Recruiting, retaining women is vital to nation’s future

John Hennessy
Susan Hockfield
Shirley Tilghman

The following opinion piece by President Susan Hockfield of MIT, President Shirley Tilghman of Princeton, and President John Hennessy of Stanford appeared in the Boston Globe on Feb. 12. The writers’ intent is to focus public debate on the steps that can be taken to bring women, and more young people in general, into science and engineering.

Harvard President Lawrence Summers’ recent comments about possible causes of the under-representation of women in science and engineering have generated extensive debate and discussion—much of which has had the unintended effect of shifting the focus of the debate to history rather than to the future.

The question we must ask as a society is not “Can women excel in math, science and engineering?”—Marie Curie exploded that myth a century ago—but “How can we encourage more women with exceptional abilities to pursue careers in these fields?”

Extensive research on the abilities and representation of males and females in science and mathematics has identified the need to address important cultural and societal factors. Speculation that “innate differences” may be a significant cause of under-representation by women in science and engineering may revalidate old myths and reinforce negative stereotypes and biases.

Why is this so important? Our nation faces increasing competition from abroad in technological innovation, the most powerful driver of our economy, while the academic performance of our school-age students in math and science lags behind many countries. Against this backdrop, it is imperative that we tap the talent and perspectives of both the male and female halves of our population.

Until women can feel as much at home in math, science, and engineering as men, our nation will be considerably less than the sum of its parts. If we do not draw on the entire talent pool that is capable of making a contribution to science, the enterprise will inevitably be underperforming its potential.

As the representation of women increases in every other profession in this country, if their representation in science and engineering does not change, these fields will look increasingly anachronistic, less attractive, and will be less strong. The nation cannot afford to lose ground in these areas, which not only fuel the economy, but also play a key role in solving critical societal problems in human health and the environment.

Much has already been learned from research in the classroom and from recent experience on our campuses about how we can encourage top performance from our students. For example, recent research shows that different environments, while challenging its students in math and science, informs those who set university policies, and who strive to understand the world and make it a better place.”

Noting that Marie Curie had long ago “exploded the myth that women could not do science,” Hockfield emphasized the importance to society of drawing more young women into science and technology and of making MIT an even more supportive environment, while challenging its students to reach their highest potential.

Rebecca Perry, founding director of the Program in Women’s Studies, commented that the challenge to the program is not producing more women CEOs but “informs those who set university policies, and who strive to understand the world and make it a better place.”

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Anna's Taqueria receives warm welcome

Sasha Brown
News Office

Burritos stuffed full of beans, meats and rice drew more than 1,100 students to the first floor of the Student Center on Feb. 9. They started lining up around 4 p.m., a full hour before the scheduled opening of the first-ever campus Anna's Taqueria.

The much-anticipated opening of the popular Mexican fast-food stop was a favorite of many MIT students—has been delayed twice by snowstorms in the past two weeks. The line lasted past 2 a.m., after which the doors were locked on Wednesday because Anna's was serving free food as part of its grand opening celebration.

Everybody has been patiently waiting for this for a way to thank them," said Mike Kamio, owner of Anna's. Kamio estimated that he gave away about 1,200 burritos and 300 quesadillas on opening day.

A steady stream of students, 20 or more, kept workers busy until 10:30 p.m. By then the doors had not been closed, though some, apparently a little bit off weight," Petitti said. "But I may have to get out to the Student Center on a regular basis.""
Durant appointed head of MIT Museum

John Durant, a museum director and academic researcher with extensive experience at some of England’s leading science museums, has been selected as the new director of the MIT Museum.

Currently the head of At-Bristol, a science and technology history center in Bristol, England, Durant has served the United Kingdom in a leadership capacity on promoting science and technology. He served as publisher of Public Understanding of Science while at Imperial College, London.

