DEI@MIT:

Achieving Holistic Diversity & Inclusion at MIT

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Ideas expressed are my own.

Achieving Holistic Diversity & Inclusion at MIT

Achieving a diverse student body, faculty, and staff are worthwhile aspirations for any university. As it applies to higher education and MIT, I define *diversity* as

> the degree to which students, faculty, and staff represent/demonstrate a range of different skills, knowledge, cultures, identities, geographies, experiences, ideologies, philosophies, values, and personalities, to provide the greatest opportunity to learn and grow from each other.

Diverse lived experiences and viewpoints improve our thinking, sharpen any debate, and foster innovation. In his book, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*,[1] University of Michigan and Santa Fe Institute scholar Scott Page shows how cognitively diverse teams outperform homogeneous ones. Also, including a broad range of viewpoints on campus can help mitigate and potentially reverse long-held prejudices and harmful, growing US polarization. So, MIT should indeed be vitally interested in the diversity of its students, faculty, and staff. MIT has been part of my life since before I was born (my mother was an MIT librarian when she was pregnant with me and until I was five),[2] so my perspective is long term, on MIT in the next half century and beyond.

Dimensions of Diversity

To talk meaningfully about diversity, we first need to identify the variables that diversity applies to. The variables we most frequently discuss are race and gender, with additional variables of disability, military veteran status, and sexual orientation.

Those are just five of millions of variables along which a population's diversity can be measured. There are even more ways to categorize all the variables; I find three categories particularly useful:

The **physical/identity** group mostly includes features immediately visible – e.g., race, gender, age, ethnicity, geography, language, and disability – and some features that may not be immediately visible such as sexual orientation.

The **cognitive/intellectual** group includes mostly less immediately visible variables: e.g., abstract vs. concrete thinking; risk aversion vs. risk taking; long- vs. short-term time horizons; relationship vs. transactional orientations in dealing with others; collaborative vs. independent work styles; introversion/extroversion; ability to delay immediate gratification; not to mention intelligence itself.

A third group I call the **related attributes** of the individual – I think of them as one's "extended phenotype," to use the words of biologist Richard Dawkins – such as zip code; household income; veteran status; first-generation college attendance; civic associations joined; hobbies; sports; and musical, sartorial, and tonsorial preferences. Together, I call these three groups *holistic* diversity – encompassing the entire individual.

Some variables cross more than one of my groups. For example, religion/faith and political orientation may reflect both identity and cognition. In *The Righteous Mind*, psychologist Jonathan Haidt identifies six foundations of morality – care, fairness, liberty, loyalty, authority, and purity – that individuals and cultures differ in valuing.[3] In *The Difference* mentioned above, Page notes that it is cognitive/intellectual diversity that makes boards, committees, and work groups better at decision-making; physical/identity diversity only to the extent that it indicates cognitive/intellectual diversity.

My categorization of diversity dimensions is not unique; we simply want to encompass as many relevant variables as possible. That brings me to my first point:

Before selecting variables of diversity that we will prioritize in our admissions, hiring, and promotion, let's enumerate and consider a broad sample of the *entire* set of variables for which greater diversity could make MIT a stronger, better, and more equitable place.

Considering a broad set of variables, and in particular both physical/identity and cognitive/intellectual, has two advantages: a) we are less likely to overlook important variables, and b) unduly prioritizing diversity in some variables can *reduce* diversity in other important variables, an unintended consequence of which we will see examples below.

Thinking Fast and Slow

Our focus in DEI is on visible variables to the exclusion of less-visible variables. This is for two understandable reasons: 1) Focusing on race and gender helps right past wrongs and/or signals that we wish to do so; and 2) Addressing visible variables is readily demonstrable, while addressing less-visible variables, even if just as important, is harder to demonstrate.

To use Daniel Kahneman's language, thinking fast – immediate, knee-jerk reactions akin to running away from a threat or attacking an enemy – drives unwanted racial and gender discrimination, whether learned or innate. To fight racism and sexism, we must refuse to think fast and superficially about people, and instead think slowly and deliberately about them. As Martin Luther King said, his dream is for his children to be judged not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. That is hard work. Character is not immediately visible. It requires slow thinking. But we are MIT; we excel and properly take pride in thinking slowly and deliberately. We don't ignore important dimensions just because they are not immediately visible. If others focus just on visible variables, we set the example to do otherwise.

Parenthetically: While cognitive/intellectual qualities tend to be less immediately visible than physical/identity variables today, they are *becoming* more visible thanks to Augmented Reality, 5G, and other Social-Mobile-Analytics-Cloud (SMAC) technologies. In the future, AR may enable us to see, for example, that everyone in a Zoom conference is an INTJ. Even one ESFP might make that meeting more effective.[4] Soon, AI and search will instantly serve up detailed dossiers on the people we interact with (think LinkedIn profiles with a thousand times the detail). While some may view such detailed profiles, including less-visible cognitive/intellectual qualities, as an invasion of privacy, might the outcome be that we are less like to "judge books

by their covers," i.e., that we more readily prioritize less-visible variables along with purely physical/identity variables in ensuring diversity?

