



Vice Chancellor for Student Life  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

## THE SEARCH

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), one of the nation's preeminent research universities, seeks an accomplished, values-driven, and highly collaborative leader to serve as its next Vice Chancellor for Student Life (Vice Chancellor). MIT is a global leader in education, research, and innovation, distinguished by its commitment to rigorous inquiry, hands-on learning, and the responsible advancement of knowledge in service to society. Within a deeply collaborative culture of shared governance, MIT places strong emphasis on student agency, community responsibility, and the integration of academic, residential, and co-curricular life.

The Division of Student Life (DSL) is central to this holistic educational experience. Encompassing a broad portfolio of student-facing programs, services, and residential and student life operations, DSL supports student well-being, belonging, leadership, and development across the undergraduate and graduate experience. The DSL team manages approximately 30% of campus spaces and athletic fields and supports more than 10,000 events annually. In recent years, DSL has emerged as a clear institutional strength—grounded in a culture of care, well-being, and operational excellence—while continuing to evolve in response to changing student needs, financial realities, auxiliary management, and the shifting higher-education landscape.

The next Vice Chancellor will have the opportunity to articulate a forward-looking vision for DSL; modernize high-impact areas such as dining, housing, athletics and recreation, and auxiliary services; strengthen graduate student support and representation; and ensure that students' experiences align with MIT's aspirations for excellence, access, and belonging. The successful candidate will be a visible and trusted presence on campus—leading through partnership, clarity, and purpose—while guiding DSL with a shared sense of mission in support of students.

Reporting to the Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor for Student Life serves as the Institute's senior leader responsible for shaping the student experience outside the classroom and ensuring that institutional programs, services, and policies support students' well-being, development, and success. Working closely with senior university leadership, faculty, staff, and students, the Vice Chancellor oversees a complex portfolio of operational units while advancing a comprehensive vision of student development that complements the academic mission and prepares students for the future. The position requires

balancing day-to-day operational oversight with long-term planning, fostering inclusive and supportive campus communities, responding to emerging student needs, and ensuring that co-curricular programs contribute meaningfully to students' intellectual, social, physical, and personal development.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this recruitment. Please direct all inquiries, nominations, and applications to the search firm, as indicated at the end of this document.

## MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

MIT's first students enrolled in 1865, marking the culmination of an extended effort to establish a new kind of educational institution for an increasingly industrialized nation. The Institute's motto, "Mens et Manus" ("Mind and Hand"), reflects its founding ideal of integrating rigorous academic study with practical application. From its earliest days, MIT advanced a model of education that combined teaching with research, emphasized real-world problem solving, and pioneered the concept of the teaching laboratory.

MIT is an independent, coeducational, privately endowed university with an endowment of approximately \$25 billion, annual operating revenues exceeding \$5 billion, and a workforce of roughly 17,000 employees. The Institute is organized into five schools—Architecture and Planning; Engineering; Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences; Science; and the MIT Sloan School of Management—as well as the MIT Schwarzman College of Computing, established in 2019 to advance computing research, education, and interdisciplinary collaboration across the Institute. Together, these units encompass more than 30 academic departments, along with numerous laboratories, centers, and interdisciplinary programs.

MIT's faculty members are internationally recognized for groundbreaking contributions across disciplines. They have received many of the world's most prestigious honors, including the Nobel Prize, National Medal of Science, National Medal of Technology and Innovation, Turing Award, Pulitzer Prize, MacArthur Fellowship, Guggenheim Fellowship, and Fulbright Scholarship. More than 300 faculty members hold membership in leading scholarly academies such as the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the National Academy of Medicine.

MIT is located in Cambridge, MA, along the north bank of the Charles River. Its 168-acre campus extends more than a mile along the river. The central group of interconnected buildings, dedicated in 1916 and designed by William W. Bosworth, was conceived to promote collaboration and ease of movement across disciplines—an architectural expression of MIT's commitment to interconnected inquiry.

