Spring Semester 2021: Updates and Discussion

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Guiding principles and goals for Spring semester

• Prioritize the safety of our community and our neighbors
• Aspire to invite everyone to one semester on campus for AY2020-2021
  • Take advantage of new housing capacity available in spring
  • Build on experience operating during a pandemic thus far
• Deliver an academic and student experience that is as excellent as possible
• Support the mental health and well-being of our community members
Spring 2021 questions being considered

• Can MIT safely execute the Spring semester plan developed in July 2020?
  • Bring to MIT in the spring: 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students, SHARP students, and graduate students?

• What are the major hurdles/risks?
  • How do we overcome or mitigate those risks?
2020 lessons learned: What is working

Cautious but dynamic approach
- Policies, procedures, monitoring compliance, implementation, and decision making continuously evolving
- Ramping up of research operations & in-person (e.g., classes, UROPs) to reflect safety conditions

Rigorous testing, tracing, and isolating, effective space management, access control, policy adherence

De-risked academic calendar
- Q-week, adjusted start date and remote learning to avoid expected Covid peak periods
2020 lessons learned: What we continue to work on

Diminished student experience for on- and off-campus students

• Tension between ensuring safety and supporting mental health
  • Mental health and isolation is a concern

• Improving the on-campus student experience
  • Pods: wellbeing benefits; have introduced some risks when intermixing
  • In-person instruction, UROPs, experiential learning opportunities
  • Making the outdoor campus better (e.g., lighting, seating, heat, music)
  • Spaces for “safe” gatherings (although they increase safety risks)
Strategy for Spring semester: Leverage learnings

Testing, tracing, and compliance (critical!)
• Currently ~16,000 PCR tests per week; low wait times; ~95% compliance (.05% positive rate)
• In Spring, will need and are prepared to deliver ~24,000+ PCR tests per week

Teaching and learning
• Strong enrollments
  • Fall: ~5% of undergraduates took leaves or deferred
  • Spring: Survey data suggests enrollments will be strong
• In-person instruction
  • Fall 2020: 120 G and UG subjects plus 150 Sloan sections
    • 50% of on-campus UGs take classes with in-person elements (60 subjects) M-F
    • Preliminary estimates for Spring: <160 G and UG subjects plus 150 Sloan sections with in-person elements
• In-person UROPs and other experiential learning opportunities (ELOs)
  • Fall: ~90 in-person UROPS
  • Spring: Expect significant increase in-person UROPs and other ELOs

Research
• Continue to optimize shared space to accommodate concurrent teaching and research in Spring
Strategy for Spring semester: Leverage learnings (continued)

Campus life

- Currently ~7000 students living on- and off-campus in Cambridge and Boston
  - 5000 off-campus, with 2600 off-campus graduate students accessing campus
  - Very few examples of possible transmission on campus among positive cases
- In Fall, 780 undergrads (24% occupancy); 1,334 grad students (58% occupancy)
- In Spring, expecting up to maximum of ~3000 undergrads living on campus; potential increase of ~500 grad students
  - Evaluating alternatives to optimize safety and community objectives
De-risking winter

- Academic calendar will include a delay of semester start + more fully-remote time in the beginning (being finalized by APART)

- We need more small group indoor spaces
  - Shifting class schedule times becomes even more important
  - Are piloting touchdown spaces

### Academic Calendar

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- First two weeks of classes are remote
- 62 Teaching Days (“Normal” spring has 65)
- 6 Break Days
- 2 x 4-day wknds and 2 x 3-day wknds (same as in fall semesters)
- 11 Mon, 11 Tue, 14 Wed, 14 Thu, 12 Fri
- (“Normal” spring is 12 Mon, 12 Tue, 14 Wed, 14 Thu, 13 Fri)
- 25 MW, 25 TR, 12 F
- 3-Day “reading period” as in spring semesters prior to this past year
- Theses for doctoral degrees will be due May 7
Recommendations

• Invite three undergraduate classes to live on campus
  • Operate similar to Fall 2020 (quarantine week, strong testing, etc.)
  • Spring 2021 housing options enable return of three undergraduate classes
• Continue research operations
• Continue graduate student access to campus, regardless of residence on- or off-campus
• Provide in-person research and other learning opportunities for undergrads
• Adopt modified Spring semester calendar