AI Can Help Promote Diversity

"Using Artificial Intelligence to Promote Diversity," a Winter, 2019 article in the *MIT Sloan Management Review,* discusses how AI can and should be used to overcome biases and promote diversity.[5] For MIT admissions, AI can help:

1) Manage and balance thousands of dimensions of diversity
2) Identify previously overlooked but important variables/dimensions
3) Identify diversity shortfalls in important variables/dimensions
4) Recognize strong candidates previously overlooked
5) Recognize and flag individuals mismatched for MIT.

Shaping and selecting a first-year undergrad cohort is an optimization constrained by the number of students MIT can admit each year. Of all of the possible configurations of admittees, which one best satisfies all of our objectives – curiosity, diversity, intelligence, intensity, preparedness, talent, work ethic, etc. – and constraints? We have decades worth of data as to which students at MIT are likely to succeed, to drop out, to go on to successful careers, and to be engaged alumni. Insights such as those of Media Lab scientist Joy Buolamwini and her Algorithmic Justice League can help ensure fairness. AI can help us not only predict and avoid unfavorable outcomes but also better comprehend the diversity of an entire cohort, especially along less-visible dimensions, and advise on admission decisions in the context of that entire cohort.

Judiciously used, AI affords less opportunity for human bias in favor of or against one candidate or another; some oppose its use for that reason. But given our College of Computing strengths in AI and interest in diversity and fairness, MIT should clearly be a leader in applying AI to admissions.

Under-Representation of MIT Undergrads from Rural States

MIT's mission statement includes serving the entire nation. Nonetheless, we so focus on a few "fast thinking" dimensions of diversity for which there are strong on-campus constituencies – race and gender, in particular – that "slow thinking" dimensions for which there are few or no on-campus constituencies are being neglected. One such key dimension is geography. Adjusting for state populations, MIT's 2018 undergrad enrollment for the least-enrolling 25 US states was 33% of the enrollment for the most-enrolling 25 states (chart below).[6]

The top seven states (including MA) enjoy northeastern proximity to MIT. Most of the under-represented states are rural. To better understand why our national distribution is the way it is, we have to look at the MIT Admissions Pipeline.

**Adjusted for State Populations, 2018 MIT US Undergrad Enrollment
for the Bottom 25 US States was only *33%*
the Enrollment for the Top 25 US States**
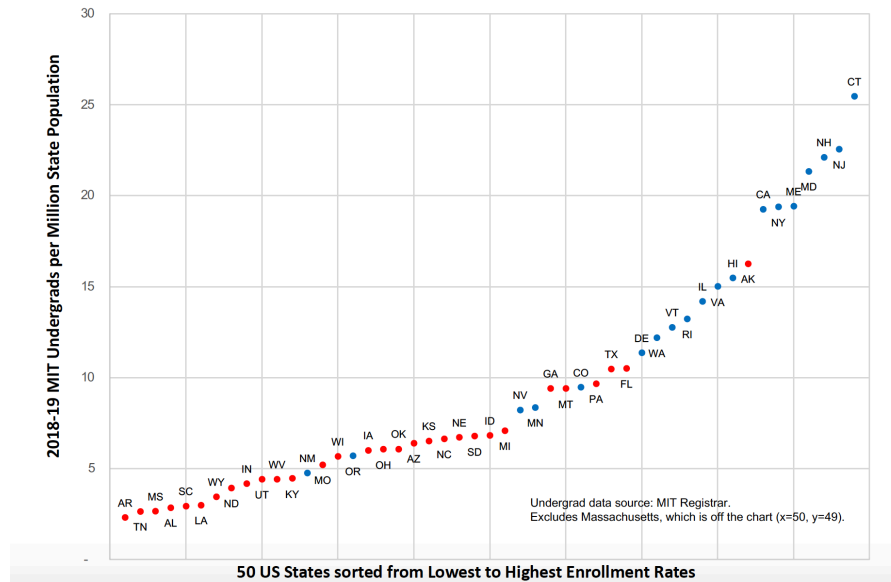
The Rural-Urban Divide and the MIT Admissions Pipeline

