Who is MAS Now?

Tod Machover, Academic Program Head
Tod provides overall leadership of the MAS team including integrated oversight of faculty and students. He represents MAS on SA&P School Council and Institute-wide leadership committees.

Joe Paradiso, Associate Academic Head and Graduate Officer
Joe is a member of the MAS leadership team with a primary focus on oversight of MAS graduate curriculum and student issues, including transfers and academic actions.

Mahy El-Kouedi, Director, Academic Program Administration
Mahy manages the academic administration of the MAS program in partnership with MAS faculty and the academic heads. She works to improve faculty relations, appointments, promotions, as well as the program’s policies and procedures.

Heidy Gonzalez, Assistant Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging (DEIB) Programming
Heidy manages DEIB, community-building and student support initiatives. She works to improve the climate and culture of the Lab and MAS through our policies and programming. She also provides administrative leadership and implementation of recruitment and admissions efforts.

Sarra Shubart, Graduate Administrator
Sarra manages and supports students’ progress through the program. She coordinates MAS courses, registration, grading, and degree requirements. She is the first contact for student questions.

Rebecca Cuscaden Marvin, Sr. Program Associate, Diversity and Student Support
Rebecca coordinates the diversity, recruitment, and student support initiatives and programming, as well as the admissions procedures and UROP payroll. She also manages events and coordinates the program’s communications, finances, and administration processes.

Jonathan Richards, Administrative Assistant
Jonathan provides administrative support to the Director including assistance with meetings, finances, communications, visiting student procedures, faculty searches, and promotion cases.
Recruitment Efforts

MIT Summer Research Program (MSRP)

MSRP brings undergraduate students from across the United States to conduct research at MIT for nine weeks over the summer. In addition to gaining research experience, interns learn about applying to and succeeding in graduate school. In the summer of 2021, the Media Lab hosted six MSRP interns in five research groups across the Media Lab.

Camila Acevedo Carrillo
Fluid Interfaces

Ann-Marsha Alexis
Space Enabled

Christina Marquez
Lifelong Kindergarten

Jessica Mindel
Opera of the Future

Manuel Torregrosa Cueto
Space Enabled

Gianna Williams
Viral Communications

Open House

Offered in a virtual format again this year, the MAS Open House allowed prospective students to learn more about the Media Lab, meet with faculty and graduate students, and determine if this is the best program for them. Overall, 287 people registered to attend from around the world.

SOS (Students Offering Support)

SOS pairs applicants with current students who provide feedback on either the applicant’s statement of purpose or portfolio. Because MAS research groups vary so much in the skills and experience they are looking for, this individualized attention goes a long way in helping applicants understand what to highlight in their applications. This year, 29 applicants were paired with 13 volunteers from eight different research groups. Of the SOS participants, one was admitted to the MAS program.
In Fall 2022, MAS will welcome 29 new masters and 8 new PhD students. Women outnumber men in the incoming master’s cohort, and the percentage of URM students remained close to last year at 18%, much higher than the previous two years.
MAS offered two new community building events this year! These crafting events provided an outlet for community members to take a break from work, be creative, socialize, and meet new people outside of their lab groups. The first was a holiday craft bazaar in December, followed by a Valentine’s Day DIY Card-Making Party in February.

**Holiday Craft Bazaar**

**Valentine’s Day DIY Card-Making Party**
Random Acts of Kindness (RAK) Week

As part of the Mind, Hand, Heart Initiative, Random Acts of Kindness (RAK) Week took place across MIT March 7-11, 2022. MAS Diversity supplemented the Institute-wide events with our own RAK Week activities.

Community Lunch
MAS hosted a community lunch for all members of the Media Lab and MAS to take a break from work and socialize. The lunch featured a swag table, board games, and the community shout-outs on the big screen! MAS also handed out touchless keychains to all members of the Lab.

Community Shout-Outs
MAS encouraged the community to shout out their friends, mentors, colleagues, anyone and everyone that has made a difference in their time at the Media Lab. We received 95 shout outs which were shared with the community.

RAK Wall
Community members were encouraged to contribute their ideas for random acts of kindness and the ways they spread kindness in their community through a poster on a wall in the 3rd floor kitchen. Participants could choose from pre-written suggestions or write their own.
**Family Fun Day**

We kicked off the summer by bringing back the popular MAS Family Fun Day after a three-year hiatus! This event featured a burger bar, an ice cream bar, a DJ, face painting, balloon animals, and outdoor games! We also handed out beach towels and sunglasses. Media Lab and MAS members were encouraged to bring their families and friends. Over 200 people attended to enjoy some time together and recharge on a sunny, summer day.

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**Ice Cream Social**

To celebrate the end of the Spring term MAS held an Ice Cream Social and ML Tea for the entire Media Lab community! Over 150 people attended and enjoyed an ice cream bar from Rancatore's and board games.
Diversity Initiatives

Diversity, Equity, and Belonging Roadmap

The Diversity, Equity, and Belonging (DEB) Roadmap consists of 4 components that guide our work. The components are not sequential, but rather anchor our projects to ensure transparency and accountability:

- **Knowledge Baseline**: Establish a foundation across the Lab so that everyone understands the same concepts and what they mean.

- **Leadership Development**: Individually-based exploration of knowledge baseline meant to shift how community members interact and reflect on their actions.

- **Culture Audit**: Assess Lab processes.

- **Structural Change**: Determine priorities and maintenance plan.

Proactive Approaches to Staff Culture and Development Workshops

These past few years have been very challenging for all of us. MAS made a concerted effort to address the mental health distresses brought about by the ongoing global pandemic and the complex challenges of current events. We hosted a series of “Best Practices for Supporting Graduate Students” presentations for faculty and staff to learn more about available campus resources and connect with offices that support students across the Institute. Representatives included staff from the Office of Graduate Education (OGE), Division of Student Life (DSL), Mental Health and Counseling, International Students Office, and Disabilities & Access Services.

