

2013 Student Quality of Life Survey Highlights

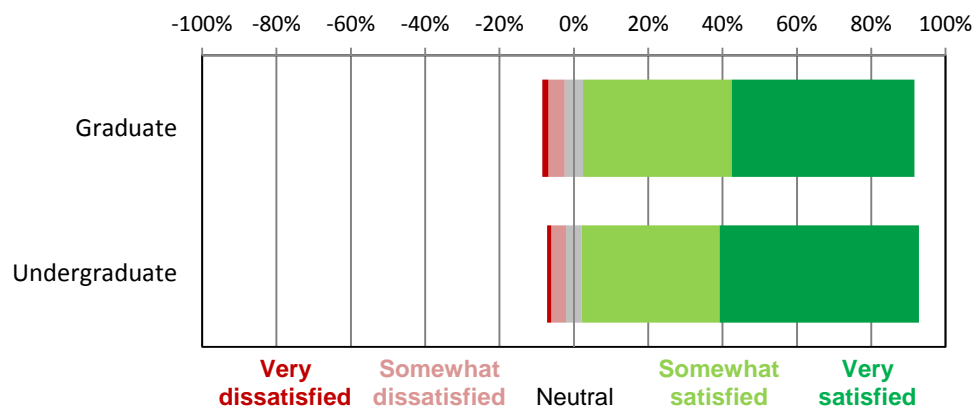
In early March 2013, Chancellor Eric Grimson invited all enrolled MIT students to participate in a quality of life survey. This pilot survey covered a range of topics including workload and activities, climate on campus, sources of stress, available resources, health and well-being, and personal demographics. The survey closed at noon on April 3, 2013, with 54% responding to at least part of the survey (56% for undergraduates and 52% for graduate students).

This report presents some of the highlights from the survey. Overall frequencies for each question by type of student (undergraduate and graduate) are posted on the Institutional Research website (web.mit.edu/ir/surveys).

Overall Satisfaction & Quality of Experiences

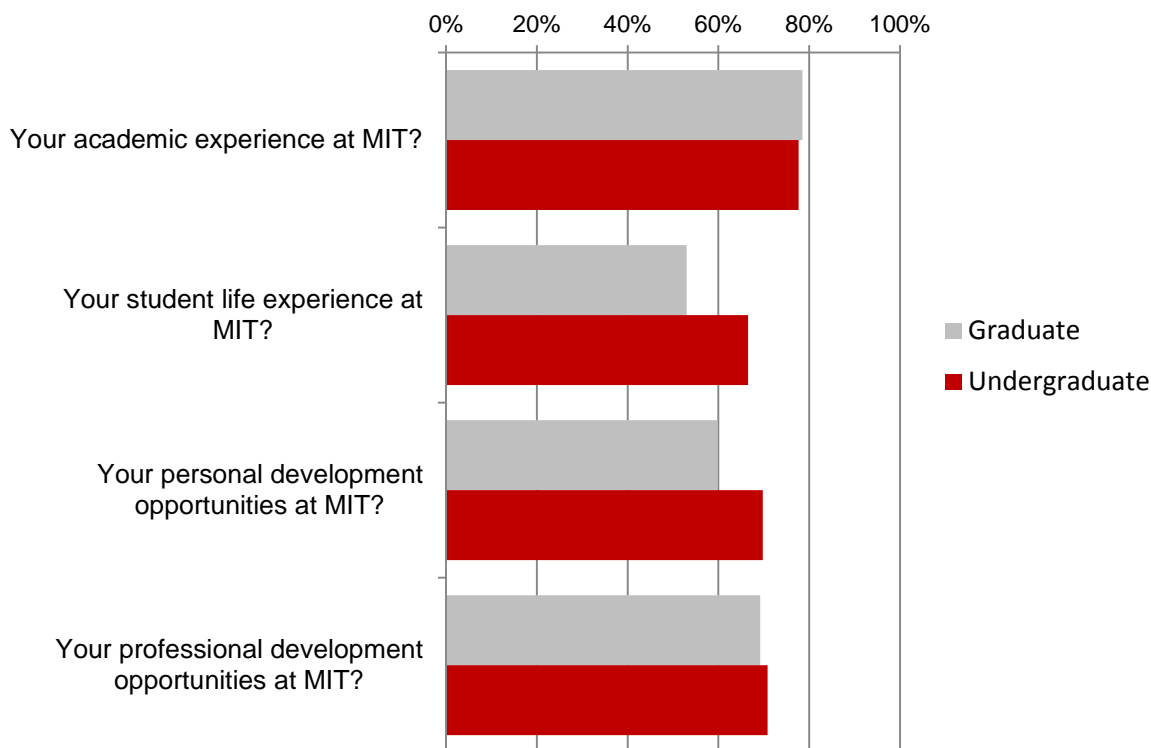
- Respondents reported being quite satisfied overall being a student at MIT (90% somewhat or very satisfied). Undergraduates and graduate students looked similar on this measure.

