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Graduate Student Council

of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

- I. Introduction (5:30-5:40)
 - a. New faces
 - b. Quorum check*
 - i. 40 attendees – quorum reached
 - c. Approval of November minutes*
 - i. Approved
2. Discussion of academic policies for the Spring semester (5:40-5:50)
 - a. Grading decision for spring semester
 - i. For grad students, very similar to fall semester
 - b. Standard A/B/C grades, D or below not shown on transcript
 - i. Can uncover a D if desired
 - c. One class can be selected as PE/NE
 - i. There can be no restrictions on what classes can be declared PE/NE
 - d. Graduate P/D/F option will be available
 - i. Normal rules apply, can't be used for degree requirements
 - e. <https://now.mit.edu/policies/fall-2020-emergency-academic-regulations-and-policies/>
 - f. Notable policies from the fall semester:
 - i. Accommodations for students if a required class is in-person (1.3)
 - ii. Strongly suggest recording of live lectures (1.4)
 - iii. Advising against using proctoring software (1.11)
 - iv. Alternative arrangements for taking midterms (2.3)
 - v. De-emphasizing final exams (3.2)
 - g. Not in EARs, but guidance from CGP
 - i. PE/NE classes that are part of quals process can still consider the letter grade that would have been given
 - ii. If a student doesn't get a satisfactory grade, there should be a method for appealing and a process for students to prove their mastery of the material
 - I. Ex. exam re-do, alternative exam, oral presentation
 - h. Please give us your feedback from this semester!
 - i. What did or didn't work for the students in your department?
 - ii. How should four-day weekends be handled?

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- iii. What will qual or required classes look like, and what protections for students should be in place?
- iv. Feedback
 1. One student took a class expecting PE/NE, now their department expects an A – they should talk with their department
 2. A lot of undergrads basically had midterms every weekend.
 3. Is there a concerted look at how scheduling policy changes affect students, undergrads, faculty, and staff? (Some TAs and faculty feel a lot of pressure)
 - a. There is an intention to survey people and see the impact of policies
 - b. Some classes have put a lot of consistent pressure on students in an attempt to de-emphasize final exams
 4. 3-day weekends haven't alleviated anything re. patterns of work

I. Updates from the RISE campaign (5:50-6:20)

- a. Campaign update
 - i. RISE is a collaboration between BGSA, Grad Students for a Healthy MIT, and GSC DEI

4 Sections of Demands

1. Reform Graduate Admissions and Faculty Hiring

- a. Make strategic commitments to reform graduate admissions and improve URM graduate student retention
- b. Promote diversity in faculty hiring and tenure through evidence-based practices
- c. Increase student participation in hiring and tenure decisions

2. Increase Resources for Education and Support

- a. Expand educational programming and training
- b. Hire DEI Officers for departmental accountability
- c. Provide institute-wide support for anti-oppressive research and labor

3. Reform the Policies for Prevention and Response of Faculty Misconduct

- a. Reform the policies and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct against faculty and staff
- b. Publicize data and outcomes for allegations of misconduct against faculty and staff in annual IDHR reports
- c. Implementation of targeted policies for preventing and punishing retaliation
- d. Guarantee transitional funding

4. Advance Funding Equity at MIT

- a. Guarantee 12-month funding for all PhD programs offered at MIT
- b. Establish non-competitive internal dissertation completion fellowships
- c. Guarantee a minimum annual cost-of-living adjustment for all graduate stipends

- ii.
- iii. Petition had 988 individual signatures
- iv. Section I Updates

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1. As these demands challenge faculty power and the structure of academia, we are focused on wins at the department/school level
2. Faculty hiring/tenure demands
 - a. Focused on implementing new practices (mainly student involvement and holistic evaluation) for College of Computing cluster hire of 50+ new faculty
 - b. Long-term: we hope these practices can be adopted/imposed more broadly
 - c. Also regularly engaging with faculty about the campaign
3. Grad admissions demand
4. With GSC-DEI, developing a Graduate Admissions Best Practices Handbook
- v. Section 2 Updates
 1. Have met with ICEO John Dozier multiple times
 2. Main priority: get these demands into the Strategic Plan
 3. Have particularly focused on departmental Diversity Officers (DOs) demand (2B)
 - a. Supporting department-level efforts
 - b. Organized many student groups and Architecture, Chemistry, and HST department heads to sign a letter to the Provost calling for prioritization and funding of DOs
 - c. Have been told this demand will end up in the Strategic Plan
 4. Developed “metrics of success” for relevant demands to help ICEO’s efforts
- vi. Section 3 Updates
 1. Demands regarding policies and reporting of faculty misconduct and retaliation (A - 3C)
 2. Who we've talked to
 - a. Have had a number of conversations with Chancellor Barnhart and members of IDHR



