

[BAMIT Platform](#)

for Diversity and the Black Experience at MIT

2015 December 3

Overall implementation score: 52%

Mental Health

Implementation score per item

Recommendation: 1 Recruit “Dean Counselors”. Identify and train a significant number of non-academic dean-like counselors who can speak to shared experiences.

Status: Partially implemented with additional hires in S3, <https://studentlife.mit.edu/s3/about-us> 0.5

Additional info: Before students can experience inclusion, they have to learn to navigate and leverage opportunities at MIT. This can be challenging regardless of department or major. Value, respect, and inclusion are often fostered by the depth and meaning of the relationships students develop. Research supports that students tend to reach out and respond most effectively to a member of their affinity group, whether by ethnicity, gender or race. “Dean Counselors” (DCs) will understand the specific race-related challenges Black students face both inside and outside of MIT. Lived experiences put DCs in the ideal position to share the broad and varied set of skills and strategies necessary for success at MIT. Having like-minded individuals vested and aiding in their success ensures that students feel valued, respected and included. DCs should therefore be professionals trained in dealing with issues related to stress and isolation; the main DC role is to bond with students and intervene as necessary on the student’s behalf.

Recommendation:	2	Enable crisis intervention. Establish a formal process by which DCs can identify potential mental-health crises among Black students and follow through by interfacing with medical and mental-health professionals.	
Status:		Partially implemented with the establishment of the CARE Team, http://studentlife.mit.edu/careteam	0.5
Additional info:		Anticipating a crisis situation and intervening before a crisis occurs is especially needed during students' freshman and sophomore years. Those who need to reach out may not do so if they are depressed or feel isolated. As a normal part of the semester, we suggest establishing meetings for all students with DCs. These meetings should take place at least once or twice a term. The student gets to meet with a person who is "on their side" and converse about grades or life at MIT without feeling the pressure associated with an Academic Advisor or department member. The more informal role allows DCs to do a well-being check of the student. If DCs recognize forms of mental illness or duress they can begin interfacing, proactively, with the mental-health department, the academic department or other agencies to better support the student in need.	
Recommendation:	3	Expand advising. Increase advising efforts appropriate to the mental well-being of Black students.	
Status:		Implemented. Mental Health & Counseling has special groups for black students and other students of color, https://medical.mit.edu/services/mental-health-counseling/group-counseling . Women's and Gender Studies has organized a group for black women http://news.mit.edu/2016/my-sisters-keeper-builds-community-for-black-women-students-1110 , and the Office of Minority Education has established a group for men of color http://ome.mit.edu/programs-services/standard . Thus, both counseling and advising needs of black students are being addressed.	1

Additional info:	Just as MIT has recognized the importance of identity markers like gender, and sexuality in counseling, the Institute must place greater emphasis on the specific advising needs of Black students in order to ensure both retention and mental well-being.	
Recommendation: 4	Hire specialists. Hire Black counselors with expressed interest (and experience) in counseling specific issues related to URM.	
Status:	Implemented with several new clinicians in Mental Health and Counseling, https://medical.mit.edu/services/mental-health-counseling#careProviders	1
Additional info:	In order to address any mental-health issues found among Black students, MIT must assure that there are sufficient health professionals equipped with the cultural sensitivity required. Indeed there are many Black students with multiple URM identities—e.g., women, members of the LGBT community, the disabled—who especially need guidance. Specificity of treatment ultimately helps all students navigate issues within MIT and manage racial challenges they encounter outside of MIT (e.g., internships, grad school, jobs, etc.).	
Recommendation: 5	Ongoing dialogue.	
Status:	Unclear how to measure this, but Mental Health and Counseling is exploring new ways to help faculty help students.	Awaiting more information
Additional info:	The recent mental-health crises among members of the MIT community make it imperative that the Institute integrate mental-health approaches in its endeavors. One of MIT's constructive initiative of the past year was encouraging professors to check in with students, especially while the campus community was coping with deaths in the student population. BAMIT also looks to explore ways in which we can help Black students approach professors without shame or hesitation.	

Student Support and engagement

Recommendation:	1	Implementing recommendations from the Report on the Initiative for Faculty Race and Diversity, developed by the committee led by Dr. Paula Hammond.	
Status:		See Hammond Report tab.	0.30
Recommendation:	2	Monitoring and addressing any procedural inequities in Black students being able to secure thesis advisors (especially in departments with straight and flexible options), UROP/IROP assignments and distinguished fellowships.	
Status:		Not implemented.	0
Recommendation:	3	Providing all students with a print or online catalog of all campus professors from underrepresented groups (not just those in students' respective departments) at the beginning of each semester.	
Status:		Not implemented.	0
Recommendation:	4	Assure operating space. The Institute should assure the Black Students Union a regular (everyday) operating space.	
Status:		Done.	1
Additional info:		URM-community-oriented spaces like the BSU Lounge, the Cheney Room, and the Rainbow Lounge deliver a clear message that the MIT campus welcomes and is home to diverse communities. For decades the BSU Lounge has sustained the campus life of Black students as a place to study, share meals, connect with peers, and hold meetings and events. In addition, having a regular place to congregate significantly eases the administrative burden on students to coordinate meeting space.	

Measuring Outcomes

Recommendation:	1	Granular data. Include metrics on recruitment, retention, graduation (MIT and departmental data) and other survey data by race (not just URMs as a whole).	
Status:		Largely done, see dashboards at http://diversity.mit.edu/data/	1
Additional info:		BAMIT has additional interest in seeing the breakdown of these statistics by gender within the Black community. MIT should also monitor whether high achieving URMs (e.g., those with certain test scores) are applying and being admitted to MIT at higher or lower rates than their counterparts.	
Recommendation:	2	Student surveys. Increase the frequency and depth of student surveys to understand how attitudes change for specific students over time.	
Status:		Not fully implemented. While surveys have added new questions and more in depth analysis has been done, not all questions are asked annually.	0.5
Additional info:		This will allow more accurate pinpointing of issues that should be addressed by MIT leadership. As part of the dashboard (mentioned above), there should be a student assessment done on an annual basis (as opposed to the student survey that is only done once every 4 years, currently).	
Recommendation:	3	Black-student surveys. Conduct a specific survey for Black students on a bi-annual basis to address any impediments to their success such as difficulty in finding or working with academic/thesis advisors, UROPs/IROPs and distinguished fellowships.	
Status:		Not implemented.	0
Recommendation:	4	Interest assessment. Review areas of academic and research interests and determine how those align with growing minority concerns.	
Status:		Not implemented.	0

Additional info: The Institute can better allocate resources to heavily recruit within certain research areas, such that Black candidates will feel that the program will be more attractive over the long-term.

Recommendation: 5 Institutional models. Have MIT continue to participate in the “Leading for Change” consortium that addresses creating more inclusive universities.

Status: ICEO has led continued participation,
<https://www.bridgew.edu/LeadingforChange>

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Additional info: This leverages learnings from peer institutions that are making significant strides, not limited to the elites.