

August: Several questions regarding COVID testing were discussed, including the potential for self-swabbing, logistical questions regarding the number of people tested and frequency of people accessing campus, and the possibility of evening and early morning testing hours. Representatives from the Student Veterans Association were present at this meeting, and topics discussed included the (currently) limited scope of veterans' resources on campus, and a proposal for a path forward for increased support by December.

July: Visa issues were discussed in light of COVID and unexpected changes to DHS regulations. Specifically, there was discussion of the requirement for students to have at most one online class. It was made clear that David Elwell and ISO would continue to work hard on FAQs during times of political/bureaucratic turbulence. Additionally, another topic discussed was the prospect of Sloan and SCM allowing students to either enroll or reapply. Lastly, a constituent-raised issue regarding creating a dual-degree statistics/physics PhD program to help PhD students in Physics obtain tech internships; the conclusion from the meeting was that an institute-wide requirement to offer OPT options would be more effective than establishing a dual-degree program.

June: The GSC and OVC discussed which departments and people could be most useful to refer to for the 2020-2021 term. Summer remote appointments and finances were discussed; 335 students were processed by OGE as of the meeting date. OVC agreed to look into publishing statistics on summer visa approvals. A constituent-raised issue regarding the lack of departmental COVID relief in SA+P was discussed; one challenge discussed was that MIT's funding model is set up for departments to solve their own funding problems, and that departmental funding is complex to negotiate. To address this issue, SFS will handling financial aid (e.g. in the form of TAs and RAs) for individuals in need, and the GSC will continue to receive updates on the implementation of SFS aid. Lastly, OVC gave an update about a plan to merge different advising initiatives into the "Graduate Mentoring and Advising Working Group".

May: The GSC asked questions regarding decision points and timelines for grads for COVID response. Additionally, the GSC brought up the issue of PI's potentially coercing students to go to work, for which potential solutions were discussed (including one that was implemented afterwards: putting information about hotline.mit.edu on the GSC COVID information page). Regarding international graduate students, OVC indicated that guidelines were sent out to PIs about which appointments can be made without any review and which need to be reviewed. At the end of the meeting, the GSC and OVC discussed last year's initiatives re. improving advisor-advisee relationships. Additionally, the OVC indicated that there is a goal to create an institute-wide requirement for departments to offer experiential learning options for graduate students, which may also help international students participate in internships using CPT. (Although this was a large focus for last year, it has been placed on hold due to COVID, but optimistically will be addressed by the end of the 2020-2021 year.)