Recommendations of LBGTQ+ Students and Communities at MIT (2016)

Overall implementation score: 22%

Implementation score per item

Recommendation: 1  LBGTQ+ Inclusive Graduate Student Orientation
Status: Not implemented (there is a graduate student orientation, but it does not provide information about LBGTQ+ issues).
Additional info: We fully support the Black Graduate Student Association recommendation #4 - changes to grad orientations. We also recommend that there be more visibility of the LBGTQIA+ community during graduate student orientation events, programs, and presentations. Several students have commented on the lack of LBGTQ identities and experiences represented in their grad student orientation experience. Inclusion of LBGTQ related content in other diversity and inclusion efforts during Grad student orientations is advised. Furthermore, the intersections of student's identities should be highlighted at some point during grad student orientation.

Recommendation: 2  LBGTQ+ Inclusive Undergraduate Student Orientation
Status: Current entering student orientation does include a look at intersectionality as it relates to some of the frequently named characteristics such as ethnicity, culture, economic class, politics, religion, etc. However, owing largely to severe time limitations, there is no appreciable focus on intersectionality as it relates to the LBGTQ+ community.
Additional info: We fully support the Black Students' Union recommendation #3 and, similar to its graduate counterpart, strives to have more visibility of the LBGTQIA+ community during undergraduate orientation/international orientation events, programs, and presentations are recommended. Furthermore, the intersections of student's identities should be highlighted at some point during undergrad student orientation.

Recommendation: 3  LBGTQ+ Inclusive Mental Health Resources
Status: Implemented.
Additional info: We fully support BSU recommendation #1 and BGSA recommendation #5 - increased resources allocated for the hiring of multicultural competent mental health and student support services staff, inclusive of a racially diverse professional staff. In addition we recommend the inclusion of staff in Mental Health who have professional experience and expertise on issues of Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation. Student feedback highlights a recent Gender Fluidity Support group in Mental Health in which some time was spent teaching the practitioners about Gender Identity rather than fully receiving the benefits of the group therapy experience. Similar to the need for more practitioners with multicultural competencies, this experience highlights the need for more LBGTQ competent practitioners and resources.

Recommendation: 4  Resources for Queer and Trans Students of Color
Status: Discussions are under way to develop strategies to begin to more fully address needs of Queer and Trans students of color, but these are in the embryonic phase and no timeline is articulated.
We highly recommend more human and financial resources and support services be provided to self-identified queer and trans students of color at MIT. A recent professional consultation indicates that MIT students from these populations are in need of more inclusive, better trained, and more supportive resources across MIT. Highlights from this report include statements that students are being called racial slurs by their professors without any bystander intervention, that "diversity work is not a hobby", that "MIT is not designed for people", that "there is a lack of moral/ethical impetus to care", and that "MIT has lost its humanity". We suggest the swift implementation of the report’s recommendations: improvements to overall transparency, communication, strengthening student affairs, and developing a student-centered ethic of care felt throughout the student experience.

**Recommendation:** 5  
**LBGTQ+ Inclusive Sexual Violence and Sexual Misconduct Resources**  
**Status:** Currently no targeted efforts have been outlined.  
**Additional info:** National data indicate that bisexual and trans people of college age experience much higher rates of rape, physical violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence. Thus, it is recommended that all MIT services that handle issues of sexual violence and sexual misconduct have the proper resources, data, training and awareness to adequately assess and address these existing disparities for LBGTQ+ students and other high risk populations within the student body.

**Recommendation:** 6  
**LBGTQ Training for Faculty**  
**Status:** Not implemented.
Additional info: There is currently no ongoing, organized inclusion of any LBGTQ specific training or educational content for faculty and more importantly no sustainable resource for the provision of any diversity, inclusion, or social justice related training for faculty. There has been a demonstrated need for sensitivity training among faculty, housemasters, advisors, etc. around issues of sexuality, gender, and race. Thus, within the context of multicultural competency and social justice skill development for our faculty, we recommend LBGTQ inclusive sensitivity, awareness, and ally-ship trainings be funded, staffed, developed, organized, implemented, and repeated as needed.

