



**52 UA Council Session 3 Meeting Minutes**  
 June 5th, 2020 8:00 PM-9:30 PM EDT, Zoom

<b>Living Group</b>	<b>Representative</b>	<b>Present?</b>
Baker	Laura Rosado	Y
Burton-Conner	Sarah Aaronson	Y
East Campus	Miana Smith	Y
MacGregor	Seif Eses & Albert Gerovitch	Y
Maseeh	Zach Villaverde	Y
McCormick	Afeefah & Yara Komaiha	Y
New House	Sarah Edwards	Y
Next House	Thomas Adebisi	Y
Random Hall	Sonia Reilly	Y
Simmons	Shaida Nishat	Y
Interfraternity Council	Nico Salinas	Y
Interfraternity Council	Jaya Kambhampaty	Y
Interfraternity Council	Maximilian Porlein	N
Interfraternity Council	Sam Costa	Y
Living Group Council	Jason Ye	N
Off Campus	Sam D'Alanzo	Y
Panhellenic Association	Kate Nelson	Y
Panhellenic Association	Stephanie Zhang	Y
Panhellenic Association	Valerie Chen	Y

# 52 UA Council Session 3 Agenda

June 5th, 2020 8:00 PM-9:30 PM EDT, Zoom

1. Roll Call 8:00 - 8:05
2. Community Discussion on Race Relations and Policing 8:05 - 9:30
  1. Mental health and support services
  2. Education and allyship
  3. MIT, Cambridge, and Boston police
  4. Longer-term initiatives surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion

## **8:05 Meeting Begins**

Motion, seconded, all in favor. Passed.

## **8:07 Community Discussion on Race Relations and Policing**

- Important for council to come to a consensus decision regarding recent events

### 1. Mental health and support services

- Already talking to Karen Singleton about forming a support group for black students dealing with recent events of violence and compounded effects of COVID-19
- Would like to see more black mental health specialists at MIT Medical
  - Better understanding of different experiences
- Complaints about Medical
  - Not enough time with mental health
  - Addressed by administrators-- frequency of visits determined by professionals at medical
  - Outside referrals can take months
  - Hire more staff to solve this?
- Accessing mental health resources at home
  - Can be harder to get services from in demand counselors
  - Can access these resources from anywhere including outside of Massachusetts
- Space constraint for hiring new people
  - MIT medical already cramped in terms of space
  - Other campus spaces available?
  - More virtual appointments
  - Already some telehealth options  
<https://myblue.bluecrossma.com/health-plan/well-connection>
- Is there any word on if Mental Health services is considered "essential", for like hiring purposes, etc
  - Ethan will look into it
  - It should be.
  - Identify mental health partners in MA to extend counseling service to a wider audience

### 2. Education and allyship

- Course 12
  - Not enough outreach for undergrads
  - Set up poorly and requires students to get lucky with advisors/mentors
  - Severe lack of diversity
    - Female students cannot work with this professor, etc.
  - Department head very problematic
    - Reach out to him? Rob
- Math Piazza
  - Never felt welcomed by math department besides sharing an interest in math
  - 40 screenshot long post/thread
    - Postdocs, professors, and students included in the conversation
  - How to make the community more welcoming?
    - Hiring more black professors -- difficult because of pipeline effects
    - Better peer matching programs
- DUSP
  - Working to institutionally change things
- Tendency of professors to think of the diversity problems outside of their departments
  - Rather than looking inward

