



# Graduate Student Council

of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

## General Council Meeting Agenda

May 6, 5:30 PM on Zoom

- I. Introduction, New Faces (5:30 – 5:40 PM)
  - a. Quorum Check via Qualtrics (35 people; quorum = 34)
  - b. Approval of April GCM Minutes (approved with all yes's, 2 abstains, 1 didn't vote)
2. Budget Report (5:40 – 5:50 PM)
  - a. Presented by Robin
  - b. ExComm
    - i. Everything went according to plan; we went over on holiday party
  - c. Nom Board
    - i. Under budget on most things, spent a bit more than expected on a couple of meetings; otherwise very well below budget
  - d. Funding Board
    - i. Very much below budget
  - e. P&P
    - i. Kept things under budget
  - f. ASA
    - i. Kept things under budget; their only main expense is food for meetings
  - g. ARC
    - i. Under budget; travel grant was over budget
  - h. HCA
    - i. Kept everything pretty much under budget
  - i. OC
    - i. Generally good
  - j. Muddy
    - i. Doesn't report to us
  - k. EAB
    - i. Very under
  - l. DEI
    - i. Looks like they overspent, but they actually have more funding sources than us.
  - m. Donation to OGE happened; added another \$30k

### Officers

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#### **President**

Peter Su

#### **Executive Committee**

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#### **Vice-President**

Alex Joerger

#### **Nominations Board**

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#### **Secretary**

Naveen Arunachalam

#### **Publications & Publicity Board**

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#### **Treasurer**

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#### **Housing & Community Affairs (HCA)**

Mohammad Islam

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[gsc-hca@mit.edu](mailto:gsc-hca@mit.edu)

#### **Muddy Charles Pub**

Richard Park

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#### **Orientation (OC)**

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Chantharayukhonthom

[gsc-oc@mit.edu](mailto:gsc-oc@mit.edu)

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- i. Thusfar we have given \$130k from reserve funding/unused budget to the OGE, which has been helping students deal with fallout from COVID-19.
  - ii. We offered money to student organizations who suffered losses – but none has been claimed so far, since the ASA has covered the majority.
  - iii. We have donated \$50k to the Cambridge COVID-19 response fund
  - n. One person had a question about how their lab could donate; answer: unclear
3. End of Year Report (5:50 – 6:10 PM)
    - a. Continued social events from AC (pre-COVID)
    - b. Continued refinement of Orientation to focus on incoming students before they arrive and welcoming students when they arrive
    - c. ARC
      - i. Increasing engagement with alumni events
      - ii. Continued growth of VISTA
      - iii. First steps towards supporting initiatives for better advising
    - d. DEI
      - i. Diversity Fellows program
      - ii. Continued filling out Conduit Assembly
    - e. EAB
      - i. Formed Grad Student Caucus in US House of Representatives
      - ii. Potentially forming Cambridge Students Association
      - iii. Expanding local outreach opportunities
    - f. HCA
      - i. A lot of work around financially related issues (stipend recommendation, housing costs, targeted programs for those in financial distress)
      - ii. Getting grad dorms back involved & informed about GSC
      - iii. Unsuccessful attempt at starting Wellness Subcommittee
    - g. Commencement
      - i. Prevented changes to this year's commencement (COVID makes this moot)
      - ii. Next year's commencement still to be designed
    - h. Epstein



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i. Student Committee on Guidelines for Outside Engagements still working on report

1. Expect more chances to give your thoughts soon
2. Faculty committees actively designing new processes for MIT to use when evaluating gifts and outside engagements.

i. Admin relationships

- i. Currently pretty positive
- ii. Building upon 4+ years of consistent collaboration
- iii. Working on improving trust between admin and broader student body.

4. Officer Updates (6:10 – 6:20 PM)

- a. Cost of Living increase of 2.9% to stipends
- b. Apply to short-term emergency fund if you lost \$ due to COVID: <https://engage.mit.edu/submitter/form/start/390335>
- c. For students with < 9 month funding or on non-res status, you should be actively identified and contacted by admin
  - i. If not, “application” for Long-Term Financial Hardship Funding is opening June 15
- d. Question: What is the structure? Is it like OGE stipend-only fellowship?
  - i. Peter: what they promised from the last stipend increase: ensure that all PhD students with 9-month or non-resident status should not be “in financial distress”.
- e. Question: This seems like a waste of time for admin to swoop in at the last minute to help people without enough funding?
  - i. Peter: It’s a way of giving a funding commitment without really giving a funding commitments; students get flagged and given assistance. In future years we should push to increase upfront guarantees.
  - ii. Follow-up question: There’s a fundamental inequality in how students are funded at MIT. I don’t believe this is a step in the right direction; MIT knows what programs are underfunded.
- f. Madeleine: Stipend working group recommended to not have an individualized application for the reasons brought up. If you want to get involved in this, there’s an effort to reactive the student activism subcommittee of HCA.