Overall, how satisfied are you being a student at MIT?



- Nearly 82% of students said they would choose to come to MIT if they could decide all over again. Just 3% said they would choose not to come to MIT; 16% said they would have second thoughts.
- When asked to rate the quality of various experiences at MIT, both undergraduate and graduate students rated their academic experience higher than their student life experience. Undergraduate students tended to post higher ratings than graduate students on student life experience and personal development opportunities.

Overall, how would you rate the quality of:
 % 'Very Good' or 'Excellent'



Workload & Activities

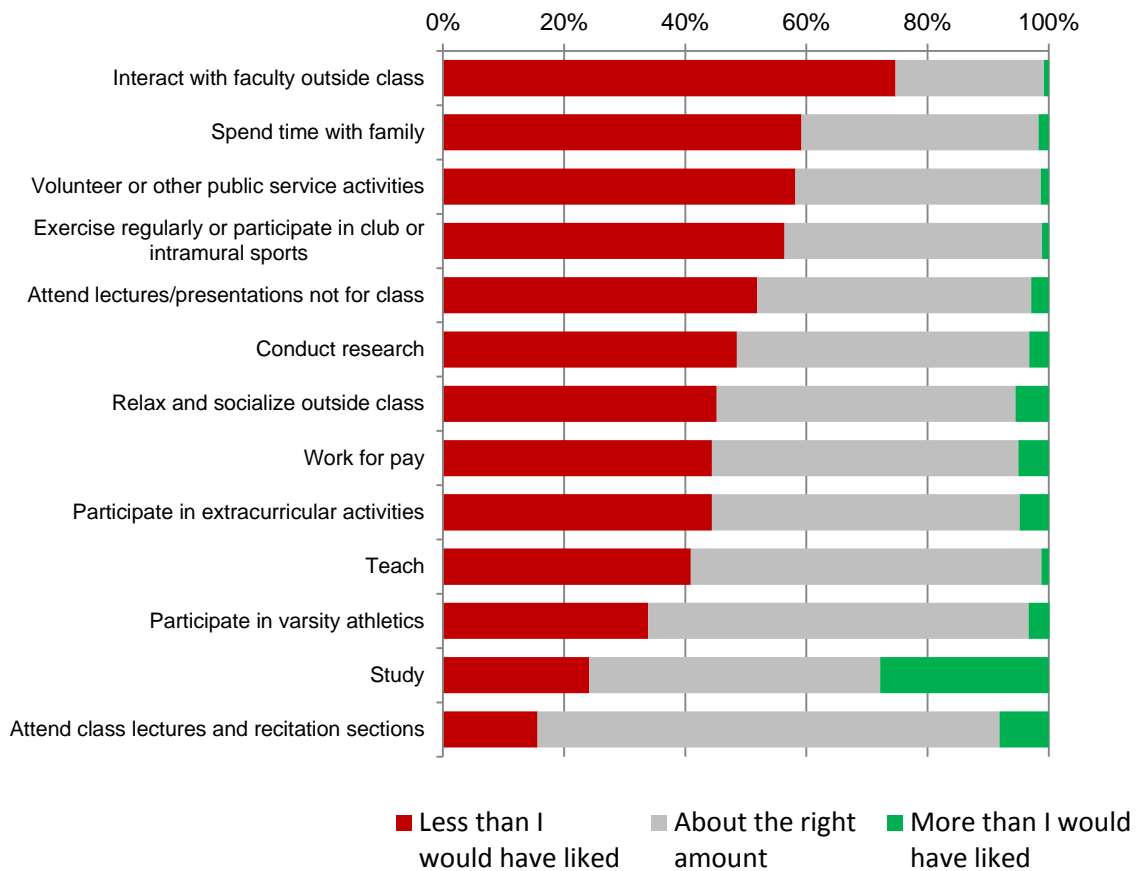
- 54% of students rated their academic/research workload as “About right” (59% for graduate students and 46% for undergraduate students). Just 2% said “Too light” and 6% said “Much too heavy.” The remainder of respondents chose “Too heavy.”
- When asked how their workload compared to when they were a high school student or undergraduate, 64% of undergraduate students rated their workload as much heavier than high school, compared to 26% of graduate students who rated their work load much heavier than college.