University student populations are the result of pipelines with four stages: outreach, applications, admissions, and enrollments:
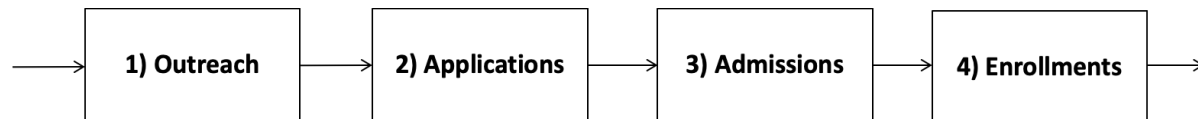
1) **Outreach** is universities' recruitment and other marketing to high school seniors. According to Admissions Director Stu Schmill, by far the majority of MIT's outreach is to urban areas. This is both 1) more efficient in reaching many seniors than spreading limited resources across sparsely populated rural areas, and 2) where most of the top-rated high schools are located. Failure to reach rural seniors is not specific to MIT; see, for example, this NPR article, "One Reason Rural Students Don't Go To College: Colleges Don't Go To Them."[7]

2) **Application rates** to MIT and top universities are significantly lower from rural states than for the US overall, likely due to less outreach by universities, less awareness, less word-of-mouth among students; lower SAT/ACT scores overall, giving students less confidence to apply; and to socio-economic conditions and cultural values. Here are two specific factors, one economic and one sociological/cultural, that contribute to the disparity:

   i) The Santa Fe Institute's urban scalability research by Geoffrey West,[8] Luis Bettencourt and others shows that, as the populations of cities double, average income, average numbers of graduate degrees and patents, and many other *per-capita* metrics increase by 15%. (These economies of scale are also reflected in infrastructure:

as you double population, the total length of sewer pipes, numbers of telephone poles and gas stations increase by only 85%.) Thanks to higher population/density, cities overall offer more frequent interactions and faster flow of word-of-mouth knowledge, greater specialization and division of labor, and greater value placed on specialized skills. These benefits are created in part by self-selection, that is, by people who move to cities to contribute to and enjoy them, but accrue to everyone in the city, whether self-selected or not. Urban households and college applicants benefit from these dynamics.

ii) "Somewheres" vs. "anywheres". According to author David Goodheart in *The Road to Somewhere*,[9] "somewheres" are people whose identity is shaped by a sense of place and attachment to a group. They feel a deep attachment to their community, to a likeminded cohort, with a strong sense of where they are from, sometimes with roots going back generations. Their identities are more *ascribed* by community and the place to which they belong. As a result, they value familiarity, security, and group attachments. In contrast, "anywheres" see their identities and self-worth as less tied to place, more to achievement and position. Their values are more associated with their life experiences than where they grew up. Their identities are less ascribed than *achieved*. People who grow up in the suburbs tend to be anywheres, but even those who grew up in small towns and the country as somewheres convert into anywheres when they study at university. Traveling all the way from their hometowns, likely in central US states, to Cambridge, MA or Palo Alto, CA, instead of to, say, their state university, is particularly discomfiting for somewheres. See also this InsideHigherEd.com article, "Rural Students Gain but Lag in College Attendance."[10]

Just as people of color often fail to apply because they feel college is not an option for them and we reach out to them to overcome that bias, so it is with rural candidates and should do likewise.

3) **Admissions**. Interestingly, according to Chancellor Cynthia Barnhart, MIT admission *rates* (relative to the number of applicants) are slightly *higher* for rural than urban regions. Since most of our outreach is urban and word-of-mouth about MIT among rural students is sparser, rural students really have to want to go to MIT, be strongly advised by an adult, or be an extraordinary candidate, to find out about it or apply. All other things being equal, outreach and average applicant quality are inversely related, since outreach casts a wide net.

I am an example of this phenomenon. My high school guidance counselor, Mr. Bussell, discouraged me from applying to MIT: no one from Jupiter, then a remote Palm Beach County outpost, had ever gone there. Few in our high school then had even heard of MIT. Even Dad expected me to go to Palm Beach Junior College. But until we moved to Florida when I was five, my mother had worked in the MIT Libraries, so I had heard all about (and idolized) MIT from an early age. Mom – only Mom – believed I might get in and made sure I applied. (Moms: realize your influence.) I became the first male in my family to get a bachelor's degree.

4) **Enrollments**. Cindy did not have data on rural enrollment rates (relative to admissions), but anecdotal evidence suggests that rural applicants feel less welcome/included from campus visits and other interactions and are thus less likely to enroll. More on this below.

To be very clear, I am not concluding there is intentional bias by MIT in *admitting* rural applicants. There appears to be bias, either intentional or unintentional, discouraging rural seniors from *applying* and *enrolling*; more on that below. In any event, why would under-representation at MIT of students from particular regions or states matter?