- Course 20 discussion
  - Very frustrating
  - Faculty that were not listening, not internalizing student feedback
  - Brushing off concerns or just saying they “care” about this
    - Framed as communication rather than fundamental issue
  - Providing active listening training to faculty
  - Share diversity effort between different departments
- Do all departments have diversity officers? and for those that do, have they been shown to actually help/take action?
  - No they do not
  - Course 16 does but not necessarily effective
  - Need to hold officers accountable to their mission
  - the math dept has a diversity chair and it has not been enough
  - On Devin’s point, I think it would good to appoint a faculty member or hire an officer to help with diversity issues (if there’s not one already)
  - MIT had been trying to hire a staff member focused on diversity for each school prior to the pandemic happening - but it seems like this work got interrupted because of the hiring freeze (somebody correct me if i’m wrong though)
  - Need to transfer responsibility to whole department not just diversity officer (too much of a burden for one student)
  - The issue found in the math dept is that diversity issues/responsibilities were only left to a single person. but one person cannot fix systemic problems.
- Extend conversation to psets as well
  - 6.002, incorporate problems that show inequities in the world
  - Voting maps and public transportation
- Course 16 diversity officer reports to head of department instead of outside of department
  - Department head isn't receptive of feedback
  - Should be externally accountable so there is room to push the department head for growth
- Top down discussion of affirmative action for departments
  - Undiverse aero astro grad school pipeline
  - Department bends over backwards to avoid addressing affirmative action’s role in the pipeline
  - No intelligent conversation about AA happening
- Collective effort
  - Incidencies of students acting discriminatory
    - Need to address these internal issues as well with education
  - More time for conversation and reflection of these acts of discrimination
    - Platforms to address this being started at other schools
    - Departmentally or by schools, create a similar platform for those who feel wronged
    - Anonymous place to air this out, can see patterns or repetition for certain professors or TAs
    - Creating accountability and calling out racism
  - Bias response form
    - Allow for anonymous reports of discrimination
  - Overarching efforts
    - Academic council working group, tasked with handling BSU recommendations
    - Change of leadership, John Dozier is now the head and coming up with a strategic plan
    - Decentralized nature of MIT makes it difficult to make high level hiring changes (these decisions are made on the department level often)

- DEI not unified at MIT-- that's way John is working on strategic plan
    - There hasn't been a plan for five years which is why there has been a little progress recently
    - Making DEI essential is a big step in securing funding for these issues within departments
  - Are there significant bottlenecks that have been identified as barriers to diversity? It seems like recruitment/applications, the student body, and department heads have been mentioned, but is there information available on whether a given department has a student body that is open to diversity but the department heads are the biggest barrier or vice versa?
    - wonder if this might be helpful towards targeting training/action more effectively/efficiently. Regarding the reporting like Jonathan and Kelvin have talked about, I believe this link/office can be utilized: <https://idhr.mit.edu/fileincidentreport>
    - Are the issues mostly the students or the department that are the source of DEI concerns and how does that inform where should we focus our efforts
- How is MIT educating our student in terms of DEI
  - Diversity modules for undergrads to learn from
  - Are faculty also subject to similar trainings
    - Baseline training
    - Other trainings are not mandatory
  - Many TAs haven't had any training besides class content
    - 8.02 started a mentorship program to help students who are weaker in the class
    - In the training for that program, discussed studies about african american students in physics and how to be inclusive in physics
    - But training was brief and optional
- Ideally, a GIR about DEI
  - Certain highschoools and workplaces have started doing it
  - Must do them every 2 years
  - Lot of opposition to adding requirements
  - Other route could be adding DEI topics to their existing curriculum
    - Institute wide level
    - Require faculty to add this to all their curriculum
    - This needs to be broader than a single lecture
  - This has been proposed / is under consideration in EECS.
  - Show how DEI is applicable to every career and real life
  - How to blend the technical and how culture affects the technical aspects of our work
  - Make one of our 8 HASS requirements relevant to minorities and other culture
    - No need to make it major specific necessarily
    - Making a new class in the major may be hard for some departments
  - Could be difficult for HASS since they are underfunded as compared to departments
    - Maybe the progress goes in the other direction and departments create a requirement
    - MIT hesitant of adding more requirements
    - Having an ethics of engineers/ethics for scientists class would be helpful (this harkens back to College of Computing clapback too)
  - In general, I think we have a lot of GIRs so adding another has been considered and shied away from e.g. adding an intro computing subject but they considered then making one of bio/chem optional so scientists were big sad. I think the idea of transforming one of the existing HASS/CI-M to include these goals could hold water much better.
  - Other schools may have similar programs
    - Cornell's freshman program

- Book before coming to campus, required to read before coming to campus
        - Creates shared experience
        - can start DEI conversations
    - Currently there is a diversity orientation for Freshman (which exists and can be improved upon), and a mandated diversity module for sophomores (which exists and most likely will not change any time soon because it was created last spring).
    - Pushing for these things again may be worthwhile in this moment where there is more pressure
      - MIT freeloading off of its name
      - Most colleges are required to have an ethics class, but we don't really do it (at least one ethics lecture)
        - But telling the accreditation board that we do this
        - Combine 2 half semester courses about ethics and DEI
        - Reclaim lectures for other classes
        - Should be small group/seminar oriented so that students can meaningfully engage with subject matter
        - Should be required so that the people who most need it would not enroll
        - I actually think it would be really interesting if the ethics and diversity courses were not just undergrads being taught by a prof, but had other professors, grad students, and department staff in them who are part of the socratic discussion and are also receiving "Grades" or "feedback"
- Important to recognize historical oppressions in the sciences
  - And the crises and injustices that they have caused in minority communities, ex. BioEng
- More investment in OMP and OME
  - Allowing them to teach the DEI curriculum as well
- Does the UA want to endorse BSU's recommendation
  - Conversation will be continued
  - Invite Dean Nobles to the conversation because it would be powerful to have her on our side

