

# THE CHAIR OF THE FACULTY

*Notes from the Committee on Nominations*

[Last Updated 2/4/2024]

## INTRODUCTION

This document provides an overview of the position of Chair of the Faculty, giving a sense of the major roles played by the Chair in the MIT governance system as well as details regarding the specific responsibilities.

## ROLE

The Chair of the Faculty has three primary roles:

- (1) To serve as a problem solver, communicator, and community builder in leading the faculty governance system.
- (2) To serve as the highest-level representative of the MIT Faculty. This representation is carried out in meetings of the Faculty Policy Committee, which the Chair convenes and facilitates, and in the monthly Institute Faculty Meetings, for which the faculty officers, President, and other senior officers set the agenda. More importantly, the Chair represents the Faculty at the following:
  - Monthly (more frequently if needed) one-on-one meetings with each of the President, Provost, and Chancellor, as well as regular meetings with the Chair of the MIT Corporation
  - Academic Council meetings
  - Monthly meetings to set the agendas for the Institute Faculty Meetings
  - The Chair may request a brief speaking and discussion spot at Corporation meetings to bring key topics on the minds of faculty to the attention of Corporation members. In addition, the Chair may request an agenda slot at Executive Committee meetings to speak about matters of significance to the faculty.
  - Charging ad hoc committees, at times in collaboration with senior leadership, to address significant Institute-wide matters<sup>1</sup>
- (3) To engage in outreach to departments and the Schools/College in order to communicate about ongoing policy deliberations and collect input concerning issues of importance to faculty. To this end, the Faculty Officer Group attends each School/College Council once each semester.

## TERM AND ELECTION

The Chair of the Faculty is elected in alternating years with the Associate Chair and the

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<sup>1</sup> This is of particular importance because MIT's shared governance is to a large extent administered through a system of standing committees, with ad hoc committees formed as needed. Ad hoc committees convened by the Chair of the Faculty have at times resulted in new bodies, principles, and processes being set up within the Institute's governance system and administrative structures.

Secretary of the Faculty.<sup>2</sup> The next Chair will serve from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025 as Chair-elect, followed by a two-year term (July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2027) as Chair of the Faculty. As Chair-elect, the nominee will join the Faculty Policy Committee and attend select meetings.

The Committee on Nominations submits nominees for faculty officers as part of the slate of nominees for the Standing Committees of the Faculty. This slate is presented at the March Faculty Meeting. Beginning in Spring 2024, the actual vote for faculty officer(s) will be conducted separately from the vote on the committee nominees. Faculty will have a week to vote electronically on each, and the results will be announced at the May meeting. While *Rules and Regulations of the Faculty* allows for an alternate nomination process in which faculty can nominate someone other than nominees proposed by the Committee on Nominations (including themselves), it has been exercised infrequently.

## **COMPENSATION**

The Provost provides three summer months of salary for two summers (i.e., six summer months). This salary may be used **only** for summer salary. In addition, if the Chair is already receiving summer salary, e.g. through a grant, they will not receive these funds beyond the standard cap on summer salary.

In addition, the Chair receives a \$50K/year scholar allowance (total \$100K) and has access to \$2,000<sup>3</sup> each year for meeting expenses. Teaching relief may be provided by the Chair's department but is not guaranteed; the Chair negotiates this with their department.<sup>4</sup> Relief from other departmental service is typical, and is determined by the Chair's department.

## **MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Chair of the Faculty, with the assistance of the Faculty Governance Administrator:

- Meets weekly with the other faculty officers. The chair of CUP often joins these meetings as well, and sometimes the chairs of other Standing Committees of the Faculty, depending on topics under discussion.
- Meets monthly (more frequently if needed) with each of the President, Provost, and Chancellor, and with the Chair of the Corporation at a frequency determined on an annual basis.
- Is responsible for the day-to-day functional supervision of the Faculty Governance Administrator.
- Hosts the monthly Random Faculty Dinners/Lunches. The other faculty officers also attend. Summary notes, with speakers' names omitted, are provided to the President, Provost, Chancellor, and Senior Advisor to the President.

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<sup>2</sup> There is currently a pilot underway to have two Associate Chairs instead of an Associate Chair and a Secretary. The pilot will be evaluated in Fall 2024, and if found successful, a proposal for permanent change will go to the floor of the Faculty.

