

Opening remarks from UA/GSC

Welcome...I want to thank all of you, President Reif, Chancellor Barnhart, Provost Schmidt, Vice Chancellor Waitz, Dean of Student Life Nelson, and the many Deans, department heads, faculty members, administrators, and staff for joining us here today.

In the conversations we've had with other students all across campus, we've recognized the range of responses we are feeling: shame, sadness, helplessness, anger, confusion, apathy, hope. Today's event on its own is not intended to provide immediate resolution. It is the first of a series of student-organized conversations.

Our discussion today is not only about Epstein, but also about the many axes about which we can feel and think our way through these difficult questions. It's important for us to consider all of them.

Embedded in this complexity are questions surrounding:

1. The message our actions send to victims of sex trafficking;
2. Our cultural treatment of women at MIT, including
 - a. Female representation amongst faculty and students;
 - b. And resources being provided to students, especially those who are survivors of sexual assault.

We can also think about:

3. Our organizational structure and shared governance system, including
 - a. The role of individual judgement in decision-making,
 - b. The ongoing development of the College of Computing, and
 - c. Integrating accountability.

And finally, we might consider:

4. Our process for vetting and accepting funds, including
 - a. The effects of anonymity, and
 - b. Ongoing engagements with other contentious sources of funding,
5. As well as
 - a. Institutional power dynamics,
 - b. Protections for whistleblowers, and
 - c. Our fundamental values surrounding technology and knowledge production.

We hope that tonight, we will leave heard. We hope that the typical response of working groups and incremental change will not be a substitute for real structural and cultural transformations.

-----To submit written comments for the record -- student-forum-record@mit.edu-----

NOTES:

- MITSAW flyer the entire area -- putting #TheyKnew timelines and "Call out the corporation" protest on Friday

Opening remarks from President Reif

"I know you are angry at me"

[same comments](#) as faculty meeting:

- (1) Funding issue
- (2) Impact on women

"I've done a lot of listening over the last few weeks and I hope to do more listening now"

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Grad student in EECS. On the record. Research is focused on using tech to fight human trafficking, what JE did. This is an underfunded space in academia. MIT pledged to give money to charities that do this work. However, could have an additional and profound impact by distributing a pool of funding to MIT students/researchers who want to actually do this work. There are hackathons and other initiatives we already host on these subjects. Lots of interest and insufficient funding for people who already want to do this work. MIT students/researchers have the desire and skills to fight traffickers and support survivors, need leadership to commit to supporting this work locally as well as globally.

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MIT 2020 in math now up. On the record. If we as students are going to contend with this issue, then we need to be square with the facts. Disputes Reif's prior public characterization of the facts ("if we had known then what we know now...") by running through everything that was publicly known or should have been known when JE was cultivated as a donor.

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Will have spent a third of my life at MIT, love this place, been congratulated by Reif for jeopardy for nerd pride, but no pride now.

Before me was someone who was talking about how human trafficking research is unfunded and how people don't want to join the lab

After me was someone going through a deep dive on the Epstein timeline

Now is MechE grad student

"What I hear is a lot of outrage. And I'm outraged. But I'm asking for accountability"

"We have to take back these conversations back to our PIs"

“We say we know what’s right and wrong, but we have no formal mechanisms to actually enact this”

This person is talking from a military perspective -- it’s not all black and white.

Ask what happened in a neutral way and evaluate how it goes better

We need to enact our leadership muscles

I support President Reif and don’t think he should resign

[gets cut off because 30 seconds over]

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First MITSAW person

“This is not an isolated incident nor is it antithetical to MIT’s values”

This is a copy-paste from the last rally -- which is kind of awkward when Reif and the senior admin are actually in the room -- so statements like “Reif’s a clever guy; he knows all of the SJW words to get us off their backs” fall flat

The Schwarzmann deep dive reads like a distraction from the issues

“How can MIT possibly reconcile its values”

Reif is on Schlumberger’s board

Building up to a direct question -- [Given all of this long history of funding sources], “why should we believe you and why should you still be our president”

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Reif - “I don’t want to get into the nitty gritty of the details on what’s accurate or not. But I want to say one thing. I’ve spent many decades at MIT. I am an open book and put everything on these lines. People know how I think. I respect your points of views.