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- g. Peter: it's taken a lot of conversation to get this to be a topic of discussion with administration at all

## 5. TERM TRANSITION

- a. New team: Madeleine = PhD Chemistry and former AHEC chair; Jerry Ng = PhD MechE, Former Edgerton President; Steven Burcat = PhD MechE and former ASA; Naveen = Returning secretary and PhD ChemE

- b. Values and goals for 2020-21

- i. Collaboration and participation: get more grad student involved in the GSC in ways they find meaningful

1. Streamline the process to become a council rep in all departments
2. Empower groups that form minorities (SHASS and SA+P, grad students with families)
3. Get more international students involved

- ii. Transparency

1. Improve website and make it easier to find information
2. Keep council informed of major outtakes from Officer meetings with administrators
3. Streamline the Anno and add "What the GSC did for you" part
4. Start running Resource Sharing nights

- iii. Democracy

1. Make it easy for Council members to add to GCM agenda
2. Civic dialogue on "tough stuff"
3. Streamline electronic voting to decide whether an item warrants an "emergency GCM" vs electronic vote
  - a. Creation of ad hoc committees
  - b. Voting on whether GSC should sign statements, internal and external
4. Consider continuing "virtual" participation in emergency GCMs
5. Empowering grad students: give everyone ground to stand on

- c. Empowering grad students: Give everyone ground to stand on



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- i. Aim I: Bring grad students affected by issues into direct contact with MIT Administrators
- ii. Aim II: Advocate around grad student financial support, with help from HCA team
  1. Getting a 12-month stipend for all doctoral students
  2. Guaranteeing final-year thesis support – *especially during COVID-19*
  3. Support for international students affected by visa and work authorization delays
- iii. Aim III: Supporting the GSC Committees as they advocate for student interests
  1. ARC: Research advising; academic COVID projects
  2. HCA: Affordable graduate housing, family support, financial support
  3. EAB: Advocating for grad students to local/state/federal government
  4. And more!
- d. Understanding, overcoming structural barriers to solving problems
  - i. Aim I: Ensure we have a good working relationship with all the key players at MIT
  - ii. Aim II: Understand what goes into Student Life Fee decisions
  - iii. Aim III: Use the Cost of Living Survey to address the *information* barriers to the needed changes
    1. How many grad students need Institute support for summer stipends each year?
    2. What “outside” paid summer opportunities are degree-supportive?
    3. How much grad students in each program spend on supplies for their own research?
    4. How many grad students have (dependent!) spouses and children
- e. Helping campus face the challenges of COVID-19
  - i. Share summer ideas [here](#)
  - ii. Grad women: answer survey on how COVID-19 affects graduate women [here](#)
  - iii. Join the External Affairs Board to advocate for grad students to bodies outside MIT



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1. Can engage at local, state or federal level
2. International students are *not only allowed but encouraged!*
3. Email [gsc-eab@mit.edu](mailto:gsc-eab@mit.edu)
- iv. Join the Housing and Community Affairs Committee to advocate for grad students *within* MIT
  1. Works on family support, stipends, affordable housing
  2. Email [gsc-hca-chair@mit.edu](mailto:gsc-hca-chair@mit.edu)
- f. Questions from Peter
  - i. Considering virtual participation for virtual GCMs – is there a plan for virtual GCMs?
    1. We'd prefer for people to come to the physical meeting, but maybe let's have people listen in? A: We should discuss
6. Nominations Open for Nominations Board and Funding Board (6:20 – 6:25 PM)
  - a. Funding board
    - i. 1 position
    - ii. Helps review applications for GSC funding for student groups (this is ~40% of our budget!)
    - iii. Quarterly review cycle
    - iv. You'll also get a gift for your effort
    - v. Nomination this GCM, vote next GCM
      1. **Webster Guan** nominated by Lucio (present at this meeting). Webster accepts. ("yeahh I accept")
  - b. Nominations Board
    - i. 3 positions
    - ii. Selects the nominees for institute committees
    - iii. Minimal time commitment
    - iv. 3 meetings during summer + additional ad hoc meetings
    - v. You'll also get a gift for your effort
    - vi. Nomination this GCM, vote next GCM
      1. **Bharat Khurana** nominated by Somu; accepted by Bharat (present at this meeting)
      2. **Jonathan Melville** nominated by Jenny Cascino
      3. **Nicholas Selby** nominated by Jonathan Melville; accepted.
      4. **James Salamy** nominated by Lucio; accepted
      5. **Jenny Cascino** nominated; accepted



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6. **Bianca Lepe** nominated by Peter Su; accepted.

