

SESSION 11: MIT’s Journey Towards Diversity

Readings to complete before class:

- (1) Jaimes, Joel J. “Diversity at MIT: 1981 to Present.” *The Tech* 123, no. 3 (February 11, 2003). <http://www-tech.mit.edu/V123/N3/timeline.3f.html>
- (2) Penfield, Paul. “Faculty Diversity.” *MIT Faculty Newsletter* 6, no. 3 (January/February 1994): 1, 12-15. <http://www-mtl.mit.edu/~penfield/pubs/diversity.html>
- (3) MIT Committee on Women Faculty in the School of Science. “A Study on the Status of Women Faculty in Science at MIT.” *MIT Faculty Newsletter* 11, no. 4 (March 1999). <http://web.mit.edu/fnl/women/women.html>
- (4) Waugh, Alice C. “Policies Have Helped Boost Women Faculty.” *MIT Tech Talk* (March 31, 2004). <http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2004/fac-diversity-0331.html>
- (5) JBR chapter 26: “Examining Women’s Progress in the Sciences from the Perspective of Diversity” (Clewell and Ginorio).

Discussion notes:

- Have you personally seen or experienced gender discrimination at MIT?
- MIT’s report has huge influence outside the Institute, too: MIT really “led the charge” and inspired other universities to examine their own policies. Some criticism recently that MIT’s efforts have not continued being pursued very vigorously.
- “How do these trends project into the future? To double the percentage of MIT women faculty to 35 percent would take 31 years, and to bring it to 50 percent would take 60 years--assuming that current faculty size, number of hires per year, percentage of women hires and tenure rates remained unchanged, Hopkins said” (*Tech Talk* article).
- Why is gender (racial, economic, cultural...) diversity important, aside from ensuring that those groups are included? What are the benefits to the “overrepresented majority”?
 - “A diverse faculty can carry out the mission of our department better than a nondiverse one” (Penfield).
- Affirmative action: a whole can of worms.
- MIT undergraduate admissions office defense of why women have a higher acceptance rate than men (though since the number of male applicants is much larger, overall more

men are admitted than women): the women applicants are more self-selecting, with only the very best even applying.

- “First and foremost it is essential to set aside the issue of whether these women were badly treated because they were simply not good enough. It must be understood that for these particular women the opposite was undeniably true. Despite discrimination, most of these women achieved at an outstanding level within their professions... Only people above the average MIT faculty could have succeeded at this level despite the many obstacles the senior women faculty encountered in their careers. Indeed, it should be almost obvious that the first women, the first blacks, the pioneers who break through despite enormous barriers must be exceptional” (*Study on the Status*).
- “Women are often the harshest critics of other women they deem less than better than most faculty for fear that they will reflect badly on all women” (*Study on the Status*).
- How much of the responsibility for improving diversity is MIT’s, and how much is society’s?

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