

MIT Response to: Report on the Sexual Harassment of Women from the National Academies' Committee on Women in Science, Engineering, and Medicine*

Report of Academic and Organizational Relationships Working Group

**Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2018)*

Values

shape the

Expectations

we have of ourselves, each other, and our communities, and we receive

Resources

to raise awareness and to develop professional competencies so that we may meet *expectations* and uphold shared *values*.

Reiterative Assessment

of our adherence to *values*, the degree to which we meet *expectations*, and the impact of the *resources* provided enables individuals and our community to improve on an ongoing basis.

Accountability

empowers individuals, communities, and institutions to deter negative behavior, mitigate conflicts, and enforce consequences for violations.

Recognition of Excellence

affirms the *values* of an organization, highlights the contributions of positive role models, and incentivizes community members to *exceed expectations*.

I. Charge to Academic and Organizational Relationships Working Group

The Working Group on Academic and Organizational Relationships was asked to review the National Academies' Committee on Women in Science, Engineering, and Medicine's proposals regarding power imbalances inherent in research institutions. In developing its recommendations, the Working Group considered: *The CWSEM's underlying findings; MIT's goal of eliminating sexual harassment at the Institute; the organizational structures of MIT's various departments, labs, and centers; MIT's operational needs; and any outside restrictions (including funding restrictions) that may bear on MIT's organizational practices.* The Working Group's charges, and the sections of this Report where each charge is addressed, are:

1. Identify all dependent relationships that exist across the Institute with specific focus on faculty and graduate students and make recommendations on:
 - a. Supporting various research and academic relationships
 - b. Enhance mentoring networks
 - c. Analyze recommendations on research funding, advising, and supervision

The Working Group's response to a. and b. may be found in [Section IV](#). A discussion of dependent relationships may be found [Appendix A](#), and the Working Group's response to c. may be found in [Appendix B](#).

2. Identify and make recommendations to address any organizational or operational conditions that present obstacles to the reporting or elimination of sexual harassment, including ways to make organizational structures "flatter" and more egalitarian.

The Working Group's response may be found in [Section IV](#).

II. Composition of Academic and Organizational Relationships Working Group

The members of the Academic and Organizational Relationships Working Group are:

- **Paula T. Hammond**, David H. Koch Professor and Department Head, Chemical Engineering, *Co-Chair of Working Group*
- **Timothy F. Jamison**, Robert R. Taylor Professor of Chemistry and Associate Provost, *Co-Chair of Working Group*
- **Molly A. Bird**, PhD Student, Biological Engineering
- **Shauna Bush-Fenty**, Administrative Assistant, Office of the Provost
- **Danielle Doughty**, Communications Coordinator, Department of Chemistry
- **Anette E. (Peko) Hosoi**, Neil and Jane Pappalardo Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Associate Dean of Engineering
- **Isabel Nocedal**, Postdoctoral Fellow, Biology
- **Georgia Perakis**, William F. Pounds Professor of Management, Sloan School of Management
- **Rebecca Saxe**, John W. Parve Professor and Associate Department Head, Brain and Cognitive Sciences
- **David A. Singer**, Professor and Department Head, Political Science, and Secretary of the Faculty
- **Justin Steil**, Professor of Law and Urban Planning
- **Ian A. Waitz**, Jerome C. Hunsaker Professor of Aeronautics and Astronautics and Vice Chancellor

III. Working Group's Process

The Academic and Organizational Relationships Working Group met 8 times as a full group. Five subgroups were formed, each with a focus on different groups of MIT community members. Each of these met several times in addition to the all-group meetings. The 8 meetings of the entire working group were dedicated to discussing and revising the recommendations of the subgroups. Those discussions are synthesized in this report, the first draft of which was prepared by TFJ and PTH. Revisions were solicited from all working group members and are reflected in this submitted version of the report.

IV. Recommendations regarding Academic and Organizational Relationships

The overarching philosophy of the working group and summary recommendation is that MIT should *strive to understand the vulnerabilities in dependent professional relationships and to minimize the vulnerability to these dependent relationships*. Implicit in these statements is the acknowledgment of the existence of dependent relationships at academic institutions, including MIT. Sometimes dependent relationships are characterized as having a *power imbalance* or *power differential*. We use these terms interchangeably in this report.

Some of the dependent relationships at MIT include the following. Graduate students and postdocs depend upon their faculty advisors for intellectual discourse, mentorship, letters of recommendation, and many other aspects of their educational journey. Pre-tenure faculty are dependent upon their tenured colleagues for mentorship and support of their promotion cases. Some tenured colleagues may have more influence or implied power than other tenured colleagues, including those who hold administrative positions. The relationship between administrative staff and support staff may be dependent. Undergraduate students are dependent upon their recitation instructors and teaching assistants, who may be graduate students, postdocs, lecturers, or tenure-track faculty. Earlier career graduate students may be dependent upon their graduate student colleagues who are closer to matriculation, or upon postdocs in the same research group or academic unit. UROP students are dependent upon their mentors. Please see Appendix A for further examples and a broader discussion.

Elimination of the dependent relationships is unrealistic. That faculty have greater experience in a field than, for example, students and postdocs and are responsible for educating and mentoring these earlier-career scholars as a part of our educational mission represents an inherent power differential. Moreover, the practice of tenure induces many of the dependent relationships present at academic institutions, as does the nature of academic career progression in general, which often relies on recommendations and support from more senior faculty for career advancement.

Dependent relationships are not necessarily dysfunctional. Rather, they can (and should) be healthy and rewarding to both parties. Therefore, our aim in this report is to provide recommendations on how MIT can achieve the goals of minimizing vulnerability of its community members to the myriad dependent relationships that exist at academic institutions and to foster the development of healthy professional relationships.

In general, the more senior/influential a community member is, the more power and influence they have in their community. It follows that the more that these "more powerful" community members strive to minimize the professional vulnerability of other members of their communities, the greater the

impact on fostering a positive community climate, one that inhibits the spread of pernicious actions and phenomena represented by the submerged portion of the metaphorical iceberg in the *NASEM Report* (figure 2-2, page 32).

The recommendations below vary in their complexity, ease of implementation, and cost. Thus, we have also attempted to suggest a prioritization. Recommendations in **boldface** text are viewed as **particularly high priority**; those in **green** are viewed as achievable in the **short term** (less than 12 months), whereas those in **blue** are viewed as **longer-term** initiatives, requiring more than 12 months to implement.