## Leadership

### President

Dr. Sally A. Kornbluth is MIT's 18th president, a role she assumed in January 2023. Since assuming this role, President Kornbluth has mobilized the MIT community to address some of the world's most pressing

challenges by fostering bold, cross-disciplinary collaboration and enabling faculty and students to pursue ambitious ideas. Under her leadership, MIT has launched several major initiatives, including the Climate Project at MIT; the MIT Human Insight Collaborative, which bridges the arts, humanities, and social sciences with technical fields; the MIT Health and Life Sciences Collaborative (MIT HEALS); the MIT Generative AI Impact Consortium; the MIT Initiative for New Manufacturing; and QMIT, an effort focused on advancing quantum science and its applications. Throughout her time at MIT, President Kornbluth has emphasized MIT's commitment to freedom of expression while working to ensure an environment in which all members of the community can thrive.

A cell biologist by training, President Kornbluth previously served as provost at Duke University, where she was the institution's chief academic officer and led wide-ranging efforts to strengthen faculty excellence, interdisciplinary scholarship, and student well-being. A native of Fair Lawn, New Jersey, President Kornbluth earned a BA in political science from Williams College, a BA in genetics from the University of Cambridge, and a PhD in molecular oncology from Rockefeller University, followed by postdoctoral training at the University of California, San Diego. She joined the Duke faculty in 1994 and progressed from professor to senior administrative leadership before being appointed MIT's president.

### **Chancellor**

Dr. Melissa Nobles assumed the role of Chancellor in 2021. Chancellor Nobles oversees the Division of Student Life, the Division of Graduate and Undergraduate Education, and the Institute's Discrimination and Harassment Response Office— comprising more than 60 interconnected offices that support undergraduate and graduate students' academic success, well-being, and personal and intellectual growth, while working closely with senior leaders to advance MIT's strategic priorities. Over the course of her career at MIT, her leadership has driven major institutional initiatives, including the creation of a new theater building and a state-of-the-art music building. She has also championed the pioneering MIT & Slavery research class; expanded support for graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, and faculty in SHASS; and launched multiple labs focused on digital humanities, music technology, election data and science, and climate action.

An accomplished scholar and teacher, Chancellor Nobles has taught graduate and undergraduate courses across comparative politics, ethnic politics, nationalism, Latin American studies, and social movements. Chancellor Nobles graduated from Brown University with a degree in history and received her MA and PhD in political science from Yale University. She has held fellowships at Boston University's Institute for Race and Social Division and Harvard University's Radcliffe Center for Advanced Study. She has served on the editorial boards of *Polity*, *American Political Science Review*, and *Perspectives on Politics*, as well as a guest editor for a special issue of *Nature*.

### **Faculty and Staff**

MIT has 17,033 faculty and staff (including at Lincoln Lab, a federally funded research and development center located in Lexington, MA). The Institute has approximately 1,087 faculty members holding the

ranks of professor, associate professor, or assistant professor. Of those, approximately 320 are women. MIT has another 1,031 teaching staff with appointments of senior lecturer, lecturer, professor emeritus, instructor, professor of practice, and adjunct professor.

MIT's academic community is highly international. During academic year 2024–2025, the Institute hosted 2,359 international scholars from 98 countries, including visiting scientists and scholars, postdoctoral associates and fellows, research staff, and members of the faculty.

MIT employs approximately 8,100 staff members in a variety of non-faculty roles: administrative, clinical, support, and service. In addition, MIT employs about 4,300 staff members dedicated to research, plus about 1,400 postdoctoral scholars.

## Students

During the 2025-2026 academic year, MIT enrolled 11,816 students, including 4,561 undergraduates and 7,255 graduate students. MIT practices need-blind admissions for all applicants and meets 100% of demonstrated financial need for admitted undergraduate students through several types of aid. Approximately 88% of undergraduate students graduate debt-free. Approximately 12% of undergraduates and 41% of graduate students are international. Additional details about MIT's undergraduates and graduates are available at [MIT Facts](#).