Durant’s appointment represents a significant step in the evolution of the MIT Museum, which was founded in 1971 with the mission of showcasing the creativity and achievements of MIT’s faculty, students and staff to the broader community. The museum presents changing and ongoing exhibitions and public programs and is home to renowned collections in science and technology, architecture and design, and the history of nautical engineering.

Durant’s stated goals include “a radically reconceived” museum that will help facilitate informed public debate about the place of scientific and technological innovation in the wider culture. “The MIT Museum should be a living place where the public not only enjoys exhibitions but also engages with scientists and technologists doing cutting-edge work in the here and now,” Durant said.

He hopes the museum will serve as a public profile and a greater community presence in Cambridge and Boston, and become a museum that is “more flexible in terms of exhibiting; and to develop museum programming within the larger context of contemporary issues. And unlike most museums that cater only to families with young children, Durant aims to focus much of his efforts on programs that will appeal to audiences of all ages.

Durant’s academic appointment within STS will provide opportunities for interactions with MIT faculty and research projects. “We anticipate that John’s new museum and faculty appointment will create a robust network of activities at MIT involving public engagement in science and technology,” said Rosalind Wallace, the Metcalf Professor of Writing and Director of the Program.

Durant, a native of Norwich, England, received the M.A. in natural sciences and the Ph.D. in history and philosophy of science in 1977 from Queens’ College at the University of Cambridge.

From 1989 to 2000, Durant was director of science communications at the Science Museum in London, one of the oldest and largest museums of science and technology in the world. Appointed in 1989 by Imperial College, London, to the first professorship of Public Understanding of Science, he devoted the next eleven years to expanding the museum nationally and internationally, and also founded the first peer-reviewed international academic journal devoted to research in public understanding of science.

Most recently, as chief executive officer of At-Bristol, he helped establish the independent, not-for-profit science and natural history center as the largest science-based visitor attraction in the U.K. In addition, the museum has won 12 national awards and was selected as England’s “Favourite Science Centre” in 2003.

As a member of the House of Lords Select Committee of Science and Technology from 1999/2000, Durant assisted in the drafting and editing of one of the most influential and widely cited policy documents on science and society in the U.K., the House of Lords Select Committee’s Science and a Changing World: The Kingdom of Knowledge, and served as a consultant, posts, and is a frequent lecturer and public speaker.

Durant is replacing previous museum director Jane Pickering, who left MIT in 2002 to become assistant director for public programs at the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale University.

“Science and technology have never been more important than they are today,” said Philip S. Khoury, Dean of the School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences. “We are most fortunate to be able to attract Durant to our shores and look forward to developing new programs designed to bridge the gap between science and the public.”

Tearing down metaphoric walls to expand new MIT’s program

Patti Richards, senior communications officer in the News Office, interviewed museum director John Durant to discuss his views on the role of the museum in the community.

Q: How would you describe the relationship between the MIT Museum and the larger Boston community?
A: The relationship between a university and its local community is vitally important. Ideas and innovations produced at MIT will have a huge impact on the way we and our children live in the 21st century, and I hope to explore some groundbreaking ways of making MIT research more accessible to the wider community.

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Q: We need to literally think out of the box. People talk a lot these days about “museums without walls,” and it’s time we made them happen. For example, we could bring scientists and citizens together, sometimes physically, by inviting scientists to come and talk about their work, and involve the community virtually, by connecting scientists and citizens remotely with the help of new communication technologies. People in Cambridge can be linked to experts or participate in virtual video-conferences with the scientists and scientific events, wherever these may happen to be.

Q: The editor of The Scientist, Richard Gallagher, noted that the new museum was aimed to help build community.
A: This recognition speaks to the dedication of the Postdoctoral Scholars Advisory Council in our ongoing efforts to address funding and other issues affecting their experiences here. Our survey respondents used an “agree/strongly disagree” scale to rank statements about their workplace and experience in terms of quality of training, mentoring, communication, facilities and family and personal life. Financial matters, including funding, compensation, equity and health insurance, were also addressed.

