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Dear Chair Alanna Mallon and Members of the Cambridge City Council Economic Development and University Relations Committee,

I regret that I cannot attend Tuesday's Economic Development and University Relations Committee public hearing but welcome the opportunity to share in writing an overview of MIT's plans for the upcoming academic year. I will focus my comments on our preparations for the Fall 2020 semester in order to augment the information my colleagues Medical Director Cecilia Stuopis, Director of MIT Emergency Management Suzanne Blake, and Office of Government and Community Relations Co-Director Sarah Gallop will share in their presentation and remarks.

Overview of MIT's Fall 2020 plan

We arrived at our Fall 2020 plan after extensive consultation with our community, public health experts, and government officials. Our decision-making is aligned with guidelines and best practices issued by the Centers for Disease Control and state and local health agencies. All of our actions are guided by core principles, including protecting the health of our community and our neighbors; preserving our ability to deliver on MIT's critical mission of teaching and research; and enabling students to stay on track in pursuit of their degrees. Given the trajectory of the pandemic, we are confident that MIT's approach to reopening is responsible, conservative, and cautious.

Our plans for graduate students and undergraduate students differ in part because many members of our graduate student community did not depart the Cambridge area as our undergraduates did last spring (unlike undergraduates, most graduate students consider MIT and the greater Cambridge/Boston area their home and live in apartment-style residences on and off-campus that enable physical distancing and quarantining). In fact, many graduate students resumed their work on campus in mid-June as part of [our successful phased research ramp-up](#).

All graduate students have been invited to campus for the Fall 2020 term, and can participate in a combination of remote and in-person instruction and research. Of the 6,900 eligible to enroll, about half have pre-registered before our August 14, 2020 deadline. About 1,700 students will reside in on-campus graduate residences this fall; of those residents, about 900 have been living on-campus since the spring. Move-in for graduate students occurs on a rolling basis, and will continue through the end of August. All graduate students granted access to campus will be tested on a regular basis as part of MIT Medical's comprehensive testing protocol.

For our undergraduate students, only rising seniors and a small fraction of other undergraduates whose circumstances required special consideration given their safety, living conditions, visa status or other hardship will be living and learning on MIT's campus this fall. We currently estimate that these two categories of students will amount to fewer than 900 undergraduates residing in our

residence halls during the fall term. They will be housed one-to-a-room and, like our graduate students, will be tested upon arrival and regularly thereafter by MIT Medical. In order to enable physical distancing, they will receive designated move-in dates and times on August 29 and August 30.

For undergraduates, only those who live on campus will be able to access campus buildings for any reason, and only these students may participate in any in-person elements of classes or residential life, clubs, and activities. We instituted this restriction to encourage all seniors to live on campus, and to deter first-years, sophomores, and juniors from coming to the Cambridge area this fall.

Compliance with MIT's COVID-19 policies will be required as a condition of returning to campus — and this compliance means that campus life will look very different this fall. MIT has developed [policies and guidelines](#) to promote the health and safety of the campus community as much as possible.

All MIT community members, including students, are expected to comply with MIT's COVID-19 policies, including mandates on the use of face coverings and physical distancing. Before returning to campus, all students must complete a COVID-19 [Student and Resident Agreement](#). The agreement explains MIT's guiding principles and plans associated with the return to campus; describes certain guidelines and protocols that campus community members will be required to follow; prompts students to complete a departure plan so they are prepared in the event they must leave campus before the scheduled end of the in-person portion of the term on November 20; and requires each student or resident to confirm that they will cooperate to protect the health and safety of our community.

These policies, which include prohibitions on parties and other large student gatherings, will be reinforced by campus wide awareness campaigns, with special focus on residence halls. Staff in residence halls will make regular sweeps and spot checks in common spaces and student living areas to enforce COVID-19 policies. Failure to comply with the policies may result in disciplinary action, including removal from housing or suspension and expulsion.

In Conclusion

MIT's plans are intentionally cautious given an uncertain forecast for the fall. Our success, just like the success of every other institution and entity in the Commonwealth, depends on the course of the pandemic as well as our respective community members' commitment to sharing in the responsibility of preserving individual and collective health and safety. We will remain vigilant in our monitoring and flexible in our approach - if the conditions on campus, locally, or statewide worsen, we will not hesitate to adjust course in order to protect the wellbeing of our community and our neighbors.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Barnhart
Chancellor
Ford Professor of Engineering