Almost all MIT students, both graduates and undergraduates, engage in research. Under the auspices of the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP), about 93% of undergraduate students complete at least one significant research project prior to graduation, working in collaboration with a faculty member, research staff, and the graduate students involved in the project. Because a cornerstone of MIT is pushing the boundaries of knowledge and possibility, MIT values research as a potent form of learning by doing. Through co-curricular opportunities and experiences—including student organizations, athletics, events, cross-cultural education, civic engagement, and leadership development—students gain invaluable skills and experiential knowledge that they will continue to develop during their time on campus and beyond, as future leaders.

## THE DIVISION OF STUDENT LIFE

The MIT Division of Student Life (DSL) shapes and supports the Institute's co-curricular experience, recognizing that student learning and development extend well beyond the classroom. In close partnership with faculty, staff, and students, DSL advances environments where students can thrive intellectually, physically, personally, and in community. In this work, DSL plays a central role in realizing Chancellor Nobles' vision to educate the "[whole student](#)" across every aspect of their MIT experience to help students become leaders who invent the future and build a better world. Through programs and partnerships that support academic success, foster belonging and well-being, and cultivate personal and intellectual growth, DSL helps ensure that students are equipped not only to meet the rigors of an MIT education but also to develop the resilience, purpose, and sense of connection that prepare them for lives

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of impact beyond the Institute. The division oversees a broad portfolio—including housing and residential life, dining, athletics and recreation, student organizations and leadership development, religious life, well-being and support services, and shared campus spaces—that complements MIT’s academic and research mission and helps students find balance within a rigorous academic culture. Division staff are also responsible for supervising or interacting with unionized populations, including: custodial workers, lifeguards, residence hall patrol, desk attendants, and maintenance mechanics represented by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 32BJ; and graduate student assistants represented by the MIT Graduate Student Union - United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America.

Over the past decade, under Vice Chancellor Suzy M. Nelson’s leadership, DSL has undergone significant organizational and strategic evolution to strengthen student well-being and the coherence of support services. Early restructuring consolidated key support and crisis-response functions within the division, enabling more coordinated care and data-informed decision-making. Today, DSL advances a multi-year strategy aligned with MIT’s [Student Life Priorities](#)—Leadership, Learning, and Engagement; Well-Being, Belonging, and Support; Student Spaces and Dining; and Employee Development and Administration—while evolving this work through active working groups and initiatives such as the Campus Dining Roadmap Initiative, Dialogue Collaborative, and the Graduate Housing Advisory Committee. Complementing these efforts, the Staff Engagement Advisory Board (SEABoard), established in 2016, serves as a key community-building body for staff, advancing professional development, engagement, and division-wide initiatives that sustain DSL’s people-centered mission.

For more information, see [DSL’s website](#) and [data page](#).

## THE MIT RESIDENTIAL EXPERIENCE

MIT’s residential system is a central component of the undergraduate and graduate experience, designed to foster vibrant, student-driven communities that extend learning beyond the classroom. Across its residence halls, each living environment has its own distinct culture, traditions, and social dynamics, giving students meaningful choice. Residences are not simply places to live, but are central to the MIT experience, with strong mentorship and community building embedded in daily life.

Residences are managed as a partnership with faculty, students, and live-in professional staff to create a vibrant atmosphere for living and learning. Residence halls are led by a live-in faculty member, called the Head of House, who, in partnership with DSL, oversees a House Team consisting of an area director, live-in graduate resident advisors, and a house manager. Additionally, students play a significant role in building community within residences through strong house governments and a variety of student-led programs. As a leader of leaders, the Vice Chancellor must cultivate strong, collaborative, trust-based relationships with Heads of House—key leaders within MIT’s residential system—navigating a complex landscape of shared governance with diplomacy and clarity, while ensuring alignment around divisional priorities.