General recommendations

Our approach in this report is to provide recommendations that lead to *systemic, sustainable positive change*. We therefore have included suggestions not only for addressing acute, visible problems such as outright violations (tip of the iceberg in the metaphor provided in the *NASEM Report*), but also for preventing the much more broadly experienced phenomena represented by the submerged portion of the iceberg. **The view of this working group is that promoting a positive culture and climate at MIT requires a holistic approach, one that incorporates all 6 of the following elements.**

- A. Values** – Our values govern our attitudes, decisions, actions, behaviors, expectations placed upon others, and therefore, our impacts on our community. Similarly, values are the foundation upon which our culture at MIT is based. However, presently MIT does not have an all-community Values Statement. The [MIT Mission Statement](#), while aspirational, is not a statement of shared values.

Therefore, this Working Group strongly recommends the development of an MIT Values Statement. Several other MIT Community members supported this recommendation during the open comment period. One suggested that the Values Statement be integrated with Policies and Procedures; another remarked that our Values are “embedded” within our Policies and Procedures. We would agree with these comments, to a point, and would add that an important distinction between Values and P&P is that the former articulates a belief system, perhaps thought of as the “why”; the latter the “what” and “how”. Moreover, Values serve as a community reference point when situations arise that are not (yet) explicitly covered a collection of Policies and Procedures.

The development of comparable statements has been discussed and recommended by several at MIT for many years. Some have opined that it may not be possible to do so. We would ask in response, “Is there no single value upon which all can agree?” We maintain that crafting a shared values statement *is* possible, and should be created through a shared process in which cross-campus discussions shared by all members of the MIT community discuss the impact and meaning of a values statement and the most important components of one. While we did not take it upon ourselves to draft such a statement for MIT, as it is beyond our charge, we would recommend considering the examples below. The following list is not to be taken as complete:

1. We believe that every member of the MIT Community is equally valued.

2. We believe that no member of the MIT Community should experience harassment of any type, including sexual harassment.

[“A Scientist’s Oath,”](#) recommended by a community member during the open comment period, may also serve as a starting point for discussion. We illustrate the importance of shared values using one of the above as an example. Were every member of our community to adhere to the notion that no person in our community should experience harassment of any type, the incidence of harassment would decrease significantly.

A shared MIT values statement serves as a starting point and a basis for establishing norms within our culture, and the process of developing such a statement as a community can help solidify a more positive culture. Nevertheless, a values statement, while critical, is not sufficient by itself to eradicate harassment and other pernicious behaviors from a community.

Expectations must be clearly communicated to all community members. **Resources** should be provided to community members to meet the expectations placed upon them. **Reiterative Assessment** of the degree to which community members, initiatives, and programs are meeting expectations is an important component of ongoing improvement. **Accountability** speaks to the behavior and actions of community members, their adherence to policies and procedures, and consequences for violation of them. **Recognition of Excellence** serves as an affirmation by an organization of its values, highlights the contributions of positive role models, and incentivizes community members to *exceed* expectations.

- B. **Expectations** – Our expectations of each other are based on our values; the latter guide the former. Expectations include, but are not limited to, normative behaviors, professional competencies, technical and professional skills, leadership, academic standards, research integrity, among many others. Articulation of acceptable behaviors by those in leadership roles (official or otherwise) conveys expectations and sets a positive example.

The working group found that the vast majority of the expectations we proposed for each grouping of community members were common among *all* groupings of community members. Therefore, some sections of recommendations for expectations of individual groupings of community members simply reference the 8 that appear in the general recommendations section. This working group further posits that this high degree of overlap in community expectations bodes well for the development of an all-MIT Values Statement.

- C. **Resources** – Some of the resources that MIT provides to its community members are linked directly to its educational mission, for example, classrooms for lectures, laboratory space for research, medical professionals to foster wellness and treat illness; faculty to mentor UROPs, graduate students, postdocs, and research staff, and many others. Other resources must be provided to enable the community to meet professional and academic expectations. There are orientations for new students, staff, and faculty, and there are workshops that may be completed voluntarily to develop or enhance a technical, professional, or social skill.

That our experiences prior to arriving at MIT are varied provides richness and strength to our community. At the same time, the heterogeneity of our backgrounds presents a challenge. If one has been hired by MIT to be, for example, a faculty member, and is expected to teach classes, mentor graduate students, have an understanding of managing accounts, etc., it behooves both the individual faculty member *and* MIT to have access to resources that facilitate development of such professional competencies that may not have been a component of the faculty member's PhD education. Similarly, one might ask, "If I am expected to make a particular contribution to MIT, but I have not had the opportunity to learn the necessary competency, how can I be expected to meet the expectation?"

Furthermore, unconscious biases imparted by individuals' past experiences may manifest themselves in behaviors that are considered microaggressions in a different community. Although some behaviors are unacceptable in all communities, others may not necessarily be universally shunned, particularly if they are nuanced, context-dependent, or unspoken. Therefore, for the benefit of both the individual and the community, all community members should be provided resources to understand the values of the community and the normative behaviors that they may not have had the opportunity to learn prior to arrival. This approach not only clarifies what is expected of each of us, but enables us to meet what is expected of us.

- D. Reiterative Assessment** – "How are we doing, and how can we improve?" Assessment takes many forms – grades in courses, teaching evaluations, academic climate surveys, performance reviews, to name a few – and informs us of whether we are meeting the expectations of our roles and responsibilities. Reiterative assessment of individuals and of communities also guides the ongoing development and improvement of all involved. Surveys and similar tools provide a measure of the impact and effectiveness of resources provided to enable expectations to be met. For example, how the incidence of sexual harassment has changed since the development of and required participation in trainings and workshops inform us of the effectiveness of the workshops. The results may suggest that they be scaled up, or modified, or replaced with another resource.

Several MIT Community members conveyed support for this recommendation during the open comment period. One also asked what form the assessments would take and who the recipients would be. Another cautioned against (a) conducting academic climate surveys too frequently, (b) relying on these alone to gauge individual performance, and (c) also using other means (360° reviews, e.g.) and metrics (time-to-degree and attrition rates) to evaluate individual performance and academic unit climate, respectively. This working group concurs with the above, that implementation of the assessments be done carefully and thoughtfully, and speaks to some of these suggestions throughout this report.

- E. Accountability** – One aspect of accountability speaks to the consequences experienced by a transgressor of a law, policy, or procedure that governs the expectations placed upon members of that community. It is important to embrace accountability for issues related to harassment through the establishment and dissemination of consistent outcomes and consequences for every community member, and some degree of transparency, while maintaining confidentiality,

with regard to the process. We can also hold each other accountable in real time. Interrupting a problematic behavior or making someone aware that a particular statement is not consistent with the values of a community can reduce the likelihood that the undesirable behaviors will be tacitly accepted. Sometimes characterized as the actions of an “active bystander,” such interventions enable all individuals in a community to reinforce acceptable behaviors and make a positive contribution to the dynamics of the community.