<sup>3</sup> If a small amount beyond this is needed, the Chair can make a request to the Provost. Most typically such requests are approved.

<sup>4</sup> Recent Chairs have negotiated partial or full teaching relief.

- Moderates the all-faculty email list in collaboration with the Faculty Governance Administrator. The Chair of the Faculty has the final authority over distribution of emails to this list.
- Appoints the chairs of all of the Standing Committees of the Faculty, with the exception of the Faculty Policy Committee. The Chair also appoints the chairs of the Killian and Edgerton award selection committees. A list of the faculty committees can be found at <https://facultygovernance.mit.edu/committees-and-councils>.
- Resolves complaints regarding violations of the regulations that govern the scheduling of exams, assignments, etc. The term regulations are posted at <https://facultygovernance.mit.edu/faculty-rules-page#term-regulations-and-examination-policies>. The Faculty Governance Administrator assists in this process.
- Plays a key role in managing Institute Faculty Meetings and, in the absence of the President, serves as chair. The Faculty Officers and the Faculty Governance Administrator meet with the President, Provost, Chancellor, and senior advisor to the President prior to each meeting to set the agenda. Faculty Meetings are most typically held on the third Wednesday of each month during the academic year. Exceptions to this are as follows: (1) There is no meeting in January; (2) the May meeting is held on the Wednesday of the last week of classes; and (3) when the third Wednesday of other months falls on or immediately before a major holiday, the regular meeting is held on either the second or the fourth Wednesday. Meetings run from 3:30 to 5:00 pm and are held in-person in 10-250 and via Zoom.
- Maintains awareness of major issues that arise – in particular those that impact faculty – and charges ad hoc committees to address these, at times in collaboration with senior leadership.
- Welcomes new faculty at the annual New Faculty Orientation and leads a panel discussion about the transition to faculty life.
- Contributes a regular column to *The MIT Faculty Newsletter*.
- Submits a report on faculty business for publication in the annual *Reports to the President*. This includes a summary of the actions of the faculty committees. The Faculty Governance Administrator prepares this document.
- Attends Corporation meetings (held on the first Friday of October, December, and March, and on the last Thursday of May), and may be asked to comment on particular issues by the Chair of the Corporation or the President. The Chair may also request a brief (~7-8 minute) speaking and discussion spot at Corporation meetings to bring key topics on the minds of faculty to the attention of Corporation members. In addition, the Chair may request an agenda slot at Executive Committee meetings to speak about matters of significance to the faculty. At the end of their tenure, the Chair of the Faculty is invited to give a brief report at the May Corporation meeting.
- Leads a group of honored guests in the Commencement procession and sits on the stage during the OneMIT Commencement Ceremony.
- The Chair introduces the winner of the (previous year's) Killian Faculty Achievement Award at their Killian Lecture, and presents them with the award certificate. The Chair also attends a reception for the award winner following the lecture. The Chair is sometimes invited to attend a dinner for the award winner. The Chair is also sometimes invited to attend a lunch in honor of the previous year's recipient(s) of the Edgerton Faculty Achievement Award.

- Attends the annual dinner in honor of faculty who are releasing their tenure lines to move to either post-tenure or emerita/us status.
- Consults, at the request of the Provost, and together with the other Officers of the Faculty, on complaints related to negative tenure decisions as outlined in [Section 3.3](#) of *MIT Policies and Procedures*.
- Co-leads the review process (with the President) to appoint an Institute Professor when a nomination is received. The Provost, Chancellor, appropriate Dean, Academic Council, Academic Appointments Subgroup of Academic Council, and the Executive Committee are also involved, and the Faculty Governance Administrator staffs the process.
- Consults with the President in the event of “the closing or substantial reorganization of a department or interdisciplinary laboratory or center” ([Policies and Procedures 1.4](#)), and in the convening of a committee to review the procedures followed in developing the recommendation.

