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.

Meghan Jordan, Student Support Coordinator
Meghan joined the team in August of 2023. Meghan connects students to resources and coordinates student events such as preview, open house, orientation and commencement, as well as student support programs such as secondary advisor program.

Faith Masaku
Faith provides administrative support for diversity, community-building and student support initiatives and programming.

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. He also coordinates UROP payroll.

Rebecca Cuscaden Marvin, served as Student Support Coordinator through May 2023
Rebecca coordinated diversity, recruitment, and student support initiatives and programming, as well as the admissions procedures and UROP payroll. She also managed large scale events and coordinated the program's communications, finances, and administration processes.
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 2022, the Media Lab hosted seven MSRP interns in five research groups across the Media Lab.

Annie Chen
Lifelong Kindergarten

Camila Acevedo Carrillo
City Science

Kebing Bi
Conformable Decoders

Lina Henriquez
Personal Robots

Mauricio Martinez-Elizondo
Space Enabled

Michael Anoruo
Space Enabled

Nicole Attram
Biomechatronics

Open House

Offered in a virtual format again this year in October, 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, 350 individuals 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 and whether indeed this is the best program for them. This year, 31 applicants were paired with 13 volunteers from nine different research groups. Of the SOS participants, one was admitted to the MAS program.
In Fall 2023, MAS will welcome 25 new masters (26 were admitted, 1 deferred for medical reasons) and 18 new PhD students. MAS admitted 13 women and 13 men to the master’s program; 10 women and 8 men to the PhD Program. Women outnumber men in the incoming cohort of students. The percentage of URM students for the master’s cohort is 8%, while the incoming PhD cohort is comprised of 22% URM students.
Community Building

Crafting Events
Based on the popularity of last year’s events, MAS once again offered two crafting events. These 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. This year, MAS joined forces with the Media Lab, hosting our holiday craft bazaar as a part of the Media Lab Holiday Party. We also hosted a Valentine’s Day DIY Card-Making Party in February.

Media Lab Winter Holiday Party/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 from March 13-17, 2023. MAS Diversity supplemented the Institute-wide events with our own RAK Week activities. MAS encouraged the community to shout out their friends, mentors, colleagues, anyone and everyone that made a difference in their time at the Media Lab. We received numerous shout outs which were shared on the big screen in our atrium at a community lunch featuring a swag table and board games. MAS also handed out adhesive cell phone wallets to all members of the Lab.

Gratitude Dinner

We hosted a Gratitude Dinner for students who were unable to travel home during the November holiday break and those who had never celebrated the American holiday.

Halloween

This annual tradition brings the community together for an afternoon of trick-or-treating on Halloween. Research groups and ML operations teams distributed candy and dog treats in their spaces. MAS provided trick-or-treat bags, decorations, and snacks in the 3rd-floor atrium. Participants joined the fun by showing off their costumes!
Ice Cream Social

To celebrate the end of the Spring term, MAS held an Ice Cream Social for the entire Media Lab community. Over 175 people attended and enjoyed an ice cream bar from Rancatore’s as well as board games and conversation.

Family Fun Day

We kicked off the summer with our popular MAS Family Fun Day celebration. This year’s event was cosponsored by Media Lab Human Resources and featured a burger bar, an ice cream bar, two student DJs, face painting, balloon animals, and outdoor games. We also handed out insulated tote bags. 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 summer day.
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 continued to be very challenging for all of us. MAS maintains a concerted effort to address the mental health distresses brought about by the ongoing global pandemic and the complex challenges of current events. We once again hosted our Lunch and Learn series: “Best Practices for Supporting Graduate Students.” Faculty and staff were invited 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, and Disabilities & Access Services.

Guided by the principles of the MIT Strategic Action Plan for Belonging, Achievement and Composition, the Program in Media, Arts and Sciences (MAS) is committed to improving lab culture and enhancing diversity, equity and inclusion within our lab spaces. At the beginning of the academic year, MAS Academic Head Tod Machover, gifted each of his colleagues a copy of Jessica Nordell’s newly released and bestselling book, “The End of Bias: A Beginning.” The author was then invited to MAS for a whirlwind two-day residency visit this fall. A former MIT undergraduate, Ms. Nordell shared her experiences, research, insights and solutions concerning implicit/unconscious bias at MIT and beyond.