- F. **Recognition of Excellence** – Recognition of exceptional positive performance, behavior, and contributions provides an incentive to *exceed* expectations. To be clear, this working group does *not* believe that awards should be given for simply adhering to our expectation of no harassment of members of our community. Rather, in the context of the *NASEM Report*, incentivizing exceptional contributions that reduce or eliminate the negative behaviors represented by the submerged portion of the iceberg increases the likelihood that community members will develop innovative initiatives and dedicate significant energy and time to these aims. We point to the Title IX Change Maker Award as a specific and directly relevant example already in existence at MIT. We make several additional recommendations for incentives that we believe will contribute to positive systemic cultural change.

We conclude this section with a reiteration of an earlier point, one that we view as critical and that merits repetition. Each of the 6 components described above is important, yet *none of the 6 alone is sufficient*. For example, increased resources for harassment awareness and prevention workshops will realize a lower return on investment without reiterative assessment of the impact of the workshops. Incentivizing good behavior with rewards for excellence without holding all community members accountable for unacceptable behavior is incomplete and, in our view, misguided. Increasing accountability measures (“cracking down on bad actors”) in isolation may be compared to the “War on Drugs,” in that a unilateral approach addresses only part of a systemic problem and is therefore insufficient. Expectations without the provision of resources to achieve those expectations is tantamount to an unfunded mandate. Creation of expectations without an understanding of and articulation of shared values will lead to confusion, disagreement, and in all likelihood, reduced compliance with policies and procedures. These 6 elements may also be useful for local communities – the 5 schools and the Schwarzman College of Computing, DLCs, living groups, research groups – and individuals in leadership roles to consider as they strive to foster inclusive and welcoming climates.

Specific Responses to Charges and Recommendations

The following section elaborates on the general recommendations above and represents our specific responses to Charges 1a., 1b., and 2. As noted above, recommendations in **boldface** text are viewed as **particularly high priority**; those in **green** are viewed as achievable in the **short term** (less than 12 months), whereas those in **blue** are viewed as **longer-term** initiatives, requiring more than 12 months to implement. Please see Appendix A for a discussion of dependent professional relationships at MIT and Appendix B for the working group’s response to Charge 1c.

The first subsection below summarizes our recommendations that we deemed applicable to all members of the MIT Community. Each subsequent subsection provides specific recommendations as

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they relate to a particular group on campus: Faculty and Instructors, Administrative and Support Staff, Postdocs and Research Staff, Graduate Students, and Undergraduate Students. These 5 groupings were selected as they reflect the differences among them and the similarities within them. For example, the roles in the community of tenured faculty and of instructors are more like each other than, say, the roles of faculty and of undergraduate students.

Nevertheless, it is important to mention that there are dependent relationships within each of these groupings (tenured/untentured faculty, for example). We have attempted to indicate these relationships and other differences in the roles within a group, e. g., between administrative staff and support staff, as they relate to our recommendations.

For each grouping, we have divided our recommendations into 5 of the 6 elements discussed above, Expectations, Resources, Reiterative Assessment, Accountability, and Recognition. For the 6th element, Values, we did not draft values statements for each grouping for three reasons. One, as we recommended above, we see great benefit in the creation of an all-MIT values statement by a process that is as inclusive as possible. Two, in a similar vein, all members of each grouping could be invited to provide input on values statements for that grouping should such an exercise take place. Finally, we did not draft values statements in general because doing so was not an explicit part of our charge.

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	Values	Expectations	Resources	Reiterative Assessment	Accountability	Recognition of Excellence
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[Appendix A.](#) A discussion of dependent professional relationships at MIT

[Appendix B.](#) Analysis of recommendations on research funding and supervision

A. All Community Members

Expectations

We recommend that the following be expected of all members of the MIT Community: All students, postdocs, staff, and faculty, whether they be full-time, part-time, or visitors are expected to:

1. **Embrace and embody MIT Values** (see above recommendation re: MIT Values Statement) **and set a positive example for all other community members**
2. **Educate oneself about and adhere to MIT policies and procedures**
3. **Neither harass nor bully other members of the community**
4. **Commit to educating oneself on the perspectives and backgrounds of others and to sharing that knowledge with community members**
5. **Accord respect, civility, and collegiality toward all other community members**
6. **Act in response to sexual misconduct witnessed (bystander intervention and reporting)**
7. **Behave appropriately when in a supervisory role and strive to minimize the vulnerability of those who are in a dependent relationship to them**
8. **Act ethically in all professional and personal contexts within and beyond the campus**

Resources

In order to meet the expectations described above, all community members should be provided access to the following resources by MIT:

1. **In-person harassment awareness and prevention workshops**, with periodic refreshers (in-person and/or online), that include modules on bystander intervention, reporting, Title IX, MIT's policies and procedures, and applicable state and federal laws
2. **Unconscious bias and microaggression workshops**, with periodic refreshers
3. **Education in how individual roles relate to and impact the experiences of others at MIT, particularly those who are in dependent relationships to them**
4. **Education in ethical conduct** (professional, academic, and research)

Reiterative Assessment

In order to evaluate the impact of the resources provided, to what degree community members and communities are meeting expectations, and provide a means for ongoing improvement, we recommend the following assessments, which are applicable to all community members, with some variations/customizations noted.

1. **We recommend continuing Academic Climate Surveys annually or biannually (every 1-2 years)** in order to gauge the impact and effectiveness of the recommendations in this report and to continue to assist Departments and other academic units in efforts to address and improve climate and culture.
2. **We recommend that annual assessments of individuals, which include the upholding of community values and meeting of expectations, be instituted.** While the form and nature of such assessments will vary among the different groups of people, they may include:
 - a. Evaluations by others in their communities, which may include those they supervise, often termed "360 degree reviews";

- b. Skip-level reviews, wherein a supervisor (e.g., department head) meets periodically with the students, postdocs, and staff that report to the faculty in the department;
- c. Competency in the resources and competencies recommended above.