- On the survey students were asked how they felt about their level of participation in various activities during the current academic year. Three-quarters of undergraduates said they interacted with faculty outside of class less than they would have liked; just 1% said “More than I would have liked.” More than a quarter (28%) of undergraduates said they studied more than they would have liked.

How do you feel about your level of participation in these aspects of life at MIT during the current academic year?

Undergraduate Students Only

Sorted in descending order by 'Less than I would have liked'

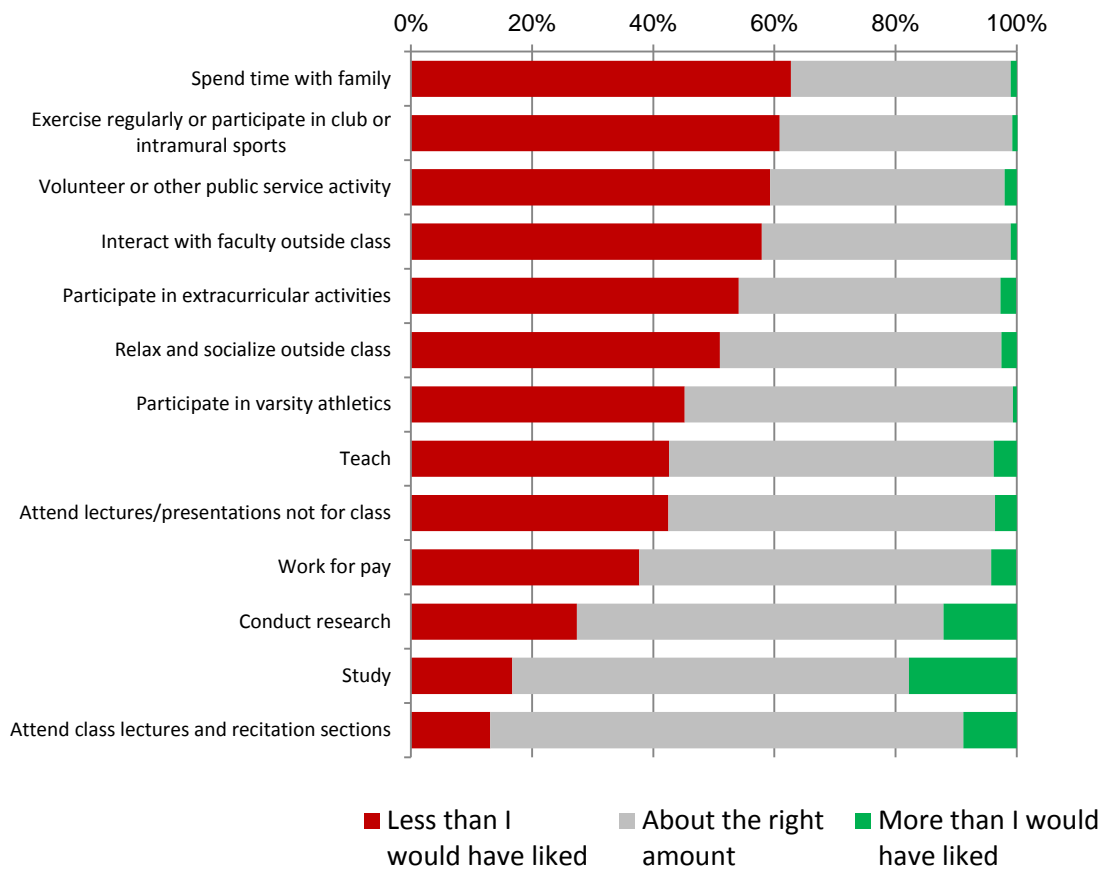


- The same bank of questions was asked of graduate students. Over 60% said their level of participation was less than they would have liked for “Spend time with family” and “Exercise regularly or participate in club or intramural sports.” More than three quarters spent about the right amount of time attending class lectures and recitation sections.

How do you feel about your level of participation in these aspects of life at MIT during the current academic year?