The "Other Half" of the US:
Different Geographically, Culturally, Economically, Intellectually, and Politically

Apart from MIT's mission of serving the entire nation, the seemingly inconsequential under-representation of rural states has unexpectedly significant consequences. The disparity is not merely geographical: it is also cultural, economic, intellectual, and political. More than the US population overall, individuals from these states, mostly red, tend to value individual rewards and responsibility, local civic ties, frugality, a work ethic, and nuclear families. They tend to be more fiscally and socially conservative and respectful of authority. They are lower income overall. As noted above, they are more likely to be "somewheres" than "anywheres." I call them the "Other Half." "Other", because, like it or not, they are not us, or more grammatically, we are not they. "Half," because they make up about half of the US population.

The "Other Half" of the US
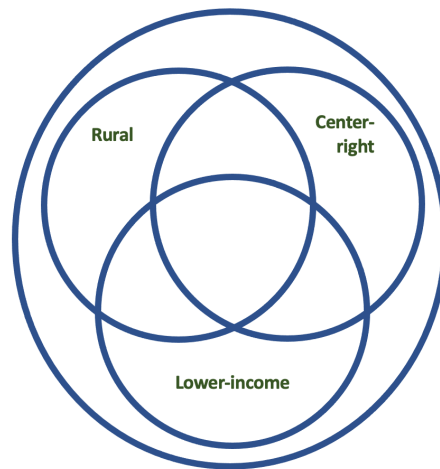
The Invisibility of the "Other Half" on Campus

Rural, center-right-sensibility, and low-income individuals have no on-campus constituency or advocacy at MIT. They are invisible. This year I had the privilege of serving on the Corporation Selection Committee for recent alumni. In my interviews with candidates, all exceptional, I asked, when the subject of diversity came up as it invariably did, "Allowing for any segmentation of the US population you can think of, which segment do you think is most under-represented at MIT?" Separately, I asked the same question of one of our Deans. The most common response, including that of the Dean, was Native Americans. According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, Native Americans, including Alaskan Natives, comprise 1.7% of the US population. *No one* mentioned rural, center-right-sensibility, or lower-income individuals by those or any other designation. Again, this is "fast" vs. "slow" thinking. This is despite the fact that their under-representation was called out explicitly by the Corporation Joint Advisory Committee (CJAC) in their FY19 recommendations:

"Explore and publicly track a wider range of diversity metrics for income/wealth and geography (including rural/urban split). Only 30% of MIT undergraduates are from rural states compared to ~50% of the US population. Only 13.5% of undergraduates come from the lower 40% of the income distribution (which is still better than our peers). Roughly 2/3 of undergraduates come from 'blue' states vs. 43% of the US population."

— MIT CJAC Report for FY19

According to that report, 57% of the US population was in red states. Given that cities are more blue than rural areas and that applicants are more urban than rural, the actual blue/red disparity is even higher than the state-level aggregates suggest. Relative to their total population, they are almost certainly *more* under-represented on our college campuses than racial minorities and women.[11] Yet we never talk or hear about them. Arguably, we have a greater responsibility to attract, expose our undergrads to, and serve these students because *MIT's* home state is both the *most* heavily represented and among the bluest of undergrads' home states (the MA datapoint [x=65%, y=49] is literally off the chart above).

Wrote School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHASS) Dean Melissa Nobles to me, ever graciously, "I appreciate your point about the urban/rural divide and will continue to think about how MIT can attract a diverse pool of students and faculty, defined in the broadest terms."

The Other Half's sensibilities are complementary to and counterbalancing of our primarily blue-state perspectives. They deserve to be included in on-campus conversations.

Low-Income, First-Generation, and International Students:
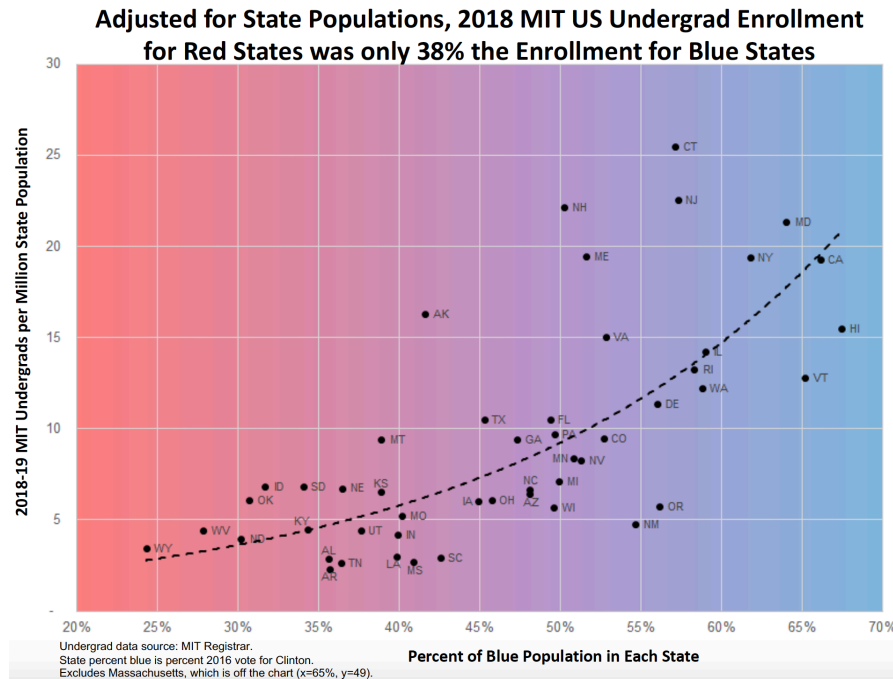**Challenges to Inclusion/Belonging**