Accountability

1. The working group notes that measures for holding community members accountable to policies and procedures varies significantly among the different groups. This heterogeneity is not necessarily a weakness and may be necessary in many cases. However, the variation can lead to confusion and complexity, which in turn may reduce the incidence of reporting. **We therefore recommend a comprehensive review of campus accountability measures and processes.** Topics that should be examined would include the following:
 - a. Differences in procedures for reporting, investigating, and resolving cases:
 - i. Postdoctoral Associates (employees) and Postdoctoral Fellows (not considered employees)
 - ii. Students and Faculty/Staff – Committee on Discipline (CoD) reviews the former; the forthcoming Faculty and Staff Complaint Resolution Process, the latter.
 - b. Fairness and due process
2. Fear of retaliation is viewed by the working group as an important inhibitor of reporting. This fear is particularly acute in cases involving faculty for several reasons, including, the significant power and influence faculty have over other community members dependent upon, supervised by, mentored by, and instructed by them, as well as the very strong dependence that graduate students and postdocs have upon their faculty mentors for career advancement (letters of recommendation, research opportunities, publication credit, et al.). As retaliation is a complex, multifaceted concern, may be overt and severe (e.g., failure of qualifying exam), or obfuscated and subtle (e.g., lukewarm letter of recommendation), **this working group recommends strongly that considerable attention be dedicated toward examining modes of retaliation and developing robust and fair means of protection from retaliation for all stakeholders.**
3. **The means by which reports of retaliation are investigated and consequences for retaliation should be clarified and enforced.** These will vary among roles at the Institute and could include salary reduction, demotion, loss of laboratory space, prohibition of mentoring students and postdocs for a probationary period or permanently, prohibition of serving as an instructor, lecturer, or teaching assistant, registration hold, expulsion from the Institute, unpaid leave of absence, and/or termination of employment.
4. **We recommend that the climate and culture of units led by those in supervisory roles, such as faculty and their research groups, administrative officers and their staff, department heads and their departments, deans and their schools, et al., be considered explicitly in all salary reviews and promotion cases.**
5. **We recommend the following to enhance transparency:**
 - a. **Compiling individual complaints in an “information escrow” system,** which may be utilized by those in leadership roles to examine trends and emerging areas of concern.
 - b. **Summaries of incidents and resolutions be conveyed, without revealing personal or identifying information, to the community on a periodic basis.** The CoD has such a practice that may serve as an example. Comparable approaches should be developed for all other groups of community members.

Recognition of Excellence

1. **We recommend that the Title IX Change Maker Award program be not only continued, but expanded and even more broadly publicized.** Enhancements would include:
 - a. Greater number of awards
 - b. Change Maker of the Year award
 - c. Considering expansion to provide other awards designated for particular groups of community members in addition to those that already [exist](#). For example, we would suggest the following as examples:
 - i. Creating separate awards designated for faculty, administrative and support staff, and for postdocs and research staff. At present, “Faculty/Staff” includes all of these groupings.
 - ii. Creating awards designated for living groups, i.e., residence halls, sororities and fraternities.
 - d. Monetary awards
 - e. Multi-hour event during the academic/business day and attended by all senior leaders (comparable to annual MIT Excellence Awards)
 - f. Inclusion in the MIT Excellence Awards event itself
2. **Use of social media and MIT website to highlight excellence on an ongoing basis:**
 - a. Tags would include climate, culture, respect, inclusion, and others that are aligned with MIT Values
 - b. In particularly exceptional cases, podcasts or videos that feature interviews of contributors and testimonials by other community members

B. Faculty and Instructors – Faculty are defined as tenure-track faculty (Assistant Professor, Associate Professor without Tenure, Associate Professor with Tenure, Professor), Institute Professor, Professor Emerita/us, Professor Post-Tenure, Professor of the Practice, and Adjunct Faculty. Instructors are defined as non-tenure track classroom or laboratory educators, such as Instructors, Lecturers and Senior Lecturers, and when in teaching assistant, tutor roles, or in any other contexts in which they are facilitating the education of other community members: Postdocs, graduate students, and undergraduate students.

In the case of tenure-track faculty, it is important to note that tenured faculty generally have both power and influence over pre-tenure faculty. Moreover, some tenured faculty may have influence over other tenured faculty, resulting in a power differential, despite both colleagues being tenured.

Expectations

In addition to the Expectations for All Community Members, we recommend that the following be expected of faculty.

1. **Take responsibility for fostering climates of mutual respect, inclusion, civility, and collegiality in their communities (classrooms, laboratories, research groups, departments, offices) and in all of their capacities (teachers, mentors, colleagues, supervisors).**
2. **Minimize the professional vulnerability of all undergraduates, graduate students, postdocs, staff, and colleagues over whom they may have power and/or influence, i.e., those in dependent relationships to them.**
3. **Take meaningful action if they observe or are otherwise made aware of inappropriate behavior or actions that are not consistent with MIT values or that violate MIT policies and procedures.** Depending on the nature of the violation, meaningful action could include addressing the issue directly with the person responsible or discussing options with an ombudsperson, HR, department head, or dean.

Resources

In order to meet the expectations described above, faculty should be provided the following resources by MIT and be required to complete them where indicated. These are in addition to those that we recommend be provided to and expected to be completed by all community members.

1. **Mentorship training** (required of all faculty mentoring students or postdocs)
2. **Professional workshops** (strongly recommended for all faculty) that foster the development of important professional skills, such as, developing a mentorship network, inclusive teaching and mentoring, personal productivity and efficiency, collegiality and civility, supervising and working with administrative and support staff
3. **Faculty coaching with a professional coach when deemed necessary** by the department head or dean; decision based on annual assessments, among other evaluations
4. **Navigating MIT** – resources that familiarize faculty with the structure and operations of MIT and advising faculty on an ad hoc basis (“How do I...”)
5. **Mediators that are faculty-focused**, perhaps an ombudsperson whose focus is faculty
6. **Transitional funding** for graduate students changing research groups and to postdocs who must transition to new positions due to harassment-related complaints

Reiterative Assessment

In order to evaluate the impact of the resources provided to faculty, to what degree faculty are meeting expectations, and to provide means for ongoing improvement, we recommend the following assessments. These are in addition to those recommended above for all community members.

1. **Annual or biannual climate survey of laboratory or group and experience of advisees** with appropriate protections from retaliation and provide feedback and suggestions for improvement to the faculty member. Results should be shared with department head for consideration in annual merit review.
2. **Exit interviews** of all major advisees, UROPs, graduate students, postdocs, and research staff upon leaving MIT

Accountability

Given that faculty tend to be in a position of power or influence over a large number of community members, the working group is of the opinion that faculty adherence to values, expectations, policies and procedures and holding faculty accountable to them are particularly important components of reducing the incidence of harassment and fostering a positive, welcoming, and inclusive campus climate. Moreover, tenure, whose virtuous purposes include protecting academic and intellectual freedom, adds another complexity to the power dynamics in academic institutions. Tenured faculty may be perceived, rightly or wrongly, as being “untouchable,” not subject to the same community values, policies, or procedures, and able to exhibit poor behavior, to harass, to bully, to retaliate with impunity. Strictly speaking faculty are beholden to the same policies, procedures, and laws as other employees of MIT, yet due to the combination of tenure and their power and influence over much of the community, many other community members (even other tenured faculty) may fear retaliation (whether overt or subtle, acute or long-term) and thus may avoid “calling out” bad behavior, and be reluctant to report violations. Such dynamics exacerbate community climates.

