
Statement by the Provost

Reports of the Committees on the
Status of Women Faculty

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Massachusetts Institute of Technology



OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

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To Members of the Faculty:

Dear Colleagues,

In March 1999 the Report on the Status of Women Faculty in the School of Science was published in the Faculty Newsletter. The study found that tenured women experience many forms of marginalization and inequity. In the fall of 1999 I asked the deans of the remaining four schools at MIT to form similar women's committees and to analyze the status of women faculty in their departments. The reports of these committees, as well as the March 1999 report from the School of Science, are contained in this document.

This collection of reports represents the work of over two years of an outstanding group of our colleagues. Their results and recommendations deserve all of our attention.

I believe that creating a diverse faculty to lead our community in education and research must be a core value of MIT. The establishment of the MIT Council on Faculty Diversity, co-chaired by Professors Wesley Harris, Nancy Hopkins, and me, is focused specifically on this goal. The reports on the Status of Women Faculty from each school have been reviewed by the Council on Faculty Diversity, by individual school councils, and by the Academic Council. The processes used by each committee, as well as the academic cultures of individual departments and schools, all differ slightly, but the findings of the committees are startlingly consistent.

Each report documents bias against women faculty. The bias takes many forms, ranging from inequities in compensation and resources, to more subtle forms of marginalization, such as exclusion from substantive decisions at the departmental level. The overall result is the same; women faculty members are not equal participants in our faculty community. A comment is repeated over and over that MIT is a "man's world". This must change.

We must redouble our efforts to change our environment to one where all colleagues are valued without bias according to either gender or race. Increasing the number of women and minority faculty must be a focus of our efforts. With this goal in mind we have restructured our processes for faculty searches to set higher standards for aggressive and thorough canvassing of the applicant pool for women and

minority candidates. With the support of the deans of MIT's five schools, we are creating new processes to identify an increasingly large pool of women and minority candidates.

Initiatives for faculty recruitment must be coupled with faculty compensation and benefits that make a faculty career at MIT a very attractive option. As you know, under the leadership of Professor Lotte Bailyn and the Council on Faculty Diversity, we have recently created or revised a number of policies in order to help our faculty balance their professional and personal lives. We revised our promotion policies to delay the tenure decision by one year for women faculty who bear a child. We also have put in place a policy that would provide paid release from teaching and service for one semester to any faculty member who is the primary caregiver of a new member of a family. Finally, we have established the option for half-time appointments for tenured faculty for a specific duration in the case where the faculty member wishes to give primary care to a family member.

The reports also address the important issue of career advancement for women faculty members within MIT. Many of the issues surrounding the potential for bias and marginalization within the Institute will be resolved only when women faculty are fully represented and integrated throughout our departments and administration. Within the last two years, we have made progress in increasing the number of women in administrative positions in all five of our schools, owing in no small measure to the work of the school deans.

I believe that the efforts and recommendations of the committees that are described in this volume will lead to fundamental change within MIT. We all must work together to make MIT an environment that is inclusive of all, and we owe a debt of gratitude to the colleagues who served on these committees. Their work has already resulted in positive changes that are a sign that MIT is making significant progress toward having a truly diverse faculty that will lead the Institute into the century ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Bob", written in a cursive style.

Robert A. Brown
Provost