I strongly believe that for people who made a mistake, we should learn and repair the damage to be in a much better place. And I would like to take the opportunity to make that change”

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“Apologies are only formalities . But we must act”

“We must hold ourselves to the highest standards”

“In order to cultivate an open and ethical MIT: I have the following demands”

1. Don't obfuscate funding structures.
2. Students must feel capable of saying their opinions

Donation to be matched for all time, not just a one off thing

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Sit-in organizer

"The primary reason -- why have you not thought about women or sexual assault resources"

"There have been no extra resources to VPR. Why?"

Now reading the demands from one of the letters

1. Everyone who knew about the funds needs to resign
2. Stop anonymizing donations
3. Goodwin Procter report needs to be public [lots of snaps]
4. Community apology for not directing to VPR
5. Seth Lloyd needs to go
6. Reif and senior admins who sanctioned the funds need to go

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"It shouldn't just be Reif up there"; Department heads as well

Why do students at MIT have a higher moral compass than the professors here? Students are the bread and butter of the place.

I've been turned away from department heads. I've heard horror stories from other students. But there have been good actors too.

Why does it feel like you have to be unethical to get to the top

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Why don't you resign tomorrow? And if not, why don't you get Kim Jong Un to fund Course 22?
The party being investigated should not get to pick the investigator

"You have a criminal liability. If you don't realize this, you're a charlatan"

"Fuck you"

A "standard" thank you letter???

This means you sold MIT's prestige for a pedophile to show off MIT's name

"I'm not the posterboy for feminism. That's not my record. But you should resign. And the next president of both here and the media lab should be a women" "If Hockfield were here, do you think she wouldn't have 'not remembered'?"

Seth Lloyd and Joi Ito saw an atmosphere of warm changed men.

"Nazi Germany had great technology"

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"Fairly new member of MIT, so coming from that perspective"

Although I'm upset, thanks Reif for organizing these events. I'm happy that MIT is recognizing that it should treat students like adults "for issues tackling all tertiary education centers"

I would also like for students to come up and rise to the occasion.

What would I do if I found out that I was funded by Epstein?

What are the standards for our peer institutions?

Let's cause a sea of change

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"My confidence in the admin for changing is very low"

Talking about whitewashing of Koch

"Clearly the MIT administration can not follow the basic moral principles that they profess"

Not another advisory committee -- we have enough of those

Give power to the people - students, faculty

Ending with a question: "Do you feel ashamed that we're distracting from Koch's legacy? If so, what are you going to do about it"

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UnKoch MIT

"Is this for the betterment of mankind that we take climate change denialism? That we shake hands with genociders"

I'd also like to talk about respect. It's not respect that you say you're sorry but no transparency. It's not respect that the Corporation is not here"

Thank you for being here. But if you want to help us, be the door to us to the Corporation

This can be about morality and ethics and we can go around in the circle. But until we recognize this is an issue of respect, we can not proceed

"While you're up here, please be respectful. There are ways to do this."

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On the record -- I am a sexual assault survivor

Students unsure about where to get support, how much funding was taken

"How can we possibly focus on our work when we are spending so much time taking care of ourselves and each other"

This is a symptom of a much larger cultural problem that all departments need to address. Thankful for the female professors and POC who spoke up. Angry at the silence from the senior administrators

A third of the grad students don't think their department would support them if they are discriminated against.

Not enough to give money back if we don't change our policies

Not enough to find facts if you don't agree to be accountable

Be transparent when the world is watching. When the world stops watching. Because it is the right thing to do

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"I want to believe in you. I am going to focus on ethics and truth-seeking"

People have talked about epstein enough, so not going in there.

But I can talk about something that you had direct control over ---- David Koch's obituary

The irony is not lost on me. Because my uncle passed away from cancer. He lived in Houston. I.e. Hurricane Harvey. Communities of color who ran away from Katrina to Houston, to suffer once more

Why did you call him a son of MIT?

Why is Shelly M. Jackson not a daughter of MIT?