Twelve of the top 15 U.S. institutions in the survey have an association or advisor for postdoctoral scholars that helps raise awareness of their needs. MIT, which has more than 800 postdoctoral scholars, established its Postdoctoral Scholars Advisory Council in 2003.

“Every gratifying to have MIT’s rich and exciting research environment reflected in the rich, diverse contributions that will get a lot of attention to science and technology. The world is rediscovering the genius of Harold Edgerton (PhD ’40), who first came to MIT as a graduate student and remained for 60 years as professor.

Reenacted photography, helped the Allies win World War II, allowed Jacques Cousteau to see deep underwater for the first time, and powered the Loch Ness monster, said the AP story, which was picked up by news outlets throughout the world, including CNN.com. The story even mentions “other more modern examples of innovation by scientists, designers, architects and historians” including the Kismet robot and the “Thinkpapaloa” Metaphid Maze, a virtual reality game in which participants use their bodies to control movements of objects through a human-sized maze.

“Engineers and scientists sometimes choose projects that will get a lot of attention to science and technology that would otherwise be ignored,” Deborah G. Douglas, curator of science and technology, told AP.

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The Scientist ranks Institute third in postdoctoral workplaces survey

MIT was ranked third among U.S. academic institutions and 13th overall among U.S. universities, government and private research institutions in the annual survey, “Best Places to Work for Postdocs,” published Feb. 14 by The Scientist, a magazine’s third annual survey of work environments for postdoctoral associates and postdoctoral scholars.

A valuable training experience, access to research equipment and library resources, and a good mentoring relationship were the key ingredients of a great workplace, according to the 3,500 postdocs in the life sciences who completed surveys about programs in 123 U.S. institutions and second, respectively, by the postdocs who completed surveys. Twelve of the top 15 U.S. institutions in the survey have an association or advisor for postdoctoral scholars that helps raise awareness of their needs. MIT, which has more than 800 postdoctoral scholars, established its Postdoctoral Scholars Advisory Council in 2003.

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Q: Will the MIT Museum launch programs to reach adults in addition to children?
A: MIT is an ideal base from which to explore Europe. Durant has been selected as the new director of the MIT Museum, which was founded in 1971 with the mission of showcasing the creativity and achievements of MIT’s faculty, students and staff to the broader community. The museum presents changing and ongoing exhibitions and public programs and is home to renowned collections in science and technology, architecture and design, and the history of nautical engineering.

Q: How do you compare the U.K. and the U.S. in terms of public engagement in science?
A: Both the U.K. and the United States are generally very interested in science, and both are also pretty positive about the role of science in society. But each culture has distinct sensitivities about particular areas of science. In recent years, many Brits have been reluctant to accept new genetic technologies in agriculture (so-called “GM foods”), whereas many Americans have been reluctant to accept new human cell research. Also, at present, the British government seems more concerned about global climate change than does the American government.

Q: You will serve both as museum director and as a lecturer in the Program in Science, Technology and Society. How will you link the two roles?
A: I’ll be teaching some courses in STS on public understanding of science, and I will encourage my students to apply their coursework in communications projects in the museum. The MIT Museum might serve as a kind of apprenticeship for students to hone their skills as science communicators.

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Sarah H. Wright

News Office

MIT Tech Talk

February 16, 2005
As a child, David Berry dreamed of becoming a superhero. Now he is one, but instead of night, he wears a lab coat. "It's important to show children that they can dream big, and make their dreams a reality," he said.

The 27-year-old M.D./Ph.D. student recently received the $30,000 Lemelson-MIT Student Prize for his inventive research with a new protein, called dimeric FGF2, or dFGF2 for short. This protein synthesizes itself in the body, a common anti-coagulant, and a protein called fibroblast growth factor, or FGF2, for short. FGF2 is localized to particular places in the genome, but is absorbed by cancerous cells in the body, instead of by healthy cells.

"With this single invention, David made several innovations that could give victims a new way to potentially treat a wide variety of cancers," Sasisekharan said in his recommendation letter.