Over the past decade, MIT has undertaken a significant program of residence hall renewal and expansion aimed at modernizing facilities while preserving the distinctive, student-driven cultures of its living communities. MIT has also expanded its graduate housing portfolio to meet growing demand, including the opening of new facilities such as the Graduate Tower at Site 4 in Kendall Square and the recently completed Graduate Junction, a 675-bed residence. Together, these efforts reflect MIT's dual focus on reinvesting in historic residential communities and increasing capacity through new construction, strengthening the residential experience across both undergraduate and graduate populations.

DSL manages 6 dining halls within residences and 11 retail spaces, working with external vendors and contract employees. MIT is currently undertaking a review of the dining program and starting to develop a dining roadmap for programs, facilities, and meal plans for the coming decade.

MIT also has a historic and vibrant Greek life community that includes traditional fraternities and sororities, along with co-ed fraternities, independent living groups, and multicultural groups, as a whole called "FSILGs" (Fraternities, Sororities, and Independent Living Groups). 34% of undergraduate students are members of an FSILG, and 20% reside in one of 35 chapter houses, which are all MIT-approved housing with live-in graduate resident advisors. The Vice Chancellor must develop collaborative and supportive relationships with FSILG undergraduate leaders, FSILG support staff, and alumni to ensure the interdependent relationships are maintained.

## ROLE OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR FOR STUDENT LIFE

Reporting to the Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor for Student Life oversees 9 areas across the division of student life, with 545 MIT employees and 250-300 contract staff, with an annual budget of \$212M. The Vice Chancellor has 7 direct reports: Dean of Student Life, Executive Director for Administration, Athletic Director / Head of the Department of Athletics, Physical Education, and Recreation (DAPER), Senior Associate Dean of Housing & Residential Services, Senior Associate Dean of Residential & Community Life, Senior Associate Dean of Student Conduct & Community Standards, and Chief of Staff. In addition, the Senior Director of Assessment & Employee Development is a dual report to the Vice Chancellor, and the Vice Chancellor oversees the Heads of House. The Vice Chancellor serves on the Chancellor's senior leadership team, is a member of MIT's Academic Council, and plays a critical role in advancing the Institute's strategic priorities while strengthening DSL's impact and effectiveness.

The Vice Chancellor will leverage current and emerging best practices in student affairs and student development to ensure that MIT's policies, programs, and services meet the evolving needs of today's students and are responsive to the students of the future, including the challenges and opportunities that artificial intelligence presents for student life. The Vice Chancellor will be data-informed and establish student-life-specific frameworks and guidelines that adapt to the rapidly changing landscape of higher education. In partnership with the Heads of House, staff, and campus stakeholders, the Vice Chancellor will provide leadership in student safety, event and crisis management, and emergency preparedness, ensuring coordinated, compassionate, and effective plans and responses that prioritize student well-being. This leadership will extend to MIT's FSILGs and other residential and co-curricular communities,

working in close partnership with alumni and advisors to support healthy, values-aligned environments that contribute meaningfully to student development and Institute life.

Student leadership and meaningful engagement in institutional decision-making are highly valued aspects of MIT's culture, and the Vice Chancellor will continue to champion these traditions while honoring the Institute's distinctive character. Through oversight of student organization support and event planning frameworks, the Vice Chancellor will help ensure that students are empowered to create vibrant and well-managed co-curricular experiences that foster connection, creativity, and belonging. As a Division III school for most sports, MIT has an exceptional athletic program with 33 varsity sports and remains the all-time leader, across all three NCAA Divisions, in Academic All-Americans. Leading within a complex and highly interrelated environment, the Vice Chancellor will serve as a source of direction and coordination, ensuring that initiatives across student life are collaborative, aligned, strategic, and that student-centered perspectives inform problem-solving, planning, and continuous improvement across all aspects of the student experience. Ultimately, the Vice Chancellor will ensure that MIT remains a welcoming and supportive environment for all students that reflects MIT's values of excellence and curiosity, openness and respect, and belonging and community.

