

# Reif announces new MIT commitments to track DEI efforts

*Efforts include work on BSU, BGSA, NASEM reports' recommendations*

By Vyshnavi Vennelakanti

STAFF REPORTER

In a Feb. 23 email to the MIT community, President L. Rafael Reif announced the launch of a new website, Institute Commitments, to track and share MIT's progress on advancing Institute efforts to make the community "fairer and more welcoming to all."

These efforts include working on the 2015 Black Students' Union (BSU) and Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA) recommendations, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) working group recommendations, and Reif's July 2020 commitments.

The website details steps taken as part of these efforts and labels them according to their progress. The steps

are labeled "Completed" if MIT has fulfilled the commitment or recommendation, "Progress underway" if the work is underway, "Progress made" if the elements have been advanced without current plans to complete them, and "Not pursued" if MIT has decided to not advance.

Reif provided further context to the efforts, writing that he invited students of the BSU and BGSA to hear their experiences at MIT while campuses across the country struggled with issues of "equity and racial justice" in Fall 2015. He wrote that the BSU and BGSA recommendations from that time "continue to pave the way for meaningful and lasting change across the MIT community."

Commitments, Page 2



ZOE PASETSKY — THE TECH

Students undergo in-person Makerspace training on Monday, March 8 during the COVID era.

# CAAC special meeting features student presentations across six areas of Institute sustainability landscape

*Presentations include recommendations designed specifically for MIT's 2021 Climate Action Plan*

By Srinidhi Narayanan

NEWS EDITOR

The MIT Climate Advisory Committee (CAAC) held a meeting, a "key event in MIT administration's decision-making around climate action," Feb. 22. The meeting featured six student presentations "across the sustainability landscape at MIT" that included recommendations for "what MIT should be doing to tackle the climate crisis" and specifically, "what MIT's 2021 Climate Action Plan should look like," MIT UA Chief of

Staff Kiara Wahnschafft '22 wrote in an email to *The Tech*.

The CAAC is led by Maria Zuber, vice president for research, and includes Jim Gomes, Zuber's senior advisor; Ron Prinn, MIT's Center for Global Change Science and the Global Change Joint Program director; Charlene Kabcenell '79, a member of the MIT Corporation; Bethany Patten, Sloan School of Management senior associate director for the sustainability initiative; Brian Goldberg, Office of Sustainability assistant director; Gail Greenwald, alumnae representative

and an early stage investor in clean tech and sustainability; Bob Armstrong, Energy Initiative director; and Deborah Campbell, Lincoln Laboratory's leader of the climate change initiative.

The student presentations addressed the structure and process behind the Climate Action Plan (CAP), public engagement, investments, private engagement, on-campus sustainability, and education.

The structure and process presentation was led by Laura Chen '22, Jessica Horowitz '22, Kelly Wu '21,

Sydney Kim '24, and Jess Cohen '22, and introduced three core principles: Accountability, Representation, and Transparency ("ART"). The presentation also proposed the conception of an MIT Climate Council, which would "consist of committees that focus on specific aspects of MIT's climate action, and will include existing initiatives."

Each committee would report to a steering council, "a larger governing body." Each committee would have representation from administrators, faculty, staff, graduate students, un-

dergraduate students, and alumni, with the student positions being filled by elected representatives, with "term lengths, to allow for increased participation," Wu said.

Additionally, the CAP should include an implementation plan that should "lay out timeline, actions, and actors who will follow through on these actions, as well as a budget," Horowitz said. The presentation concluded with a summary of key takeaways, which included, in addition to

CAP, Page 2

## IN SHORT

Regular action decisions are released March 14. **Happy Pi Day!**

The deadline to **submit events for CP\*** is March 19.

Sign up to **become an MITPal** by March 24.

MIT affiliates should complete the **COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility Form**.

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# Celebrating the life of first-year master's student, researcher Jinxuan 'Janice' Zhou (1997–2021)

*Student in mechanical engineering and aeronautics and astronautics remembered by friends for her 'sunny smile' and various contributions to communities and research*

By Nicole Chan

ASSOCIATE NEWS EDITOR

Jixuan "Janice" Zhou died in Cambridge on Feb. 25, President L. Rafael Reif wrote in an email to the MIT community Feb. 26.

Zhou was a first-year master's student studying mechanical engineering and aeronautics and astronautics and a resident of Edgerton House. At MIT, Zhou worked in the Aerospace Controls Laboratory, "investigating intriguing new directions for how to have

multiple robots learn in the world at the same time" with application to "autonomous aerial vehicles and cars."

Prior to studying at MIT, Zhou completed her bachelor's degree at the University of Toronto. The university "celebrated Janice as one of its 'grads to watch,' citing her playful spirit, her imaginative contributions to campus life and her nimbleness as an engineer," Reif wrote.

Reif added that Zhou's friends said that even "face coverings could not mask her smile."

Zhou's friends and acquaintances left messages and memories for her and her family at Dignity Memorial's obituary site.

