *multiple* high-profile commencement speakers. People might be worried about the stature of the other ceremonies. It could also be a size issue – the number of people graduating off-cycle could be small enough that MIT doesn't want to do anything about it.
  2. Comment: Also, it's winter...
- ix. Comment: You might want to float the idea of off-cycle commencement. The big thing is that they need to give you your real diploma, and you need to have really finished to get your real diploma.
- x. JR: Referring to the previous comment, no it's not an American thing to have 1 commencement; many schools have 2.
- xi. Comment: I feel the MIT administration benefits from the second options but students don't; families are just as likely to go to both ceremonies, but MIT might just be trying to hide that the option doesn't benefit students but will be easier.



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1. PS: One of the reasons it's being suggested is that it might make things easier, but it could also make things more complicated because of the number of ceremonies.
  2. Comment: It might be incorrect to conclude that last year took too much time since that has an unaccounted-for variable, that the Masters were included
    - a. PS: The M-Eng's are considered part of the Bachelors.
  - xii. No other comments. PS: We'll bring this up at the next meeting with the admins, and there will probably be more updates later this year.
4. Orientation Update (6:25 – 6:35 PM)
    - a. SM
      - i. Here's why we started earlier. Orientation used to start mid-July to August. The old schedule was harsh and hard for the team.
      - ii. This year, we want to get the committee up and running. What I'm going to show is what we've done so far.
        1. Orientation 2019 has already started
        2. This year, we split our team into 3 parts: Shashank is running pre-Orientation and pre-Campus teams.
          - a. Re. the pre-Campus programs: the undergrads have Summer send-offs: Undergrads used to be hosted and have informal discussions and networking. All the send-offs had grad students except New York for some reason.
          - b. We had alums reaching out to incoming grad students, and it's a huge success that we're helping incoming students network domestically *prior* to joining MIT.
    3. We expanded the pre-orientation webinar to domestic *and* international students. Last year, things were rushed in August, but this year, we're having one this Friday. It's webex-based, and I'm already receiving webex calls from students.
    4. We realized that families are coming to MIT, and a lot of them come in without supplies for their babies. We need



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to better mentally prepare families, so we're having an exclusive family webinar.

5. Right now, the committee is all male – if you are interested, please reach out. The dates and timings are online, please sign up – we really want representation on that.
6. Moving on, we sent out a communication. Instead of using Mailchimp, we got a mailman list. The first communication we sent was about the webinars. We sent out the webinars form, and next we're going to send out the bulletin. The bulletins are at [grad-orientation.mit.edu](http://grad-orientation.mit.edu)
7. Just got funding for the Dorm orientation events. Ashdown wants to host their orientation BBQ on Sept 1. We're trying to get dates for other orientation things.
8. New initiative: we are having a multi-dorm mini golf. Funding is taken care of. EC and 70 Amherst are also part of it. Let's see how it goes.
9. Last year's post orientation survey indicated that people still don't realize the different student café's; so regarding these, we decided we need a fun activity with the students so they know the places on campus, how TechMart functions; does MIT ID have a T Pass or not, can you get subsidized tickets, etc.
  - a. Thus, we want a campus-wide scavenger hunt. We are using a mobile app to host the event (2-3 hours); we requested OGE funds. This is also to help get Sloan students to Main Campus – the goal is to get students from all schools on one team
10. Last year, the outing was to New Hampshire. Everything was great, but we could only cater to 70 grad students. This time, we want to do Beach or Blue Hills.
  - a. This year, students wanted something more strenuous than a walk that you call a "hike"
11. Resources 101 series: new initiative we're taking on so that orientation does not necessarily end after one week





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after orientation ends. We are having 6 resource events to help orient students towards resources on campus.

12. T-shirts: we have yet to design a logo: if any of you has an idea to pitch, please let us know.

13. We have a paid GCF (graduate community fellow) – it's a very flexible position; please pass on the info to your friends. Also T-shirt design.

a. Q: How does this work for international students?