### 3. MIT, Cambridge, and Boston police

- MIT Police website
  - Lack of handbook or policies on the website
  - "Specialized" training not clarified upon
  - Need more transparency
  - Seems like their policies are not equally applied
    - Example Chocolate City events vs other groups
  - Higher standard for suspect reports
    - Disproportionate descriptions of "6 foot tall black men"
  - Want to see what they are thinking and the internal problems they recognize
  - iHouse has started a petition to ask for MIT PD not to support Boston PD in policing protests
  - Follow ups on incidents would also be useful
- Strict policies will be in place when we return to campus
  - Questions about how these policies will
- Opinions
  - Disarm and defund police and use the funds for student supports
    - If they cannot be disarmed, they should only be armed if they are called for an assault or other violent situations (not armed for monitoring events, etc.)

- Overall number of police should be decreased
  - Historically, use of police force has been extremely problematic-- may need to upend the system and how it serves us
  - initiatives that move towards defunding / abolition rather than reforms that expand policing -
    - [https://40ep0y39wiq61vsfuh7fnei1-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/CriticalResistance\\_Police-Abolition-vs-Reform-Chart.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3YBzsCeb74biRyP4MTTOWRhX26vQJEI27eQ8dAFzc5qXZIZUMeDB4vi4](https://40ep0y39wiq61vsfuh7fnei1-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/CriticalResistance_Police-Abolition-vs-Reform-Chart.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3YBzsCeb74biRyP4MTTOWRhX26vQJEI27eQ8dAFzc5qXZIZUMeDB4vi4)
    - Need to know the people tasked with protecting us
    - Reform police until it fits the needs of our community
- Maybe not cutting them out but emphasizing their transparency
- 
- Cut ties to boston and cambridge police
  - No more contracting them
- Really reflect on what it means to protect and serve
- When I call the ambulance, why do the police have to come?
- Police not fit for every situation
  - Look at calling mental health professionals for drug abuse cases, etc.
  - More stress on everyone in the situation if the police are called
  - How have police de-escalated mental health problems?
    - Known cases where they have been called but unclear outcome
    - If not, they should have mental health professionals on the force
- Replace the police department on campus with more mental health facilities?
  - Give VPR more funding
- Here's the 2019 MIT Annual Security and Fire Safety Report:
  - [https://police.mit.edu/sites/default/files/MIT-Police-Files/MITPolice\\_ASR\\_2019\\_Book\\_final9oct19%20%281%29.pdf](https://police.mit.edu/sites/default/files/MIT-Police-Files/MITPolice_ASR_2019_Book_final9oct19%20%281%29.pdf). There's details on training, authority, division, etc.
  - Very vague about what trainings really are
- Is there like a form or hotline to specifically report cases of bias or excessive force from MIT police?
  - We do not know of them but will look into it
  - They do have a feedback report, where you can check "unsatisfactory feedback". Where name and email are necessary and it is not at all specifically targeted to reporting abuse of power
  - Not anonymous and needs to be more visible
- Standard for parties and events
  - How much police presence required
  - May depend on number of people in attendance
  - Hiring private security detail rather than MIT police?
  - For FSILGs, we have to submit a report to MIT PD is every Thursday before the weekend and MIT PD does a check to make sure FSILGs (usually IFC though) that they are following social events policies. If a house does violate social events policies, MIT PD will submit a report and talk to the house risk manager and/or chapter president Just to provide context, but happy to hear if anyone has had issues or has suggestions on changes
- MIT admin is very aligned with MIT Police ever since the death of Sean Collier
- Ad-hoc committee on police is an opportunity to address these issues

#### 4. Longer-term initiatives surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion

- Fundraisers (still more short term)

- (RE: Fundraiser: Yale organized 80+ of its student organizations together to donate together under one body/name, something like that might make it easier for groups to donate? It's Yale Together on FB)
- Next steps
  - Next council meeting we will start creating policy position surrounding these topics
  - Bring them to administrators and transfer the burden of implementing these policies to them

**9:32 Motion to Adjourn.**

Jaya motions, Zach Seconds.