Besides the Other Half, groups that deserve more attention than they receive for inclusion/ belonging are low-income students more broadly, who often struggle to find and fulfill term-time jobs, precluding their involvement in many student activities; first-generation college attendees; and international students whose native language is not English, who face not just language but cultural challenges (e.g., renting and furnishing an apartment and getting electricity).

When I arrived at MIT as a freshman, my top living choices were the three cheapest dorms – Senior House, East Campus, and Baker House – in that order. I got my last choice, Baker. I later came to love Baker, but I remember how angry and resentful I was at first towards MIT that I had to pay all this extra money for this luxurious dorm, more than I wanted, needed, or could afford. Somehow, we figured out how to pay for it. Too, of my incoming class of a thousand, only 200 of us took the most basic Introductory Calculus. Some 80% of those had had *some* calculus, but I had had none – my high school didn't even offer it. So, I started out in the bottom 20% of the bottom 20% of the class. To help pay for my education, I was fortunate to be accepted into the VI-A Co-op program, in which, starting in your sophomore year, you spent half of your semesters away from campus working for your co-op company (in my case, GE).

Only after my mother passed away at age 100 two years ago did I learn from going through her papers how urgently, at age 52, she earned her bachelor's degree, the same year I graduated from high school, and how desperately she sought a high school teaching job with it, to put my sister and me through college.

## Under-representation and Stereotyping: A Negative Feedback Loop

As noted, most of the Other-Half states are red. Adjusting for state populations, MIT's 2018 undergrad enrollment for red states overall (see chart) was 38% the enrollment for blue states overall.[12]

Adjusted for State Populations, 2018 MIT US Undergrad Enrollment for Red States was only 38% the Enrollment for Blue States

Undergrad data source: MIT Registrar.
State percent blue is percent 2016 vote for Clinton.
Excludes Massachusetts, which is off the chart (x=65%, y=49).

Above in Stages 2 and 4 of the MIT Admissions Pipeline, I mentioned that rural students may feel less welcome/included from campus visits and other interactions and may thus be less likely to apply or enroll. In part due to their under-representation on campus, Other-Half individuals, whether students, faculty, or staff, are widely, if unconsciously, stereotyped. The greater the under-representation, the easier it is to stereotype. At a recent visiting committee meeting, a senior administrator stated that those in the Other Half "don't share our values." Yet another characterized them as "poor, white, and uneducated." Imagine making such gross generalizations about women, Blacks, or gays: utterly unacceptable. Both comments reflect bias, whether conscious or unconscious. But such sentiments are widespread on campus about Other-Half individuals. Many such students, faculty, and staff have become as deeply closeted as I was growing up gay in the 1970s. Relatedly, Provost Martin Schmidt acknowledges, "Being Republican may be the hardest thing to be on campus." The bias and stereotyping are not unique to MIT. Here in the San Francisco bay area, students at Stanford, without repercussion, routinely equate conservatives with white supremacists.

A 2010 survey by *The Tech* of MIT students found that those who were Democrats outnumbered Republicans by over five to one.[13] Surely those numbers would be much more skewed today, over a decade later.

We might conduct "lost customer" surveys of high school seniors who visit campus but do not apply for admission, or if admitted, do not enroll, to determine why. Imagine how uncomfortable you and I would feel on a campus where everyone was a Trump supporter. Very uncomfortable indeed, I daresay. That is how many Other-Half seniors feel when they visit MIT.

The "Other Half" @ MIT:
A Negative Feedback Loop

Stereotyping

Under-representation
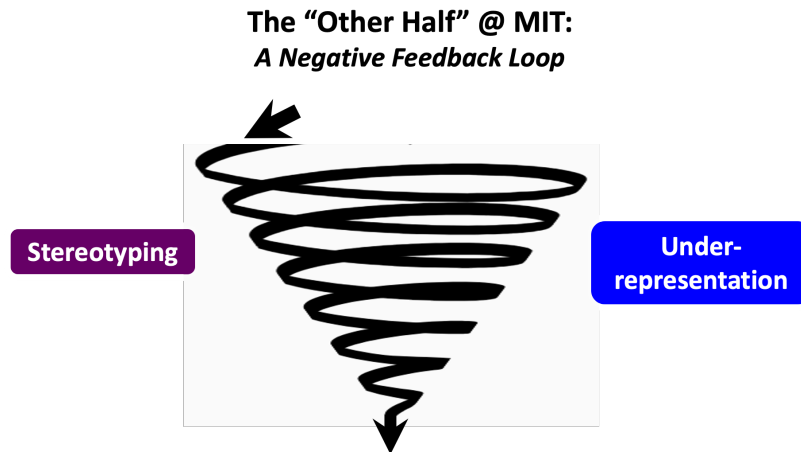
Other-Half Individuals Most Under-Represented among MIT Staff

