General Council Meeting Agenda  
October 2, 5:30 PM in 32-155

1. Introduction, Dinner, New Faces (5:30 – 5:40 PM)  
   a. Quorum Check  
      i. Start GCM at 5:36pm  
      ii. 50 people present – quorum reached.  
   b. Approval of September GCM Minutes  
      i. Motion to approve and seconded

2. Vrajesh Modi – Intro to MIT Corporation (5:40 – 6:00 PM)  
   a. Graduated in 2011 as an undergrad, 2015 as a grad student  
   b. Here to tell about the MIT corporation  
   c. Why I’m here, why invited for this talk  
      i. When I was a student, the corporation was a mysterious entity that existed at MIT. It wasn’t clear, even as a student leader, how it worked and what it was made up of.  
      ii. When I was elected to the corporation, my goal was to make things transparent to students. So if you have any questions, please ask. I will answer everything I can answer to the best of my ability.  
   d. Given so many people have heard of the MIT corporation, does anyone want to volunteer a guess as to what we do?  
      i. Handle money?  
      ii. Corporation is to MIT as GSC is to grad students  
      iii. The corporation represents MIT, is made up of 78 members (25 life members, 25 term members, i.e. 5 year terms, 15 members nominated by Alumni association, and 5 recent graduates, such as Vrajesh)  
      iv. Just a few years ago: just because 15 spots are for alumni, doesn’t mean other spots are not.  
      v. We then have a few officer positions, such as secretary.  
      vi. Collectively, that makes up the membership of the corporation.  
   e. I have a slide showing what we do  
      i. The corporation sees that the institute adheres to the purposes for which it was chartered and that its integrity and financial
resources are preserved for future generations as well as for current purposes.

ii. Specific tasks:
1. Provide guidance on strategic direction
2. Approve annual budgets
3. Exercise long-term fiduciary responsibility
4. Approve new degree programs, courses of study
5. Approve (individual) degrees
6. Elect the president and other corporation officers
7. Advise the President.

iii. The split
1. Corporation
   a. Oversight
   b. Advice
   c. Support
   d. Volunteer role; similar to the GSC or the UA.
2. MIT leadership
   a. Management
   b. Execution

iv. Structure
1. Millard is the chairman
2. Glassburn is the VP and secretary
3. Israel is the EVP and treasurer

v. I would highly encourage you to join the visiting committee for your department.
1. Every single department has a visiting committee, i.e. a committee of the corporation (1/3 corporation, 1/3 alumni, 1/3 presidential nominees, ~18 or so people) that meets with students, faculty, and other groups (e.g. labs), and make recommendations to department head and dean of the school. That happens once every two years.
2. Joining is one of the ways you can have a really big impact on your department. Every visiting committee report I’ve been on has been taken very seriously.

vi. There is also the Corporation Joint Advisory Committee (CJAC): the only committee that has students, corporation, and faculty, but no administration.
vii. Screening committee for grads is how you can get involved.

viii. There are five recent graduates on the MIT corporation.

1. If you want to get in touch with us, we’d be happy to hear from you.

2. We are there to provide a recent graduate’s perspective on the issues that MIT is facing.

ix. There are several visiting committees (https://corporation.mit.edu/committees/visiting-committees)

x. CJAC has Peter, HCA, and ASA representation.

f. Corporation is accepting nominations for recent graduates

i. 5-year term beginning July 2020

ii. Nominations are due on 11/1/2019

iii. Eligibility: graduated in 2018 or 2019, or expected to graduate by September 2020.

iv. You cannot be MIT faculty/student/staff during your Corp term.

g. Questions (5 mins)

i. How are visiting committee members decided? There are people sitting on social sciences committee who are directly competing with our program?

1. MIT thinks that by getting the best people in the field to see us each year (even if they’re from a competing program) makes us better – they’re in a good position to tell us what we’re doing well and what we’re not.

2. Those people are only 1/3 of the committee.

3. What communication channels are there for checks and balances?

a. The agenda will be dictated mostly by MIT members.

ii. For the nomination process – if I graduated with a master’s, but will still be a student in 2020, can I be nominated?