Graduate Students Only

Sorted in descending order by 'Less than I would have liked'

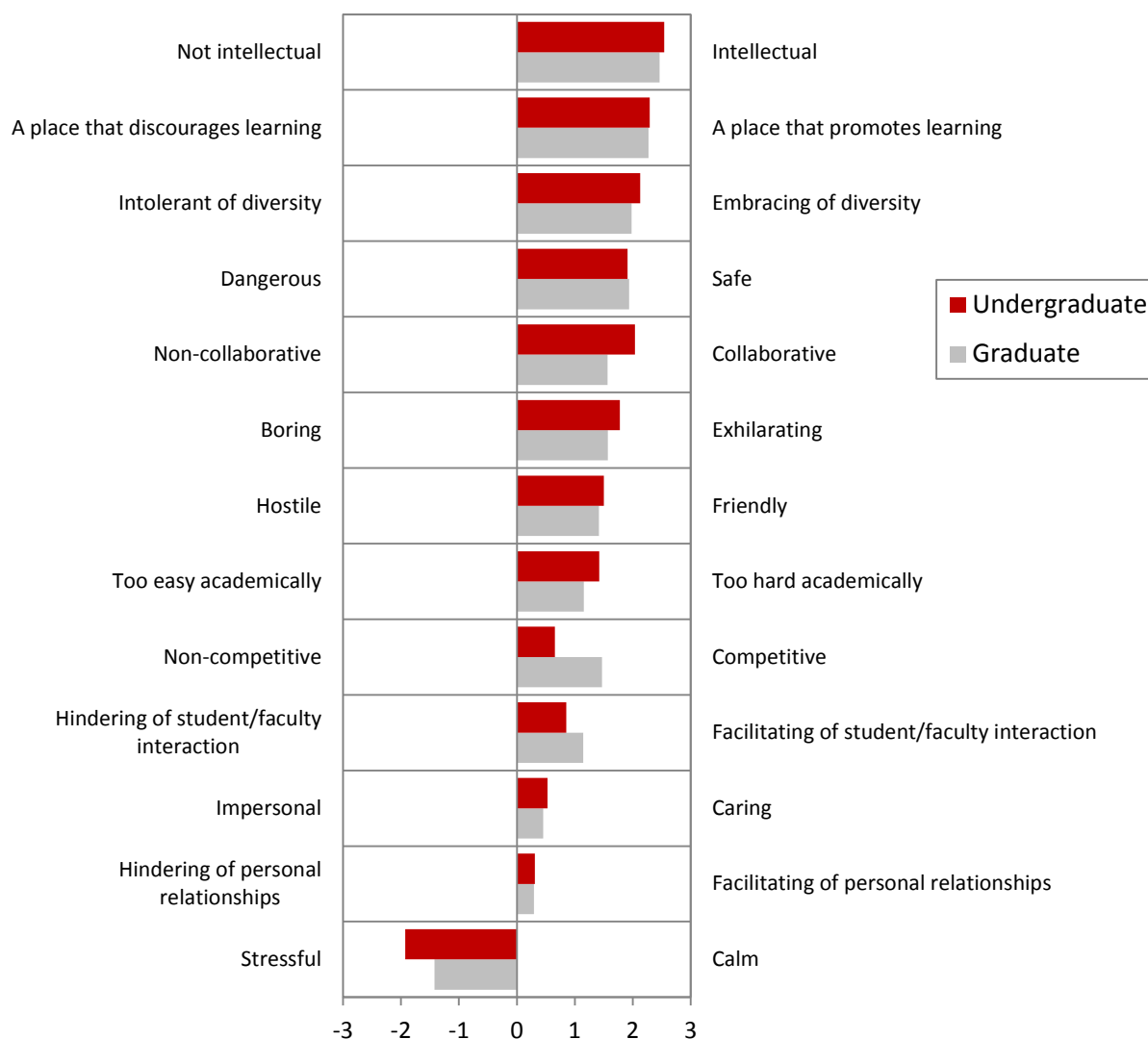


Campus Climate

- Along 13 dimensions, students were asked to rate the general climate for students at MIT, using a six point scale. At one end of the scale was one word (e.g., Boring) and at the other end was another word (e.g., Exhilarating). The chart below shows the mean score for each word pairing, separately for undergraduates and graduate students. For the wording pairing Stressful: Calm, students were more likely to select “Stressful” than “Calm.”

