

# Spring Semester 2021: Updates and Discussion

Cynthia Barnhart

Panelists: Suzanne Blake, Rick Danheiser, Peko Hosoi, Suzy Nelson, Krishna Rajagopal, Cecilia Stuopis, Krystyn Van Vliet, Ian Waitz

October 21, 2020

# 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**

**Start two weeks later w/ 62 Teaching days**

Spring 2021

Feb						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28					
Mar						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		
Apr						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	
May						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					
June						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5

- 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

Holidays / Break Days
Registration Days
First/Last Day of Classes
Add / Drop Date
Remote
Monday Classes on Tuesday
Final Exams
Grades due
CAP/GAP meetings
Commencement Day(s)



# 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