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE VICE CHANCELLOR FOR STUDENT LIFE

In order to be successful, the next Vice Chancellor for Student Life will address the following key opportunities and challenges:

### **Craft a vision for the next chapter for student life at MIT that is responsive to the current and evolving needs of students.**

The next leader will be charged with articulating and advancing a compelling, integrated vision for the Division of Student Life—one that reflects shifting student needs, evolving expectations of higher education, emerging technology, and the institution's long-term strategic priorities. With a large and complex portfolio, this role presents an opportunity to lead through influence, relying on a strong senior leadership team, talented staff, and a robust culture of distributed student leadership. Building upon the foundation already in place, the leader will ensure continuity while sharpening focus, accelerating impact, and translating collaborative work into strategic priorities, structures, and outcomes.

The Vice Chancellor is expected to advance key priorities within DSL, including the modernization of dining and the continued strengthening of graduate student life. The leader will oversee the development and execution of a long-term dining vision and multi-year plan to better meet the needs of current and future students, enhance convenient access to quality food, and manage costs for MIT and dining affordability. The Vice Chancellor must ensure that the dining services evolution maintains the unique community culture of the houses.

At the same time, the leader will build on recent gains to further integrate and elevate services for graduate students, including housing, dining, family support, student organizations, Department of Athletics, Physical Education, and Recreation (DAPER), Office of Religious, Spiritual, and Ethical Life (ORSEL), and crisis response through the CARE Team. These initiatives will involve partnering with the Division of Graduate and Undergraduate Education (especially the Office of Graduate Education) and MIT Health. Institute-wide investments and structural changes have begun to bring graduate students more fully into campus life, creating momentum that the Vice Chancellor will continue toward a more cohesive, inclusive student experience across degree levels. Together, these efforts will position the Division of Student Life to support all students more holistically, responsively, and strategically in the years ahead.

### **Navigate change with empathy, clarity, and a steadfast commitment to student well-being.**

At a time of significant complexity and ongoing change in higher education, the next leader must bring exceptional emotional intelligence and change management capability, ensuring that student well-being and belonging remain the priority of DSL. This role requires navigating transformation steadily without eroding the deeply held culture of compassion that students, staff, faculty, and alumni value and rely upon. The position demands a relational approach to leadership centered on partnerships with faculty, staff, and students to achieve strategic goals through an active system of shared governance. The opportunity lies in sustaining and strengthening that culture while guiding DSL forward with intention, coherence, and confidence.

Building on a strong existing foundation, the leader will reinforce and integrate the institution's well-being infrastructure, including the CARE Team model, Dean-on-Call, Heads of House, and DAPER, ensuring these systems work in concert to support students. Clear, direct, and transparent communication will be essential to this work. The leader must build trust across student, staff, faculty, and alumni communities by communicating priorities, decisions, and trade-offs with honesty and consistency—especially during moments of change. By listening attentively, naming challenges directly, and grounding decisions in shared values, the leader will foster confidence, reinforce a sense of belonging, and ensure that change efforts ultimately strengthen, rather than disrupt, DSL's commitment to student well-being.

### **Support and lead a team of dedicated and talented professionals.**

The next Vice Chancellor will have the opportunity to leverage and partner with a dedicated, talented, and high-functioning team. At a time when workload pressures and organizational complexity are widely felt across higher education, this role presents an opportunity to address these realities while directly strengthening staff capacity and sustaining effectiveness, morale, and trust. Throughout, the leader must preserve the autonomy and trust that enable staff to do their best work, even as expectations and systems evolve.

At the same time, the leader will advance efforts to simplify operations and explore shared-service approaches that reduce unnecessary administrative friction and support more sustainable ways of working. By balancing care for people with structural clarity and operational discipline, the leader will

position DSL to thrive and ensure that dedicated professionals are supported, valued, and empowered to serve students effectively.