Based on your experience and observation, rate the general climate for students at MIT along the dimensions below.

Mean score of scale ranging from -3 (left axis) to +3 (right axis)



- There are some notable differences by student type. Graduate students were more likely than undergraduates to select “Competitive” for the word pair Non-competitive: Competitive. Similarly, undergraduates were more likely to select “Collaborative” for the word pair Non-collaborative: Collaborative. In line with the finding regarding undergraduates wanting to spend more time with faculty, graduate students were more likely than undergraduates to select “Facilitating of student/faculty interaction” for the word pair Hindering of student/faculty interaction: Facilitating of student/faculty interaction.

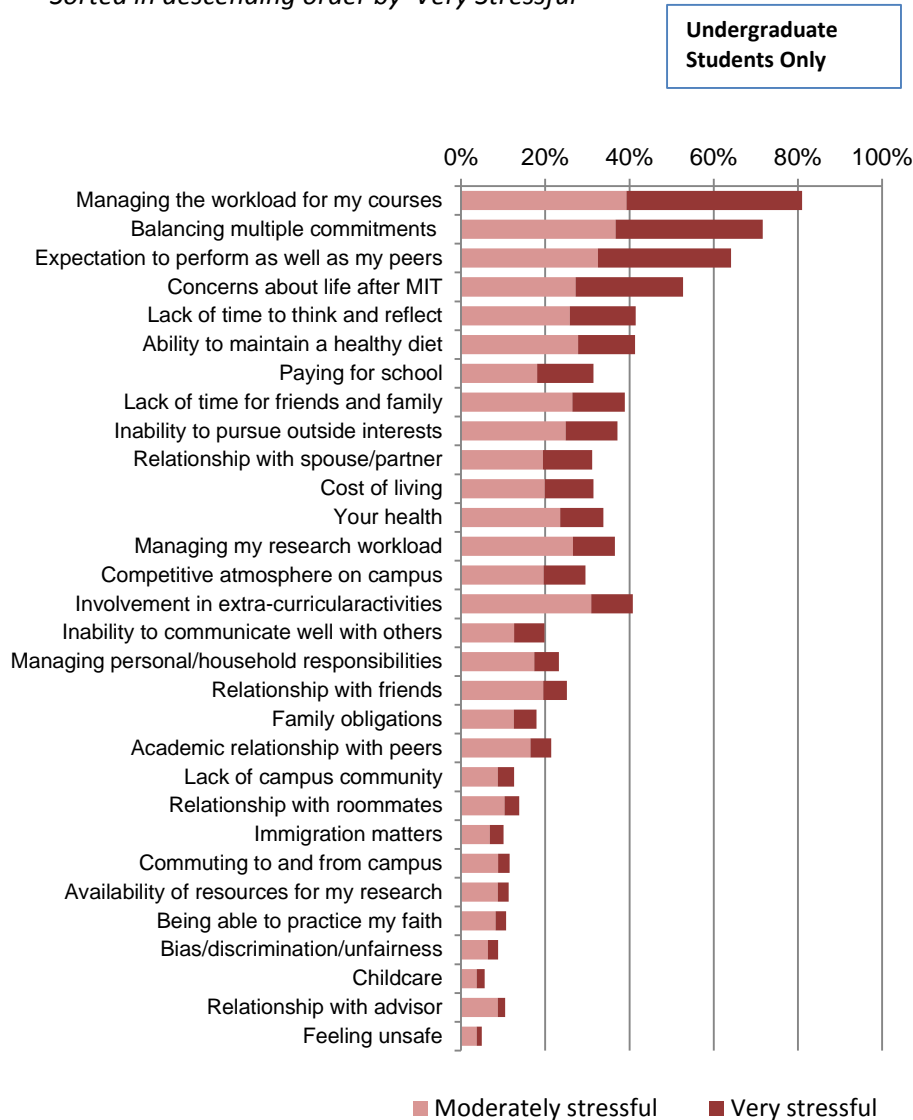
Feeling Overwhelmed, Isolated & Stressed

- Students were asked how often they felt overwhelmed by all they had to do during the current school year. A third said “Often” and 21% said “Very often.” Undergraduate students tended to report feeling overwhelmed more often than graduate students. A quarter of undergraduate students said “Very often,” compared to 19% of graduate students.
- On average students were less likely to say they felt isolated than feeling overwhelmed. 9% said they felt isolated “Very often”; a quarter said “Never.”
- The survey included a bank of questions asking students about many potential sources of stress during the current academic year. For each of the 30 items in the bank, students rated the item on a four-point scale, ranging from “Not a source of stress” to “Very stressful.”