A: Please email Jessica Landry and look up GCF's, and you can see the eligibility criteria.

b. A (from audience): Int'l students can work >20 hrs over summer *if they're on fellowship*. So if you're lucky enough for your department to pay for a fellowship, then you can work. Otherwise, you cannot. There are a lot of positions that international students cannot do.

### iii. Final questions?

1. Comment: This might not be feasible, but there's 8 weeks between people needing to get rid of stuff and new people who want stuff; can we have a system for people to drop off their things and have others pick them up later? (A: There are existing programs, e.g. MIT Reuse (?)).

a. Comment: Is there an online way to do this? A: Tang is doing "trash to treasure": for last week of May, outgoing students gave their stuff in a particular place. There's a recycling and gardening chair from Tang Hall. Once students arrive, they organize a "yard sale" where it's first-come-first-serve. This is particular to Tang and Westgate.

2. Comment: Furniture exchange does this, but it's not on a large enough scale.

### 5. Officer Updates (6:35 – 6:45 PM)

a. Welcome DEI!

b. Peter

i. A lot of students were affected by OPT processing delays; ~40 students were affected for varying lengths of time. They went



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beyond 90 days; some got their OPT before their internship start; some got it after. OGE reached out to all affected students and gave them support. Then the big thing moving forward is a big push to allow departments to offer CPT as an option to help students get authorization over the summer. If your department doesn't have CPT and you want to get involved (or if you know people who do), have them reach out to the officers or wait for more details/updates.

1. Our understanding is that the GSC will have limited ability, since it's going to be a department-by-department thing.
  2. Comment (RZ): EECS was piloting (a year ago) an academic "professional perspective" requirement so that their department can offer CPT. The GSC can **push individual departments** to start their own initiatives.
    - a. PS: This is going to be very department-heavy.
  3. Question: What are the minimum requirement for departments to offer CPT?
    - a. PS: It has to be in the catalog and required for the degree in some way. (The way CS does it is by having a bunch of different ways to fulfill options, and just one of them is CPT) – this doesn't require all students to do CPT.
  - ii. Use your Council Rep funds!! It's \$150/rep/term. You get an extra \$100 if you're on a GSC committee. You also get an extra \$150 if you collaborate with another constituency! Please apply to it – there are some conditions (e.g. the event needs to be accessible to everyone in your consistency). Also be timely with your request. You can't use your \$ for alcohol, etc.
    1. We already decreased the \$ for this line item, since it was underutilized.
    2. Email [gsc-vp@mit.edu](mailto:gsc-vp@mit.edu) with any questions.
6. Committee Updates (6:45 – 7:00 PM)
- a. ARC (PS: Meicen had to go)
    - i. Big thing this year is advising: Noam and co-chairs met with GradSAGE since they had already worked on this for a bit.



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- ii. The advising subcommittee is now a thing, and they are looking for members from Econ and Architecture. If you're interested at all, you should contact [gsc-arc@mit.edu](mailto:gsc-arc@mit.edu).
  - iii. The chairs and GradSAGE chairs are going to be meeting with admins (e.g. VC and other people); first Subcommittee meeting related to this is on Friday morning.
  - iv. If you can't make it, email [gsc-arc](mailto:gsc-arc). There will be coffee in the GSC office.
  - v. Upcoming events: DYD is now Thesis Lounge. It's going to be week of August 5; for people who are finishing thesis, you get free food and a place to work on thesis. Writing center will be there too.
  - vi. Academia Job Search panel in mid-to-late August.
- b. AC (Henry)
    - i. Past month was Art Gallery tour
    - ii. Upcoming: Whale Watching trip on July 20 – ticket sales are now open. Already sold.
    - iii. Six flags trip coming up; tickets are \$38.
    - iv. Discussion this morning w/ people at Harvard: thinking of having joint Spoken Word event; we'll have grad students performing spoken word. We want to advertise as soon as possible. Watch out on the Anno for this.
    - v. Next meeting is next Monday 7/8.
  - c. ASA (Becca)
    - i. Last few weeks we have been wrapping up the re-recognition process to keep group recognized. We've been tracking the ~100 groups that haven't finished the process. Now we're left with ~40 groups, and we're telling them they're really going to be derecognized.
    - ii. We finalized our Large Event fund, we allocated \$20,000. Will occur between now and end of September, will over OC events.
    - iii. Constitution changes; we are changing guidelines to match GSC policy. We talked about it a bit more last semester.
  - d. DEI (Peter; Bianca not here)
    - i. New Treasurer: Becca Carlson