Why did it take an external entity to put pressure?
It took *The New Yorker* to get a second email from you?
How can we believe in the senior admin now? "For the first time ever, my faith in y'all is 0"

Once you step down, someone else in the room will probably be President of MIT. And I'm calling on that person to develop infrastructure so we don't make this at all

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Seth Lloyd visited Course 8 classroom during lecture, spoke about exonerating himself
Monologued for 30 minutes
No way to leave
No prior warning that he was going to be there

"When I saw his name on the calendar, I thought it was a mistake"

You are outsourcing your moral decisions to us.
Just by what we choose in our syllabus.
That is not our job.
You should be making those decisions.
I chose to drop the class but others struggle because you have not put your foot down.

You should not be having students force to choose between professional development and their moral code.
Moreover, when you make that decision, think about who is continuing to work in quantum computation.
You wanna talk about barriers to gender equality? That's who. The people who don't care.

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"When I was a child, I was sexually assaulted, raped and tortured by someone who was more powerful to me. I am being treated for PTSD at MIT Medical. I know that I am not the only person at MIT with this story.

Saying that I'm sorry is insufficient. Every day that you continue to be the leader of this institution continues to be an act of violence to us. The people who are constantly reminded of the kind of person you took money from"

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We keep pointing to accountability as the way out of this scandal
But we fail to keep recognizing the gender discrimination

I don't know who this person is talking about, but it's someone who doesn't recognize gender identity? I think this is the head of the philosophy department

I want MIT to commit to making safe spaces for the trans / nb people in this community

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It seems like you are looking for some institutional change to allow us to hold our high moral values

Let's look at the undergraduate admissions policy. I'm proud of it -- need-blind financial aid for international students and no legacy / athletics

This goes above and beyond our peer institutions and is gr8, especially how we divorce it from our funding concerns.

Bring this to the rest of the research. Can we only have these policies for undergrads by sacrificing it for the grad students? Why?

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"We forget to critically examine our decisions"

"Pursuit of knowledge vs. power and plunder"

Originally a land-grant college so churning out military officers and taking land from indigenous people

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Answer the question from earlier about Koch "Do you feel shame about Koch? And if so, what are you going to do about it"

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Reif: "we need to revise all of the principles that we used to make these decisions. Right now our principles aren't really applicable to what is going on today."

It's currently just about academic integrity and academic freedom.

That may have been fine in the past, but no longer fine now.

Like yeah, right -- the point about not taking Kim Jong Il's money

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What's the timeline on those revisions?

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Reif: “we’re all shocked at what happens. We are extremely careful with how we get money, so it is urgent. I want this to be resolved in months, but since it’s faculty deliberation, it’s gonna take some months to set the ad-hoc committee, etc. etc.”

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Survivor of sexual assault and attempted sexual trafficking

It’s hard for me to say that because I want to be known for my work. But it’s hard to do work.

We waited for a response for months during the #MeToo movement.

I’m tired of the sympathy and the lack of action is deafening.

I want there to be enough VPR counselors for everyone [loud snaps]

I want there to be enough mental health counselors for everyone [loud snaps]

To this day, we still don’t have a group for survivors of sexual trauma. I was in one for a semester when it was discontinued.

I want so badly to be in academia, but you’re making it hard for me.

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First person introduce with their pronouns

I’m from an international country with which I have severe disagreements to because of discrimination of queer and trans people. I took their funding because it allowed me to get out. So, I’m only here because of morally gray decisions. I know you can’t be morally pure.

However, I’m pretty sure that y’all knew you were making moral compromises. But your choices had impact way beyond themselves. I’m not sure if you had the right to make it in a closed room. The people who make the decisions are allowed to make moral decisions on the behalf of so many, when they don’t have all of the expertise and understanding of the moral decisions.

I’ll continue my remarks later.

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Moderator: We’re wrapping up at 8:20

Reif: Let the people who are standing now finish

Moderator: OK

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“If you need female students, faculty, and staff to tell you that there’s sexism at MIT, you’re part of the problem.”

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Military person retracts their previous statement about unwavering faith in administration. The leadership has a contract between the leaders and the people and obviously there’s a fault in this relationship.