Lena Downes SM '20 wrote that Zhou was "so kind and thoughtful" and "made a huge impact on everyone who she met" at MIT. "Her sunny smile and warm personality will always stay with me. I am grateful to have known her, even for a short time," Downes wrote.

Dong Ki Kim SM '20 wrote that Zhou "always had lovely smiles." She "shared her exciting research

ideas in robotics & AI" during their research meetings, Kim added. Kim said that he would "forever remember" Zhou as his "bright and happy friend."

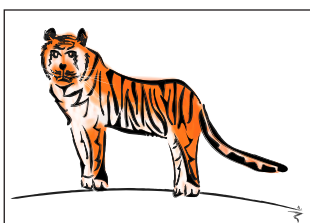
Members of the MIT community can access MIT Student Support Services at 617-253-4861 or via email at [s3-support@mit.edu](mailto:s3-support@mit.edu) and Mental Health Services via phone at 617-253-2916 during weekdays and at 617-253-4481 during nights and weekends. GradSupport can be contacted at 617-253-4860 or [gradsupport@mit.edu](mailto:gradsupport@mit.edu).

## ACCOUNTABILITY

How will MIT change as the climate changes?  
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## RACISM IN ACADEMIA

At MIT, centralization is necessary to achieve DEI goals.  
**OPINION, p. 5**



## STRIPES

Not just on the flag.  
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## COVID COMPLIANCE

Student leaders must encourage others to follow Institute guidance.  
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WEATHER

# Small glimpse of spring this week, temperatures set to drop again on Pi Day

By Trinity W Manuelito, and Francesca Macchiavello

This week in Cambridge, we can expect a couple of days of lovely, sunny weather that help us to get a glimpse of what’s to come (hopefully soon) during springtime in the Northeast. Make sure to try to spend some time outside and soak up that Vitamin D on Thursday and Friday, which will be optimal for a few hours between classes laying out on Killian Court. Unfortunately, the weekend we will experience a 20 degree drop as Pi Day ap-

proaches. Despite the gloomier temperature on Sunday, don’t forget to celebrate Pi Day! Many future members of the Class of 2025 will receive notification of their admission to MIT on Sunday, so, buckle up, make your favorite Pi, celebrate the new incoming class, and cross your fingers, because Spring Solstice is near.

Don’t forget to set back your clocks one hour this Sunday! Even though we might be losing one hour of sleep, we will start seeing longer days soon. More light, more Vitamin D, more serotonin, MIT. We got this.

Extended Forecast

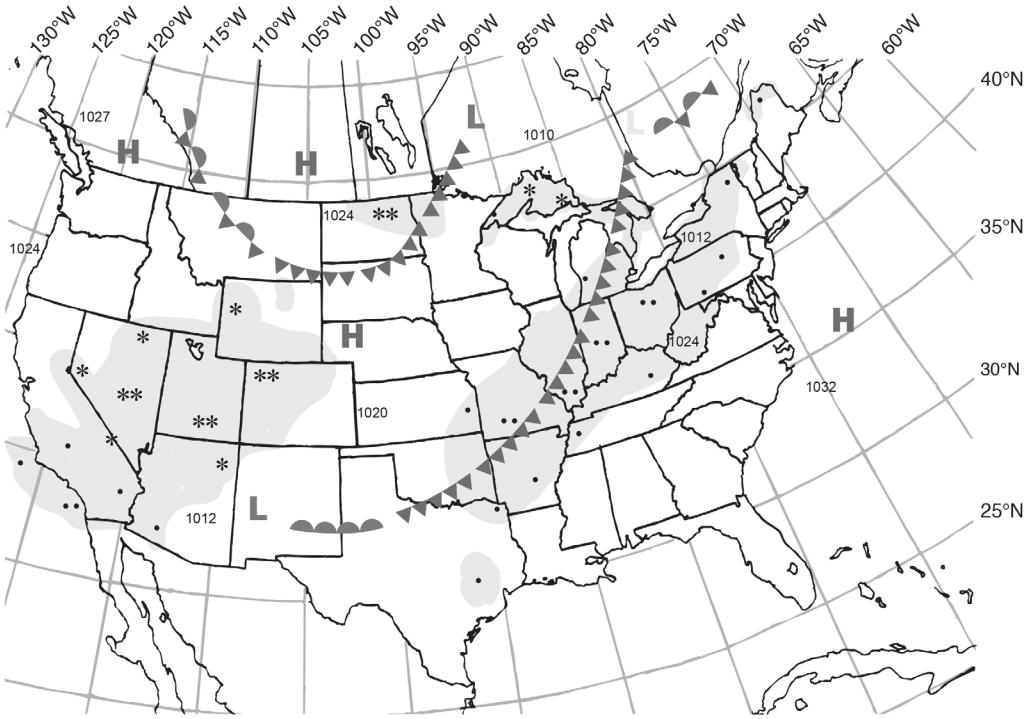
**Today:** Mostly sunny. High around 69°F (21°C). Southwest winds around 7-14 mph.