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- ii. If you're interested in joining for a relatively chill position (take notes during meetings + your own goals), that's open. Next meeting is 2 weeks from now: Tues July 16 at the GSC office. Will make guidelines for new Conference Travel line in their budget.
- e. EAB (Jack)
  - i. Next board meeting is July 15, 5-6pm.
  - ii. If you have comments on policy platform and/or direction, please attend.
  - iii. NAGPS accepted our bid to host the Northeast regional conference. If anyone is interested in participating, we can get into that.
  - iv. We're having a meeting with a Cambridge City Councilor to discuss availability of grocery stores, ability to vote in local elections, climate change, etc.
  - v. We are also looking at two programs that have been renamed: SHINE (interviews in local newspapers)
  - vi. Also, SHIP (Student Hometown Presentations)
  - vii. Email me if you're interested.
  - viii. Q: what's involved?
    - I. A: SHINE is our process to work with students and reach out to newspapers to get pieces written and published. If you're interested, come let us know. SHIP is something that high schools commonly do: if you're an alumnus, you can give a random presentation to a random class from high school. If you're interested in that but it seems like a lot of work to reach out to the school and do a presentation, we can throw some resources and \$ your way.
  - ix. Q: is this open to international? A: We've had at least one.
- f. HCA (Peter)
  - i. Want to let you know that next meeting is Wed, GSC office, after GCM.
  - ii. Topics this time: Establish wellness subcommittee; start talking about managing stress. Normally this happens later in the year, but this year they want to start early. **Families subcommittee** is still looking for people.



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g. Muddy (Richard)

i. Muddy is applying for new funding. If you want to help with writing, please talk to me after this meeting.

ii. Come to our next meeting.

7. Open Floor (7:00 – 7:05 PM)

a. Somesh

i. Re. dorm events, we want to bring diversity to dorms and help students share their experiences. This time, we are starting with 3 Wednesdays in July, just wanted to put that out. Just received funding confirmation yesterday.



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## Upcoming GSC Meetings

Academics, Research, and Careers (ARC)	TBD
Visiting Students Association (VISTA)	Every Monday, 7:00 PM
Activities Committee (AC)	TBD
External Affairs Board (EAB)	Monday, 7/15, 5:00 PM
Federal Affairs Subcommittee	TBD
State and Local Affairs Subcommittee	Thursday, 7/11, 5:30 PM
Public Outreach Subcommittee	TBD
Development Subcommittee	Every Friday, 5:00 PM
Housing and Community Affairs (HCA)	Wednesday, 7/10, 6:00 PM
Off-campus Subcommittee	TBD
Sustainability Subcommittee	TBD
Transportation Subcommittee	TBD
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)	Tuesday, 7/16, 5:00 PM
Muddy Charles Pub	Monday, 7/29, 7:00 PM
Orientation Committee (OC)	TBD
Executive Committee (ExComm)	Wednesday, 7/31, 6:30 PM

\*Unless otherwise indicated, all meetings are in the GSC Office (50-220)

## Upcoming General Council Meetings (GCMs)

Note: Dinner starts at 5:00 PM and meetings start at 5:30 PM

August General Council Meeting	Wednesday, 8/7, 32-155
September General Council Meeting	Wednesday, 9/11, 32-155
October General Council Meeting	Wednesday, 10/2, 32-155
November General Council Meeting	Wednesday, 11/6, 6-120
December General Council Meeting	Wednesday, 12/4, 32-155

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