In addition to an illuminating keynote address, Ms. Nordell toured various lab spaces, and met separately with MAS students, members of the DEI Working Group and faculty. These community conversations were incredibly productive and hopeful, providing great insight to different strategies for: inclusion and engagement; improving lab culture; better supporting students; and increasing diversity at the lab. We look forward to continuing these important conversations and further exploring the different strategies suggested by Ms. Nordell’s experience and extensive research: identifying and uprooting alienating/exclusionary behaviors, languages and practices; strengthening and deepening our commitment to higher values by establishing mutually respectful and nurturing relationships; and finally developing our own humble awareness of our capacity for bias at both the individual and collective level. Ms. Nordell encouraged us to deeply consider that by losing our biased lenses: “We might become human, we might become trustworthy, we might all become free.”

Following last year’s Cultural Values Mapping Workshop for faculty, two MAS staff participated in an intensive training with the Center for Cultural Intelligence (CQ). They each received certification to facilitate CQ Unconscious Bias workshops. Additionally, MAS partnered with Media Lab Human Resources to offer two separate Unconscious Bias workshops for Media Lab staff. The learning outcomes included: understanding why bias matters; recognizing sources of explicit and implicit/unconscious bias; identifying systemic bias in our organizations/institution; and learning how understanding cultural differences can help pave pathways for better communication and collaboration in work spaces.
Faculty Panel: What Failure Taught Me

MAS once again hosted our second “Things I wish I Would Have Known as a Graduate Student: What Failure Taught Me” faculty panel. The panel was Moderated by Prof. and MAS Academic Head Tod Machover and featured three MAS faculty members: Deblina Sarkar, Ed Boyden, and Pattie Maes. The faculty were invited to share their stories of failure during their academic careers, as well as the difficult lessons they learned throughout their graduate and professional journeys. A lively discussion was augmented by a significant Q&A follow-up.

PRIDE Mixer

Each year Boston celebrates PRIDE in June. For the first time ever, MAS joined forces with MIT LGBTQ+ Services and hosted an Intercollegiate PRIDE Mixer. The mixer/networking event connected LGBTQ+ identified graduate students, staff, faculty and allies across various colleges (Berklee College of Music, Boston College, Boston University, Brandeis, Emerson, Harvard, MassArt, Northeastern, Simmons, Tufts, UMass Boston and Wellesley) in the Boston/Cambridge community. This event was made possible by the cosponsorship and generous contributions of MIT: SLOAN DEI, School of Architecture and Planning (SA+P), Institute Community and Equity Office (ICEO), Women’s and Gender Studies (WGS), Office of Graduate Education (OGE), and Human Resources (HR).
Women Take The Reel Film Festival Screenings: “Neptune Frost” and “Sisters with Transistors”

MAS once again partnered with the Program in Women’s and Gender Studies for the annual Women Take The Reel Film Festival (WTTR). This annual film festival features films directed, written and/or produced by women that explore issues relating to gender, race, sexuality, class, and/or feminism. This year we hosted two film screenings to commemorate both Black History Month and Women’s History Month. We celebrated Black History Month and kicked-off the WTTR film festival with a special screening of “Neptune Frost,” a celestial afro-futuristic, cyber-musical that offers a radically bold vision of power, exploitation, and love. The film screening of “Neptune Frost” was cosponsored by MIT ICEO, Black Graduate Student Association, LBGTQ+ Services, Literature, Comparative Media Studies, and Women’s and Gender Studies. MIT Literature Professor Sandy Alexandre led the Q&A. To commemorate Women’s History Month we screened “Sisters with Transistors,” the remarkable untold story of electronic music’s female pioneers, composers who embraced machines and their liberating technologies to utterly transform how we produce and listen to music today. The film screening of “Sisters with Transistors” was cosponsored by MIT Music & Theater Arts and Women’s and Gender Studies. The film was followed by a Q&A with MAS professor and electronic music enthusiast Joe Paradiso.