- For undergraduates, the top stressor was “Managing the workload for my courses,” where 81% of students rated it moderately or very stressful. This was followed by “Balancing multiple commitments” (72%) and “Expectation to perform as well as my peers” (64%). Undergraduate students reported not being overly stressed about their “Relationship with advisor” or with “Feeling unsafe.”

Below are potential sources of stress that you may experience. Please indicate how each has effected you during the current academic year.

Sorted in descending order by 'Very Stressful'



- Among graduate students, the top two stressors were “Managing my research workload (69%) and “Balancing multiple commitments” (61%).
- Cost of living ranked higher as a source of stress for graduate students compared to undergraduate students.

Below are potential sources of stress that you may experience. Please indicate how each has effected you during the current academic year.

Sorted in descending order by 'Very Stressful'



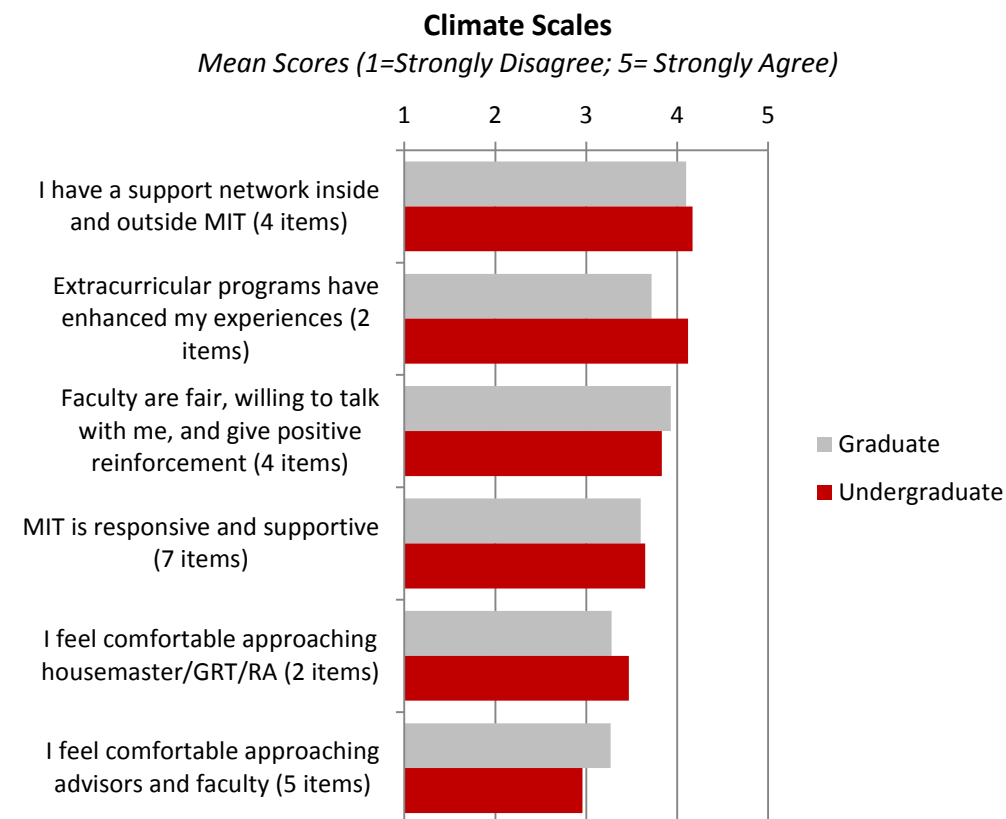
Health & Well-Being

- 72% of students described their health as good or excellent. Less than 5% said “Poor.”
- When asked how many of the past 7 days students got enough sleep so that they felt rested when they woke up, 42% of undergraduate students and a third of graduate students said fewer than three days per week.
- When asked how many days they felt exhausted (not as a result of physical activity), nearly half said three or more days.
- 73% of students said they never felt bothered by second hand smoke in the past 7 days.
- 61% of undergraduate meal plans students somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement, “Participating in the campus dining plan has provided me opportunities to meet and socialize with peers.” 13% strongly disagreed.
- Three quarters of students somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement, “I know where to get help when I am not feeling well.”

