MIT Diversity Story Timeline Milestone – Women

1865 – Margaret Dayton Stinson becomes the first female employee of MIT (Source: Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge Massachusetts)

1873 – 1st female graduate of MIT, Ellen Swallow Richards. See http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/exhibits/esr/ (Source: Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge Massachusetts)

1882 – MIT starts admitting female students, following gift from Women’s Educational Association to provide appropriate facilities for women at the Institute (Source: AMITA) http://alumweb.mit.edu/groups/amita.old/esr/womenslab.html

1890 – Eta Sigma Mu is founded as the first club for women students at MIT. In 1897, the name is changed to Cleofan. (Source: Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge Massachusetts)

1899 – Massachusetts Institute of Technology Women’s Association (MITWA) founded “to promote greater fellowship among Institute women.” Renamed AMITA in 1964 (Source: AMITA) http://www.mit-amita.org/esr/mitwa.html

1905 – Marie Celeste Turner becomes the first black female to attend MIT. (Source: Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge Massachusetts)

1906 – Ida Annah Ryan becomes the first female to earn the S.M. from MIT, in Architecture. (Source: Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge Massachusetts)

1922 – Elizabeth Stuart Gatewood Pietsch becomes the first female to earn the Ph.D. from MIT, in Chemistry. (Source: Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge Massachusetts)

1945 – First women’s dorm opened, at 120 Bay Street, Boston. (Source: Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge Massachusetts)


1960 – Prof. Sheila Widnall ’60 is the first woman appointed to Engineering faculty; first woman to chair MIT Faculty (1979); first female Secretary of Air Force (1993-1997). (Sources:
1963 – Emily Wick becomes the first female tenured professor at MIT. (Source: Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge Massachusetts) Also, see http://www.mit-amita.org/esr/sixties.html


1968 – All intramurals now open to women (Source: AMITA) http://www.mit-amita.org/esr/sixties.html


1968(?) – Women’s newspaper, Sojourner, started (Source: AMITA) http://www.mit-amita.org/esr/sixties.html

1968 – Shirley Jackson & Jennifer Rudd become first African-American women to graduate with SB from MIT (Source: Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge Massachusetts)

1970 – Mary Frances Wagley, ’47, becomes the first woman to join the MIT Corporation. (Source: Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge Massachusetts)


1970 – MIT starts allowing co-ed dorms; MIT drops target numbers for women’s admissions, based on recommendations by Dean Emily Wick ’51 and ad hoc committee on women’s admissions (Source: AMITA) http://www.mit-amita.org/esr/adhoc.html

1972 – Ad Hoc Committee on the Role of Women at MIT, headed by Prof. Mildred Dresselhaus & Paula Stone ’72. Other members included Sandra Yulke ’74, Carol Epstein ’72, Christina Jansen ’63. (Source: AMITA) http://www.mit-amita.org/esr/adhoc.html

1973 – MIT – A Place for Women – brochure sparked by Ad Hoc Committee on Role of Women.  
(Source: Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge Massachusetts)

1973 – Alumnae survey conducted by AMITA (Source: AMITA) [http://www.mit-amita.org/esr/centennial.html]

1973 – Centennial Celebration exhibit featuring “pioneering alumnae” prepared by AMITA 
president, Susan Schur ’60 (Source: AMITA) [http://www.mit-amita.org/esr/centennial.html]

1973 – Shirley Jackson granted PhD in Physics. First African-American woman in the US.  
(Source: Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge Massachusetts) Also see: [http://www.mit-amita.org/esr/centennial.html]

1976 – WILG (Women’s Independent Living Group) established with AMITA’s help (Source: 
AMITA) [http://www.mit-amita.org/esr/centennial.html]

1979 – Prof. Sheila Widnall ’60 first woman elected chairman of MIT Faculty (Source: AMITA)  
[http://www.mit-amita.org/esr/critical.html]

1984 – Mary Frances Wagley, ’47, becomes the first female president of MIT Alumni 
Association. (Source: Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, 
Cambridge Massachusetts)

1984 – Ann E. Friedlaender, Ph.D. ’64, appointed Dean of the School of Humanities and Social 
Sciences, becoming the first female academic dean at MIT. (Source: AMITA)  
[http://www.mit-amita.org/esr/critical.html]

1986 – Ellen Swallow Richards chair endowed (by AMITA?) (Source: AMITA) [http://www.mit-
amita.org/esr/critical.html]

1990 – AMITA Oral History Project developed under leadership of AMITA President Bonny 
Kellerman and Prof. Marjorie Resnick. Renamed AMITA/MacVicar Memorial (Source: 
AMITA) [http://www.mit-amita.org/esr/critical.html]

1999 – Publication of Study of the Status of Women Faculty in the School of Science, under 
leadership of Nancy Hopkins, Amgen Professor of Biology (Source: Reports to President, 
2000-2001)

2001 – Latina Interview Project directed by Lecturer in Foreign Languages and Literatures, 
Margarita Ribas-Groeger to document the experiences of Latina students at MIT. Results 
in film, Nuestras Voces: Being Latina at MIT, which premieres at the 30th New England 
Film and Video Festival in 2005. (Sources: Reports to the President 2001-2002; MIT 
Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures) Film is available here:  
2004 – Susan Hockfield is elected 16th president by the Corporation and becomes the first female president of MIT.