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b. In touch with Student Advocates for Survivors (SAS) and IDHR's Student Advisory Committee (IDHR-SAC)

c. Meeting with Mark DiVincenzo and Prof. David Singer about recent "changes" to retaliation policies

3. Progress

a. IDHR is developing new resources for their website providing details on their existing procedures that align with our demands (e.g., anonymous reporting, timelines, etc.)

b. Refusal to review or change any official policies or make larger procedural changes

4. Guaranteed transitional funding demand (3D)

a. Working with Chancellor Cindy Barnhart and Dean Anantha Chandrakasan to develop a working group to create a proposal

b. RISE has submitted their official proposal for review and discussion with this group in the coming weeks

c. Goal: submit proposal to Dean's Council by Jan. 15th

d. Summary of conversations thus far:

e. Opposition to blanket guarantee (i.e., for reasons not related to advising issues)

f. Will continue to be primarily funded by departments

g. Pushing for centralization through OGE, who would act as advocates for students, negotiate accommodations, and help track lab switches (working with IDHR) to address bad advisors

vii. Section 4 updates

1. Topic: Funding Equity and Security

2. This fight has been led by MIT COVID Relief, a student group fighting for immediate pandemic relief in the form of funding extensions as well as structurally addressing

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chronic funding issues in dept which do not guarantee a living wage, year round funding, or final year funding

3. The MIT admin have refused to follow the example set by peer institutions (Brown, Yale, Harvard) to offer funding extensions to all of those affected by the pandemic
 4. Some programs are in discussions with the Provost (almost always not including students in the discussion) on how these programs can restructure to make these funding changes
 5. Funding changes could be positive for some students, but are being imposed in a way which will require austerity restructuring, seriously altering academic programs and cutting cohort sizes, with no indication of additional financial support from the Provost
- viii. Other efforts - continued engagement and base-building among students and staff
1. Town hall events to discuss topics related to demands, post-election response, etc.
 2. Student group / department mixers
 3. Op-eds (rise4mit.com/op-eds)
 - a. Series of anonymous stories of advisor abuse
 - b. Opinion pieces (DEIC playbook, we can make change without a strategic plan)
 - c. Exposing inequities in communities (MechE quals, international student experience)
 4. Guided reading discussions about our op-eds
 5. Supporting students and student groups in their individual fights against bad actors and department leadership
- ix. We always welcome new members!
1. Learn more at rise4mit.com
 2. Email us at rise4mit@gmail.com
 3. Join us every Thursday from 7:00-8:30 PM
- b. Q & A period
- i. Is there anything we should be doing in our own departments to aid with these things? Is it a good idea for people to approach

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their own department heads? Are there certain areas where you wish students would do that?

- i. Our [RISE's] understanding is that decentralization tends to be used as an excuse to not initiate change – RISE's goal is to have institute-wide policies and support, since we want the changes to be equitable. However, the routes for change are through the department level, so we support conversations at the department level. Usually these types of conversations tend to happen behind closed doors.
 - ii. How do you make sure that MIT doesn't pretend that their resources are too finite to e.g. hire DEI officers without withdrawing funding from other departments for things like transitional funding or Humanities funding
 1. We made estimates for everything we're asking for.
 2. We will not accept concessions for one part of campaign if they're offered at the expense of other parts of campaign
 - iii. If a grad student is just seeing this now, and wants to get involved, what's the most impactful way to do so?
 1. We can tailor work to your exact interests – feel free to reach out to rise4mit@gmail.com
2. Latest from the Graduate Housing Working Group (6:20-6:30)
- a. GHWG is an institute committee formed to improve graduate housing
 - b. Today's meeting focused on rent & stipend setting
 - i. MIT leadership indicated they have no interest in Site 4 being more affordable
 - ii. Family units in the new West Campus Residence likely to be equally unaffordable
 - c. Plan to continue engagement at least through the next meeting in mid-January
 - i. Might be able to get more clarity on affordability plans for the new residence at that meeting
 - d. If MIT leadership is not able to offer meaningful progress then we will have to consider withdrawing
 - i. May be accompanied by a GSC position statement
 - ii. Likely also tied into broader strategy

