MAS Diversity and Community Year in Review 2017-2018
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. Interns learn about applying to and succeeding in graduate school. In the summer of 2017, the Lab hosted four MSRP interns in different research groups at the Lab.

At the end of the summer, the interns presented their research, first to the Media Lab community, and then at the MSRP poster session with the rest of their cohort.

In the summer of 2018, we will host six interns in five different research groups.
Travel Grants & Virtual Visits

The MAS Open House is a great way for prospective students to learn more about the Lab, meet with faculty and graduate students, and determine if this is the best program for them. Unfortunately, the cost of traveling to Cambridge for the Open House can be a deterrent for those who live far away or do not have funds to travel here. To alleviate this burden, we offer 20 travel grants each year to cover travel expenses for this event.

These travel grants have proven to be a great tool in helping prospective students interested in attending the Open House, but they cannot completely close the gap. With that in mind, this past year we launched a virtual recruitment series to provide a personalized alternative to traveling to the Lab. These virtual visits successfully allowed potential applicants to learn about MAS research and gain insight about the culture of the Lab from current students. We hosted nine virtual visits presented by a combination of students, staff, and faculty.

Three visits were specifically focused on research:
- Juliana Nazaré (Social Machines) and Anneli Hershman (Social Machines)
- Randi Williams (Personal Robots) and Rachel Smith (Mediated Matter)
- Nicole L’Huillier (Opera of the Future) and Pedro Reynolds-Cuéllar (Personal Robots)

Two visits were geared toward admissions and the MAS Program:
- Monica Orta (MAS) presented a program and admissions overview with Q&A.
- Bianca Datta (Object-Based Media) and Marc Exposito Gomez (Social Machines) spoke about their experiences in the program and answered questions.

Four visits were led by our newest MAS faculty member, Danielle Wood, who presented her research goals and group vision to recruit applicants for Space Enabled.

The Stats!
- 20 open house travel grants were awarded in 2017
- 70% of travel grant awardees applied this cycle
- 36% of travel grant awardees who applied were admitted

“Thanks a lot for such an informative session. I feel better placed and much more comfortable in applying for the MAS program now!”

“The virtual visit you arranged was really great. Thanks for providing such great platforms to interact well with the Media Lab.”

“It was great to attend the MAS virtual tour and I massively enjoyed it. Huge thanks to all for this amazing presentation and interaction!”
SOS (Students Offering Support) Program
In its third year, SOS serves as an important resource that pairs applicants with current students who provide feedback on either the applicant’s statement of purpose or portfolio. Because the 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 how they should highlight their accomplishments in their application.

This year we had the highest number of participants and graduate student volunteers since the program began. Fifty-seven applicants were paired with one of our 39 volunteers across 18 research groups.

Recruitment Efforts

MAS Ambassadors
We continue to run our MAS Ambassadors program, which aims to leverage current students’ networks by sending them to their previous institution or company to speak about MAS. This program allows us to expand our reach, as well as give prospective students a more interactive experience by meeting current students and hearing from them firsthand.

This year we sponsored six trips:

• Blakeley Payne (Scalable Cooperation) presented at the University of South Carolina
• Devora Najjar (Sculpting Evolution) presented at Cooper Union
• Vik Parthiban (Object-Based Media) presented at University of Texas, Austin
• Ishaan Grover (Personal Robots) and Tony Shu (Biomechatronics) presented at Georgia Institute of Technology
• Stefania Druga (Personal Robots) presented at New York University
• Juliana Nazaré (Social Machines) presented at Olin College

The Stats!
• 39 grad student SOS volunteers, across 18 research groups
• 77% of SOS participants applied this cycle
• 7% of SOS applicants were admitted, up from 6% in 2017
In Fall 2018, MAS will welcome 52 new master’s and 23 new PhD students. This will be our largest cohort ever, with both master’s and PhD admits surpassing previous years.

Master’s Applications

Incoming Master’s Cohort

Incoming PhD Cohort
Community Building

Women’s Lunch Series
These monthly lunches serve as a space for our women graduate students and postdocs to connect and build community. Each session features a dynamic speaker who addresses some aspect of professional or personal development.

- **Navigating Male Dominated Spaces for Exclusively Female Agendas**  
  Ridhi Tariyal, CEO and Co-Founder of NextGen Jane

- **Investigating Normal: Hybrid Research for Technology and the Body**  
  Sara Hendren, Artist, Designer, and Researcher at Olin College

- **My Journey to the Media Lab**  
  Canan Dagdeviren, MAS Principal Investigator, Conformable Decoders

- **Failing Better – How Games Taught Me to Be Human**  
  Colleen Macklin, Professor in Design & Technology, Parsons School of Design

- **Authentic Leadership**  
  Renée Gosline, Senior Lecturer & Research Scientist at MIT Sloan School

- **Entrepreneurship for Everyone**  
  Jennifer Dziura, Founder of Get Bullish

- **Planning for Life Tomorrow with Technology Today**  
  Samantha Brady, Research Scientist at the MIT AgeLab

- **My Journey to the Media Lab**  
  Danielle Wood, MAS Principal Investigator, Space Enabled
**Family Fun Day**

MAS Diversity kicked off the summer by hosting our first annual Family Fun Day. This half-day event was designed to bring our community together with everyone’s non-Media Lab family to connect, let off some steam, and recharge as we welcomed the summer. A bounce house and outdoor games encouraged attendees to get out of the building and enjoy the fresh air. Lunch on the 6th floor followed by ice cream sundaes, face painting, the ball pit, and board games brought everyone together for an afternoon of play.