- a. Question: can you be on nom board AND institute committees? A (Peter): I'm 80-90% certain you need to excuse yourself from decisions for things you're applying for. Bianca can do a tentative acceptance.

7. 67.gsc.1 – FY21 Budget (6:25 – 6:45 PM)

- a. Covered by Steven Burcat
- b. Overview today; we'll vote on it next month. If there's anything you want to change, say so.
- c. Blue means amount increased; red means amount decreased
- d. Overview
  - i. We are expecting half the sales for GradRat
  - ii. Stabilization fund doesn't exist
  - iii. Assume orientation happening like it normally would and that DSL would give same sponsorship \$
  - iv. Restricted \$: most is the same. Costco membership program ended
  - v. Most committees are spending a little less than last year.
    - I. Increases: P&P, HCA, OC, DEI
- e. ExComm budget
  - i. We may not need all the recruiting money (often underutilized). More accurate numbers (no rounding)
- f. Nom Board
  - i. Halved Institute Committee Representative Meetings; they didn't happen twice like expected.
- g. Funding Board
  - i. Same expected expenditure for meetings. We're cutting down expected meetings to 2 (done online last year)
  - ii. Please spend council rep funding!
  - iii. Less \$ to initiatives fund (\$10,000 → \$6000)
  - iv. GradRat subsidization cancelled (temporary increase previously)
- h. ASA
  - i. Few major changes
- i. AC
  - i. Increases to outdoor events and subsidized dining (i.e. Taste Of)
- j. ARC



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### **Muddy Charles Pub**

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- i. Increased \$ for food at meetings
  - ii. Most things kept the same
  - iii. Effectively the same
  - k. HCA
    - i. Decreasing their meetings costs a little bit (10 meeting, not 12)
    - ii. Increases for surveys and events
  - l. OC
    - i. Expect to have slightly less meetings
    - ii. Planning to replace 101 events with new style of events, new partner organizations help reduce direct cost
    - iii. Got rid of ticketed events
  - m. Muddy
    - i. \$0
  - n. EAB
    - i. Ivy+ summit removed
    - ii. Subcommittee activities increased
  - o. DEI
    - i. Increasing expense for conduit assemblies, town halls, diversity training events
8. Vision and Goals for the Year (6:45 – 7:00 PM)
- a. Covered earlier
9. Committee Updates (7:00 – 7:15 PM)
- a. AC
    - i. Goals for 2020-21: one outdoor event each month, one arts and cultural event each month
    - ii. Looking for contributors (Grad Gala, outdoor events)
    - iii. Monthly meeting May 14 (Th)  
<https://mit.zoom.us/j/98663346373>
  - b. ARC, ASA not here
  - c. DEI
    - i. Next meeting May 14<sup>th</sup>
    - ii. Weekly meetings Friday at 4pm
  - d. ASA
    - i. CP\* Midway happened; groups saw low #s of students
    - ii. Plans to go forward to integrate into Orientation Midway
    - iii. Might do a virtual club fair and in-person later on during school year





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- iv. Re-recognition started Monday, due 5/15
  - v. \$10k went to student group losses; deciding what to do with remaining \$50k (ARM?)
  - vi. Unsure about summer LEF/ARCADE grants and early returns
  - vii. Finboard/Edgerton Center groups – can they get funding without ASA recognition?
- e. EAB
- i. Next meeting TBD
  - ii. Recent activities
    1. Issued SST recommendations to Congress re. COVID-19 Future Stimulus bills
    2. Signed onto coalition letter re. Voter Protections in Response to COVID-19
    3. Successful virtual MA statehouse visit
    4. Still have some open positions; email [gsc-eab@mit.edu](mailto:gsc-eab@mit.edu)
- f. HCA
- i. Advocacy subcommittee
  - ii. Looking for a co-chair for the subcommittee
- g. Muddy
- i. The Muddy wants you! We want graduate student members.
  - ii. Next meeting 05/11/2020 at 7pm Eastern over Zoom. Email [jkacz@mit.edu](mailto:jkacz@mit.edu) for zoom link!
  - iii. Typical meeting time is 1-2 hrs, need to attend 3 monthly meetings to be considered a member. There are subcommittees too.
- h. OC
- i. To address COVID impact on new students, we have organized webinars on different topics like housing, ISO, etc.
  - ii. Follow this up with bulletin e-mails: Lauren McLean and other committee members
  - iii. Assume events will happen in August/September
  - iv. Orientation webinar (GSC OC 2020)
    1. Housing, Medical & ISO, Finance & MIT Admin, General
    2. 355 people along with 500 views later on Youtube video for Housing
  - v. If interested in helping out, message [gsc-oc@mit.edu](mailto:gsc-oc@mit.edu)
10. COVID-19 & Open Floor (7:15 – 7:20 PM)



