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. This year the program was held virtually due to the ongoing pandemic. In addition to gaining research experience, interns learn about applying to and succeeding in graduate school. In the summer of 2020, the Media Lab hosted two MSRP interns in the Biomechatronics research group.

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**Angel Bu**  
Biomechatronics  
Project Title: *Optimizing a Neuromuscular Model*

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**Christopher Shallal**  
Biomechatronics  
Project Title: *Optimization and Parameterization of Soleus Muscle Activation Signals During Powered Platarflexion for Restoring Symmetric Gait in AMI*

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**Open House**

Converted to a virtual format this year, 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. Hosting virtually allowed for an increase in participants - 347 people registered from around the world.

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**Virtual Visits**

This MAS recruitment series continued to reach applicants who cannot visit the Lab in person. In 2020, six faculty members participated in the virtual visits to share information about their research groups with prospective students. Overall there were 240 registered participants across all sessions.

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**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. This year, 37 applicants were paired with 21 volunteers from 10 different research groups. Of the SOS participants one was admitted to the MAS program.
Recruitment Successes

In Fall 2021, MAS will welcome 32 new masters and 12 new PhD students. We achieved an even gender split with this year’s incoming master’s cohort as well as a higher percentage of URM students than the past couple of years.
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.

The Role of Critical Reflection in Anti-Oppressive Curriculum and Research Development
Speaker: Ashley Stewart, PhD, MSSW
Assistant Professor & Online Coordinator
Temple University School of Social Work

In her talk Ashley Stewart discussed the critical urgency to address forms of oppression and cultural imperialism present in higher education institutions, curriculum, research practices, and inter/intrapersonal group dynamics. Attendees also engaged in critical reflection by examining our individual roles in pursuing anti-oppressive practices and innovative and sustainable culture.

Anti-Oppression in Practice:
Lessons from a White Lady Who’s Made Mistakes
Speaker: Libby Mahaffy
Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Consultant
MIT Human Resources

In this workshop attendees used self-assessment and facilitated conversation to explore specific anti-oppressive behaviors and develop competencies for allies. Self-reflective and interactive, participants came away with tangible actions and mindsets to create more inclusive spaces. This workshop was not a magic bullet, but rather an opportunity to take attendees farther in their personal work for collective impact.

Professional Development Series

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

• Job Searching During a Pandemic: Ask a Recruiter
  Chelsea Cohen - Recruiting Lead, Full Story
• Applying for Your First Grant in Academia
  Ehsan Hoque, PhD - Associate Professor of Computer Science, University of Rochester
Women’s Lunch Series

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

- **Put Away Wet: Moving from Surviving to Thriving in Academia**
  Niambi Carter, PhD - Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Howard University

- **Navigating Academia’s Cultural Norms**
  Miriam Solis, PhD - Assistant Professor, Community & Regional Planning, University of Texas at Austin

- **De-biasing a Process: Using Implicit Bias Triggers as an Audit Tool**
  Libby Mahaffy - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Consultant, MIT Human Resources

- **The Compromises We Make: Navigating Academia and Motherhood**
  Pattie Maes, PhD - Professor, MAS & Director of the Fluid Interfaces research group
  Catherine D’Ignazio - Assistant Professor, DUSP & Director of the Data + Feminism Lab

- **Got JBOPs?**
  Denise Minor, JD, CPCC,CNTC - President, MindSpring Metro DC

- **Journey Through Academia: From First Gen to Faculty to Academic Leadership**
  Mari Castaneda, PhD - Dean, Commonwealth Honors College & Professor, Department of Communication, UMass Amherst

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 served as an extra resource for students to talk about classes, progress to degree completion, research passions, and career trajectory. Based on positive feedback from the participating students MAS will be continuing and expanding the program for the next academic year.
Diversity Initiatives

Shut Down Academia

In support of the Black Lives Matter movement, the Media Lab and Media Arts and Sciences Program participated in the Shut Down Academia and Shut Down STEM movements on June 10th, 2020. This day was designed to mark a “transition into a lifelong commitment of actions to eradicate anti-Black racism in academia and STEM.” Non-Black community members were encouraged to spend the day educating themselves and detailing plans of action to create change.

As part of this effort the MAS program sent out a list of recommended readings and resources about race to the community.

Black Lives Matter Recommendations & Implementation

In August 2020, in response to an open letter sent to the Media Lab’s executive committee and faculty members, the Media Lab’s executive committee issued a public statement outlining a commitment “to learning with and joining with all members of the Media Lab who are working to eradicate racism and racial oppression in ourselves, our community, and as an institution.”

As part of this commitment the executive committee described concrete plans to follow through on the eight recommendations that had been submitted in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. The implementation of these recommendations is being tracked closely and can be followed by community members in real-time on the Media Lab’s website.

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
Improving Lab Culture Workshops

The first workshops we hosted as part of the DEB roadmap were the Improving Lab Culture Workshops. In order to improve the Media Lab’s culture and environment we partnered with the Violence, Prevention, and Response Office (VPR) and the Institute Discrimination and Harassment Response Office (IDHR) to hold workshops for the entire Media Lab community. All staff, faculty, and students were required to participate in these workshops which were held throughout the IAP, Spring, and Fall 2020 terms.

The workshops were created specifically for the Media Lab community and addressed harassment, assault, discrimination, and community values. Everyone participated with their organizational or research group in order to facilitate individual group discussion and support of these topics. All attendees have also been encouraged to continue these discussions regularly outside of the workshop format.

In total we have held 18 workshops for operational and research groups.

Proactive Approaches to Staff Culture Workshops

The next workshop we hosted as a part of the DEB roadmap was for faculty, research staff, and operations department heads and was led by Libby Mahaffy (central HR) and Gurleen Kaur Singh (VPR).

During the 90-minute Proactive Approaches to Constructive Lab Culture workshop, attendees engaged in scenario-based, small group discussions facilitated by a peer. The bulk of this interactive workshop was spent discussing a nuanced and relatable program-specific scenario. Attendees came away having engaged with concrete personal and structural action items. These workshops were held in Spring and Summer 2021.