**Tonight:** Slight chance of rain around 4am. Mostly cloudy, with low around 52°F (11°C).

**Friday:** Mostly sunny. High around 64°F (18°C) and low around 32°F (0°C). West winds around 10-13 mph.

**Saturday:** Sunny with a high around 44°F (6°C) and low around 29°F (-1°C). Breezy with gusts up to 37 mph.

**Sunday:** Mostly sunny with a high around 41°F (5°C). Northwest winds around 9-16 mph.



Situation for Noon Eastern Time, Thursday, March 11, 2021

| Weather Systems        | Weather Fronts   | Precipitation Symbols |          | Other Symbols                                  |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------|--|
|                        |                  | Snow                  | Rain     |  |
| <b>H</b> High Pressure | Trough           | Showers               | Rain     | Fog  |
| <b>L</b> Low Pressure  | Warm Front       | Light                 | Light    | Thunderstorm                                   |
| Hurricane              | Cold Front       | Moderate              | Moderate | Haze   |
|                        | Stationary Front | Heavy                 | Heavy    | Compiled by MIT Meteorology Staff and The Tech |

# Private sector engagements group stresses MIT adhere to outside engagements report

CAP, from Page 1

the creation of the MIT Climate Council, an iterative drafting process for the action plan.

The public sector engagement presentation was led by Disha Trivedi G, Will Atkinson G, and Wahnschafft and was based on more than ten interviews conducted with staff and officials in offices associated with MIT, like the MIT Washington, D.C Office, the Center for Energy and Environmental Policy Research (CEEPR), and the Institute for Data, Systems, and Society (IDSS).

The interviewees helped “contextualize existing public sector engagement on climate action, gave feedback on recommendations, formed ties” with the student group for future collaboration, Trivedi said. The group documented and shared the “widespread yet fragmented” MIT efforts to inform climate policy, and shared key recommendations for public sector engagement.

The first, coordination, would involve creating “a position in the PKG or VPR’s Office dedicated to regularly convening researchers who are influencing climate policy,” Wahnschafft said. Secondly, “there should be a concerted effort to support and incentivize more researchers” to influence policy. Third, MIT should allocate funding to establishing PKG Climate fellows and climate policy-focused UROPs and RA-ships, Atkinson added. Finally, “MIT should join and lead local cities to accelerate sustainability goals.”

The investments presentation was led by Anushree Chaudhuri ’24, Arnav Patel ’21, Adam Potter ’22, Jasmine Chen ’24, and Daisy Wang ’24. The presentation outlined several priorities, the first of which is transparency and public commitments. The investments group noted that “there is very little information to be found online or accessible to all” regarding MIT’s endowments, next steps for climate policy, or guiding values.

The second priority is climate and environmental, social, and governance-oriented portfolio goals; the group stated that “MIT-IMCo needs to make a statement of purpose where it clearly describes goals, important stakeholders, and its interactions with the MIT community.”

The third priority is creating a framework for accountability and community input. In the group’s report, they propose “a standing committee on investor responsibility,” Chaudhuri said. Such a committee would only address responsible investing issues. Finally, the group called for fossil fuel divestment. Patel stated that “this is an action that many students want.”

In the private sector engagements presentation, led by Yeji Cho ’24, Isabel Munoz ’22, Peter Scott ’23, Cohen, Trivedi, and Wahnschafft, the group pointed to the outside engagements report released earlier this year, stressing the importance of ensuring that MIT adheres to the guidelines outlined in the report.

In the report, conflict with MIT’s core values, as it pertains to gifts/engagements and institutional partners, is marked as a yellow light. The group stated that “this should be a red light. Working with certain fossil fuel companies flashes this light.”

The group presented the metrics from MIT Divest’s standards report, stating that they “found these to be most aligned with MIT values and most applicable to MIT.” The group had also considered Barnard College’s engagement standards and the Union of Concerned Scientists’ scorecard for companies.

The metrics presented include zero tolerance for complicity in climate disinformation campaigns, aggressive greenhouse gas emission reductions and targets, no funding of climate denial through political contributions and think tanks, internal policies consistent with pro-climate forward thinking, zero tolerance for lobbying against climate change bills in Congress intended to further the U.S.’ transitions to clean energy, and tangible reparations and a focus on environmental justice.

The student education group included postdoctoral associate Jasmina Burek, Lai Wa Chu ’24, and Naomi Lutz ’22.

Lutz stated that “currently, MIT is ranked just barely above 25% of the 672 registered universities in the AASHE stars rating when it comes to curriculum and sustainability,” at the start of the education presentation. The group outlined several sustainability-related classes and

classified them as “focused” or “related” to sustainability.

Chu proposed that additional funding be allocated for professors to “rewrite curriculums and to create new sustainability-related classes” through a grant program. Finally, the group proposed that postdocs be exposed to climate and sustainability efforts through “mandatory campus sustainability training during postdoctoral orientation.”