While focusing on students, I do not mean to neglect faculty and staff. In recruiting and hiring staff, in particular, social connections and political affinities can more readily supersede professional qualifications. As I suggested at a recent Libraries visiting committee meeting, we might usefully engage an independent firm to confidentially survey MIT staff to see 1) how many staff we have of center-right sensibility (expect there to be few), and 2) how welcoming and inclusive they find the MIT work environment. To elicit honest survey responses, I think the provision of confidentiality would have to be airtight.

Growing US Polarization; Opportunity for MIT to Assume Leadership

We value diversity for gaining common understanding across our entire nation. At the same time, growing polarization may be our country's greatest existential threat. One, if not the main, driver of growing US polarization is lack of dialogue among polarizing groups. Driven by user engagement ("Likes"), social media today encourage us to interact with just those who already share our views. At MIT today, there are at best token forums and constituencies through which urban and rural, blue and red, and left and right might hear each other out and consider each other's views. Finding common ground this way is essential to keep our civil society from breaking apart.

Our stereotyping invites others to do likewise, driving sides ever further apart, and – amplified and accelerated by social media and partisan press – drawing our country into a downward spiral. More than any other institutions, universities can model open discussion and tolerance to avert these outcomes. Too, if a high school senior from rural America has, or perceives she has, less chance to be admitted to MIT than an equally qualified, traditionally under-represented but actually less under-represented racial minority, that will arouse resentment. Deservedly so. Resentment drives polarization. Some feel that being left behind in education is one of its key drivers. We value diversity both i) for exposing students to different lived experiences, to foster tolerance and understanding, and ii) for better decision making and creativity that comes from different cognitive styles. Both of these rationales apply to the Other Half.

Some may feel that MIT taking leadership to address growing US polarization goes beyond our mandate. I don't agree. We've taken on climate change and energy, similarly existential threats and opportunities for humanity. Despite the severity of the disparity, the Other Half is less under-represented at MIT than at our peer universities, all of whom are liberal arts more than scientific institutions. MIT's status as the top university which most upwardly mobilizes its students – moves more of them up from lower to higher quintiles of household incomes by age 30 – demonstrates our potential to include and engage with Other-Half individuals. We can model open discussion and tolerance, enjoin our peers to do likewise, and lead the way to halt and ultimately reverse growing US polarization. Quite possibly, no other top university could lead as effectively on this issue as MIT.

Recognize our vast common ground with the Other Half and expand on it. Whether it's eliminating poverty, preserving the environment, making higher education and health care more accessible and affordable, or achieving world peace, different constituencies share similar goals but differ in approach. Recognizing this invites a discussion of the benefits, costs, and unintended consequences of various approaches and shifts the discussion from ideological to practical. The greater the polarization, the more heavily common ground should weigh in our policies and advocacy. This approach is harder work and less satisfying short-term than stereotyping and doubling down, but it is a win-win long-term for MIT, our nation, and the world.

Launch an Institute-wide Task Force on US & Global Polarization to study forces driving and recommend solutions to address this destructive social trend. This would be analogous to the recent Task Force on the Work of the Future capably led by David Autor, Economics; David Mindell, History of Engineering and Manufacturing, and Aeronautics and Astronautics; and Elisabeth Reynolds, MIT Industrial Performance Center. The task force should address, in part, how higher education can help mitigate or reverse growing polarization.

<u>**Effective DEI Requires a Light Touch; Avoiding Mismatch**</u>

I came out late, in my late 30s. Prior to that, if I were chosen, promoted, or elected, I knew it was due to what I had contributed or accomplished, not to the fact I was gay. Now that I am out, I can't always be sure. No one should have to deal with that insecurity and indignity.

To avoid undermining the very individuals we intend to serve, and, as noted above, to avoid arousing resentment that fuels polarization, DEI at MIT needs to use many dimensions with a light touch rather than a few dimensions with a hammer. To again quote Dean Nobles, we need to attract a diverse pool of students and faculty "defined in the broadest terms." Let's make certain that no one has to wonder whether they were accepted, hired, or promoted just because of race, sexual orientation, or other physical/identity feature. Relatedly, how might we make the graphic on the front page of the DEI Strategic Action Plan reflect holistic diversity?

