

April 26, 2021

Professor Peter Fisher, Department Head  
Professor Deepto Chakrabarty, Associate Department Head  
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Dear Peter and Deepto:

Thank you for your continued support of the Physics Values Committee. This letter contains our first recommendation to Department Leadership.

Several weeks ago, the Training and Management subgroup of PVC, which is composed of staff, met to discuss their experiences within the Department of Physics. This discussion, similar to the Quality of Life Survey<sup>1</sup>, exposed feelings of exclusion, the constant pressure to work harder than others, and that overall job satisfaction is relatively low. These sentiments are significant, especially considering the number of staff members that work in the Department.

The subgroup members at the meeting were in agreement with the following suggestions:

- Training should be required for all managers<sup>2</sup>, specifically training on workplace bullying, active listening, cultural sensitivity, white privilege, and leadership.
- Training should be offered (parallel structure?) for non-managerial staff, such as cultural sensitivity, white privilege, professional development and speaking with confidence.

As a result of the conversation on training many questions arose, such as: what is HR's responsibility in hosting, conducting, and/or encouraging training? Who will hold the managers accountable for taking training(s) and implementing new practices? How will this impact job responsibilities and staff evaluations? Should we have two separate monthly staff meetings, one related to staff issues, and the other related to departmental matters, or would this be considered a duplication, as the SoS already hosts staff lunches?

Additionally, the following was acknowledged:

- Many of the staff within the Department have secondary degrees, and are taking on additional responsibilities, without recognition or reclassification of their position;
- Many of the staff within the Department are predominately white men and women;
- Staff do not feel comfortable raising concerns through channels at MIT (see QOL survey, only 67% feel comfortable raising concerns through channels at MIT and 54% feel like MIT would take reports of unethical conduct seriously); and

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<sup>1</sup> [https://tableau.mit.edu/#/site/IR/views/MIT\\_QoL\\_SOS/SummaryResults?:iid=1](https://tableau.mit.edu/#/site/IR/views/MIT_QoL_SOS/SummaryResults?:iid=1)

<sup>2</sup> Managers in Physics are defined as non-faculty and who supervise one or more people

- Lastly, there is only one woman of color in a managerial role.

This highlights the quality of staff, but also recognizes the stark differences in privilege, access, and recognition within the Department, and the desire to continue to foster allyship within the unit.

On our own, we are able to grow and share individually, and support one another when sought out. However our concerns stem from a lack of consistent and equitable managerial support, as a unit. Topics discussed were:

- As a unit, how do we grow together?
- How can we be brave enough to vocalize acts of bigotry?
- How can we praise colleagues without insinuating favoritism?
- How do we hold our AO and HR responsible for ensuring that staff morale increases?
- What is the process when our job responsibilities increase without compensation?

In conclusion, we would like to ask Department Leadership to encourage training for managers, provide access to all staff to pursue training and/or professional development, in hopes that this improves the climate and culture for the staff in the Department of Physics. In addition to the training suggested, our other recommendations include:

- Creating the Physics Department Faculty and Staff handbook to outline responsibilities and best practices for managers;
- Training and evaluation from a non-MIT source;
- Staff recognition on Physics' website; and
- Annual staff reviews.

Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns, or wish to meet to discuss this.

Cheers,  
PVC Sub Group - Management/Training