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3. Officer updates (6:30-6:40)

a. [Vacation time and self-quarantine for graduate students:](#)

- i. "Students should work remotely during any self-quarantine periods. If that is not possible, they should make arrangements in advance with their PI to ensure that appropriate progress is made on their work before and/or after the quarantine period to make up for the lost time. **They are not expected to use their two-week vacation time** (for other than the time when they are away on vacation if it is not during an Institute holiday)."

b. [Non-retaliation policy update](#)

- i. "MIT prohibits any [member of the community](#) from retaliating against any person who, in good faith;
 1. raises concerns about a possible violation of MIT policy or other wrongdoing; or
 2. participates in any Institute complaint resolution process.
- ii. "...Retaliation is any adverse action, harassment, threats, or other conduct that would discourage a reasonable person from making a report or participating in a complaint review process."

c. Reporting options

- i. Options listed here: <http://hotline.mit.edu/other-reporting-options>
- ii. For PI violations in research settings, grad student options include:
 1. Department heads
 2. The MIT hotline <http://hotline.mit.edu/>
- iii. GSC and RISE working to:

1. Make it explicit whether and how the policy applies to some anecdotally common forms of PI retaliation (failing quals, lukewarm letters of rec, visa status issues)
2. Clarify whether we have a route to HR

4. Committee updates (6:40-7:00)

a. ARC

i. [Next events:](#)

1. Co-Sponsorship of Patent Webinar Series @ MIT
2. "Academia vs Industry" event
 - a. *When:* TBD

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3. Other talks of the “Innovation during the days of COVID19” series
 - a. When: TBD
- ii. Unfortunately no visiting students will be accepted at MIT during spring 2020. So VISTA will continue to be frozen.
- iii. Alumni Relations is tapping into existing alumni affinity groups to co-advertise events
 1. We are sourcing an alum for December.
 2. Our event with Pat Chou went well.
- iv. Improving Advisor-Advisee Relationship:
 1. Noam Buckman
 2. Weekly meetings on Tuesdays at 6.30 pm
 3. The subcommittee is still iterating over the Institute-wide advising survey until the launch in January. They are refining questions, seeking feedback, and making sure that the results will be impactful.
 4. (More specifically, the past few weeks they have been reviewing the 2004 Survey which included advising questions to make sure that our survey has a larger long-term impact)
 5. That's their main / sole focus at the moment.
- v. X.ThG: Subject Evaluations
 1. **History:**
 2. 2015-2016 Academic Year, graduate students Boris Braverman (Physics), Erhardt Graeff (Media Lab), Michael McClellan (EAPS), as members of CJAC (Corporation Joint Advisory Committee on Institute-Wide Affairs),
 3. Wanted to create tools with which individual academic departments could survey the current state of research advising
 4. Create a new class of questions for use in end-of-term Subject Evaluations of research “placeholder” courses. Mechanical Engineering and EECS ran a pilot of these evaluations for Spring 2016 (in 6.ThG, 6.960, and 2.ThG).
 5. Survey is anonymous—just as with any other Subject Evaluation—and features a free-text response section at the end and the opportunity to add department-specific



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questions to probe specific departmental challenges or to target assessment of newly formed programs and initiatives.

6. https://gsc.mit.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/20161024_ThGsurvey_summary.pdf
 7. Survey response rates aren't high.
 - a. What can you do?
 - b. Write to your department student mailing list / Slack / Facebook
 - c. Troubleshoot: Why don't students fill out the form?
 - d. Can you help clarify pain-points?
 - e. Can you help remind students?
 - f. Some things are department-specific... so are you!
 - g. <https://registrar.mit.edu/classes-grades-evaluations/subject-evaluation>
 - vi. Want to join ARC? Feel free to reach us anytime through gsc-arc-chair@mit.edu
- b. AC
- i. Past events -
 1. Murder Mystery (MIT Wide) – October end – Hosted by Henry
 - ii. Upcoming events –
 1. 12/2 – 7PM (TONIGHT!!) - Henry Purcell Society - an evening of rousing tavern music from the Restoration-era Alehouse songs of Henry Purcell and his contemporaries. We'll also have recommended English Ale pairings, so you can join us in raising a glass during these rowdy songs!
 2. Head over after GCM!! Link - <https://mit.zoom.us/j/97012627025>
 3. First week of IAP – Virtual Speed Friending
- c. ASA
- i. Finalizing group application process for fall semester
 - ii. There will be an IAP Midway (date TBD)
 1. Prioritized for groups **actively recruiting members**

