

Confirmation of Reaccreditation

Letter from the [Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges](#)

May 23, 2000

Dr. Charles M. Vest
President
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
77 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear President Vest:

It is my pleasure to inform you that at its meeting on April 28, 2000, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with regard to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology:

that the Massachusetts Institute of Technology be continued in accreditation;

that the Institute submit a fifth-year interim report in Fall, 2004;

that in addition to providing information included in all interim reports, the Institute give emphasis to its continued success in:

1. coordinating efforts by the units responsible for academic programs and student services to further improve the undergraduate experience and the quality of campus life in general;
2. reviewing and improving library and information resources, with particular emphasis on electronic access;
3. careful planning for the renovation of existing physical facilities in conjunction with new construction so as to assure their successful integration;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall, 2009.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

Continuation of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's accreditation is based upon the Commission's finding that the institution's fulfillment of the [Standards for Accreditation](#) is extremely commendable in virtually every respect. Moreover, it is clear that the Institute, already peerless because of its impressive faculty, outstanding academic programs, and capable leadership, is consciously and successfully reshaping itself in a rapidly changing technological and human landscape. Central institutional planning, grounded in a strong mission statement, embraces both annual budget cycles and an episodic series of long-range plans. The Institute has also very ably managed the shift from a funding base largely dependent on federal moneys to support from industry, other academic institutions, and foreign governments, and has succeeded in stabilizing its extramural revenue stream. Efforts to diversify the student body and faculty, as well as to respond to recently documented gender inequities, have met with significant success. A particularly striking achievement is the positive outcome of the varied attempts to create a sense of community on the Institute campus; this has been accomplished through the efforts of the Task Force on Student Life and Learning, aided by the strong commitment of the central administration to this initiative, which have resulted in measures to develop integrated living-learning environments for undergraduates, and an impressive series of campus-wide events involving faculty, students and staff. It is clear that, despite its superlative reputation for academic excellence, the Institute continues in meaningful ways to strive for further institutional self-improvement.

Commission policy requires a fifth-year report of all institutions on a decennial evaluation cycle. Its purpose is to provide the Commission an opportunity to appraise the institution's current status in keeping with the policy on Periodic Review. The areas

to be given emphasis in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's fifth-year report are matters related to our standards on *Student Services, Library and Information Resources, and Physical Resources*.

The Commission applauds the Institute's many productive attempts to improve the quality of campus life, particularly for undergraduates, despite the many challenges posed by the institution's size, urban setting, and extremely demanding academic programs. We were especially gratified to see that the Institute has already taken several steps to address concerns identified by the visiting team, even as it continues efforts to pursue recommendations of its own Task Force on Student Life and Learning. The Commission is cognizant that a great deal has already been achieved in this area, and that the Institute fulfills our standard on *Student Services*. As the Institute itself recognizes, perhaps even more could be done through closer coordination between the administrative offices that oversee undergraduate education and student life, and by implementing additional strategies for involving graduate students and faculty in campus events. We encourage the Institute to continue its commendable efforts to improve the various facets of student life and thus augment the sense of community on campus, and look forward to learning of its success in the 2004 report.

We are pleased to acknowledge several initiatives designed to correct perceived deficiencies in the library and information resources at the Institute: the recent completion of a Library Strategic Plan; increased coordination between the library and the administrators responsible for information systems; and the development of a digital library. The Commission also notes with favor the Institute's plans to create a central, technologically advanced interdisciplinary library facility. Nevertheless, because the visiting team cited several specific areas that are now potentially inadequate, including digital library resources for graduate students and faculty, the computer infrastructure, and the physical facilities, some of which are less than fully functional, we were heartened to learn that the Institute has begun to respond in a productive way. Its planning now focuses on renewal of library facilities and support for the acquisition and maintenance of digital resources. This is in keeping with our standard on *Library and Information Resources*, which declares that "the institution regularly and systematically evaluates the adequacy and utilization of its library and information resources, and uses the results of the data to improve and increase the effectiveness of these services" (7.6). Knowing of the Institute's intention to continue moving forward with its review and improvement of these resources, we anticipate being apprised of its progress in 2004.

Although the Institute's numerous buildings are impressive in their size and scope, and a number of major construction projects with the potential to transform the campus are in the planning stages, the current facilities present a serious deferred maintenance challenge. The visiting team was surprised to discover, at such a distinguished institution, evidence of neglect and disrepair in several of the older buildings. We recognize that the Institute is well aware of the problem and has given it high priority, having already begun to formulate corrective long-term plans and to allocate the necessary resources to support it. As this renovation will go forward in conjunction with a variety of major new construction projects, we look forward to reviewing, in 2004, the Institute's success in planning for these significant changes in its physical plant and in integrating new facilities with the existing ones.

Finally, the scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall, 2009, is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive visit at least once every ten years.

You will note that the Commission has specified no length or term of accreditation. Accreditation is a continuing relationship that is reconsidered when necessary. Thus, while the Commission has indicated the timing of the next comprehensive evaluation, the schedule should not be unduly emphasized because it is subject to change.

The Commission expressed its appreciation for the [self-study](#) prepared by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and for the [evaluation report](#) submitted by the [visiting team](#). The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with Chancellor Lawrence Bacow as well as the team chair, Dr. Thomas Everhart, during its deliberations.

You are encouraged to share this letter and the team's complete report with all of the Institute's constituencies. It is Commission policy to inform the chairperson of the institution's governing board of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Alexander d'Arbeloff. The Institute is free to release information about the evaluation and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

The Commission hopes that the evaluation process has contributed to institutional improvement. It appreciates your cooperation in the effort to provide public assurance of the quality of higher education in New England.

If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Charles M. Cook, Director of the Commission.

Sincerely,

Adrian Tinsley
[Chair, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education]