In addition to the general recommendations for accountability for All Community Members, above, we recommend the following additional accountability measures for faculty:

1. **Development of an objective and protected means for graduate students to provide feedback on their PhD advisor’s mentoring.** Examples include:
 - i. **At thesis committee meetings, dedication of a portion of the time for the student to meet with the committee in the absence of the advisor;**
 - ii. **Regular review of the climate and culture of a research group or lab by an objective third party, who prepares a redacted report for the advisor to use to improve and for the Department Head to use in annual performance reviews and promotion cases. This review would take place periodically and serve in full or as part of a 360 review instituted for all faculty.**
2. **Develop faculty-focused harassment awareness and prevention workshops**, led by tenured faculty and/or professionals with domain expertise. Utilize discussions of scenarios to educate faculty about their impacts on their communities, their unconscious biases, and their microaggressions.
3. **Educate and empower department heads and other faculty leaders in DLCIs** on means to set good examples, to foster welcoming and positive climates, and to take action

when necessary in their DLCIs. **The MindHandHeart Department Support Program is focused on these initiatives, and we strongly recommend its continued implementation.**

Recognition of Excellence

In addition to the recommendations above for all community members, we recommend the following as they pertain to faculty:

1. **“MacVicar for Mentoring”** – We recommend the launch of a program comparable to the MacVicar Faculty Fellows (undergraduate teaching) that recognizes exceptional mentoring of graduate students and postdocs. Presently the Committed to Caring Program recognizes excellent mentors, but it does not provide the level of recognition as the MacVicar, which provides a monetary award and creates a panel of individuals consulted by leadership for Institute efforts. Doing so would confirm that MIT values mentorship of graduate students and postdocs as much as it does teaching of undergraduates and would provide additional incentive to faculty to exceed expectations, to be exceptional mentors.
2. **Faculty Change Maker Award** – Currently there is a “Faculty/Staff” category. Please see [discussion on page 12](#).

C. Administrative and Support Staff – Administrative and Support Staff generally report to other staff members, DLCI heads or directors, senior administrators, or faculty. They are employees of MIT, neither students nor faculty. Consequently, this working group found that their roles, expectations, resources assessments, accountability, and recognition mechanisms tend to be well-defined, practiced, and observed. For these reasons, few additional recommendations beyond the general recommendations above appear in the following sections. Nevertheless, **this working group recommends that particular attention be given to the dynamics and professional relationships between administrative staff and support staff.** As the latter are often in dependent in relationships with the former, similar concerns regarding power imbalances, reticence to report lest retaliation occur, and other phenomena resulting from the power differential are evident in the community.

Because the resources, processes, and remedies related to harassment lie squarely within the purview of Human Resources, these may be used as a model for other groupings of community members at MIT. That is, there may be a comparable human resources model for graduate students, the activities, roles, and responsibilities of whom are more similar to those of students in some cases and more like those of employees in others.

Expectations

Please see the 8 recommendations for expectations for All Community Members, above.

Resources

Please see the recommendations for resources for All Community Members, above.

Reiterative Assessment

Please see the recommendations for reiterative assessment for All Community Members, above.

Accountability

Please see the recommendations for accountability for All Community Members, above.

Recognition of Excellence

Please see the recommendations for recognizing excellence for All Community Members, above. In addition, the working group notes that the means of recognizing administrative and support staff already in place, for example, Spot Awards, Infinite Mile/Kilometer Awards, and MIT Excellence Awards provide a twofold purpose in this discussion. One, they may **serve as models for recognizing excellence in fostering a positive climate for these staff members as well as the community members discussed in other sections.** Moreover, **the working group recommends that community members be encouraged to nominate their staff colleagues who demonstrate excellence in embodying MIT Values and exceeding the expectations we recommend for all community members** (above).

We also recommend the introduction of an **Administrative and Support Staff Change Maker Award** – Currently there is a “Faculty/Staff” category. Please see [discussion on page 12](#).

C. Postdocs and Research Staff – Postdoctoral Associates, Postdoctoral Fellows, and Sponsored Research Staff often report directly to a faculty member, DLCI Head or Director, or Administrative Staff member. There are comparatively fewer resources and groups dedicated to postdocs and research staff, relative to graduate students. For example, graduate students generally have a thesis committee (and faculty member who is chair of that committee) and other mechanisms of evaluation (classroom subjects, qualifying exams, etc.) conducted by faculty other than or in addition to their research advisor.

Although postdocs already have completed a PhD and are thus not dependent upon these faculty for a degree per se, they are nevertheless in many cases 100% dependent upon a single faculty member for evaluations, letters of recommendation, research opportunities, authorship credit, future career support, etc. Postdocs are at MIT on a non-permanent basis, i.e., for a few years prior to pursuing a permanent position in academia, the private sector, government laboratories, etc., are thus particularly vulnerable to the power differential between them and their faculty supervisor.

Furthermore, as postdocs generally select their advisors for very specific reasons, such as a particular research project or leadership in a highly specialized area of scholarship, changing postdoctoral advisors (particularly in the same department at the same institution) without inducing a concomitant large impact on their career path or plans is also very challenging, if not impossible. Postdoctoral fellows supported by external sources of funding, while not dependent upon the advisor for funding, often are restricted from changing advisors, projects, or institutions, or may do so only after a multi-month (6-12) review process by the funding agency.

Taken together, while postdocs at MIT enjoy uncommon opportunities, they also face unique set of challenges. Harassment, bullying, retaliation (or fear thereof) by an advisor or a colleague can present to them a very difficult decision among several unappealing, life-changing outcomes: “Do I report and risk my entire career, or do I tolerate such behavior and suffer a poor experience, or do I leave MIT, or do I leave the field altogether?”

Therefore, resources and protections for postdocs are particularly critical. As these scholars are at the threshold of independent careers in their fields, fostering healthy professional relationships with their advisors and colleagues contribute to a constructive cycle of mentorship and advancement and are highly leveraged for the greater good.

Expectations

Please see the 8 recommendations for expectations for All Community Members, above.

Resources

In order to meet the expectations described above, postdocs and research staff should be provided the following resources by MIT and be required to complete them where indicated. These are in addition to those that we recommend be provided to and expected to be completed by all community members.