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Graduate Student Council

of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

2. Zoom calls by genre of group, attendees can move between breakout rooms now!
- iii. Discussed space use policies & student activities events for spring semester w/Gus Burkett
- d. DEI
 - i. GSC DEI, BGSA, & G4HMIT [RISE Demands](#)
 1. Town hall about [Demand Section 3](#) updates will be this Thursday at 4 pm
 - a. Hear from the Student Advocates for Survivors (SAS) and the RISE team about reforming policies around prevention and response to survivors.
 2. Ongoing work on creating a graduate admissions reform handbook – help us make it!
 - ii. GSC DEI Fellows training is happening!
 1. Will be occurring over IAP across 5 sessions via Zoom – training on facilitating conversations about race and racism
 - a. Some spots have opened up, let us know if you or others are interested in participating --- fill out form [here](#)
 - iii. Looking to join GSC DEI?
 1. Open positions for c-reps: First Generation-Low Income, & Disabilities
 2. Become a general member!
 - iv. Graduate Enrolled Student **Survey Data Request Form**:
 1. To request data, please fill out: <https://forms.gle/tuyufcV2TJW66hT77>
 - v. Black Lives Matter [Departmental Scorecard](#):
 1. Check out how your department is progressing with recommendations presented by student advocates!
 - vi. Upcoming Events:
 1. GSC DEI X SAS X RISE Town Hall on Preventing & Responding to Misconduct -- [RSVP](#)
 - a. Thursday, December 3 from 4-5 pm @ [Zoom](#)
 2. Conduit bi-weekly meeting this Friday (12/4) from 1-2 pm @ [Zoom](#)



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Vice-President

Jerry Ng
Nominations Board
gsc-vp@mit.edu

Secretary

Naveen Arunachalam
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a. Will be discussing the graduate admissions process in each department

3. Next Committee Meeting:

a. Tues., Dec. 8th at 4:00 pm via [Zoom](#)

b. Contact: gsc-diversity@mit.edu

e. EAB

i. Statements Passed

1. Future of Defense Task Force Report
2. Quantum Frontiers Report

ii. Currently Working On:

1. Welcoming new members! (gsc-eab@mit.edu)
2. Biden Transition Team
3. Proposed MBTA Service Cuts ([Fill Out Our Survey!](#))
4. Spring Virtual 3MT Competition (with \$3000 in prizes!)
5. Planning Spring Initiatives + Events

f. HCA

i. Administration hasn't yet been willing to consider further relaxing the guest policy for on-campus residences

1. They've hinted about making the policy stricter if compliance doesn't improve; might just be trying to pressure student leadership to help them

ii. Vast majority of graduate students are following testing/attestation requirements

1. Concern about small fraction of on-campus residents who are late/skip testing

iii. Faculty committee on campus planning

1. This committee hears updates about new campus buildings, renovations, and so forth

a. Great way to stay informed (and keep our constituents informed) about planned changes to campus

2. The committee is mostly composed of faculty but the GSC has just been granted a second seat

3. Apply today!

g. Muddy

i. It would be *super cool* if we had you as a part of the Muddy Charles Pub Board!

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- ii. The board is looking for *new graduate student members!*
- iii. Next meeting 12/7/2020 @ 7 PM eastern
- iv. [Email Jennifer](#) with any questions!
- v. gsc-muddy-chair@mit.edu

h. OC

- i. With new students being mostly virtual, need to emphasize connection of students with MIT community
- ii. Package of items to be delivered to new students at the beginning of Spring 2021
 - I. Working with sponsors and partners to get items, work out delivery logistics
- iii. Will likely retain virtual summer events for 2021 regardless of COVID situation
- iv. Rollout of new web interface (Canvas) for 2021 that will streamline information dissemination

5. Open Floor

*Requires a vote