1. If you’re still a student, it’s a conflict of interest to be on the board and be a student. Wait until you’re completely finished.

iii. If you’re elected to be a nominee and live in another state, is that ok?

1. MIT helps with cost of travel
iv. Comment from another student on visiting committee: my perspective on faculty from other schools, is that they saw themselves as neutral outlets for students to express dissatisfaction with their departments.

v. Why don’t corporation members have more informal meetings with students on campus? There’s a real disconnect there.
   1. I’m trying to do my part!
   2. The only thing that might help with this, is that the Chairman is full-time on campus. If it’s of interest to you, the GSC can work to set up that kind of interaction with them.

h. I will be at the Muddy later to carry on the conversation.

3. Epstein (6:00 – 6:30 PM)
   a. There was a big forum yesterday, we filled 10-250, lots of powerful speakers there, Reif was there, a lot of the deans of the schools and many department heads were there to listen to what students had to say.
   b. Why we have the topic here at GCM: to get feedback from you. Are you hearing anything about this? Is there anything really important that we should keep in mind? At the end, depending on how things are going, ExComm has a resolution that we might propose during this meeting.
   c. Opening the floor now to hear general thoughts on what’s going down with Epstein.
      i. Will there be some kind of summary posted, and can there be an open comment period?
         1. In the invitation email, it says that if you email student-forum-record@mit.edu, you can submit anything to get into the summary.
         2. We are in the process of making the summary.
         3. We’ll make sure the record is relatively easily readable.
      ii. Why are you not releasing the audio record?
         1. We recorded the whole meeting, but the idea was that students could request to be on or off record; no one requested to be off-record, so we don’t have to remove comments.
         iii. You might generate more trust by releasing the audio record.
1. The other thing is that people who attended the forum didn’t agree to be on the written record, not necessarily to be on the public record via audio

iv. Will there be additional forums?

1. We haven’t figured out the details – we probably won’t have another large forum like this, but we’re going to try to have more student conversations around this, what the root problems, etc. and what we can do moving forward.

2. No more large forums, but more directed conversations on things.

3. The plan hasn’t been fully formed yet.

v. What is GSC’s plan moving forward? Are you going to follow through, or just make the record public?

1. Gives students an avenue to speak directly with administration

2. Give us a point to work off of: what are the root problems, etc., and what things to work on

3. The plan is to parse through, figure out what we can do, and to continue the conversation with students.

4. Yes, there’s going to be processes within the MIT administration and faculty (e.g. committees for tackling cultural and process issues), there’s probably going to be a few students on those committees, but we don’t want it to be a non-student-controlled process, so we’re going to make some efforts

5. I don’t think any students will be comfortable leaving these conversations exclusively to the administration

6. One more comment: the entire student body forms a united front (the UA and GSC are working together on this), and we’ll decide the best way to move forward based on what we’ve heard and learned.

vi. How is the corporation involved in these processes, since they’re advising on financials

1. Vrajesh: the report by the law firm will be processed and submitted to the executive committee.
2. Peter: The only involvement I know of is that the outside investigation is going to be submitted to the executive committee of the corporation and Reif, and from there, we’re not sure.

vii. Two questions: why doesn’t the corporation see itself as part of the cultural change; and what does the GSC want to do to integrate this call with improving student-faculty relationships?

1. To answer the second question: this is going to be a very important part of what we’re doing. There is a lot of work going on in our DEI committee related to climate. I think when we process all the information that we got from the forum and try to decide next steps, there are several things we’ll try tying together. The Epstein thing brings up additional points re. treatment of women/minorities on campus.

2. We are not sure how much faculty/admin are able to tackle advising things either

3. We’ll make sure that all are tied into the changes that are going to happen. Now is the best time to make changes in MIT, since everyone is primed for it. We’ll be pushing for as many things as possible at the same time.

4. Follow-up question: students are concerned that MIT didn’t push out additional resources for mental health and support sexual assault survivors. Does the GSC have a plan in place (e.g. policy statement) to address these issues?

   a. We started a wellness subcommittee within the HCA to tackle these issues.

   b. The hard part is that we’re constrained in several directions: from the MIT side, they’re constrained resource-wise according to budget they can allocate to these things, bureaucratic slowness; from our side, the biggest constraint has been manpower. We have a total of 5 people working on this.

   c. The GSC has institutional clout; we have a good sense of what’s possible from their end, so we
have a good sense of where we should be applying pressure. I don’t know if the current manpower within the GSC is going to be able to tackle this in an effective way.