1. Particularly in fields and departments where the duration of a postdoc appointment is generally 3 years or more, **a Postdoc/Research Staff Career Advisor to be selected by the Postdoc from among the faculty at MIT or a collaborating institution**, comparable to a Thesis Committee Chair for graduate students, including an annual meeting with this Career Advisor

2. A **DLCI Postdoc/Research Staff Officer**, comparable to undergraduate officer and or graduate officer is highly recommended for units with a sizable community of postdoctoral fellows and associates and research staff (e.g., 20 or more)
3. Upon request by a postdoc or research staff member, the Postdoc/Research Staff Officer or Postdoc/Staff Career Advisor could provide a letter to file that attests to rate of progress and professional contributions.
4. **Explicit, publicly stated procedures for changing research advisors or transitioning out of a postdoctoral position in the case of a difficult situation or harassment**
5. **Transitional funding when moving out of research advisor's lab due to harassment/retaliation issues** (to postdoc seeking new position or potentially to new research advisor) and **taking action to minimize the impact of this change on the professional trajectory of the postdoc.**
6. **Professional development workshops** (strongly recommended for all postdocs and research staff) on developing a mentorship network, mentoring, being a teaching assistant, ethical research conduct, working with a research advisor, etc.
7. **Social Host Training** (e.g., Party-Safe Plus) required for social event registration on MIT property.
8. **Joint Title IX/VPR Interpersonal Violence Disclosure Response Training that outlines a postdoc's reporting options for reporting and the protections from retaliation**

Reiterative Assessment

Please see the recommendations for reiterative assessment for All Community Members, above.

Accountability

Please see the recommendations for accountability for All Community Members, above. We also take this opportunity to reiterate that the different policies and procedures for postdoctoral associates and postdoctoral fellows create confusion and bear comprehensive review, as recommended above.

Recognition of Excellence

Please see the recommendations for recognizing excellence for All Community Members, above. In addition, the working group notes that the means of recognizing postdocs and research staff already in place, for example, Spot Awards, Infinite Mile/Kilometer Awards, and MIT Excellence Awards provide a twofold purpose in this discussion. One, they may **serve as models for recognizing excellence in fostering a positive climate for these community members as well as those discussed in other sections.** Moreover, **the working group recommends that community members be encouraged to nominate their postdoc and research staff colleagues who demonstrate excellence in embodying MIT Values and exceeding the expectations we recommend for all community members (above).**

1. **We also recommend the “development of Committed to Caring Awards (currently for excellence in faculty mentoring) specific to postdocs and research staff who excel in mentoring other community members.**
2. **Postdocs and Research Staff Change Maker Award** – Currently there is a “Faculty/Staff” category. Please see [discussion on page 12](#).

D. Graduate Students

In some disciplines graduate students have a single thesis advisor and are highly dependent on this faculty member for evaluations, letters of recommendation, research opportunities, authorship credit, future career support, etc. In other fields, graduate students may have an advising committee wherein the dependencies are comparable in nature, but not to a single faculty member. Unlike undergraduate students, it is not primarily coursework performance that determines their success, but rather their research contributions and PhD thesis, as evaluated by their PhD advisor and thesis committee. The PhD advisor often has the greatest decision-making authority in whether or not a graduate student receives a PhD degree at all; graduate students are dependent upon their faculty advisor(s) to a large degree for matriculation itself. The thesis committee, Department, School, and MIT offer critical and official stages of approval, but the PhD advisor(s) is/are the strongest voice, and it is very unusual for a degree that is not recommended by the advisor(s) to move forward. For these and reasons articulated below, graduate students are thus highly vulnerable to the power differential between them and their faculty supervisor(s), particularly when there is a single faculty advisor. It follows that PhD programs should allow sufficient time for entering students to make informed selections of advisors, as was noted by a member of the MIT Community during the open comment period.

Furthermore, as graduate students often select their advisors for specific reasons, such as particular research project or leadership in a highly specialized area of scholarship, changing advisors (particularly in the same department at the same institution) without inducing a concomitant large impact on their career path or plans can also be very challenging. Graduate students supported by external independent sources of funding, while not dependent upon the advisor for funding, could be restricted from changing advisors, projects, or institutions, or in some cases, could do so only after a multi-month (6-12) review process by the funding agency.

Taken together, while graduate students at MIT enjoy uncommon opportunities, they also face a unique set of challenges. Harassment, bullying, retaliation (or fear thereof) by an advisor or a colleague can present to them a very difficult decision among several unappealing, life-changing outcomes: “Do I report and risk my entire career, or do I change groups and start my PhD research over and/or add years to my PhD experience, or do I tolerate such behavior and suffer a poor experience in graduate school, or do I leave MIT, or do I leave the field altogether?”

Therefore, resources and protections for graduate students are particularly critical. As these scholars are at the threshold of independent careers in their fields, fostering healthy professional relationships with their advisors and colleagues contribute to a constructive cycle of mentorship and advancement and are highly leveraged for the greater good.

Expectations

Please see the 8 recommendations for expectations for All Community Members, above.

Resources

In order to meet the expectations described above, graduate students should be provided the following resources by MIT. These are in addition to those that we recommend be provided to and expected to be completed by all community members.

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1. **Explicit, publicly stated procedures for changing research advisors provided within each Department**
2. **Graduate thesis committees include a chair of the committee who is not the advisor, and that there be a brief period of feedback between the student and the committee in the absence of the advisor at each thesis committee meeting.**
3. **Transitional funding** when changing research advisors and **taking action to minimize the impact of this change on the professional trajectory of the graduate student.**
4. **Department Head and/or Graduate Officer “Office Hours” posted regularly**, which allow any graduate student to informally and confidentially discuss a personal concern with Department leaders
5. **Exit interviews of each graduating student** by objective staff or party within each Department to ensure feedback on mentoring and training experience
6. **Professional development workshops** (strongly recommended for all graduate students) on developing a mentorship network, mentoring, being a teaching assistant, ethical research conduct, working with a research advisor, etc.
7. **Social Host Training** (e.g., Party-Safe Plus) required for social event registration on MIT property.
8. **Joint Title IX/VPR Interpersonal Violence Disclosure Response Training that outlines a student’s reporting options for reporting and the protections from retaliation**

Reiterative Assessment

Please see the recommendations for reiterative assessment for All Community Members, above.

Accountability

Please see the recommendations for accountability for All Community Members, above.

Recognition of Excellence

Please see the recommendations for recognizing excellence for All Community Members, above. In addition, the working group notes that the means of recognizing staff already in place, for example, Spot Awards, Infinite Mile/Kilometer Awards, and MIT Excellence Awards provide a twofold purpose in this discussion. One, they may **serve as models for recognizing excellence in fostering a positive climate for graduate students as well as those discussed in other sections.** Moreover, **the working group recommends that community members be encouraged to nominate graduate students who demonstrate excellence in embodying MIT Values and exceeding the expectations we recommend for all community members** (above).

