

## Launching Working Group on Free Expression

January 27, 2022

To the members of the MIT community,

I write today to share the charge and membership of the special Ad Hoc Working Group on Free Expression.

Since October, the decision regarding the Carlson Lecture sponsored by the Department of Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences has caused significant concern and contention within our community, and beyond. I have received and reflected on the unvarnished views of people on every side.

### **Ad Hoc Working Group on Free Expression**

The most striking feature of the commentary is how so many thoughtful people, inside and outside of MIT, can look at the same events and come to such different conclusions. However, I am convinced that we can learn from this moment together and arrive at a place of shared understanding. To help us do this, we will turn to the leadership of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Free Expression.

### **Leadership**

Given the importance of the subject, I am especially grateful that the working group will be co-chaired by two faculty members with exceptional records of academic accomplishment, leadership as teachers and mentors, and service to the Institute and the world: Institute Professor Penny Chisholm and Professor Phil Clay PhD '75, who also served as MIT's chancellor from 2001 to 2011.

I encourage you to read the committee's charge – from Provost Marty Schmidt, Chancellor Melissa Nobles and Chair of the Faculty Lily Tsai – and review its membership.

Because faculty have direct and enduring responsibility for stewarding MIT's core academic values, principles and practices, including academic freedom, it is our faculty who will lead the way. To tap the wisdom of the whole community, however, the working group will consult regularly with an important set of partners who will take responsibility for seeking out and representing the views of MIT students, staff, postdocs, alumni and Corporation members. The working group will also draw on extensive feedback gathered from the community last fall. If you would like to share your views as this work begins, you may do so via [working-group@mit.edu](mailto:working-group@mit.edu).

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One of the privileges of being part of the MIT community is the opportunity to learn from each other. This effort presents each of us with a stimulating opportunity to do just that – with an open mind, curiosity, respect and care.

With gratitude and optimism,

L. Rafael Reif