Physics Values Committee
Town Hall

Zoom
December 3, 2020, 12:00 - 1:30 p.m.
Summary of ground rules

1. Follow our Physics Community Values - be respectful!

2. Intent of your statements ≠ their impact on others

3. Want to raise your hand? Type in the chat!
   - Type the number “2” to comment on a current topic
   - Type the number “1” if you want to start a new topic
   - Wait until we call on you before you unmute yourself

4. Respect and maintain confidentiality of the other participants.
Notes

- PVC representatives will be taking notes during this meeting.
  - Notes will not include people’s names, just a general description like “graduate student said ___”
  - Notes will be stored in the PVC’s private Google Drive

- Please private-message Christina Andujar if you would like to make an anonymous comment, and she will read it aloud.

- Department leadership are present as community members who may have problems they wish to bring to the PVC, not as hosts or moderators, nor to respond or resolve problems at the event
Plan for today

1. Who we are
2. What we do
3. Feedback from you
Decision-makers at MIT = Committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department level</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Physics Council (department + division leaders)</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Education Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Physics Values Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>● PhysicsX Planning Group (edX)</td>
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<td>● Colloquium Committee</td>
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<td>● ARC (MSRP admissions)</td>
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<td>● etc.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Division level</th>
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<tr>
<td>● Faculty hiring and promotions committees</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Postdoc hiring</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Graduate admissions</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Seminar organizers</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Technical needs, e.g. LNS computing resources committee</td>
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<td>● Strike for Black Lives task forces</td>
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<td>● Ad hoc, as needed</td>
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<td>● etc.</td>
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Our Mission

The PVC is an advisory council whose role is to help guide the MIT Physics Department to better uphold its values at a **systemic and structural** level through its policies, procedures, and practices.

The PVC considers problems brought to its attention by the MIT Physics community and devises action plans to resolve them.

Check out our website at [physvals.mit.edu](http://physvals.mit.edu)
## Committee History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th align="left">2014-15:</th>
<th align="left">2017-18:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td align="left">- The Visiting Committee notes that too few students take advantage of the opportunity to meet with it</td>
<td align="left">- Physics Values Statement finalized</td>
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<td align="left">2016-17:</td>
<td align="left">- Design posters</td>
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<td align="left">- Department organizes students to meet with Visiting Committee</td>
<td align="left">- First values trainings</td>
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<tr>
<td align="left">- Visiting Committee reports back widespread problems with culture of student body</td>
<td align="left">2018-19:</td>
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<tr>
<td align="left">- Group of students, staff, faculty forms to write a code of conduct</td>
<td align="left">- Physics Values Committee becomes a standing committee</td>
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<td align="left">- Two subcommittees:</td>
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<tr>
<td align="left"></td>
<td align="left">(1) Trainings</td>
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<tr>
<td align="left"></td>
<td align="left">(2) Resources and Accountability</td>
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## Committee History, continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall 2019:</th>
<th>Spring 2020:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Trainings keep running</td>
<td>Recommendations &amp; Actions team forms:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Resources &amp; Accountability team starts building website</td>
<td>- How can the PVC take action on issues that come to its attention?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Focus on systemic issues</td>
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<tr>
<th>Summer 2020:</th>
<th>Fall 2020:</th>
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<tr>
<td>PVC restructures itself:</td>
<td>- Department leadership step down from PVC — PVC now issues independent</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>advice to them</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Before: upholding values as individuals</td>
<td>- Work begins.</td>
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<tr>
<td>→ Now: tackling systemic problems</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Scope now includes faculty, staff issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Joined APS-IDEA network</td>
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<td>- Launched website</td>
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Our charge

- **Train the community**
  - Student orientations
  - Faculty and staff lunches
  - Substantial web resources

- **Collect issues**
  - Feedback Form
  - Individual conversations
  - Feedback from department, student leaders
  - Task forces: MIT + national

- **Resolve problems**
  - Assign a team
  - Conduct research
  - Consult stakeholders
  - Issue recommendations

- **Remain accountable**
  - Track progress on website
  - Community emails
  - Semi-annual Town Hall

- **Train ourselves**
  - New member onboarding
  - Shared leadership model
  - APS-IDEA network
Framework for issue resolution

New issue brought to the PVC’s attention
- Within scope?
  - Add to database of known issues
  - Send to relevant body to resolve
- Outside of PVC’s scope?
  - Send to relevant body to resolve

Trend observed in database of known issues
- Straightforward fix?
  - Fix it!
- Complex issue, many moving parts?
  - Need to develop plan

Basic background research
1. Compile all related comments and concerns
2. Identify common underlying causes
3. Do basic research on potential solutions

Build a long-term roadmap for the PVC
1. List key issues and subcomponents
2. Create action items to resolve components
3. Indicate a sense of order, timing, or priority

In-depth research for the action item
- What do national reports, peer reviewed research, and experts say?
- How can we adapt these best practices to the context of our own department?

