MAS Diversity and Community Year in Review 2018-2019
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 2018, the Media Lab hosted six MSRP interns in five different research groups.

In the summer of 2019, we will host four interns in four different research groups.
Recruitment Efforts

MAS Ambassadors
The MAS Ambassadors program 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 three trips:

- Pedro Colon-Hernandez (Object-Based Media) presented at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez.
- Angela Vujic (Fluid Interfaces) and Tony Shu (Biomechatronics) presented at Georgia Institute of Technology.
- Laura Perovich (Object-Based Media) presented at Bowdoin College.

MAS Open House Travel Grants
The MAS Open House is a 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, individuals can apply for an MAS travel grant. This year, MAS awarded 12 grants.

MAS Virtual Visits
In its second year, this MAS recruitment series continued to reach applicants who cannot visit the Lab in person. In 2018, two students – Vik Parthiban & Emily Salvador (Object-Based Media) – participated in the virtual visits to share their experience with prospective students. Our newest MAS faculty member, Deblina Sarkar, also used the platform to share her vision for her new research group.

SOS (Students Offering Support) Program
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, 25 applicants were paired with 21 volunteers from 12 different research groups.
In Fall 2019, MAS will welcome 45 new masters and 22 new PhD students. We continue to inch closer to an even gender split with this year’s incoming masters cohort having the highest percentage of female students.
Après Ski 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. In March 2019, MAS Diversity hosted an après ski tea to brighten up one of the bleakest winter months in New England. The tea was complete with “snow-covered” cupcakes, fir trees, and skiers.

Trick-or-Treating
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 other snacks in the 3rd floor atrium. Participants joined the fun by showing off their costumes!
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 11 - 15, 2019. MAS Diversity supplemented the Institute-wide events with our own RAK Week activities.

Monday 3/11
RAK Wall
A collage of random acts of kindness completed by Media Lab community members was constructed on the kitchen wall over the course of RAK Week. Participants could either choose from a basket of pre-written random acts of kindness, or use the provided supplies to record their own.

Wednesday 3/13
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 173 messages that were displayed in the 3rd floor atrium throughout the day.

Friday 3/15
Community Lunch & Canned Food Drive
MAS hosted a lunch for all members of the Media Lab to take a break from their work and enjoy one another’s company. Attendees were encouraged to bring a non-perishable item for MIT food pantries that help reduce food insecurity on campus. We were able to fill three large plastic bins with donations!
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.

- **Social Change From the Insiders**
  Sheena Allen, Founder & CEO, CAPWAY and Phocal
- **The Story of Self for Social Impact**
  Jamira Burley, Youth & Social Justice Advocate
- **Matter Design Computation: Biosynthesis & New Paradigms of Making**
  Jenny Sabin, Professor in Architecture, Director of Graduate Studies, Cornell University
- **Robots are Awesome! Becoming a Robot Ethics Expert**
  Kate Darling, Research Specialist, MIT Media Lab
- **Unleash the Leader in You**
  Kemi Sorinmade, Owner, Growth Studio
- **My Journey Through Academia**
  Mariana Arcaya, Assistant Professor of Urban Planning & Public Health, MIT
- **What I Wish I Knew Then: Reflections from the Worst Graduate Student Ever**
  Saida Grundy, Assistant Professor of Sociology & African American Studies, Boston University
- **Accelerating Change**
  Amanda Nguyen, Founder & CEO, Rise
Family Fun Day
MAS Diversity kicked off the summer by hosting our second annual Family Fun Day. After receiving positive feedback from last year’s event, we brought back some fan favorites including the bounce house and face painting, and added some new excitement – a petting zoo! This half-day event brings our community together with everyone’s non-Media Lab family to connect, let off some steam, and recharge as we welcome the summer.

Diversity Series
The MAS Diversity Series brings the Media Lab community together each semester to develop skills and explore ideas of diversity and social justice through presentations and discussion.

Science-Based Skills for Avoiding Burnout
Nataly Kogan
Co-Founder & CEO, Happier

Inspired by research on happiness, Nataly’s company, Happier, aims to inspire people to do more of what brings them joy. Starting with a personal story, her presentation to the Media Lab community taught attendees practical, research-backed tools to practice self-care to optimize energy, increase motivation, and get through challenges with resilience and self-compassion.

Cuing Identity Threat: How Situational Cues Signal Threat in Academic Settings & What We Can Do About It
Mary Murphy, PhD
Professor, Department of Psychological & Brain Sciences and Associate Vice Provost for Diversity & Inclusion, Indiana University

Mary discussed the cues hypothesis which posits that subtle situational cues in our environment can trigger identity threat – the concern that one will be devalued or disrespected in a setting because of their social group membership. Her presentation focused on the effects of situational cues in educational and workplace settings. Attendees discussed how to create more identity-safe environments where all people can thrive.
Professional Development

Professional Development Series
Lily Zhang, Manager for Graduate Student Professional Development, organizes programming around professional and career development, including a monthly series. Workshops focus on career building skills for traditional and non-traditional trajectories.

- **How to Seed Your Idea**
  Katie Rae, CEO & Managing Partner, The Engine

- **Connecting Through Storytelling**
  Kirsty Bennett, Manager, MIT Women’s League; Founder, MiTell

- **Writing Compelling Professional Bios**
  Diana Chien and Victor Prost, MIT Communications Lab
  with Kyle McLean, Lisa Volpatti, and Reyu Sakakibari

- **Starting an Art Studio**
  Kelly Heaton, Mixed Media Artist, Kelly Heaton Studio

- **Data Visualization**
  Steven Braun, Data Analytics & Visualization Specialist, Northeastern University

- **What is Interaction Design?**
  Penny Webb, Interaction Designer, Philips

- **Carving Your Own Path**
  Anne Helen Petersen, Author & Journalist, Buzzfeed News
tbd: determined, not defined
This professional development conference was an opportunity for students to learn new skills, network with MAS alumni, and explore career options without having to define exactly what they want to do in the future. Nearly 100 MAS students were in attendance. Participants learned about designing their life, grant writing, social entrepreneurship, data visualization, starting a company, and more.

Faculty Roundtables
The faculty roundtables provided a chance for MAS students to meet with three different faculty in a casual setting over lunch. Faculty discussed their career paths and gave the students advice on their own.

Ten MAS faculty members participated in the roundtables:

Fadel Adib – Signal Kinetics
Canan Dagdeviren – Conformable Decoders
Hugh Herr – Biomechatronics
Kent Larson – City Science
Andy Lippman – Viral Communications
Tod Machover – Opera of the Future
Joe Paradiso – Responsive Environments
Roz Picard – Affective Computing
Mitch Resnick – Lifelong Kindergarten
Danielle Wood – Space Enabled

“Nice opportunity to step back from my daily activities / responsibilities and spend some time thinking about my future career plans. Also a nice change to meet alumni and students in other groups.”

“I’m very glad there were some academically oriented alumni and sessions. It’s not extremely common in the Media Lab and was very useful for me.”

“It was great to hear what people are up to after leaving and what everyone’s individual journey has been like. It was also great to be reassured that there isn’t a best answer for what to do for a career!”