5. Peter: The corporation isn’t involved in the day-to-day at MIT; they’re advisory. It’s now up to the administration and faculty to decide on implementation. The corporation could re-emphasize being part-and-parcel of cultural change, but I’m not sure how much that will change things other than make students feel like the Corporation cares.

viii. Did the corporation, administration, or faculty have any written or verbal policies regarding finances prior to this?

1. There was only one overarching principle – academic integrity (i.e. if you give money to MIT, you have no discretion over how it’s used).

2. Epstein was on the blacklist, so there were some values/principles at work, but I don’t think they were written.

3. Follow-up questions: does this affect grants from donors?

   a. Peter: there is no policy that I know of.
   b. Becca: even some PI’s don’t know how the process works.

ix. I didn’t make it to the forum yesterday; a worrying development is that the issue gets outsourced to a committee and thus the actual people in charge are never held accountable. Who has the power to change policies at MIT re. who we accept money from and how?

1. Alex: In general, probably the Provost could implement policy; with that being said, MIT is relatively decentralized, and a lot of those policies live within individual departments, which is why it was important to have department heads etc. show up at the forums. President Reif seems committed right now, but things are being delegated; you’re right that we shouldn’t expect things to get changed with just this one push.
2. Peter; my best guess: a lot of faculty members have their own leeway to do their own thing, which is why people are alluding to a cultural change. The culture should change so that faculty members feel that they shouldn’t be taking $ from certain people. There are almost definitely professional staff working on deciding who can donate to MIT (my best guess is that they’re under VPR, e.g. Maria Zuber). If you can change the culture, all the problems go away, but culture change is hard.

x. Follow-up question: they brought a convicted pedophile on campus. Who is in charge of deciding who can be brought on campus?

1. Peter: fairly sure there is no process. In theory, you can invite someone on campus.
2. There is a process for getting senior leadership in on a visit, but I highly doubt there is a process for vetting every single campus visit.
3. Alex: Epstein was invited by the director of the Media Lab, not by senior administration. If the department makes a decision, senior admins would be blind to it. But it is a good question.
4. There are two people under the president who you care about the most: the provost and the chancellor. Any policy is going to affect faculty members’ ability to invite people to campus, which they’ll be uncomfortable with.
5. Becca: One thing that could help is whistleblower protection, which was discussed at the last faculty meeting.

d. Resolution

i. The executing committee had a meeting last week (meetings are open, 6:30pm the week before GCM). We thought it would be good to request that the documents from the legal investigation be released.

ii. Title: 66.gsc.3: To Issue a Statement to the Executive Committee of the MIT Corporation Urging Public Release of the Results of the MIT-Epstein Investigation

iii. Council was given some time to read the statement.
iv. Discussion

1. I think it was well-written.
2. Nitpicky comment: it would be stronger to change “compromising our ethical principles” to “enhancing our ethical principles”.
3. Does the investigation ask the GSC for anything?
   a. No, it has not and probably will not.
   b. Jack: our understating is that we don’t know what the investigation is doing. Even Media lab students and GSC members don’t know anything beyond Reif’s email.
4. How different is it saying released to students vs. released to public?
   a. There’s no particular reason why we used that phrasing.
   b. Comment from audience: Keeping it as “students” would be powerful.
5. Would it be too much to ask to also ask for a report for what they’re going to do with these results? Once the investigation has ended, we want to know what will happen.
   a. Comment from audience: from our point of view, it would make more sense to ask for the results of the report first, and then make suggestions. Also, asking for additional things could delay the provision of the investigation documents.
   b. The audience of this is the corporation.
   c. Follow-up: since it could cause some delay, it’s still something we should know or ask for. E.g. “as soon as you get the reports, let us know what will come of this investigation”, or “us students want to be involved in the decision making”, etc.
   d. Lucio: I agree that going beyond would be useful, but going beyond this request could also just involve a second resolution. In the end, the Epstein problem is what we’re going to do long term about it.
e. Alex: In terms of who will actually take action, it will be chaired by senior administration, and from all the (near-daily) conversations we’ve had so far (e.g. with Chancellor and her staff), all we’ve heard is that things will be done with student voices involved. Also, all those forums are intended to do exactly that: include student voices. Of course, right now, it’s only good thoughts and we don’t know what would happen, but based on the faculty meeting and student forum, I would be surprised if students are excluded.