The last group, the on-campus sustainability presentation group, included Laura Chen ’22, Andrea Garcia ’23, Sam Humphries G, David Mazumder G, Natalie Northrup ’22, Vrindaa Somjit G, Brandon Wang, Munoz, and Wahnschafft. The group described how MIT’s approach toward campus sustainability should progress.

The presentation outlined several key points: setting ambitious, quantitative institute goals for greenhouse gas emissions, waste, and water; establishing a body to determine, implement, and monitor steps towards institute goals; and publishing data in a transparent, centralized, and accessible manner, pointing out that data on waste amounts and sources, storm-water planning efforts, and energy costs and hourly data should all be made public. The group referred the committee to Harvard and Princeton’s sustainability websites as models for transparency.

The student presentations were followed by an open discussion with Zuber, student presenters, and meeting attendees, as well as a question-and-answer session with online attendees through slide.

The CAAC meets six times a year, and hosts several conversations, meetings, and events in conjunction with other MIT-led initiatives to receive community input. Prior to the Feb 22. meeting, the committee “hosted a zoom forum along with the Facilities Department of the Office of Sustainability on what we can do to reduce MIT’s own carbon footprint,” Zuber said.

In the coming weeks, the CAAC will be “holding forums hosted by the MIT Energy Initiative and the Environmental Solutions initiative about how MIT engages around climate with governments, companies, NGOs, and other academic institutions as well as civil society.”

# Institute continues work on graduate fellowships, values statement, policing practices

Commitments, from Page 1

Reif also discussed the NASEM report addressing “harassment of women in academia nationally” after which “MIT launched an extensive process to combat harassment in our community.” An implementation team continues to advance the NASEM recommendations.

The July 2020 commitments stem from the national outcry over the death of George Floyd. Reif wrote that he “committed our community to be a part of a national transformation, building an MIT that works for everyone.”

Reif wrote that these efforts are a part of MIT’s comprehensive strategic action plan for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

Reif described some of the progress that the Institute has made in these efforts.

He wrote that all of MIT’s schools and many of its departments are “actively recruiting for senior staff” to advance DEI. In addition, MIT has published a diversity dashboard and minority enrollment reports to increase transparency surrounding representation at MIT.

Reif stated that the policy describing the factors used in evaluating candidates for tenure has been revised to “emphasize mentoring and advising.” He added that the policy for handling complaints of discriminatory or harassing behavior has been strengthened and “required refresher training about preventing sexual harassment” has been introduced.

Reif also described areas of work that remain to be done.

Reif noted that “we must continue to make graduate student fellowships a priority, especially for students from underrepresented groups.”

The recently finalized plans for an accessible transitional funding program “to lower the barriers some graduate students experience when they change research advisors or groups” advance a recommendation made by the Academic and Organizational Relationships Working Group in response to the NASEM report, Reif wrote.

Additionally, Reif stated that the commitment to review policing at MIT must be fulfilled with the aim to “ensure that everyone in the MIT community is safe and feels safe.” He wrote that senior leadership has been meeting with MIT Chief of Police John DiFava and student leaders for this goal.

The Institute has also “retained an outside consultant” working with faculty, students, and staff to review best practices of policing on MIT’s campus.

Reif also wrote that MIT is working to define a statement of Institute values. An Institute-wide committee of staff, faculty, students, postdocs, and alumni is working towards defining a statement of Institute values and will submit a final recommendation this summer, Reif wrote.

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## WENBO'S WALKS

# How a tiger bears its stripes

# Words carry weight

**By Wenbo Wu**  
*EXECUTIVE EDITOR*

## I. Orange, black, and white

At a moment's notice, the train pulled up to Park Street. The man moved like the wind as he stepped off the platform into the rickety sodium-illuminated trolley, the doors sliding shut behind him. He did his best to eschew a glare toward the inebriated voice in front of him muttering about how "the Chinese kid should be let in first, like they always are."

They were like echoes; his mind was aflame, a cavern with but a single orange candle flickering beneath a perilous, staccato drip. He took a seat beside the doorway, concealed his face behind his hoodie, and buried his barren hands beneath the pockets of his black nylon coat.

He looked across the aisle and stared into the perpetrator's suffocating blue eyes. They scarcely noticed him as a horrible laugh escaped from their possessor's rib cage. The ocean has eyes, but its riptides have teeth, and he understood every word they tore away from shore.

His lips quivered. Words piled up behind them and formed a riotous mob, ready to storm the gates should they ever open. He looked to his companion sitting in the seat beside him. His companion peered into the distance and marveled at the orange of the sunset and of the seagulls' bills. The seat was as good as barren; he never opened the gates, and the mob died down.

The effigies of time shattered into a fine white plaster that spilled into the streets. There, the dust settled like aged perfume, freezing more in the nights that succeeded. The bustling Bostonian city faded into the landscape of a quaint Massachusetts town.

