

MIT Department of Physics

Peter Fisher, Department Head Professor of Physics

March 16, 2021

Physics Community
MIT

Dear Physics students, staff, and faculty,

The Physics Department has always committed to supporting our graduate students, including providing funding when deciding to transition between advisors. MIT has now adopted this policy across the Institute, which changes how physics will handle these situations in minor ways. [Here is the full Institute policy.](#)

MIT and Physics are committed to supporting graduate students' academic and personal development throughout their time at MIT. If you are a graduate student and wish to change groups for any reason, the Department will provide transitional support, usually in the form of a TA position, for one term to help you with your change. The Department has appointed Prof. Will Detmold (wdetmold@mit.edu) as the Physics Transitional Support Coordinator (TSC), and you should contact him for help. I am grateful that Will has agreed to take on this role. You may also contact the Graduate Advocate, Prof. Claude Canizares (crc@mit.edu), for help changing groups.

While there are several possible reasons for wishing to change research groups, the most problematic is an unhealthy relationship between students and their research supervisor. The Department is committed to ensuring a healthy environment throughout the community, as embodied in our Physics Department Values Statement, whether or not you choose to change research groups. Please raise any such concerns with Professors Detmold or Canizares or Cathy Modica (cmodica@mit.edu). You should know that [MIT has an updated nonretaliation policy](#) that helps to advance the principles and goals articulated in [the guaranteed transitional funding support program](#).

Another invaluable resource will be Suraiya Baluch, Associate Dean for Graduate Advising in the Office of Graduate Education (OGE). Suraiya, who can be reached at baluch@mit.edu. She will serve as OGE's TSC so that students have a place to go if they want their transition from an advisor or group to be handled outside of our Department.

This communication is the first step in our outreach process. We will undertake a sustained effort to raise awareness about the program, including posting information about it on our website, scheduling presentations in faculty meetings, and highlighting it in our orientation materials and handbooks. This program is Phase 1 of a two-phase effort to improve the lives of our graduate students. Paula Hammond (Professor of Chemical Engineering) and Sarah Rankin (Title IX Coordinator) lead an [Institute committee](#) developing Phase 2 recommendations based on the National Academies Advisory Board action plan. The Chancellor's Office and I will keep the community informed about their progress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peter Fisher".

Peter Fisher
Thomas A. Frank (1977) Professor of Physics
Department Head