We also recommend development of Committed to Caring Awards (currently for excellence in faculty mentoring) specific to graduate students who excel in mentoring other students (graduate or undergraduate).

E. Undergraduate Students – The experiences of MIT undergraduate students are influenced most strongly by their living groups, the major(s) and minor(s) they select, their cohort of students in these majors and minors, the classroom subjects they take, their UROP experiences, athletic teams and allied commitments, artistic pursuits, and service opportunities. Portions of their experience, particularly UROP positions, resemble those of graduate students and postdocs, but since they are at an earlier career stage, generally it is their coursework and other groups and experiences listed above that govern their careers at MIT.

Moreover, the vast majority of MIT undergraduates complete their degrees in four years following a well-defined set of requirements in a major or majors. This is not to say that such degrees are easy to obtain – not at all! – but rather to distinguish the nature of their academic pursuits from those of graduate students (whose degree duration varies greatly), postdocs (who are 100% focused on research, generally, and do not receive a degree upon completing their postdoc experiences), and research staff (who may be full time employees at MIT for decades).

Survey data and anecdotal information indicate to this working group that undergraduates experience sexual harassment and other negative behaviors in their living groups to a larger degree than they do in classrooms and UROP experiences. Nevertheless, harassment of undergraduates does occur in the classroom and in research activities, and like graduate students and postdocs, undergraduates may experience microaggressions, stereotype threat, discrimination, and non-inclusive behavior in these settings outside their living groups. They are also, of course, dependent upon many others in the community, particularly faculty advisors and other mentors, for mentorship, letters of recommendation, career advancement, and important opportunities. Thus they too are vulnerable to power imbalances with these community members who are at more advanced stages of their careers. Undergraduates may also be teaching assistants and graders of problem sets and exams of other undergraduate students; elimination of gaps in training of the former regarding appropriate professional conduct in these roles would help minimize the vulnerability of the latter.

Expectations

Please see the 8 recommendations for expectations for All Community Members, above.

Resources

In order to meet the expectations described above, undergraduate students should be provided the following resources by MIT and be required to complete them as appropriate. These are in addition to those that we recommend be provided to and expected to be completed by all community members. It is our understanding that these or comparable resources may already be provided and required. If so, we recommend continuing and expanding as necessary.

1. **Social Host Training** (e.g., Party-Safe Plus, Sorority Trainings Addressing Risk) required for social event registration on MIT property, dormitories, sororities and fraternities
2. **Joint Title IX/VPR Interpersonal Violence Disclosure Response Training**

Reiterative Assessment

Please see the recommendations for reiterative assessment for All Community Members, above.

Accountability

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Please see the recommendations for accountability for All Community Members, above.

Recognition of Excellence

Please see the recommendations for recognizing excellence for All Community Members, above.

We also recommend development of Committed to Caring Awards (currently for excellence in faculty mentoring) specific to undergraduate students who excel in mentoring other students (graduate or undergraduate).

Appendix A. A discussion of dependent professional relationships at MIT

Per our charge, the Working Group identified and discussed the many different kinds of dependent and interdependent working relationships between different groups within the MIT community. As described in this report, such relationships are not by definition problematic, but are a requisite part of academic institutions of learning and research; however, recognition of the power differential and the details of them can help the academic community understand the importance of guidelines, rules, and practices that lower vulnerabilities to harassment, and help to determine what practices might be helpful in accomplishing this goal. These dependent and interdependent relationships, as outlined briefly below, vary a good deal, but all have some element of power differential that is inherent to the roles of those involved, and include:

- Faculty Principle Investigator (PI) / Graduate Student - the PI, generally a faculty member or in some cases, Senior research staff, provides mentorship and in many cases, particularly in the physical and life sciences and engineering, the research funding that supports the graduate student and his/her research efforts. There is dependency on the PI for the needed support to enable completion of graduate thesis work, as well as approval of the final results of that work to allow advancement toward the degree. Because the very nature of research and the amount of effort or work accomplished required for graduation can be somewhat subjective, the length of time to degree, and the ability to proceed toward its completion are up to the PI and the thesis committee, with considerable weight for that decision falling on the PI in many cases, depending on the field. In most fields, journal article and conference proceeding authorships are determined by the PI, which can lead to issues impacting authorship order or inclusion in authorship altogether. The student is also dependent on the PI for job recommendations and support during the student's future career. In some cases, depending on the type of future career of the student, letters of support are requested from the advisor out to several years following completion of the degree for future career moves, awards and promotions that can further their career.
- Faculty PI / Postdoc – in most cases the PI, generally a faculty member or Senior research staff, (or PI's if co-supervised) is often the sole supervisor and evaluator of the performance of the postdoctoral associate or fellow, and there is a dependency on the PI for letters of recommendation or verbal recommendations for the next job or position. The power differential can be further exacerbated if the PI is considered to have considerable reach and influence in the chosen field of the Postdoc. Because at present, postdocs do not have as many established or official means or paths toward establishing relationships with other faculty on campus, the importance of the PI as a mentor and supporter becomes even more critical. In most fields, journal article and conference proceeding authorships are determined by the PI, which can lead to issues impacting authorship order or inclusion in authorship altogether. As mentioned for graduate students, letters or words of support in some form can often be requested of the PI many years after the completion of the postdoc.
- Research Scientist / Grad Student, Postdoc – research scientists are research staff who may not officially supervise graduate students or postdocs, but may directly supervise or be heavily involved in decision making around the projects that students and postdocs work on, which can thus lead to critical decisions that could impact their work or their thesis progress. Research

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staff within labs may also have authority over the use of certain kinds of key equipment, the assignment of tasks, or the role of other lab members in a particular project.