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**Diversity Committee**

The Diversity Committee, comprised of students, staff, and faculty, meets once a month to discuss recruitment and retention efforts to increase the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of the MAS Program. These meetings consist of brainstorming sessions, recruitment and admissions updates, and presentations by individuals working to improve diversity through programming at the Lab and in the larger MIT community. This year the Diversity Committee:

- Learned about MIT’s Graduate Student Council’s (GSC) student liaisons who help departments learn from one another about effective diversity programs and initiatives.
- Heard from MAS student Britney Johnson about the National Society of Black Engineers conference.
- Learned about the Media Lab HR office’s efforts to do more programming with staff.
- Discussed the Title IX Bias Response reporting tool.

Arguably the most exciting news shared with the Diversity Committee this academic year was the launch of all-gender bathrooms. MAS Diversity and the Media Lab administration worked with central MIT on this effort for the past two years. Building code restrictions played a significant role in the slow process. In October 2017, the state of Massachusetts gave MIT permission to launch a pilot for all-gender, multi-stall bathrooms. We are very proud that the Media Lab was the first site on campus to open when the E14 4th floor bathrooms converted to all-gender in April 2018.
**Superbowl Tea**
The Media Lab tea is a weekly, informal community gathering every Friday afternoon to unwind and interact with those outside of your research group. MAS Diversity partnered with HR to host a Superbowl-themed tea on the Friday before the New England Patriots played the Philadelphia Eagles in the Superbowl. This tea, complete with football party snacks and cookies, was an excellent way to connect with others while engaging in some friendly team rivalry.

**Trick-or-Treating**
This annual tradition brings the community together for an afternoon of trick-or-treating on Halloween. Research groups give out candy and dog treats in their space. MAS provides trick-or-treat bags, decorations, and other snacks in the 3rd floor atrium.

Participants joined the fun by showing off their costumes and visiting the different groups around the Lab.
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 5 - 9, 2018. MAS Diversity supplemented the Institute-wide events with our own RAK Week activities.

Monday 3/5
Go the ‘Extra’ Mile
Media Lab community members were encouraged to thank a friend, labmate, or coworker who went the extra mile by giving them a pack of Extra gum, provided by MAS, with a cute thank you note attached.

Tuesday 3/6
Community Lunch
MAS hosted a lunch for all members of the Media Lab to take a break from their busy day and come together over a meal.

Wednesday 3/7
RAK Week Bingo
Everyone was invited to pick up a BINGO card featuring random acts of kindness such as “ask someone how their day is going,” “leave your officemate an encouraging note,” and “compliment someone to their supervisor.” Once they completed five in a row, participants could turn in their BINGO card at the MAS office for a prize.

Thursday 3/8
Ball Pit & Shout Outs
Undoubtedly the favorite event of our previous RAK Weeks, we brought back the ball pit and shout outs to acknowledge peers and colleagues. Shout outs were submitted leading up to RAK Week to celebrate those who have made an impact. This year we received over 220 messages that were displayed in the 3rd floor atrium throughout the day.

Friday 3/9
Open Mic Night
MIT RAK Week concluded with an open mic night in the new SPXCE lounge in W11. Attendees were invited to use this safe space to share their thoughts, struggles, and inspirations with one another.
This past year we welcomed Lily Zhang as our new Manager for Graduate Student Professional Development. Lily organizes programming around professional and career development, including the monthly professional development series. These workshops focus on career building skills for traditional and non-traditional trajectories.

- **A Mindful Way to a Meaningful Career**
  Jennifer Earls, Career Coach & Mindfulness Teacher, Dance with Life Consulting

- **Communicating Your Research**
  Jorge Cham, Creator of PhD Comics

- **Designing Your Life**
  Sean Clarke, MIT Biological Engineering Communications Lab
  Jake Livengood, MIT Career Services
  Tianna Ransom, MIT Career Services

- **LinkedIn For Career Building, Networking & Job Search**
  Sabrina Woods, Holistic Career Coach & LinkedInTrainer

- **Networking for People Who Hate Networking**
  Jennifer Dziura, Founder of Get Bullish

- **IDEO Portfolio Workshop**
  Dirk Ahlgrim, Design Director, Industrial Design, IDEO
  Jason Robinson, Senior Design Lead, Industrial Designer, IDEO
  Lindsey Turner, Senior Design Lead, Communications Designer, IDEO
Alumni Career Series
The Alumni Career Series highlights the many different career options for MAS students. These discussions provided a new opportunity for students to engage with alums and ask questions about how to strengthen their career building skills while still at the Lab and in the future.

### Fall Alumni Panel
- Julie Legault
  Creative Director, Founder & CEO, Amino Labs, Inc.
- Josh Levinger
  Consultant, Spacedog XYZ
- Andrés Monroy-Hernández
  Lead Research Scientist, Snap Inc.
- Matthew Reynolds
  Associate Professor, University of Washington

### Spring Alumni Panel
- Mary Farbood
  Associate Professor, Music Technology, New York University
- Maxim Lobovksy
  Co-Founder & CEO, Formlabs

“it’s great to hear more about how former students manage life after the Media Lab and what resources are most important to take advantage of while we’re here.”

Student Headshots
We brought in a photographer to take professional headshots of students to use on their portfolio, LinkedIn, or personal website. In the first round, we distributed a sign-up form with 48 slots, and they filled up immediately. Because of its popularity, we hosted a second round of headshots later in the semester for the remaining students to participate. The sessions again filled, with more than 50% of students receiving a professional headshot.

Due to their popularity, headshots will be offered each academic year for new students to build their professional image and continuing students to refresh older headshots.

Coming Up!
In the next academic year, MAS will host a conference focused on professional development and career planning. Stay tuned!