MAS faculty were invited to attend a 90-minute Cultural Values Mapping Workshop with the Center for Cultural Intelligence. This workshop provided faculty the opportunity to reflect on their own cultural values and develop awareness of the cultural value preferences of others. As leaders of ML/MAS the workshop offered a safe space for self-reflection and gave faculty strategies to better relate to people from different cultures; improve/transform organizational culture; and retain staff and students from diverse backgrounds.

MAS staff participated in a two-day retreat where we: participated in two HR team development workshops; discussed our roles and responsibilities as individuals and as an office; brainstormed expectations, goals, and objectives; and developed a strategic plan for the upcoming calendar year.
Faculty Panel: What Failure Taught Me

Moderated by Tod Machover, this panel featured four MAS faculty members: Fadel Adib, Rosalind Picard, Mitch Resnick, and Danielle Wood. The faculty were invited to share their stories of failure and the difficult lessons they learned throughout their graduate and professional journeys.

We Can Breathe

MAS held a belated Black History Month celebration featuring a multi-media performance led by visionary performer, social justice activist, and yoga instructor Tanya Birl-Torres along with multi-grammy nominated violinist Curtis Stewart and tony award nominated actor and spoken-word performer Daniel J. Watts. Birl-Torres and her guests led participants through guided meditation – witnessing and practicing the power of stillness, movement, breath, healing, art, conversation and community. This event was co-sponsored by: Institute Community and Equity Office, Program in Women’s and Gender Studies, and Office of Student Support and Wellbeing | DSL.
Women Take The Reel Film Festival Screening: “Picture a Scientist”

MAS partnered with the Program in Women’s and Gender Studies to present a screening of the film “Picture a Scientist” during the annual Women Take The Reel Film Festival. This annual film festival features films directed by women and about issues relating to gender, race, sexuality, class, and/or feminism.

“Picture a Scientist” chronicles the groundswell of researchers who are writing a new chapter for women scientists and providing new perspectives on how to make science itself more diverse, equitable, and open to all. The film was followed by a Q&A and discussion with MLK Visiting Associate Professor Kristen Dorsey.

The film screening was co-sponsored by: MIT Program in Women’s and Gender Studies, Institute Community & Equity Office, School of Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences, Physics, Brain & Cognitive Sciences, McGovern Institute, Picower Institute, Earth, Atmospheric & Planetary Sciences, Chemistry, Women in Chemistry +, and Aeronautics and Astronautics.

Women’s Lunch

A Women’s Lunch hosted by our MLK Visiting Associate Professor Kristen Dorsey, entitled “Making Advice About Academia Work for You” was an interactive session with women graduate students and postdocs. As every individual’s path, goals, and identity is different, the focus was on how to take standard career advice and make it useful to your personal career goals and needs.

Graduate Student Wellness Workshops

This new ongoing workshop series is focused on improving graduate students’ mental health and wellness. The workshops will continue to be offered two times each year in the Fall and Spring terms.

- Caring For Your Wellbeing as a Graduate Student
  Presenters: Nadia Damani-Khoja, Ph.D., Outreach, Education, & Prevention Coordinator, Student Mental Health & Counseling, MIT Medical; and Jimmy Doan, Associate Dean, Office of Student Wellbeing, DSL
- Intimacy & Romantic Relationships: Do We Really Connect?
  Presenter: Maria Minkova, PsyD, Clinical Psychologist, Student Mental Health and Counseling Services
- Let’s Talk About Stress
  Presenter: Xiaolu Hsi, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist, Student Mental Health & Counseling
- Finish Strong: End-of-Semester Hacks
  Presenter: Zan Barry, PsyD, Program Manager, Community Wellness
Secondary Advisor Program

Following a recommendation from the Student-Advisor Working Group, MAS piloted a secondary advisor program for first-year master’s students in Fall 2020. Secondary advisors served as an extra resource for students to talk about classes, progress to degree completion, research passions, and career trajectory.

Based on positive feedback from the participating students, MAS expanded the program this past year to include interested doctoral students. In total 84 MAS graduate students signed up to be matched with a secondary advisor.

Professional Development Series

MAS hosted several professional and career development workshops this past year. Based on student feedback there was a special focus this year on careers in academia.

• Managing Yourself and Your Advisor
  Presenter: Diana Chen, PhD, Communication Lab Program Director
• MAS & MIT Resources for Careers in Academia
  Presenter: Francisco Jaimes, MAS Assistant Director of Student Support and Diversity
• Panel: Applying for a Career in Academia
  Presenters: Sean Follmer (Stanford), Laura Perovich (Northeastern), and Emma Chory (Media Lab Postdoc)

Design Critiques

Based on feedback received from the Research Working Group, MAS facilitated three sessions of Design Critiques hosted by Zach Lieberman. This series was organized to help facilitate critical responses to work — responses that build up rather than tear down — and aim to offer the maker new insights and motivations for their work. The first session focused on a process of how to share work and how to give constructive feedback. In the following sessions students presented their design works for critique by their peers. Additional critique sessions are being organized.
Student Research Seminar Series

MAS students expressed interest in hearing more about their colleagues' research to facilitate learning and collaboration between research groups. During the Spring 2022 semester, MAS hosted weekly student seminars that showcased students from across the research groups. The seminar series was a success and more students will have the opportunity to present in the upcoming academic year.

- Sooyeon Jeong  
  Personal Robots

- Neil Gaikwad  
  Space Enabled