- Postdoc / Graduate Student – Depending on the nature of a given program or project, it is not unusual for a Postdoc to act as a senior investigator for a project that involves graduate students. In some cases, this can lead to some dependency of the graduate students, particularly those early in their thesis work, on the Postdoc for training of key methods, dissemination of information or resources important for the project, and advocacy for or access to co-authorship on papers associated with the project. Postdocs can sometimes have some influence on the PI if they have a senior role in a project.
- Postdoc or Graduate Student/Undergraduate Research Intern or UROP – Most UROPs will work closely with graduate students or postdocs in the chosen PI's lab as a part of a pre-existing project or in the development of their own project. The natural coordination between Postdocs and Graduate Students with UROPs and other kinds of summer research interns provides an opportunity for mentorship and leadership for the senior lab members, and a chance for mentorship by someone closer and more accessible for undergraduates. Because the Postdoc/Grad Student is involved in the planning of the project as the UROP's supervisor, and determines the daily activities of the UROP, there is a great deal of control that the senior member has in ensuring access to the lab, determination of paper authorship when relevant, assignment of grades for the UROP, which is often a coordination between faculty member and the UROP supervisor, and renewal of the UROP for future semesters.
- More Experienced Graduate Student / Less Experienced Graduate Student – when new graduate students enter an existing research environment, they will often need to be trained on techniques and methods by senior lab members including the more experienced graduate students. There is therefore a frequent reliance on senior graduate students to learn the protocols, methods and approaches needed to carry out research.
- Academic Instructor (Faculty, Lecturer) / Student– An instructor for a course can influence the grade of a student in the course, determine weighting of more subjective elements of a class, and ultimately influence grades in classes that impact the student's GPA (which can impact job, graduate or professional school applications), are a requirement for degree completion or a metric for qualifying in a graduate degree program.
- Academic Instructor (Faculty, Lecturer)/Teaching Assistant – An academic instructor has a position of authority over a class and how it is operated, and may appear to have influence over a TA due to the potential or perceived influence and reputation of the academic instructor in the field, potential for influence in a thesis committee or thesis defense, qualifying exam process or even the grading of a separate class in which the TA is or will be a student in the future.
- Teaching Assistant (Student)/Student – A TA may have influence in the grading of a course, determine weighting of more subjective elements of a class, and ultimately influence grades in classes that impact the student's GPA (which can impact job, graduate or professional school applications), are a requirement for degree completion or a metric for qualifying in a graduate degree program.

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- Senior Faculty / Junior Faculty – Senior faculty at the Institute can directly and indirectly impact the careers of junior faculty. Senior faculty are responsible for mentorship and guidance of junior faculty, and influence careers through letters of support for promotions and awards, introductions and recommendations to important senior colleagues, and key advice for advancements in their field. Negative input or feedback from senior faculty or faint praise can have significant impact on tenure and promotion. In addition, in some cases, junior faculty may be reliant on certain senior faculty for access to resources needed for a project or engagement in important collaborations or other research activities.
- Tenure-Track Faculty / Lecturers, Staff – Because Lecturers, Research Staff and Administrative and Support Staff often work in environments in which their work accomplishments, recognition, promotion and support are dependent on faculty co-workers or supervisors, there are many kinds of dependencies which include direct performance evaluations, recommendations for promotion, teaching assignments, contract renewal, and future recommendations for job searches.

Peer relationships can also sometimes involve power differentials that can lead to potential vulnerabilities to harassment. It is important to recognize that such possibilities exist in most research environments. Some examples include:

Faculty/Faculty: When one faculty member has access to or control of an important research resource such as a significant lab or center, or involvement in a key academic collaboration or activity, power imbalances can occur.

Grad Student/Grad Student or Postdoc/Postdoc: When there is a key development or area of work that is attributed to a graduate student or postdoc, access to involvement in that accomplishment or the desire for shared attribution can lead to power imbalances.

Finally, there are clear power differentials with administrative roles at the Institute that by their definition involve supervision of faculty and staff, including Department Head, which involves many significant roles for the advancement of faculty and staff, from support and presentation of promotions to annual salary increases, approvals of leaves, and distribution of resources (lab and office space, faculty chairs, etc.) throughout a Department or unit.

Appendix B. Analysis of recommendations on research funding and supervision

As a working group, we were also charged in 1c to analyze the CWSEM Committee recommendations on research funding, advising, and supervision. The general thought behind this recommendation is the idea of creating, where possible, a “flatter” hierarchical landscape for graduate students and postdocs in particular. As discussed in detail in the full text of our report, we believe a great deal can be done to *minimize* vulnerabilities of those in dependent and interdependent relationships with power differentials, including the recommendations around the use of thesis committee chairs, feedback to thesis committees, establishment of mentoring networks for students and postdocs, and other measures which broaden the scope of mentorship and make trainees less dependent on a singular PI.

After great consideration regarding the structure of research funding, advising and supervision, we determined that it is not possible to completely eliminate the associated power differentials directly, although the degree to which research funding is a primary influence on these factors varies from School to School and within Schools based on disciplinary practices and the nature and form of the research to be accomplished.

Most research grants in physical and life sciences and engineering are based on proposals written by the principle investigator (PI), which is in almost all cases, the faculty member who has established a lab to accomplish the research. Typically, once a grant is received, graduate students and/or postdocs are funded on the grant to accomplish the aims or objectives of the grant. Graduate students are admitted into a given Department, and will then select an advisor who will cover the costs of their graduate research assistantship (RA) on the grant. Some graduate students will come with their own funding in the form of a fellowship, or win a fellowship during their time as a graduate student from external or MIT internal sources. Postdoctoral associates will be hired by the PI to work on a given grant, and/or arrive with their own funding to work in the faculty member’s lab. Even if they have their own funding and can work on projects that are independent of PI-funded work, the trainees will need to work in a research setting that supports their work and enables them to learn methodologies from fellow senior lab members and the PI. This funding scheme works differently for research trainees in the humanities, business and in certain of the social sciences, where graduate students are funded through academic resource allotments provided through the Institute or on fellowships, and can independently propose their own research idea and select faculty mentors who guide but are not necessarily directly involved in the research. Grad student mobility is higher in these programs, lead advisor changes are common, and 3-4 person committees are standard.

Because of the funding scheme that is predominant for most graduate students and postdocs at MIT, in general, due to the nature of grants, which are submitted by and awarded to PI’s, it is not possible to:

- Allot funds assigned from a grant or research agreement for a given project to the student or postdoc working in a given research group, rather than to the PI, who by definition is the supervisor of the project and allocates and directs all funds related to the project, which takes place with his/her research lab and resources.
- Re-assign awarded research funds from grants and programs away from the PI and to the trainee(s)

- Unsupervised research in laboratories is not an alternative, and most research proposals are funded based on the ideas and concepts of the PI.

A realistic power diffusion approach in the report recommendations includes providing resources to units if a graduate student changes labs or projects. Some Departments already support students who must transition to a different lab using discretionary resources to cover tuition stipend for a semester or up to a year depending on resources available, to allow time for the student to find another advisor that can support them, often in a new project, for their thesis completion. Not all Departments are resourced in a manner to make this practice a norm for all graduate students who must find a new advisor, in which case resources from the Institute may be needed to implement these recommendations across the campus. **Finally, similar recommendations have been made for postdocs**, although postdoc transitions do not involve degree completion requiring a new advisor, and may typically involve coverage of salary for a pre-determined period before they can find either a new postdoc position (within or outside of MIT) or a professional job. Additional recommendations that address research advising are covered in detail in the full report, including the discussion of thesis committees, broader reporting mechanisms, and expanding mentor networks.