"My ultimate career goal is to help improve the quality of people's lives," Berry said. "What I appreciate most about science and invention is that, although you don't aid people on a day-to-day basis, your inventions have the potential to impact society as a whole."

Some aspects of voting systems improved in 2004

Professor Charles Stewart, head of the Department of Political Science, and other researchers in the CalTech/MIT Voting Technology Project studied the 2004 Presidential Election on election day and afterward to see what changes and improvements had occurred since 2000.

The group found that in one area in particular, the "residual vote rate," the U.S. election system improved a good deal. Residual votes are votes that are not counted for any number of reasons. In his summary of the research, Stewart noted the following important points.

- 17 million more people voted in 2004 than in 2000, plus an additional 926,000. Approximately 1 million of these "new voters" were due to reforms in voting machines and other non-machine factors, including increased election administration practices often over the past four years.
- Of the 37 states (including the District of Columbia) that have reported total turnout in the 2004 presidential election, the aggregate residual vote rate was 1.1 percent in 2004. Among these same states, the residual vote rate was 19 percent in 2000.
- Florida and Georgia saw the biggest decreases in the residual vote rate across the past four years, by 2.5 percent and 3.1 percent, respectively.
- Only five states—California, Connecticut, Indiana, Iowa and Nebraska—saw decreases in the residual vote rate across the past four years, by 2.5 percent and 3.1 percent, respectively.
- The greatest improvements in residual vote rates occurred in counties that shared the following characteristics:
  - The whole state engaged in comprehensive reform.
  - The county changed its voting machines, especially those that abandoned punch cards.
  - Changing voting machines and changing election administration practices often went hand-in-hand. One-half to two-thirds of the residual vote rate over the past four years can be attributed to non-machine factors, including increased electoral competition in " battleground states" and statewide reform efforts.
- The residual vote rate declined more between 2000 and 2004 in counties that gave presidential candidate Al Gore a large percentage of the vote in 2000.

Surprising difference between human and chimp genomes

Researchers have learned that despite the 99 percent similarity between the DNA of humans and our closest relative, the chimpanzee, a significant difference occurs in the places along the genome where gene swapping occurs. In the Feb. 10 online issue of the journal Science, researchers from the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard report with colleagues that the locations of DNA swapping between chimp and human genomes, known as recombination "hot spots," are nearly entirely different.

"We started trying to compare recombination in humans and chimpanzees a couple of years ago, in the hope that better understanding this fundamental mechanism might inform our approach to mapping genes for human diseases, but our progress was stymied because identifying hotspots was laborious and inefficient," said co-author Dr. David Altshuler, director of the Broad's program in Medical and Population Genetics and associate professor of genetics and of medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School.

"Recombination—or the swapping of genetic material between chromosomes—shapes the patterns of genetic variation in a species. It is the process in which DNA with an individual's father and mother is reshuffled to create new combinations of genes in the child—new combinations on which natural selection can act to shape the evolution of the species," Altshuler said. "Scientists recently discovered that recombination does not occur at random across the human genome, but is localized to particular places in the genome called hotspots. Because these hotspots are important to the study of genetic disease, the research team set out to compare recombination in the genomes of humans and chimpanzees.

"They expected the patterns to be very similar between the species, and that by comparing the DNA it would be possible to identify particularly crucial DNA sequences that might explain the localization of recombination to hotspots," Altshuler said.

"In addition to the Broad researchers, the international research team consists of investigators from Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), Harvard Medical School (HMS), the University of Oxford, and the Biomedical Primate Research Centre in the Netherlands."
WOMEN'S STUDIES

Continued from Page 1

sor and chair of history at Duke University, in her comments to open the discussion of Paper and Class: Conversations Without Guilt.

Deutsch likened the challenges facing working-class students to the discussions of class prejudice within universities that occur amongsoon-to-be feminists or trade unionists in the early 20th century. Cross-class coalitions among women are difficult to create; they’re always con- tingent and don’t necessarily last. But if we can’t talk about class in this environment, how will we do it in the larger world?