Recommendation: 7 LBGTQ Training for Staff
Status: While initial conversations with HR have been started on this front, there continues to be insufficient staffing to fully implement the demand for all in-person training requests or other strategic training efforts across MIT.

Additional info: We recommend more staff be trained to support the needs of our LBGTQ communities, especially within HR and for a variety of offices that service students (eg. MIT Mental Health, Medical, Student Support Services, MIT Police, Ombuds Office, Card Office, DSL staff, Housemasters, Academic Administrators, Advisors, etc.) We recommend LBGTQ inclusive sensitivity, awareness, and ally-ship trainings be funded, staffed, developed, organized, implemented, and repeated as needed.

Recommendation: 8 Infrastructure and Space: Intercultural Center
Status: With the newly established intercultural center, the staff is better able to address some of the needs of underrepresented student groups, but current resources of budget and personnel remain inadequate for meeting the needs of the populations that have requested services.
We fully support the BSU recommendation #11 to have experienced diversity representatives available in every department. In addition, we recommend that the Rainbow Lounge move to a more centrally located space, housed with other cultural student spaces. Moving above ground, out of the basement would allow more students to feel welcomed and accepted by the Institute. We suggest the inclusion of the Black Students' Union, Latino/a Cultural Center, additions of an Asian student space, Desi/Indian student space, a Middle Eastern student space, and Native American student space as well as intentional collaborations with the International Students Office, the Student Disability Services Office, and the Cheney Room. The center could also be closely tied to the course work of "Inclusion Studies" (BSU recommendation #2) and serve as a resource for social justice learning and initiatives for students both grad and undergrad across the institute. A newly renovated W31 could be an ideal location for this upgraded center.

Recommendation: 9 Financial Resources
Status: 0.25

Staffing and budgetary resources were increased from $20K to $30K in this area for the current year but are not yet sufficient to support the level of effectiveness aimed for ($80K annually to best support all student needs from these communities).

Additional info: We recommend increasing financial resources for LBGT@MIT. For the past 10 years this office has only received $20K annual GIB for all operations, support, and programs. This year the program has lost approximately $11K due to the aging of a major donor. The current financial needs of the office based on the needs of the LBGTQ community and the educational, training, and support needs of the Institute are closer to $80K annually.

Recommendation: 10 Gender Inclusive Restrooms

Additional info: We recommend that gender inclusive restrooms be included on all MIT maps and the MIT app. Currently MIT does not have a strategy to ensure that renovation, reconstruction, and new construction includes Gender Inclusive Restroom spaces across the Institute. We recommend that a strategic and comprehensive plan be implemented. The MIT Media Lab and MIT Sloan currently have no Gender Inclusive Restroom spaces available for students.

Recommendation: 11 LBGTQ+ Specific Career Development Resources
Status: Early steps in the work on this recommendation have begun with group discussions involving MIT offices on what it means to identify as LGBTQ in a professional setting.

Additional info: We recommend that career services, other large career events and programs (career fairs, UPOP, MISTI, etc.) at MIT be more inclusive of LBGTQ identities and that professional and career advising for students be inclusive of LBGTQ specific considerations and information. In recognizing that career development happens throughout the institute, we suggest that all staff responsible for advising students on their careers have the proper training, experience, and expertise regarding issues related to the coming out process, LBGTQ related research for various career paths, LBGTQ specific resources of potential employers, and LBGTQ specific considerations working in other states and in other countries.

Recommendation: 12 Resources and Support for International Travel for LBGTQ Students
Status: While some early conversations about travel resources are starting on this front, nothing has been set at the level of this recommendation.
Additional info: We recommend that all travel related services at MIT be inclusive of LBGTQ identities and that travel advising for students be inclusive of LBGTQ specific considerations and information. In recognizing that travel advising happens throughout the institute, we suggest that all staff responsible for advising students on their travel (eg. international student travel, study abroad programs, MIT's Global Emergency Team, International Safety and Security of IS&T, and international travel for LBGTQ students through D-Lab, MITSI PSC programs, etc.) have the proper training, experience, and expertise regarding issues related to the coming out process, LBGTQ related safety issues in other states and other countries, and LBGTQ specific considerations and safety planning when traveling to other states and to other countries.