6. Do we need to be any more specific about the timing? Or is the current phrasing good enough?
   a. They could just say no, rather than say they’ll give it after N years.

7. I think the timeline issue is very important, and we should rephrase this to expect findings by a given date. I would advise against asking for more, since we need to have information from the report in order to decide what we want to ask.
   a. Comment on the date thing: I’m not sure what date will be reasonable, and I don’t know what date is appropriate to put.
   b. Reply: I think a good time would be the end of this academic semester.

8. I think this statement is good because it’s straightforward and clear for what it’s asking for, and I’m not sure if we should ask for more. No thoughts on having a specific date though.

9. I think the corporation might not even know what a reasonable date is to ask for.

10. Robin: I’d suggest a slight time delay so they can complete redactions.

11. How will this be delivered? (e.g. an open letter?) If so, that would be pretty powerful.
   a. That is an option
b. Pressure could come from the fact that it passed council, not necessarily from having students sign

c. We will announce to the student body that we’ve passed this resolution.

d. When we pass a resolution, it will be public, so we can then actively publicize it.

e. There is a chance we might ask the UA if they also want to sign on, which might require more fine-tuning of language.

f. Motion to end discussion seconded and passed

4. Initiative Application (6:30 – 7:00 PM)

a. SP and Ashdown Go Green proposal (> $5000)
   i. Proposal for sustainability initiative for dorms

b. Motivation and goals
   i. Residences together have 1200 residents. Lots of events are hosted per year. Both houses have sustainability officers.
   ii. Sidpaci hosts monthly brunches, weekly coffee hours, monthly floor events, other events like outings and themed events, etc. = 100s of events that have food.
   iii. Half the people who attend coffee hours are not residents, and a quarter are off-campus. We are a good test bed for new environmental initiatives on campus.
   iv. We’d like to end people grabbing a new cup/plate since they go to waste. The lack of a clear system for waste processing means even compostables will go to the trash.

c. We want to get disposables out of all of our events.

d. We want to help residents develop sustainable habits.
e. The way we want to do this is through a pilot project where we distribute Tupperware to the houses; residents and attendees will be offered an item which they could continue to bring to events.

f. All of the events have campus-wide reach, and there are a huge number of events combined. Many off-campus students attend.

g. Beyond this, at Sidpac, we give gifts each year (e.g. sustainability-related gifts like plates and shopping bags)

h. Getting into the details: the total cost is $5758.50
   i. Buy 1650 units.
   ii. This is an opt-in program which is why our estimate is 500-650 SP residents, and 400-550 residents
   iii. Rest of units will be for non-residents

i. Primary goal was to get rid of disposables this semester. In October, we’ll take baseline data on our events, and will spread sustainability messaging to our residents. We will order compostables for people we couldn’t give a reusable to. In November or late October, hall councilors will distribute reusables to all residents, along with commentary on why it is important to bring reusables to events.

j. Then, we will implement a rule that residents must bring their own utensils/cups/etc, so then residents will get in the habit of bringing their own cutlery. Students will only be able to receive a reusable if they agree to use them for at least 10 events.

k. In the Spring, we’ll continue to evaluate the use and impact of our initiative, and in June, we will use a survey assess long-term habit changes.

l. Metrics
   i. Hypothesis: the program will reduce plastic and other waste at MIT
      1. Hypothesis: reusables will get non-SP and non-Ashdown residents bringing their own utensils. How we measure: count the number of non-residents at events, and see if fraction using reusables goes up.
   ii. Continue taking attendance at events to check that attendance isn’t suffering.
   iii. We will be tracking compost contamination and waste reduction.
iv. Will help residents learn about sustainability; as assessed by a student survey, along with asking for improvements for future programs.

m. We want to push sustainability at MIT, and graduate students should lead this effort. We do a lot of the legwork at MIT; two houses that make up 15% of the grad student population are working to make MIT more sustainable. Help us order the reusables this semester to make

n. Discussion

i. Please leave it on the summary slide, not the questions slide.

ii. Have you done research on how many times people have to use the containers before it makes sense to use them instead of disposables? Some people might take Tupperware they don’t need also.

