

April 1, 2019

To the members of the MIT community:

We are writing to share the news about important new initiatives in our ongoing campaign to address sexual misconduct on campus and, more broadly, throughout academia. We believe that these actions will strengthen the fabric of our community as well as higher education communities across the country. You can [read more here](#).

### **Launching 2019 AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Misconduct on April 2**

In 2014, for the first time, MIT conducted a comprehensive survey to understand our students' experiences with unwanted sexual behavior. The survey's findings inspired a number of actions that followed: expanding the Violence Prevention and Response and Title IX teams with staff who support and educate students; creating new education and training programs for students, faculty, and staff; and developing and enhancing policies that protect and advance a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment.

Five years later, it is time to take stock of the progress we have made and the work that remains. To that end, tomorrow we will email all MIT students an invitation to complete the [2019 Association of American Universities \(AAU\) Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Misconduct](#).

**To our students: We strongly encourage you to participate.** Active student engagement in 2014 helped us understand the challenges students face and strengthen our prevention and response efforts; it will this time, too. You can find more information in these [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

### **Responding to the Recommendations of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine**

Last September, speaking to an overflow campus crowd, Institute Professor Sheila Widnall and Wellesley College President Paula A. Johnson presented a [report of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine](#) on the sexual harassment of women in academia. As co-chairs of the committee that developed it, [they described](#) the toll sexual harassment takes on individuals, communities, and institutions, and articulated recommendations for action. In response to the report's findings, the National Academies have urged all of higher education to aim higher by changing the cultures and climates that allow harassment to go unchecked.

We are developing a plan to answer the National Academies' call and simultaneously bolster our ongoing efforts. President Reif is establishing a presidential advisory board of senior leaders and four working groups of faculty, students, post-docs, and staff who will be responsible for engaging our community, responding to the report's specific recommendations, and advancing our work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct at MIT. Below we list the board's senior officers and working group co-chairs. Information about [the groups' charges can be found here](#).

To help move the report's recommendations forward, we have agreed to be a founding member and to serve on the steering committee of the new [Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education](#). Among the collaborative's goals are sharing and elevating evidence-based strategies and developing a standard for measuring progress in all of higher education.

We look forward to working with you to cultivate a campus climate that is safe and supportive for all members of our community.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Barnhart  
Chancellor  
Ford Professor of Engineering



Martin A. Schmidt  
Provost