With each breath he took, the smokers covered their faces. With each step forward, they took a step back. He couldn't

see their faces behind his fogged-up glasses, but he sensed their fervor to avoid him. His fingers fidgeted with his headphone wires in the pockets of his black nylon coat.

A meandering stream of consciousness transported him through a vacuous daze. The days grew longer as the plaster solidified to concrete. He walked with his friends on a clear spring day down Vassar Street. People in helmets sped past and screamed a word at them. High-fives were exchanged.

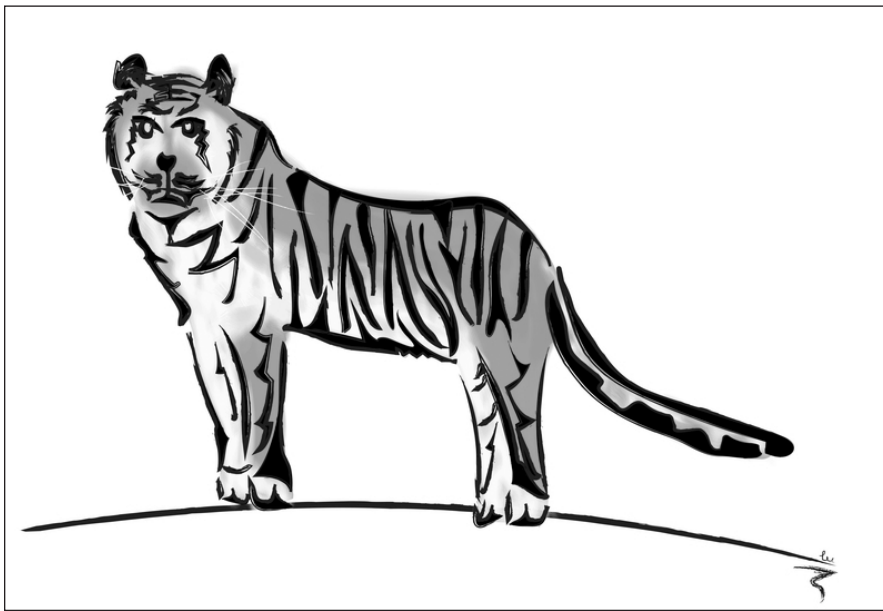
The three friends stood outside the power plant, shocked but not surprised. They averted their eyes and let the words sweep them like a howling zephyr. *Go back to where you came from. You are not welcome.* These were the words that they all knew by heart, and these were the words replaced by “coronavirus.” They didn’t say a thing, because nobody wanted to cause a scene. After all, is it not easier to ignore than to confront?

## II. How a tiger bears its stripes

But let me tell you how a tiger bears its stripes. Everyone recognizes them; everyone understands their weight. Even so, a tiger does not shrug them off, for doing so is not an option. Rather, a tiger lives with them and understands their implications, taking advantage of the hues that streak across its coat.

Likewise, I live in my skin with my past, and I do not look upon them with regret or envy. I contemplate them for what they are, and I live with the voice I was given at birth and the positions I must hence take. Ever since I was young, I found my race conflated with a tiger (*Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*). But that by no means constrains me.

As someone who has a platform to voice my thoughts, I find myself in a difficult position; as much as I would love to keep my column lighthearted and fun, making it an escape from reality, it's impossible to write about walking without bringing readers into my shoes.



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PHOEBE LEE—THE TECH

**Even in the mountains,** I see the eye of the tiger.

Biden's America is still racist. This is far from an original take. However, it's easy to forget that just because the faces of the government have changed, its underlying discriminatory infrastructure and institutions have not. The issues of 2020 still exist and must never be forgotten.

The U.S. donning a new mask does not fix its racism. The only difference nowadays is that many are not vocal about their prejudices. Regardless, we see their racist attitudes manifest themselves in almost any online discussion forum about any incident that could even remotely be linked to a person's race. Recent remarks I've read concerning such articles in *The Tech* have made it impossible for me to stay silent.

I write a lot about the walks that make me think, and none makes one think more so than ones that provoke feelings of injury or injustice. Ironically, those are the ones

I've historically avoided writing about, not because I don't care about them, but in part because of the delicacy and difficulty I've found in encapsulating into words my experiences with xenophobia.

The other part is that I've not lived enough like a tiger: I've allowed cowardice to take over every time I had previously come close to initiating conversations around race or my experiences with it. I promise to strive for and do better; I will do that no longer.

It's therefore crucial to recognize our, my own included, prejudices and confront them head-on. Specifically, being fearful of or avoiding conversations surrounding race does not make one a better person. Diversity is an asset. While it's not possible to fully experience the range of experiences of another person, it is possible to learn about them through candid discussions of perspective.

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# The climate is changing, and so must MIT

*As students, we must hold MIT accountable for its climate action — and inaction — to shape the 2021 Climate Action Plan*

As an institution, MIT holds a position of great respect and, consequently, influence. Its graduates and professors are respected entrepreneurs, scientists, astronauts, and political leaders. Its name consistently appears at the top of university rankings. In fact, MIT graduates and professors have earned the fifth most Nobel Prizes of all institutions in the world, and in 2021, *Times Higher Education* ranked MIT fifth in the world. Certainly, in the eyes of the public, MIT is a model institution.