Create a realistic action plan
- What resources do we have?
  - Money?
  - People?
  - Time?
- Keep in mind the cost on affected parties if unresolved.
- Ideal isn’t always possible – find feasible middle ground.

Issue a recommendation
- What to do and how to do it properly
- Who should carry out each step
- Why we need to do it

Track resolution
- How is progress going?
  - Did it get resolved?
- If not enough progress – why? How can we help? Where can we apply pressure?

Note that the focus of the PVC is developing long-term solutions to systemic, structural, and department-level problems, — not implementing quick fixes to individual issues nor punishing individuals for violating the community values.
Examples of identified problem areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representation of underrepresented racial minorities</th>
<th>Financial stresses for students and postdocs</th>
<th>Interpersonal interactions and workplace climate</th>
<th>Teaching, advising, and mentoring practices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of community for postdocs</td>
<td>Staff inclusion, voice in the department</td>
<td>Communication and transparency</td>
<td>Environment for dept members with children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training and accountability for managers</td>
<td>Representation of women</td>
<td>Lack of interaction among divisions</td>
<td>Clarity of norms and expectations in academia</td>
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Started out the semester with ~150 known issues on our list
PVC progress this fall

September 30
- First meeting with new charter

October
- Onboarding 10 new members
- Intro project: take a small preassigned issue and design an action plan to resolve it

November
Develop long-term plans for:
(1) Interpersonal interactions
(2) Staff climate issues
(3) Improving teaching, mentoring, and advising practices
Long Term Strategic Plan to Improve Staff Positions

Identify and Select Topics

PVC Identifies Issue:
Staff Concerns

Form PVC Subcommittee:
Christina Andujar (Lead), Joe Checkelsky, Emma Dunn, Andy Neely

Background Research:
- Online Committee Discussion
- Staff Experience
- Reach out to staff via email list (ongoing)

Produce & Evaluate Potential Solutions

Present and Feedback with PVC:
- Biweekly PVC Meeting
- Ongoing communication with PVC Members

Identify Goals:
1. Staff Career Development and Professional Resources
2. Staff Inclusion
3. Staff Positions during and post COVID

Action Items for Each Goal

Goal
(a) Make Career Path Planning Resources Available
(b) Audit by Senior Leadership: evaluate each staff person, their roles, responsibility, experience & education level
(c) Scope of position relationship between adding new projects & reevaluation of position

1
(a) Involvement with institute-wide surveys

2
(a) Improve communication on the department level for staff
(b) Inclusion/input during the ‘reboot’ process: structure plans
(c) Work from home: commuting & childcare flexibility

Implementation & Feedback

Issue
Recommendation
- Describe Changes Needed
- Who/Why/How Make Changes
- Projected: Spring 2021

Track Resolution
- Follow use of recommended resources and success/impact with Staff
- Feedback to PVC
- Projected: Summer 2021 on
In parallel to other department efforts like...

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<th>Communication tools</th>
<th>Booths at recruitment events</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Peter+PGSC+SPS newsletter</td>
<td>- NSBP (students + faculty)</td>
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<td>- Piazza page</td>
<td>- Black in Physics Week (PVC!)</td>
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<td>- Slack workspaces</td>
<td>- Ivy+ Puerto Rico, UPRM (GAGA)</td>
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<td>- Dept leadership office hours</td>
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<th>Student support</th>
<th>Diversity &amp; inclusion task forces</th>
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<td>- Ed + Kerstin mentor program</td>
<td>- Task forces in ¾ Divisions</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Careers Task Force</td>
<td>(LNS, CTP, MKI), plus CUA</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Grad student advocate</td>
<td>- PGSC-GAGA working with Matt Evans on admissions</td>
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<td>- Undergrad coordinator</td>
<td>reform</td>
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<td>- ARC: revamp MSRP admissions</td>
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Key takeaways

1. We interface with the community about our values, existing problems, and available resources

2. We create long-term strategic plans to resolve major issues

3. We devise specific recommendations for how to implement each step of a strategic plan within our community
We'd like to hear from you!

Questions for us? What is working well? What is not working well?

➢ Department climate and culture
➢ Interpersonal interactions
➢ Teaching and advising
➢ Communication
➢ Department structures that should be rethought
➢ Expectations for students, faculty, and staff
➢ Mentoring and support for professional goals
➢ How you feel the department is addressing issues
➢ etc.
Recap of ground rules

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