Recommendation: 13  
LBGTQ Equity Issues for Employees  
Paid parental leave increased to 20 days effective July, 2018:  
http://hrweb.mit.edu/worklife/newparents/employees; other changes not made.
Additional info: Please note that LBGTQ Equity for MIT employees has a positive ripple effect for LBGTQ+ students, post docs, etc.

In keeping with our peers and best practice from industry, we recommend Gender Neutral Paid Parental/Family Leave be a minimum of 4 and ideally 6 weeks for full time staff. The current 5 days is not at all adequate.

Similar to disability status, we recommend that HR offer new employees the option to disclose basic demographic information with regard to sexual orientation and gender identity.

In keeping with our Nondiscrimination Policy we recommend that MIT Health Insurance offer equitable coverage for fertility benefits to LBGTQ identified employees as is offered to heterosexual employees (eg. costs of donor sperm and shipping, the ICSI procedure of IVF). For same-sex male couples we suggest the benefit of a stipend for surrogacy.

Recommendation: 14 Graduate LBGTQ+ Resources
Status: Not implemented.
Additional info: There is a strong need for more LBGTQ related resources for the graduate student community. We recommend the provision of more resources (human and financial) to support the LBGTQ graduate student community.

Recommendation: 15 LBGTQ-Friendly Faculty/Staff Directory
Status: Not implemented.
Additional info: We recommend creating a directory of faculty and staff who are open to speaking about LBGTQ related issues and topics and who are comfortable serving as a resource for LBGTQ identified students.
Recommendation: 16  Divestment from Prisons
Status: Not implemented.
Additional info: Because prisons are a source of oppression for many different groups that are disproportionately incarcerated, MIT's investment in these institutes poses an issue. Similar to the University of California School System, we recommend that MIT divest from all prison related investments.

Recommendation: 17  Creating an LBGTQ-affirming Culture and Climate in West Campus and the FSILGs
Status: Heads of House have met with members of Queer West, and have had conversations with Abigail Francis and La-Tarri Canty to talk about some of the issues implicated in this recommendation.
Additional info: We recommend that Housemasters, Housing, and Res Life staff on the west side of campus as well as RAs and FSILG staff join with the student groups "Queer West" and "Affiliated" respectively to help build LBGTQIA+ community and to help ensure that a safe and supportive living environment is available for all students. We also recommend that the ASA recognize the "Affiliated" student group (on hold since Fall 2015) so that they may have more access to resources for this important work.

Recommendation: 18  LBGTQ+ and Social Justice Coursework
Status: Not implemented.
Additional info: We strongly support the BSU recommendation #2 - an "Inclusion Studies" GIR Requirement. We also recommend more MIT coursework focus on LBGTQIA+ issues as well as history and current events, and we suggest that faculty lines be added in WGS so that diversity, inclusion, identity, and social justice content are consistently being taught by those trained in that discipline.

Recommendation: 19  Data and Accountability Metrics
Status: Work done to date on this recommendation is constituted in the work done in response to the BSU and BGSA recommendations cited above. Further detailing of data that focus on LGBTQ members/issues is not yet part of this work but needs urgent focus. This recommendation is considered the most important one of all, given its relevance and interdependence to most of the foregoing ones.

Additional info: We fully support BSU recommendation #5, #7, #8, and #9 and BGSA recommendation #2 - the public release of data and accountability for departmental performance. In addition, we suggest the breakdown of recruitment, retention, matriculation, transfer of majors for students, and the hiring, firing, promotions, tenure, and attrition of employees based on ALL identity categories and intersectional identities included in the MIT non-discrimination policy. We recommend the disaggregation of the non-discrimination policy identities and intersections of those identities for the Community Attitudes on Sexual Assault, Mental Health, Enrolled Student Survey, Student Quality of Life, and Employee Quality of Life surveys. We also suggest a comprehensive climate survey be administered to access issues of harassment, micro/macro aggressions, and overall sense of welcome, inclusive of the aforementioned demographic breakdowns. We recommend that this data be shared with department heads and visiting committees (ex. Dashboard from ICEO report).