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- a. Madeleine: It would be necessary and wise to have an emergency meeting to talk about this.
- b. GSC Slack workspace?
- c. Open Letter
  - i. <https://mitgradstudentadvocates.weebly.com/>; 830 grad student signatures; 270 community allies including 70 faculty = ~1100 supporters
  - ii. Amplify recommendations of GSC Stipend Working Group
  - iii. Address concerns from students on <12-month funding or at end of funding package
  - iv. Added time-to-degree extensions; health insurance; better representation in decision-making, communication
  - v. Stipend working group recommendations
    1. Priority 1: Emergency provisions due to COVID-19
    2. Priority 2.1: 12-month stipends for all doctoral students
    3. Priority 2.2: Additional aid for families
    4. Priority 3: Internal dissertation completion funding
  - vi. Anyone not on a 12-month stipend is not making a min working wage
  - vii. Admin made good on 2.9% COLA; did not guarantee summer stipends, have reporting system for schools, internal dissertation completion status/time-to-degree
  - viii. Family aid disbursement delayed to Oct
  - ix. Support options so far
    1. Individualized aid process through OGE
    2. No details re. international students @ end of funding package
    3. "Coordination" with depts/programs/labs – unclear
    4. Doesn't address program needs
  - x. Next steps
    1. Establish GSC's own COVID response committee to
      - a. Formalize student efforts on this front
      - b. Liaise with admin and other GSC committees
      - c. Help assess spectrum of impacts and needs
      - d. Help respond to needs w/ equitable relief proposals



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- e. Understand how to maintain support for grads, undergrads, and staff
- f. Offer point of contact on ongoing responses
- g. Effectively represent graduate students in this crisis
- h. May be through Ad Hoc committee process or HCA

## 2. Emergency GCM?

### xi. Comments

1. This is worthwhile and GSC should sign letter. This could fit well into advocacy subcommittee.
2. Agree that this should become part of the subcommittee; may not need to be done through motion
3. Two questions: Could you explain a little bit further why short-term relief doesn't cover needs? Also I'm looking at their website and their coverage looks like what's expected (e.g. COVID-related issues)
  - a. A: Both are good questions. One major issue w/ short-term funding response is that underfunded programs have been asking for things like full summer funding for over 10 years. Short term funding doesn't solve all problems.
4. Issue of financial security. When I changed labs, would OGE pay for it vs. research department? I could plan on that \$. It is worrying that entire departments can't rely on that.
5. Do we know what's going on with time to completion?
  - a. A: Several in SHASS and DUSP will guarantee 4 years of funding, but many take longer than that. There's already funding shortfalls that are expected to increase.
  - b. Some labs have the opposite issue where PI's are well-funded and want to "hold on" to grad students.
6. Re. signing onto letter: I don't want GSC to sign on to the letter; I would typically approach this strategy-wise by having the GSC amplify the letter within meetings with administration.



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- a. If the GSC signs on, the GSC needs to have control of what the letter (or letter supporters) says; or the GSC needs to be able to distance themselves if things go further than what GSC wants. Better to have our own statement than sign onto the statement itself.

### 7. Straw poll for special meeting in one week

- a. 17 votes for "yes", 0 votes for "no" (out of 28)

### d. Straw poll for Slack

- i. 13 votes for "yes", 2 votes for "no" (out of 25)

### ii. Comments

- I. @channel/@here are both disabled for non-admins

I I. Motion to adjourn and seconded; hit majority



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## Upcoming GSC Meetings

**\*\*Note:** All meetings are now online until further notice. Please contact the relevant committee to get details of how to join a meeting.

Academics, Research, and Careers (ARC)	TBD
Visiting Students Association (VISTA)	Every Monday, 7:00 PM
Activities Committee (AC)	TBD
External Affairs Board (EAB)	TBD
Federal Affairs Subcommittee	Thursday, 5/14, 4:00 PM
State and Local Affairs Subcommittee	TBD
Public Outreach Subcommittee	TBD
Development Subcommittee	Every Friday, 5:00 PM
Housing and Community Affairs (HCA)	TBD
Off-campus Subcommittee	TBD
Sustainability Subcommittee	TBD
Transportation Subcommittee	TBD
Wellness Subcommittee	TBD
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)	Thursday, 5/14, 4:30 PM
Muddy Charles Pub	TBD
Orientation Committee (OC)	TBD
Executive Committee (ExComm)	Wednesday, 5/27, 6:30 PM

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

## Upcoming General Council Meetings (GCMs)

**\*\*Note:** All meetings are now online until further notice. Please contact the your council rep to get details of how to join a GCM.

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

June General Council Meeting	Wednesday, 6/3, on Zoom
July General Council Meeting	Wednesday, 7/1, on Zoom
August General Council Meeting	Wednesday, 8/5, on Zoom

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