If you honor what people are doing here, then I think you can stay here.

But you need to hold the people who aren’t in this room accountable.

Let’s do this together and if it’s not happening, we need new people

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“I came up here to follow up the previous speaker when they spoke the first time, so this is convenient”

There’s a lot of pain. But we’re in a moral gray area. And we haven’t answered the questions that brings up. We can’t do that now.

There’s a room of people here who care (and who are really angry). But there’s a whole bunch of people outside.

I don’t want you resign. We’re talking about Epstein nominally. But now we’ve opened the cans on who to take money from. Although you may think that you know who you want to take money from, but do you?

Don’t just ask for an immediate change now. Because if you think that’s gonna solve it, without any changes, you’re not going to get what you want.

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Yeah it’s a morally gray area, but clearly there are a lot of people who thought taking Epstein’s money was ok.

Ethics standards need to be established, especially since people disagree on what those standards should be.

We need to know precisely what was your “mistake” that you made.

I want to see an email outlining current donor guidelines and how they’re going to change.

I want to see department heads to make similar statements as well

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Sit-in organizer is back again

There is one thing that is black and white. MIT's treatment of women and survivors of sexual assault has been silence. We have not received a single email of resources. There used to be a survivor group which is now gone.

This is black and white. No one is arguing that we should support survivors of sexual assaults. The people who are here are brave enough to relive their trauma for you. But no one has addressed this. No one thought about people being triggered by this. Why was this not your first reaction?

"Please don't forget those people. Because you have"

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I came to MIT because I wanted to learn. I didn't come here for this.

I am standing up here because you talked about academic integrity. I came here because I wanted to do good for the world. "No matter how beneficial those projects are, taking funding gives Epstein credibility."

It should use this money in a way that takes integrity seriously.

"And also, in terms of checking donors, I think a Google search might have worked for Jeffrey Epstein"

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International student -- wanting to talk about where the knowledge produced here goes.

My country was following socialism, so US foreign policy intervened. The technology used to intervene in my country was used to intervene in all of Latin America, and even used now. I understand that it's in the interest of the US, because that's what I study. I came to MIT because I wanted to do better -- poor people in my country and beyond.

MIT is producing engineers that go to the military industrial complex that produce technologies like that. Our thirst for knowledge should get focused on being better, the betterment of humankind.

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Sexually abused while trying to be on internationally-ranked sports team
Please be kind to survivors. Please be kind to students of Media Lab.
Media Lab students are getting bullied online. The research done at the Media Lab are just as good as anywhere else.
Please listen and support.

Hire people on their moral character. I wanted to tell my children to aspire to go to MIT. I can't say that anymore.

New students are going to come and they're going to forget. So we do need to change

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"Why do institutions feel so tempted to take dirty money?"
You think that if you take this dirty money, then you can do good with it. But if you reject it, then you have no control over how this money gets used.

But this is predicated on the idea that MIT is somehow a small actor. Where rejecting the donation somehow does not affect the moral landscape at large
It's unfortunate that the moral outrage doesn't exist for Koch and Schwarzmenn like it did for Epstein. But what if MIT had made it all over the news that "MIT rejected Schwarzmenn's money because used to burn amazon down?" that "MIT rejected Epstein's because he's a pedophile?" that "MIT rejected Koch's money for climate change denialism"

We must not forget that MIT is a large actor on the stage and that should be put into the moral decisions

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UA + GSC presidents turning it over to President Reif for closing remarks

Reif: "I respect the views you expressed. They were harsh, but I respect them.

- (1) I would have preferred if this were a conversation instead so we can actually hear each other. Obviously not tonight, but I want to make this somehow in the future. It would be great if we could just listen to each other, but I have to figure out a way to do that
- (2) It was really painful to see how so many survivors have been forced to relive their trauma. I thought I did send it out those resources, but if I didn't, that was a tremendous oversight.

(3) Thank you for attending and expressing these views. This was just the beginning of a conversation that I'd like to have with as many of you as I can.

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Email student-forum-record@mit.edu if you have something that wants to get said.