General Climate

- In three separate banks on the survey, students were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with statements about various climate issues. Most of the statements were positively worded (e.g., “I have a support network...”, but some were not (e.g., I do not feel comfortable...”).
- Using factor analysis we found that some of the variables could be combined to create a reduced set of scales. The negatively worded statements were reverse coded when combined with positively worded statements. The table at the end of the document defines the six scales we created. The combinations were calculated using simple means [e.g., $(\text{variable1} + \text{variable2} + \text{variable3}/3)$].

- The chart below shows the mean scores for the six scales, broken out by type of student.



- Both undergraduate and graduate students tended to agree that they have a network of people at MIT and beyond who they can turn to with problems.
- Undergraduates in particular tended to agree that extracurricular programs enhanced their personal growth and academic experiences.
- While students tended to agree they had positive interactions with faculty, they were less likely to agree they felt comfortable approaching their advisors and other faculty for academic or non-academic help.

Housing

- Two percent of undergraduate students and 35% of graduate students said they lived in an off-campus residence more than a 15 minute walk from MIT.
- When asked how satisfied they were with their current housing situation, more than 80% said somewhat or very satisfied (86% for undergraduates and 81% for graduate students).
- Among students living off-campus, 62% of graduate students said “I would prefer living off campus for my entire MIT program.” 20% of undergraduates selected the same response. 12% of both groups said they would prefer to live on campus for their entire MIT program.

Open-Ended Questions

The survey included several opportunities for students to provide open text comments, which will be analyzed in the coming months. Some of the questions include:

“Please use a few words to describe the one or two most positive aspects of the current MIT environment for you.”

“Please use a few words to describe the one or two most negative aspects of the current MIT environment for you.”

“What one thing could MIT reasonably do to better support your health and wellness?”

“Is there anything MIT could reasonably do to help students reduce stress?”

“Please list up to three places, groups, or activities on campus where you feel especially welcome, supported or comfortable, and up to three places, groups, or activities where you do not feel especially welcome, supported or comfortable.”

Scales and Associated Variables

<p>I have a support network inside and outside MIT (4 items)</p>	<p>Extracurricular programs have enhanced my experiences (2 items)</p>	<p>Faculty are fair, willing to talk with me, and give positive reinforcement (4 items)</p>	<p>MIT is responsive and supportive (7 items)</p>	<p>I feel comfortable approaching my housemaster/ GRT/RA (2 items)</p>	<p>I feel comfortable approaching advisors and faculty (5 items)</p>
<p>I have friends at MIT.</p> <p>I have friends at MIT with whom I can talk if something is bothering me.</p> <p>I do not know someone at MIT outside my group of friends with whom I can talk if something is bothering me. [reverse coded]</p> <p>I have a support network outside of MIT to whom I can talk if something is bothering me.</p>	<p>Extra-curricular programs have enhanced my personal growth.</p> <p>Extra-curricular programs have enhanced my academic experiences.</p>	<p>Faculty members are willing to talk with me individually.</p> <p>Faculty members give me positive reinforcement for my accomplishments.</p> <p>Faculty members treat me fairly.</p> <p>I have access to the resources, advising and mentorship that allow me to succeed at MIT.</p>	<p>My major/program does a good job informing students about available sources of support.</p> <p>MIT does a good job informing students about available sources of support.</p> <p>MIT provides the support I need to help me succeed academically.</p> <p>MIT provides the support I need to help me succeed outside of my academic life.</p> <p>I can generally find the information I need about MIT policies and procedures when needed.</p> <p>The MIT administration is responsive to student concerns.</p> <p>Students have access to adequate space and facilities on campus for group meetings, activities, and programs.</p>	<p>I feel comfortable approaching my housemaster when I need support. [on-campus residence students only]</p> <p>I feel comfortable approaching my GRT/RA when I need support. [undergraduate on-campus residence and FSILG students only]</p>	<p>My advisor(s) seem to care about me as a person.</p> <p>I do not feel comfortable approaching my academic or research advisor when I need help with non-academic issues. [reverse coded]</p> <p>I do not feel comfortable approaching my academic or research advisor when I need help with academic issues. [reverse coded]</p> <p>I do not feel comfortable approaching faculty (other than my advisor) when I need help with non-academic issues. [reverse coded]</p> <p>I do not feel comfortable approaching faculty (other than my advisor) when I need help with academic issues. [reverse coded]</p>