Deutsch asked.

Sally Haslanger, associate professor of philosophy, and Rae Langton, professor of linguistics and philosophy, offered a variety of ways to illuminate class divisions and how they relate to gender.

In her talk, “How you are affects what it is that you value.”

For example, Langton’s working-class students “in the academy, I’m finding myself now,” she said.

Langton went on to discuss “how who you are affects what it is that you value.” For example, Langton’s working-class family of “builders and miners” in Aus-

tralia and India helped her become a phil-

osopher, because they valued physical strength, not school. Her sister, who did want to participate in the men’s work, “had a big fight.”

Without Guilt.”

You are encouraged to use the “small" text block to write your text. The content of this block is intended to be displayed in a smaller font size or with reduced text density. This format is useful for including additional information or instructions without taking up too much space. Here is an example of how you might use this block:

The whole idea of citizenship has been
gobbled up by militaristic, hypermasculine,
and hegemonic values, with dire, gendered,
resulting now under way in things like the

"maid trade," declared Chandra Mohanty,
who is the Dean’s Professor of Humanities at
during, sees an “urgent challenge for feminists to name, analyze
and confront the empire and work for its
decolonization” and “Pulse” performance.

Speakers at the anniversary event also
included Elizabeth Wood, director of the
Program in Women’s Studies and associ-
with Baltzell.

the "Pulse" performance. Dancers are (left to right) junior Silvia Baptista, freshmen Yamilee

Whitney-Johnson’s twofold goal was to
generate good entertainment and to build
community among the “vast number of
home. Of course, achieving such a balance is a challenge
in many highly demanding careers. As a society we must
work and writings of King and Pearce’s

Students put together program for Black history month

Sarah H. Wright

News Office

"Pulse: One Beat. One World," an Afri-
can cultural show produced with MIT stu-
dent leadership, will be held on Saturday,
Feb. 19, at 8 p.m. in Kresge Auditorium.

"Pulse" is hosted by the MIT African
Students’ Association, the MIT Black
Students’ Union, the MIT Chapter of the
National Association of Black Engineers, and
Harvard’s Black Student Association. It is
free and open to the public.

Nicholas A. Pearce, American Chemical
Society scholar and a junior in chemical
engineering, will deliver a speech in honor
of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., during the
"Pulse" performance.

John Hennaszy is a computer scientist, Susan Hockfield is a neuroscientist and Shirley Tilghman is a molecular geneticist.

Our three campuses, and many others, are home to grow-
ing numbers of women who have demonstrated not only
extraordinary innate ability, but the kinds of creativity,
determination, perceptiveness and hard work that are
essential requirements for success in science and engineering, as in
many other fields.

These figures demonstrate the expanding presence of
women in disciplines that have not, historically, been
friendly to them. It is a matter of vital concern, not only
to the academy but also to society at large, that the future
holds even greater opportunities for them.

Whitney-Johnson

Students rehearse a step dance in preparation for Saturday’s African and African-American culture performance. Dancers are (left to right) junior Silvia Baptista, freshmen Yamilee Toussaint and Ashley Vaughn, sophomore Tracey Ragsdale, junior Teri Jeoma and freshman Douglas Slaughter.

who also participated in the Civil Rights Movement. “Their cautious, yet audacious
optimism and faith in the future inspire me
to take steps towards realizing that opti-
mism,” said Pearce.

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Northwood Lake: 4 1/2 BR, 1 1/2 bath. Deck k1cei@arrl.net Ireland, plus others. $425. 781-893-3377. includes operating manual, good cond. Works Wednesday the week before publication. be 30 words maximum; they will be edited. one classified ad each issue. Ads can be resub...
Novelist Ruth Ozeki talks about her work in meat and potatoes

Ruth Ozeki first took on meat. Now it's potatoes.