## **MEMBERSHIP ON COMMITTEES AND COUNCILS**

The Chair is a member of the following groups:

- ***Faculty Policy Committee (FPC)***

This committee is considered the executive committee of the Faculty, and the Chair serves as its chair. The committee interprets and implements academic policy as approved by the faculty, proposes or reviews modifications in policy on its way to an Institute Faculty Meeting (often from other committees), and coordinates much of the faculty’s business, including managing the faculty committee structure. FPC also provides a forum for faculty-administration interaction. FPC meets on alternating Thursdays from 12:00 to 2:00 pm during the academic year, but not during January. FPC is staffed by the Faculty Governance Administrator.

- ***Academic Council***

This is a bi-weekly meeting of the senior officers who are concerned with the overall administration of the Institute. Academic Council (<http://orgchart.mit.edu/academic-council>) meets on Tuesdays from 10:30 am to noon.

The Chair sits on the Academic Appointments Subgroup of Academic Council, which reviews and votes on all academic appointments brought before the Council. The Chair attends three full-day meetings in January and in April to review promotion and tenure recommendations.

- ***Faculty Officer Group (FOG)***

The Chair of the Faculty exercises the position’s responsibilities in collaboration with a “cabinet” of advisors, known as the Faculty Officer Group (FOG), with whom the Chair meets at least weekly. This is the core of faculty officer service – and one of the most important and most interesting parts. FOG includes the three faculty officers and the Faculty Governance Administrator. The chair of the Committee on the Undergraduate Program (CUP) and/or the chair of the Committee on Graduate Programs frequently participate as well. The members of FOG discuss and consider key issues in the context of, for example, how to most effectively engage with and represent faculty; how to most effectively enhance faculty interactions with students, administration, the Corporation, and others; how to put processes in place to engage a broad range of stakeholders across the Institute in order to

ensure diverse perspectives and be able to get buy-in.

- ***Institute Council on Belonging, Achievement, and Composition (CBAC)***

CBAC is a standing Institute committee on which the Chair serves as an *ex officio* member. The Chair may designate one of the other Faculty Officers to serve in their place.

- ***International Advisory Committee***

IAC is a standing Institute committee on which the Chair serves as an *ex officio* member. The Chair may designate one of the other Faculty Officers to serve in their place.

- ***Enrollment Management Group***

EMG is a standing Institute committee on which the Chair serves as an *ex officio* member. The Chair may designate one of the other Faculty Officers to serve in their place.

- ***MITx Faculty Advisory Committee***

The Chair serves as an *ex officio* member. The Chair may designate one of the other Faculty Officers to serve in their place.

- ***Corporation Joint Advisory Committee on Institute-Wide Affairs***

The Chair of the Faculty is an *ex officio* member of the Corporation Joint Advisory Committee on Institute-Wide Affairs (CJAC). The Chair may designate one of the other Faculty Officers to serve in their place. CJAC has typically met in October, December, and March, typically on the Wednesdays prior to a Corporation meeting, from 5:00 – 7:00 pm.

- ***Department Heads Meeting***

This group is chaired by the President and meets for lunch six times during the academic year. Topics are determined by the President. All three Faculty Officers attend.

## **VIEWS FROM FORMER CHAIRS**

In 2012, the Committee on Nominations met with former chairs Profs. Sam Allen, Tom Kochan, and Bish Sanyal to hear of their experiences. All three expressed a great deal of satisfaction with their time as Chair. In particular, all said they derived a great deal of pleasure from working with colleagues across the Institute on important matters. Also, all three found learning about ways the Institute works very useful and interesting. In 2023, Prof. Susan Silbey noted her sense that an important role of the Chair of the Faculty is to serve as a communicative conduit across the Institute – attending School/College Council meetings and collecting input concerning issues of importance that fall under faculty governance.

As the Chair of the Faculty represents the interests of the Faculty to the upper administration, the Chair must be diplomatic in his or her approach, especially on contentious issues. The three chairs generally found interacting with the upper administration straightforward, even during difficult times. A particular skill the Chair must develop is to communicate the views of the administration back to the faculty in a manner consistent with the Chair's role as an advocate for the faculty.

Overall, the chairs found their time extremely rewarding and an opportunity to do a lot of good for the Institute. All allowed that the job can be difficult, but with important issues that needed

resolution. All felt the independence of the Chair from the administration was important and that, in some cases, the Chair position has been a stepping-stone to an administrative post.

Prof. Mary Fuller (Literature) is the current Chair of the Faculty (July 2023-June 2025).