1. Lucio: The number is high, but what we’re trying to do is to create hype/culture around an object. 10 times is not enough to reach parity.

2. This unit in particular has advantages: the cutlery is placeable in the container; we hope that people will actually bring their reusables to other campus events as well.

3. Additionally, when we run our events, we go through an entire stack of plates/disposables, and this is our first step to see if we can mitigate the amount of disposables being used.

iii. What’s the Tupperware made of? (Are there microplastic worries?) Would it be possible to have wooden cutlery?

1. It is plastic #2

2. Wooden cutlery came up in our conversation; a couple of issues include the cost per unit (a lot higher than for plastic), and that some of the sellers don’t give full information on what the materials actually are.

iv. I’m worried that if I forget to bring my container, I’m not sure how this would help me. I feel this helps some part of the community, but not all of them.

1. Every time we give a container, we will give information (i.e. officers and volunteers) on how the initiative will help.
v. A couple of questions: all of this focuses on disposables; why not just let have Ashdown and Sidpac have their own cutlery. Do both houses have a broader sustainability framework?
   1. Our washing machines are not operable, and it would be logistically difficult to wash the ceramics.
   2. We’re bandwidth-limited for attacking broad issues.
   3. Follow-up question: why propose to give out plastic items rather than get a new washing machine?
      a. We could do that, but then it would be specific to Sidpac.
      b. We have to start this program somewhere, and start the change somewhere.
      c. You should be bringing your reusables outside of Sidpac and Ashdown as well. We hope that people will start bringing reusables everywhere.

vi. The cost is about $6000 for about 1650 items, and people stay in your dorm for about 1–2 years. For long-term financial liability, would you be coming to GSC each year asking for $?
   1. No, we only want to do this during this year.
   2. Follow-up: would you want to do a small copay to prevent people from throwing out the container?
      a. Lucio: I think there are some logistical issues, e.g. with the queue at brunch moving quickly. With the initial distribution, e.g. if there are 50 people coming to the first SP brunch and asking them to pay slows down the distribution process. It’s something to explore if absolutely necessary.
   3. Distribution-wise, we were thinking that someone would be in charge of the hall.

   o. Motion to end discussion seconded and approved.

p. Initiative will be voted on at next meeting.

5. Commencement (7:00 – 7:20 PM)
   a. We’ve been having more discussions w/ admins about commencement, and there will be upcoming changes. This year is probably not going to be the same as next year.
   b. For this year, there are two scenarios. One favored by administration and deans: Killian OneMIT ceremony followed by other ceremonies.
i. GSC officers have expressed reservations about separating out the Masters students

ii. Our proposed plan was to have Masters with the undergrads

iii. If you do Masters by school, you get shorter degree ceremonies for Masters and undergrads, and you can have personalized ceremonies. If Masters+undergrads, you get Killian, but the ceremony is longer. We’re bringing this up at this point because we recognize we’re not the only stakeholders in this, and there are benefits in both scenarios. The GSC officers no longer have power to influence one way or another, we’ve advocated for Masters’ students to be in Killian; however, since Masters’ students might be interested in department-specific ceremonies, as officers we don’t have additional say in this.

iv. What this means for all of you, however, is that if you feel strongly either way, PLEASE contact your school deans. The upper administration had thoughts on this too, but it’s mostly the school deans who are driving this. If the school deans decide they don’t want this, they will try to have Masters’ students in Killian on Friday. This is the last avenue by which grad students can have power in this.

d. Masters’ students’ families have already started booking tickets for Thursday, so we are constrained.

e. Are the Masters’ ceremonies and PhD ceremonies still separate?

   i. Peter: I’m more hopeful now than before that our proposal will be taken seriously.

f. If you have a lot of Masters’ students in your department, please contact your school deans if you feel strongly in either direction.

   i. Reach out to your dean as either yourself, as a council rep, etc.