The award-winning filmmaker and novelist will read from “All Over Creation” on Monday, Feb. 28 at 7 p.m. in Room 6-120. The reading will be followed by a question-and-answer session and a book signing.

As artist in residence at MIT February 28 to March 3, Ozeki will visit classes, tour labs and share informal meals with faculty, staff and students.

Ozeki’s work has been characterized by USA Today as “ardent and passionate…rare and provocative.” Her first novel won numerous awards and has been translated into 10 languages and published in 14 countries. “All Over Creation,” called a “modern epic” by the Boston Globe, is the story of a prodigal daughter’s return to the family’s Idaho potato farm. Once there, she must deal with her aging parents, old friends and lovers, and radical environmentalists who are protesting genetically engineered potatoes and corporate agriculture. The book won a 2004 American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation, and the Willa Literary Award for Contemporary Fiction.

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Ozeki talks about her work in meat and potatoes.

Visiting artists share their talent, experience

String quartet gives free concert

The Calder Quartet, a young, highly accomplished Los Angeles-based ensemble, will perform Haydn’s Quartet Op. 76, No. 1, Debussy’s String Quartet, and Bartok’s Quartet No. 1 in a free concert at Kresge Auditorium on Friday, Feb. 25 at 8 p.m.

The quartet—Benjamin Jacobson, Eric Byers and Boston natives Jonathan Moerschel and Andrew Bulbrook—has created a sensation with its combination of traditional chamber music and the avant-garde. The group has been praised for its “splendor and substance” (Alan Rich, L.A. Weekly) and its “accomplished and touching performance” (Chris Pasles, Los Angeles Times). The quartet is the resident quartet of the graduate program at The Colburn School of Performing Arts in Los Angeles.

The Calder Quartet takes its name from the American sculptor and mobile artist, Alexander Calder, whose sculpture, “The Big Sail,” a 40-foot-high painted steel stabile, graces MIT’s McKernon Court. Calder’s work inspired Jean-Faul Sartre to write: “His one aim is to create chords and cadences of unknown movements.”

Baritone Milnes to conduct master classes

MIT choir members and vocal students will have the opportunity to work with one of the foremost baritone tunettes of his generation, Sherrill Milnes, who will be artist in residence at MIT from February 24-26.

On Friday, Feb. 25, a public video presentation about Milnes’ career will be screened from noon to 1 p.m. That evening, Milnes will conduct an open master class with MIT students from 7 to 9 p.m. Both events are in Killian Hall.

Milnes studied at Drake University and Northwestern University before joining the Boris Goldovsky Opera Company in 1960. He made his major debuts in 1964, first with the New York City Opera and later the same year at the Teatro Nuovo in Milan and the Metropolitan Opera in New York, where he sang 654 performances over 35 years. Hailed as one of the greatest Verdi baritones of the modern era, Milnes has performed roles as diverse as Judge Turpin in Sondheim’s “Sweeney Todd” and Mozart’s Don Giovanni. Milnes has also performed on more than 50 recordings and 10 videos. His autobiography, “American Aria: From Farm Boy to Opera Star” was published in 1998.

Director Max Hafler will speak about his craft

Actor/director Max Hafler will present a talk titled “Faustus: Adapting and Directing the Elizabethan Bad Boy, Christopher Marlowe” on Wednesday, Feb. 23 at 5 p.m. in Room 14E-304. Hafler teaches in the theater program at the National University of Ireland, in Galway. His radio play, “Abdon Tower,” written in rap, verse and prose, won the U.K. Commission for Racial Equality’s Radio Award.

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Finnegan’s ware

Ceramic works by Damell Finnegan, the newly appointed technical director at the Student Art Association’s (SAA) ceramics studio, are on view through Feb. 28 in one of the SAA’s new display cases on the fifth floor of the Student Center. An SAA instructor since 1997, Finnegan is a professional potter and graduate of the Massachusetts College of Art. His work has been displayed throughout New England.