Consider both achievement and distance advanced in evaluating *all* candidates. Achievement measures where candidates stand today; distance advanced, much harder to discern, measures how far they have progressed on their own initiative from where they began. Either set of metrics could better predict an individual's future performance and success. SAT/ACT scores are important to both measures. AI can help discern distance advanced. We give credit for distance advanced to inner-city racial minorities; we need to do the same for rural, low-income Americans, who have also faced obstacles but advanced similarly far from where they started on their own initiative.

Apart from that, we should not lower our academic standards to admit Other-Half applicants or those of any other segment. All we can do is reach out more assiduously and ensure that strong candidates are not dissuaded from applying and/or enrolling. Lowering standards is a recipe for mediocrity, compromising MIT's standing and effectiveness long-term, and *mismatch*: underqualified students who are admitted to elite universities experiencing worse life outcomes than those who were not admitted in the first place.[14] Qualified students can tell when their peers are unqualified, doing a disservice to everyone. Despite the limitations of more-objective test scores, tracking and reporting them by segment may help ensure, if we are tempted to compromise our academic standards, that we know by how much, and that the burden we are consequently placing on those student segments is not excessive.

Across Top Universities, Alumni Giving Participation Steadily Declining

Inclusion and belonging applies to alumni, too. Alumni represent approximately 140,000 of 165,000 (alumni + students + faculty + staff) total members of the greater MIT community. As has been widely documented (see Council for Aid to Education chart below for one example), the percentage of university alumni who donate to their alma maters has steadily declined over the last two decades. Here is a hypothesis we owe it to ourselves to test: At least part of the decline is attributable to universities straying from their focus on education and research, becoming more ideological, and estranging alumni as a consequence. Even among my close friends with advanced degrees and successful careers, some have stated clearly that they will not support their alma mater "because my money would go to ideology instead of education." For similar reasons, some have stopped reading *Technology Review*.

Percentage of university alumni who donate to their alma maters

13%

8.7%

2003   2013

SOURCE: COUNCIL FOR AID TO EDUCATION
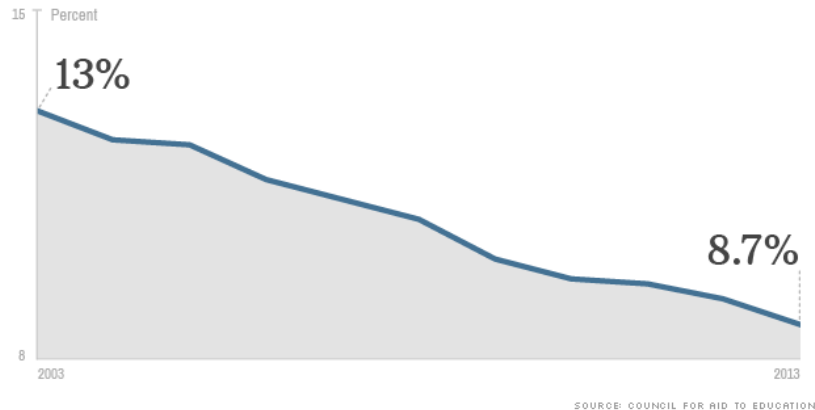
I had the great privilege and joy of serving as 2015-16 MIT Alumni Association (MITAA) president/chair, a position I fondly refer to as MIT's head cheerleader and matchmaker. During that time, I met with over a thousand alumni in 25 MIT Clubs in a dozen countries. As a result of that experience, I recently advised my friend and colleague MITAA CEO Whitney Espich as follows:

> "Closely review all large-scale alumni communications for content which is unduly political. Consider content not just from our own blue-state viewpoints, but from the viewpoints of those of red-leaning sensibilities, of whom there are relatively few on campus but who are well represented among our alumni (especially older cohorts); and of international alumni, whose countries invariably have their own political, economic, and social issues to deal with. Whenever possible, lead instead with MIT's universal, inspiring, unifying achievements in the sciences, engineering, and technology."

* * *

Achieving holistic diversity and inclusion at MIT, and in particular addressing marginalization and exclusion of Other-Half students, faculty, and staff, may well be as unpopular today as addressing on-campus discrimination against Jews in the 1930s, Blacks in the 1950s, and gays in the 1970s. But confronting those instances of exclusion in the past has paid huge dividends, helping our universities and our nation survive and flourish. Our DEI efforts, if truly holistic, will do the same today.

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Holistic DEI:
Recommendations for the MIT Community and Leadership

Consider a broad set of diversity variables, including both physical/identity and cognitive/ intellectual, for which greater diversity could make MIT a stronger, better, and more equitable place, before selecting those that we will prioritize in our admissions, hiring, and promotion. By doing so we are less likely to overlook, and to reduce diversity in, other important variables.