In terms of climate action, however, MIT is *not* a model institution. Today, despite the fact that the planet's carbon budget is set to expire in six years, MIT has yet to commit to divestment or even carbon neutrality. Data on its energy use, water use, and other sustainability-related activities is not publicly accessible, and the majority of information regarding institute investments is completely unavailable.

As MIT's stature stands on the shoulders of public opinion, it is undeniable that it consciously shapes that opinion by filtering the information it discloses. It is undeniable that this silence and secrecy is a means by which MIT obscures its climate action — or, more aptly, its climate *in*action — in the face of a global emergency. Indeed, with public respect comes privilege, and with privilege comes power. Yet in light of the climate crisis, MIT is misusing its power. MIT is managing its privilege irresponsibly.

We students cannot let this continue. This spring, MIT is set to release its second-ever Climate Action Plan (CAP), which will serve as a template for the next five years. In its 2015 CAP, MIT pledged to “minimize emission of... global warming agents into the atmosphere” and “de-

vises pathways for adaptation to climate change,” yet those goals lacked a timeline, accountability metrics, actors, and cost estimates. Compared to the diligence and rigor with which MIT conducts its research and academics, its plan to address climate change is strikingly vague.

Meanwhile, MIT has continued to invest in companies that spew the byproducts of fossil fuels into the air. These are fossil fuels that we know heat the planet, flood cities, make people chronically ill, take the lives of children in low-income communities, amplify environmental injustice, uproot villages and ecosystems, and burn homes to the ground. MIT has an enormous responsibility — a responsibility that it is denying, neglecting, and rejecting.

Now, it is up to us, as students, to fulfill *our* responsibility: to push MIT to be the leader it must be in the face of this crisis. The 2021 CAP must contain ambitious, appropriate goals that align with current climate science and include clearly defined actionables. Our responsibility is to talk, sing, write, protest, and ultimately encourage MIT to descend from its perch of privileged ignorance, open its eyes to this accelerating, alarming crisis, and act.

To coordinate our actions, the Student Sustainability Coalition recently started a climate action campaign called CliMIT. The campaign focuses on four key asks, distilled from a proposal the Student Sustainability Coalition developed to shape the 2021 CAP.

- set ambitious on-campus sustainability goals,
- implement standards for engagement with private sector actors,
- form avenues for engagement with the public sector, and
- develop and follow a framework for ethical investments.

If MIT adopts these asks as central goals in its 2021 CAP, it would enable the Institute to make significant, appropriate, and much-overdue progress in its climate action.

To my fellow students: we must push for a CAP of which we can be proud. We are the scientists, engineers, innovators, and pioneers on which MIT prides itself. We are the problem solvers, critical thinkers, leaders, and collaborators, always on the edge of “cutting-edge” technology. Now is our time to channel our collective strengths and talents to create necessary change.

To members of the MIT administration, Climate Action Advisory Committee, Office of Sustainability, Investment Management Company, and the MIT Corporation:

If you were to emerge from your climate-controlled offices and open your eyes not only to look, but also to see, perhaps your heart would ache for this world. You would see homes, demolished. Dreams, crushed. Photos floating in flood water, memories going up in flames. This world that so deeply respects you is bleeding, and it baffles me that you act as though you do not know.

Indeed, MIT stands on the shoulders of public opinion, and with it, it will fall. MIT also stands on the banks of the Charles River, and with it, its hallways will flood and its reputation will be covered in water stains. Unless MIT changes.

An opinion article in last week's issue of *The Tech* misspelled the last name and class year of an author as Kiara Wahnshaft '21. In fact, the author is Kiara Wahnschafft '22.

**Editorials** are the official opinion of *The Tech*. They are written by the Editorial Board, which consists of Publisher Joanna Lin, Editor in Chief Kristina Chen, Managing Editor Chloe McCreery, Executive Editor Wenbo Wu, and the opinion editor, a position that is currently vacant.

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## GUEST COLUMN

# The friend of racism

*A call for MIT to forgo operational decentralization and employ radical centralization in its DEI efforts*

**By Kelvin Green II**

The George Floyd murder trial process commenced on Monday in response to Derek Chauvin placing his knee on the neck of George Floyd in the streets of Minneapolis long enough to kill him last May. The protests of millions of citizens across the country and around the globe in solidarity baked into the world's collective memory that racism is not the put-down beast many believe it to be: He rears his head in the most public and private places, often disguised by circumstance (e.g., state violence, voter suppression, economic exclusion, academic exclusion); he is effective in providing distractions that often lead to the temporary anesthetization of his woken body rather than outright extinction. This is not a surprise to many who have studied American history or who have been paying attention recently; however, for those in academia as students or human conduits for those students' learning — staff, faculty, administration — a question of personal and institutional responsibility arises that deserves consideration. Refusing to give this question the requisite time it demands is the very first step of cycling through the problems racism breeds, total violence and disillusionment. It is doubly important to recognize, whether we have been taught it or whether we choose to believe it, that we *are* a community of human beings on this one earth. There is no room for individualism, which creates the devastating crisis of seeing the world through a lens of "I, me, my, mine" instead of "we, us, ours, together." I mention individualism (not individuality) as a crisis because it is a weapon against the truth about the very basis of what it means to be a citizen of this country and the world: that we all share responsibility in being caretakers of the spaces we have been gifted to occupy.