### **Strengthen fiscal resilience and stewardship in a resource-constrained environment.**

The next leader will guide DSL through a constrained fiscal environment, managing auxiliaries more cost-effectively, focusing on long-term resilience, strategic prioritization, and thoughtful innovation. This work will require strong budget acumen, the pursuit of appropriate revenue opportunities, and the alignment of auxiliaries with student needs and institutional values. Key priorities will include sequencing capital renewal responsibly, optimizing housing and dining cost structures, and creating sustainable staffing models, service quality, and cost efficiency. In parallel, the Vice Chancellor will strategically engage philanthropy – partnering with advancement colleagues to translate donor interest into meaningful investment in student priorities, thereby reinforcing DSL’s capacity to deliver meaningful outcomes over time.

### **Work collaboratively across the university to support student success.**

Student success at MIT depends on deep, sustained collaboration across the university, and the Vice Chancellor for Student Life must serve as a trusted partner and convener within a uniquely shared governance environment. The role works closely with the Heads of Houses to develop and implement policies and strategies that support student well-being and sustain vibrant residential communities, recognizing their central role in daily student life. Equally critical is partnership with student leadership and other academic faculty, whose engagement is fundamental to MIT’s culture of shared governance and to aligning academic and co-curricular priorities in support of students.

The Vice Chancellor will also ensure strong operational readiness by keeping event management systems responsive and effective, collaborating closely with MIT Police on crisis and emergency management, and maintaining clear, consistently applied policies related to protest, space use, and safety—while affirming student leadership and expression. Taken together, this work requires calm, experienced crisis management leadership and the ability to navigate complex moments with clarity, coordination, and institutional trust.

## **QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

While no one person will embody all the following qualifications, the successful candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications, skills, experiences, and personal qualities:

- A bachelor’s degree is required; an advanced degree is strongly preferred.
- Experience leading a complex student life organization and improving auxiliary operations in housing, dining, campus facilities, and student athletics, recreation, and clubs and organizations on a college campus.
- A demonstrated track record of effective communication and respectful engagement with others.

- Demonstrated record of partnering with faculty around integration of living and learning, in and out of the classroom.
- Experience making and standing by difficult decisions, considering fairness, consistency, and the potential impact of each decision on individuals and the broader community.
- Must be willing to engage with the campus community, including participating in a range of co-curricular activities with both undergraduate and graduate students.
- Ability to navigate complex environments with the disposition and dedication of a natural collaborator, taking leadership of many issues by engaging in dialogue; an engaged and trusted partner, and a respected, persuasive advocate for student interests.
- Proven skills as a senior manager, open in style and comfortable in a non-hierarchical environment; demonstrated ability to mentor and develop staff and provide successful oversight of people, budget, and space.
- Financial acumen and ability to effectively allocate and prioritize within budgetary constraints.
- Experience working with undergraduate and graduate students and an understanding of the unique needs of both.
- Established experience working directly with students in conflict or crisis.
- Familiarity or direct involvement with Greek life organizations.
- Demonstrated expertise with crisis and event management.
- Flexibility, managerial creativity, and resiliency are required to achieve results in an intricate organization.
- An effective and willing ambassador, including experience in fundraising and stewardship.
- A warm, empathetic leader who demonstrates care and concern for all community members.
- Successful candidates must agree to a background check to be performed as a condition of employment.

Research shows that people belonging to structurally marginalized groups often only apply for jobs if they meet 100% of the qualifications. As no one ever meets 100% of the qualifications, we encourage you to apply if you feel that most of the above qualifications reflect your experience and expertise.

## APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. The anticipated salary range is \$475,000 - \$570,000 and will be commensurate with experience. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the [Isaacson, Miller website](#).

**Keight Tucker Kennedy**, Managing Partner  
**Liz Braun**, Managing Associate  
**Arianna Williams**, Senior Associate  
**Alexis Scott**, Managing Search Coordinator  
Isaacson, Miller

*MIT is an equal education/employment opportunity institution dedicated to building a diverse community. As part of our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, we strongly encourage applications from women, minorities, individuals with disabilities, and veterans. We strive to be and promote a family-friendly environment and recognize that supporting this culture, at times, includes assisting dual-career couples with employment needs.*

*This document has been prepared based on the information provided by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by Massachusetts Institute of Technology would supersede any conflicting information in this document.*