Serve the entire nation, not just selected communities, regions, and states.

Leverage AI to overcome biases and promote diversity in admissions.

Expand our DEI efforts to address shortfalls where on-campus constituencies and advocacy are lacking. The "Other Half" of the US (rural, center-right, lower-income) is likely the most under-represented such US constituency on campus. First-generation college attendees and international students from non-English-speaking countries also deserve such DEI support and inclusion.

Assess our admissions pipeline – outreach, applications, acceptances, and enrollments – to understand where and why shortfalls are occurring and address them. Analyze the pipeline at a more granular zip code- rather than aggregate state-level to pinpoint the greatest shortfalls. Conduct "lost customer" interviews or surveys of high school seniors who contact or visit MIT but do not apply, or if admitted, do not enroll, to determine why.

Leverage outreach, applications, and enrollments (Stages 1, 2, and 4 of the admissions pipeline) to achieve diversity along a broad range of dimensions. Resist the temptation to compromise academic standards to admit (Stage 3 of the pipeline) Other-Half candidates or those of any other segment, thereby putting candidates' well-being, and MIT's long-term standing and effectiveness, at risk.

Consider both achievement and distance advanced in evaluating *all* candidates. We give credit for distance advanced to inner-city racial minorities; we need to do the same for rural, low-income Americans who have also faced obstacles but advanced similarly far from where they started on their own initiative. AI can help discern distance advanced.

Seek out and include voices of Other-Half members of the MIT community, even if they are few in number and/or deeply closeted. Emphasize the importance of intellectual as well as identity diversity on any university campus and of MIT's mission of serving our entire nation, not just selected parts of it.

Refuse to stereotype the Other Half either in person or online. Such actions and attitudes drive polarization and – amplified and accelerated by social media and partisan press – draw our country into a downward spiral. More than any other institutions, universities can model open discussion and tolerance to avert this outcome.

Recognize our vast common ground with the Other Half and expand on it. This approach is harder work and less satisfying short-term than stereotyping and doubling down, but it is a win-win long-term for MIT, our nation, and the world.

Launch an Institute-wide Task Force on US & Global Polarization to study forces driving and recommend solutions to address this destructive social trend. The task force should address, in part, how higher education can help mitigate or reverse growing polarization.

Call for sensitivity and civility. Encourage, praise, and celebrate civil engagement and robust debate based on mutual respect.

Closely review all large-scale alumni communications for content which is unduly ideological. Lead instead with MIT's universal, inspiring, unifying achievements in the sciences, engineering, and technology.

Join or support Heterodox Academy, a nonpartisan collaborative of thousands of faculty, administrators, and students committed to enhancing the quality of research and education by promoting open inquiry, viewpoint diversity, and constructive disagreement in universities.[15]

Summon courage to do what is right, not merely popular. Especially for our leadership.

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[1] Scott E. Page, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies* (Princeton University Press, 2007).

[2] See photo on https://www.technologyreview.com/2016/04/26/246097/the-internet-of-1916/.

[3] Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Pantheon, 2012). See also Haidt's TED talk:
https://www.ted.com/talks/jonathan_haidt_the_moral_roots_of_liberals_and_conservatives/

[4] Based on the work of psychologist C. G. Jung, INTJ (Introvert-iNtuitive-Thinking-Judging) and ESFP (Extrovert-Sensing-Feeling-Perceiving) are two of 16 personality types of the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) personality inventory.

[5] Paul R. Daugherty, et. al., "Using Artificial Intelligence to Promote Diversity," *MIT Sloan Management Review*, Cambridge (Winter 2019): 1, https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/using-artificial-intelligence-to-promote-diversity/.

[6] In the chart, labels appear above or below, not to the left or right of, the datapoints. Data point color (red or blue) is based on 2016 US presidential vote.

[7] https://www.npr.org/2019/03/06/697098684/one-reason-rural-students-dont-go-to-college-colleges-don-t-go-to-them

[8] See for example, Geoffrey West, *Scale: The Universal Laws of Growth, Innovation, Sustainability, and the Pace of Life in Organisms, Cities, Economies, and Companies* (Penguin Press, 2017).

[9] David Goodhart, *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics* (C. Hurst & Co., 2017).

[10] https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/11/05/report-examines-disparities-rural-and-nonrural-students

[11] To better ascertain this point, I have asked Chancellor Barnhart for a more granular analysis at the zip code- rather than aggregate state-level.

[12] In 2016, 84% of 3,141 US counties were red (Associated Press).

[13] https://thetech.com/2010/11/02/elections-analysis-v130-n50.

[14] Richard Sander, Stuart Taylor Jr, *Mismatch: How Affirmative Action Hurts Students It's Intended to Help, and Why Universities Won't Admit It* (Basic Books, 2012).

[15] https://heterodoxacademy.org/.