

Letter from the Dean



Graduate education is central to the mission of MIT and vital to maintaining competitiveness and leadership as a world-class research university. Premier graduate students enable the recruitment and retention of top faculty who wish to work with them, drive research discovery and exploration forward in all fields, contribute to undergraduate teaching and mentoring, and deeply enhance campus life and community. MIT graduate alumni constitute some of the most distinguished scholars, leaders, inventors, and entrepreneurs of the last century and

their far-reaching impact has brought immense prestige to MIT. MIT graduate programs train students to acquire the advanced knowledge, skills, and creativity needed to boost economic innovation and prosperity and to solve the world's most challenging problems of the 21st century.

Today, graduate education at MIT is thriving like never before. MIT's more than 35 graduate programs, distributed among five schools (Architecture and Planning; Engineering; Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences; Science; and Sloan School of Management), are ranked among the highest in the nation and the world. MIT is unique in that it has great strength in many of the classical disciplines while possessing an array of mechanisms that result in pervasive interdisciplinary interactions. MIT places strong value on residential graduate education and the resulting interaction within the graduate community, as well as the largely decentralized autonomy of graduate programs and faculty to direct graduate education in their disciplines. The Institute has a vibrant graduate community and student life (e.g. approximately 40% of graduate students live on campus in dormitories), as well as a highly engaged, collaborative, and effective graduate student government. We are proud of our large international student population, as well as the dramatic increases in the percentage of under-represented minority and female students over the last decade, that contribute to the rich diversity of our graduate community. Graduate students today have an unwavering determination to have a positive impact on society and, hence, interest is flourishing in "grand challenge" research areas (e.g., energy, health, infrastructure, etc.), along with student entrepreneurship and the desire to seek a deeper understanding of research in a broad global context. Lastly, currently graduate students ubiquitously use technology for communications, collaboration, research, and social interactions.

“The mission of MIT is to advance knowledge and educate students in science, technology, and other areas of scholarship that will best serve the nation and the world in the 21st century.”

Now is one of the most exciting times in history for graduate education at MIT. New technological tools are opening up possibilities that could not have been imagined even a decade ago: for recruitment; for building intellectual, collaborative and cross-disciplinary networks; for engaging with alumni; for innovations in teaching and research; and, potentially, for educating society at massive scales.

Simultaneously, significant challenges do exist. Many countries are building up their systems of higher education, and competition for the best students is intensifying among universities around the world. Reduced federal funding, budget cuts, and policy changes are increasing the financial burden to support graduate education. With increasing diversity, expected scientific productivity, and the use of technological tools for both abbreviated and 24/7 communication, it is critical to provide personal support; to facilitate face-to-face advising and mentoring, time and physical spaces for deep thought, study and listening; to foster work-life balance; and to nurture a caring and inclusive campus environment. In addition to creating new, original knowledge at the frontiers of the field, today's graduates also need the ability to recognize what this new knowledge means in a broader context, and to possess a more extensive skill set in order to act on this new knowledge for the benefit of society. Hence, it is becoming important to provide professional and personal development opportunities in order to prepare students for a range of career paths. MIT is taking a leadership role in these emerging areas in graduate education now to maintain its status as a world-class research institution. Clearly it will be an exciting, challenging, and, ultimately, rewarding journey ahead.



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