International Student Meet & Greet

Bringing their unique skill-sets, talents and cross-cultural perspectives, international students help enrich our research and learning environments. Being an international student, however, can sometimes bring about very particular challenges including (but not limited to) culture shock, differing academic expectations, financial stressors, feeling misunderstood and sometimes even isolation. MAS hosted a dinner conversation to help international students build community, learn from each other and validate each others’ experiences. Mahy, from MAS, shared her own experiences as a former international student. Students asked questions about campus resources and were encouraged to share the resources that have helped support them throughout their graduate journey.

Lunch & Learn: Best Practices for Supporting Graduate Students

This ongoing series connects MAS and Media Lab faculty and staff to MIT resources and provides best practices for supporting our graduate student population. This year’s Lunch & Learn series connected us to:

- Office of Graduate Education & Division of Student Life
- Disabilities and Access Services
- Mental Health & Counseling
Graduate Student Wellness Workshops

This ongoing series is focused on providing resources to help support graduate students’ mental health and wellness. The workshops offered this year were:

- **Caring For Your Wellbeing as a Graduate Student**
  Presenter: Liz Guttenberg, Assistant Dean, Office of Graduate Education
- **Let’s Talk About Stress**
  Presenter: Xiaolu Hsi, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist, Student Mental Health & Counseling
- **Partner Abuse in LGBTQ+ communities**
  Workshop facilitated by members of community organization, The Network/La Red (TNLR)
- **Finish Strong: End-of-Semester Hacks**
  Presenter: Zan Barry, PsyD, Program Manager, Community Wellness
- **Rally, Reflect, and Regroup**
  Presenter: Xiaolu Hsi, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist, Student Mental Health & Counseling

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Study Breaks

In response to student feedback, MAS hosted monthly study breaks in the Spring. These informal gatherings provided students an opportunity to take a break and socialize with each other.

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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 serve as an extra resource for students to talk about classes, progress to degree completion, explore research passions, and investigate career trajectory. Based on positive feedback from the participating students, MAS expanded the program in AY22 to include interested doctoral students, and continued to run the program in AY23.

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Design Critiques

Based on feedback received from the Research Working Group, MAS facilitated three sessions of Design Critiques hosted by Professor 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.
MAS offered writing workshops, as well as career development and professional development opportunities:

- Thesis/Dissertation Writing Workshop with Dr. Xiaolu Hsi, Clinical Psychologist, Student Mental Health & Counseling
- Start with Talent, Finish with Strength: What You Bring to Your Future Organization with Nicole Dumas, CEFL - Director, Advancement Talent, Boston College
- Dr. Mohammad Amiri joined the team (May - July 2023) offering individual career and professional development consultations to MAS students. He also led two Professional Development (PD) workshops. These interactive workshops focused on: writing resumes, academic CVs, interviewing skills, and teaching/research statements.

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**Thesis/Dissertation Writing Workshop**

**January 11, 2023**

**E14-240**

_Keep your thoughts organized_  
_Place emphasis on the importance of staying organized._

**E14-240**

_The thesis project is either the beginning of the end of your graduate studies or the gateway to the PhD. However you experience the task (excited, terrified or both), the process will provide both challenges and opportunities for growth. The journey will include: learning to manage your time, combating writer's block, finding your support systems, learning to manage your committee members, and preparing for life after graduation. Dr. Xiaolu Hsi will discuss the necessary coping strategies as well as resources around - and within - you to survive the writing process._

_Space is limited. Open to Master's & PhD students. Please RSVP._
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 2023 semester, MAS hosted five student seminar sessions that highlighted ten student speakers. The seminar series was a success — attracting large numbers of students to excellently prepared presentations — and more students will have the opportunity to present during the upcoming academic year.