   ii. List of deans:

   1. Engineering: Anantha P. Chandrakasan (anantha@mit.edu)
   2. Science: Michael Sipser (sipser@math.mit.edu)
   3. HASS: Melissa Nobles (mnobles@mit.edu)
   4. Architecture and Planning: Hashim Sarkis (hsarkis@mit.edu)
   5. Sloan: David C. Schmittlein (dschmitt@mit.edu)
   6. College of Computing: Daniel Huttenlocher (huttenlocher@mit.edu)

g. Any other thoughts/questions?
Graduate Student Council of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

i. Do we know why there is so much pushing for change this year?
   1. Because last year, even when you didn’t have to call out PhD names, the venue was basically empty by the end, and people are afraid the same thing will happen again.

ii. We hope more people will stay in their seats this year; but we don’t want to screw over Masters’ students.

iii. If school deans really want to do the department-based ceremonies, there will be nice ceremonies.

iv. Is there a corollary where PhD advisers can hood their advisees?
   1. We can work on it, but the logistics might be a bit complicated – there are a lot of advisers.

v. Last question: if I were to reach out to my cohort, what scenario should we push for?
   1. Push for the following situation:
      a. PhD Hooding + Degree Conferral in Killian on Thursday
      b. OneMIT speeches ceremony in Killian on Friday morning
      c. Undergrad + Masters Degree Conferral in Killian on Friday afternoon

6. Officer Updates (7:20 – 7:25 PM)
   a. Use your council rep funding: use it or lose it

7. Committee Updates (7:25 – 7:40 PM)
   a. ARC
      i. VISTA had a cultural night that went well
      ii. Networking event
      iii. Academic panel and alum on tap
   b. AC
      i. Taste of Bangladesh was a success
      ii. New coffee hour organizer and apple picking volunteers
      iii. Apple picking this Saturday
      iv. Coffee hour
      v. First paint night is 10/16
      vi. Taste of Brazil on 10/21 (has nothing to do with Brazilian student association)
      vii. Jan 13 Taste Of is still open
   c. ASA
i. Working through group applications  
ii. Fall LEF/ARCADE posted  
d. DEI  
i. Successful Conduit Assembly  
ii. Will be meeting with the Office of General Council to have them approve Application Assistance Program Best Practices  
iii. Student Life Subcommittee  
e. EAB  
i. DC advocacy trip and State & Local Affairs 101  
f. HCA  
i. Site 4 online next year!  
ii. All dorms should attend next HCA meeting  
iii. Graduate Life series. Meeting tomorrow at 8am at Maseeh.  
iv. Updating bylaws  
v. Come to tomorrow’s meeting or the next HCA meeting on Wednesday at 6pm, especially if you’re a dorm rep.  
g. Muddy  
i. We got OGE $; talent show; fundraising  
ii. There will be a GSC social after this.  
h. OC  
i. 101 series: next ones are professional development and wellness  
ii. We are starting to focus on the entire student body.  

8. Open Floor (7:40 – 7:45 PM)  
a. Motion to adjourn and seconded.  
9. Post-GCM Social @ the Muddy
Upcoming GSC Meetings

Academics, Research, and Careers (ARC)  Thursday, 10/24, 6:00 PM
Visiting Students Association (VISTA)  Every Monday, 7:00 PM
Activities Committee (AC)  TBD
External Affairs Board (EAB)  Wednesday, 10/16, 5pm
Federal Affairs Subcommittee  TBD
State and Local Affairs Subcommittee  TBD
Public Outreach Subcommittee  TBD
Development Subcommittee  Every Friday, 5:00 PM
Housing and Community Affairs (HCA)  Wednesday, 10/9, 6:00 PM
Off-campus Subcommittee  TBD
Sustainability Subcommittee  TBD
Transportation Subcommittee  TBD
Wellness Subcommittee  TBD
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)  Thurs, 10/17 5:00 PM
Muddy Charles Pub  Monday, 10/21, 7:00 PM
Orientation Committee (OC)  TBD
Executive Committee (ExComm)  Wednesday, 10/30, 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

November General Council Meeting  Wednesday, 11/6, 6-120
December General Council Meeting  Wednesday, 12/4, 32-155