What is academia's responsibility with regard to racism? What is MIT's responsibility in this national and global conversation? These

questions are large enough to encourage discussion but may be too big to chew when read in isolation. One could reframe these questions as: How has racism manifested in academia? How has racism manifested at MIT? Although the first question is one worth a historian's time, the second question is one I'd like to entertain as a student who has contributed to findings about MIT's history with American chattel slavery and has spent the last three years mulling this question over.

# How has racism manifested in academia? How has racism manifested at MIT?

What the streets of Minneapolis might bring to the steps of MIT is a demand for clarity. Yes, MIT may not be the place to discuss police brutality (though it should) or criminal justice (though it should). However, it is definitely the place to critically think about our founding as an American college, the initial conditions of chattel slavery which gave birth to our existence, and the lasting implications of ignoring our racist history for decades, thus strengthening the grip of racism on our institution. Operational decentralization, a system MIT prides itself on, is a supremely effective environment for racism to thrive in. Racism will thrive where control, power, and influence is in the hands of people who are racist or ignorant or arrogant (or all three). Yes, decentralization may promote innovation and encourage a sense of diversity of methodology and practice, but this innovation which thrives at MIT does not preclude racist practice. Then the question of enforcement arises. By design, decentralization resists efforts to create a cohesive vision of justice for the Institute that can be *enforced*. This is particularly detrimental in a racist society where de-

centralization functions to aid and abet the prevalence of racism.

Almost every day at MIT, I hear the words “diversity, equity, and inclusion,” or DEI. What becomes apparent is that we do not know anymore what we are saying and where we are going. Language should not stop at halfway attempts to capture an idea. Justice is the goal. There is no place better than academia to think about how we utilize language, and there is no place better than MIT to think about language as linear approximation (the approach toward the ineffable). What seems to be missing in this social Taylor expansion of a responsible and just MIT is the leading order term of leadership. The past four years have taught us the effects of bad leadership when trying to contain and extinguish a virus, and yet even a virus is more equitable than racism. How much more important is it to have not merely good leadership, but excellent leadership in the face of the most pressing question facing America and, by extension, MIT: How do we adequately reckon with our racist past and present?

**By design, decentralization resists efforts to create a cohesive vision of justice for the Institute that can be enforced.**

As assistant officer on diversity in the Undergraduate Association (UA) of MIT, I hypothesize that the centralization of our efforts as a community dedicated to justice will improve the efficacy of our efforts in addressing systemic racism and its far-reaching implications: severely underrepresented Indigenous, Black, and Latinx students, as well as our tenured faculty counterparts; insufficient results in increasing the access and opportunities

for all students to address their collective and respective needs from the material (e.g., food insecurity) to the abstract (e.g., fulfillment); and confronting the false security and failed sense of belonging which impacts all interactions one has with MIT as an institution and so-called community. The convening of the UA Diversity Council is our experiment to bring together diversity stakeholders — departmental representatives, affinity groups, and historically exclusive groups — to engage in dialogue and both coordinate and strategize together. This is our undergraduate attempt at trying to erode the silos constructed by operational decentralization. If we want to reach the aims that DEI aspire toward, the Institute must also consider employing radical centralization.

**If we want to reach the aims that DEI aspire toward, the Institute must also consider employing radical centralization.**

This week we will continue to watch the George Floyd murder trial and pray for the accountability of Derek Chauvin and justice for George Floyd's family. All the while, we recognize that George Floyd is not on this side of heaven to receive justice. The failures of the Institute in our moral responsibility to deconstruct racism may not result in the physical death of students (though this is within reach), but psychological and emotional death are more common and not any less worth preventing. Let us do our job as members of the MIT community and citizens of the world to send racism and all of its friends packing.

*Kelvin Green II '22 is the Assistant Officer on Diversity for the Undergraduate Association of MIT.*

# MIT leadership needs to restore students' trust; until then, student leaders must step up to save our semester

## Compliance with COVID-19 policies will not happen on its own

**By Áron Ricardo Perez-Lopez**

*SENIOR EDITOR*

The MIT administration has been telling us to not go to parties and to get tested for almost a year. President Reif and Cecilia Stuopis, director of MIT Medical, send us emails on a regular basis, and by now we greet them as old friends. This familiarity means that many of us don't read their emails. But even if we did, would we do as they say?

The quarantining period for undergrads arriving back to campus for the spring semester was extended by almost two days following noncompliance with testing requirements and reports of COVID-era policy violations. A week later, residential pod programs in three dorms were temporarily suspended due to the rising number of positive cases. As it turns out, the prior weekend, over 50 students participated in or were pod mates with participants in off-campus parties. If precedent holds, this in-person semester will not last much longer than last Spring.

Why are students doing this? Certainly, we have all been locked inside our homes for months, and it's hard to resist interacting with friends again. But there are less dangerous ways of doing that than going to a social event.

So do students not care that they are putting all our peers in danger with this behavior? Some of them maybe, but certainly not most of those who I know.

There is a deeper issue here. Young adults (or, in many cases, children) don't start drinking because they read the literature on the long-term effects of alcohol consumption and decide that the benefits outweigh the risks. People don't become anti-vaxxers because they consult epidemiology textbooks and conclude that they have no reason to be afraid of the given disease. Students don't start partying after having read all relevant federal, state, local, and Institute guidance and having carefully weighed the risk factors of every guest.

**Many students don't trust MIT at the moment, but students do trust other students.**

We engage in all kinds of risky behavior because those we believe and trust also engage in them, or at least don't recommend against them. These trusted entities can be governments, institutions, experts, or our peers. The most relevant entity telling students how to

behave now is MIT, more specifically, MIT leadership. However, the trust between MIT and its students has been seriously strained by years of issues. Just over the course of my time at MIT, we have had dorms shut down and their communities needlessly scattered, meal plan prices raised without warning, clothing-optionality policies revoked, and more, seemingly unilateral decisions made. (The decision to send all undergraduates home this time last year is not without issues either and could merit a column on its own.)

I sincerely believe that there are staff in DSL, HRS, and senior leadership who genuinely care about students. The problem is that time and again, this is not what is reflected in their actions. Of course, there are often more constraints than just the wishes of the students, but when you see promises broken and student voices (seemingly) disregarded repeatedly, you start to wonder whether some Institute policies are really there to protect the students or just to serve as a legal liability shield for MIT.

Although I commend MIT leadership by following through with its decision to invite all first years, sophomores, and juniors back to campus, the events of the past few weeks show that they are not fully in control of the

situation. The question is: how do we avoid further escalation of noncompliance, which could result in more cases of COVID infections and ultimately lead to undergraduate residence halls depopulated — again?

**Serve as an example  
to your peers. Educate  
them. Listen to them.**

*The Tech's* editorial board already made its appeal to the general student population two weeks ago. I don't think this is enough. What we need more of is clear guidance from someone we trust. Many students don't trust MIT at the moment, but students do trust other students. In particular, student leaders, both formal and informal: FSILG presidents, club directors, dorm execs, prominent upper-year students, well-known names from Class groups.

MIT influencers, we need your voices to stop the madness! Serve as an example to your peers. Educate them. Listen to them. Explain how their actions put *their* futures in danger.

And notice how I didn't say: report them.  
That's not how you build trust.

# DID YOUR MIT ESSAYS GET YOU IN?

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# Anniversary

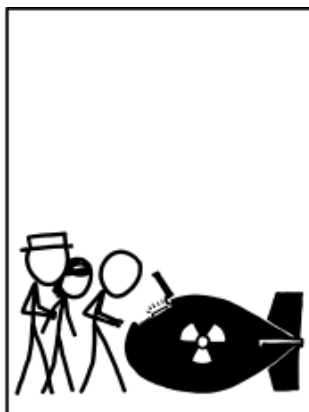
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## For Winter Driving by Adrian Kabigting

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**[1168] tar**



of technological advancement I'm still mucking with tar flags that were 15 years old when I started.





**Solution to Purell**  
*from page 7*

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**Solution to For Winter**  
*from page 6*

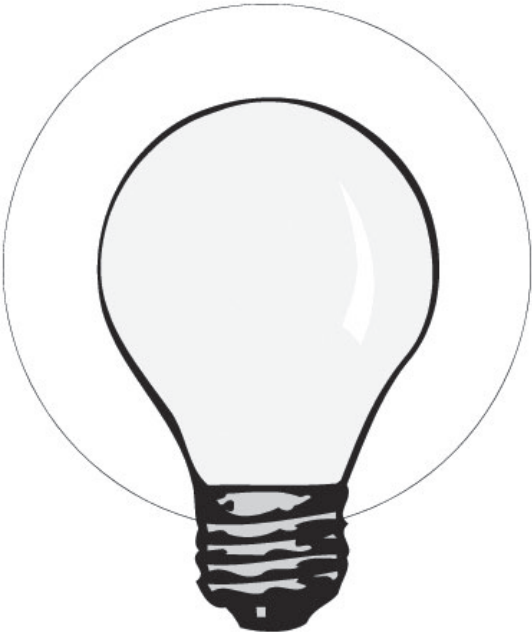
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**Solution to Eviction**  
*from page 6*

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**Solution to Anniversary**  
*from page 6*

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