President’s Message

Women in Science and Engineering – an Update

The “best” press for women in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) is again the “bad” news – take the recent article in Technology Review (TR) on Professor Suzanne Lorenz leaving her academic faculty position and lab after her third child was born (in the MIT pages). But, in many ways, featured “drop-out professors” and others, like MIT Instructor Amy Smith ’84, who runs MIT’s D-lab, are making the right choices.

Success in life is achieving the quality of life we want for ourselves. Why would anyone who believes in facts and the real world continue to work in an environment where they face barriers at every turn?

There is no denying that overall statistics on women in the workforce and at MIT have improved. Forty years ago, in the 70’s, the average working woman made 59 cents on the dollar of a man in an equivalent job; today that number has risen to 77 cents. In the same time period, the percentage of women on the MIT STEM faculty has gone from less than 1% to approximately 20%; women undergraduate students from 5% to 45%; and alumnae from <1% to 12% of the alumni total. Alumnae now lead 20% of the MIT Clubs.

BUT, when former Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor Evelyn Murphy spoke on behalf of the Wageproject.org at our Alumnae Leadership Series, she told us that working moms only make 60 cents on the dollar. As some of the lowest paid workers in our fields, perhaps we science/engineering moms have the choice of changing “fields” and practicing family values in our everyday lives.

President Susan Hockfield wrote about the “big questions” in research and technology revolutions recently in TR’s MIT pages, and she has encouraged diversity programs and K-12 initiatives within the MIT community to provide the human capital to move these tech revolutions along.

We need STEM professionals of every stripe.

AMITA represents more than a century of alumnae who continue to work toward building a solid support system for more girls and women to enter and contribute to science, engineering, and other analytical professions. To that end, we will continue to offer ways for alumnae in academia to connect, for those looking for professional advancement and flexible options to come out of their isolation, and for our sisters with many types of accomplishment to become more widely recognized. We welcome you, your energy and your ideas to come together with us to build that brighter future.
UPCOMING AMITA EVENTS

Women in Biotech
“The Intersection of Science and Business”

When: Tuesday, May 12, 2009.
6:30 PM – Light Supper
7:00-9:00 PM – Talk and networking
Where: MIT Campus, Cambridge MA

Registration: https://alum.mit.edu/smarTrans/register-login.vm?eventID=30941&groupId=182

Science is at the core of any successful biotech venture, but how does that good science get turned into a successful business? It is not always so straightforward, as scientists and business people have been trained to view the world in different ways, and often have trouble understanding one another. Knowing how to discuss the business of science can help the budding entrepreneur achieve success, and can also help any scientist employed in industry to advance her career. Dr. Gwen Acton ’91 will talk about the cultural differences between scientists and business people, and how to communicate scientific ideas in a business context. She will explain what a scientist needs to know in order to effectively crossover into the business world.

AMITA Board Nominations

This is a call for nominations for AMITA for the 2009-2010 fiscal year. Nominations are solicited for the Officers and Committee Chairwomen whose terms expire this year.

Nominations may be made by any active member. The slate will be prepared four weeks before the election, which will be held at the Annual Meeting on Saturday, June 6, 2009. Members will receive a ballot in their e-mail that may be returned to Holly Heine prior to the meeting if you will not be able to attend.

Please provide your ideas for specific nominations, of yourself or others, to Holly Heine by April 15th at hheine@wsglip.com. The open positions are:

Vice President - Fulfills all duties of the President in the event of her absence. The Vice President can share Committee coordination responsibilities with the President and can take on special projects of interest.

Corresponding Secretary/Archivist - Handles the correspondence and maintains the records for AMITA.

Program Committee Chair - Encourages and supports programming events in Boston, New York City and other cities as appropriate. Coordinates timing of events and supplies information to Newsletter Committee, Alumni Association and news outlets.

Newsletter Committee Chair - Supervises and/or produces the Newsletter. Solicits articles. Coordinates with event chairs to identify attendees to provide copy summarizing the events.

Nominating Committee - Turns over every year. A good way to learn more about AMITA. Three members are needed.

Association of MIT Alumnae
2009 Annual Meeting

“MIT Projects in the Footsteps of Ellen Richards (1873)”

Date: Saturday, June 6, 2009.
Time: 3:30 PM - 5:00 PM
Location: MIT, Stata Center 32-141 Vassar St. Cambridge
The 2009 AMITA Annual Meeting will feature Susan Murcott ’90 speaking about how she is organizing clean water and sustainability projects that follow in the Footsteps of Ellen (Swallow) Richards. Dr. Murcott is a member of the faculty in the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department. Her work with students has taken her to Ghana, Nepal, Brazil and other countries, making a difference in developing communities.


The agenda will also include election of new board members and officers and reports from this year.

Light refreshments will be served

MIT Museum Collecting Ideas for MIT’s 150th

The MIT Museum is putting together artifacts for MIT’s 150th in 2011 (1861 charter) and is asking everyone for ideas. AMITA needs you to help post anything from our women’s history that you can think of!

Please reply directly to the website link with as many items as you can think of about great women on campus and alumnae beyond. If many women respond with the same idea, it will carry a lot more weight.

Here's the link from the Alumni Association front page. Recommendations close this summer (2009)


In the News

Women’s History Month

Dateline: March 2009, from the White House:
In President Obama’s proclamation for Women’s History Month, 2009, Ellen Swallow Richards topped the bill of extraordinary women who contributed to America as “Women Taking the Lead to Save our Planet”. Check it out!


AMITA Norcal Monthly Lunches

Free monthly events – see all upcoming ones at
http://alumweb.mit.edu/groups/amita/BrowseWeb.do?webSiteId=SI000477&webPageId=P008

San Francisco Monthly Networking Lunch
Third Tuesday of every month, 12:00PM
RSVP to Alisa Mosler, alisa@alum.mit.edu

South Bay Monthly Networking Lunch (NorCal)
Third Tuesday of every month, 12:00PM
RSVP (not required) to Nicole Pelton, nskinner@alum.mit.edu

Peninsula Monthly Networking Lunch
First Tuesday of every month
RSVP by end of the first Monday of every month to:
Anh Thu Vo, avo@alum.mit.edu, 408-218-0002 (cell)
Past Events

AMITA Biotech Series: Why is Drug Development So Expensive

On March 25, 2009, Dr. Carol Epstein, MD ’72, Medivector, presented some challenging ideas to 30 attendees on some changes that could reduce the cost of developing drugs. Dr. Epstein discussed what happens to promising drug compounds during late pre-clinical trials through approval by the FDA. She highlighted where major expenses are incurred, and what can be done to reduce these costs, and proposed using “courage, insight, discipline, and creative thinking” to manage the costs of the complex drug development process.

Dr. Epstein also addressed the impact of the human factor on drug development, how to help people think differently about the drug development process, and conflicts between company, VC and personal career goals. Contact our Biotech Coordinator, Julie Schwedoc schwedoc@alum.mit.edu for a synopsis of the talk or information on our fledgling Biotech Network.

IAP 09 – Alumnae/Student Event | Woman to Woman: Life after MIT


Life after MIT – A group of 50 women gathered on January 15 for the annual AMITA IAP event, and discussed our experiences in graduate school, med school, other career paths, jobs, family.

Attendants enjoyed networking and supper in a friendly and supportive environment. It was a great opportunity to talk with other alumnae and students about life paths, as alumnae assembled around tables by topic – and other attendants table-hopped to investigate and share other perspectives and dimensions of being a tech grad in the beginning of the 21st century.

Holiday Potluck and Ellen Swallow Richards Birthday Party

December 7, 2008. MIT, McCormick Hall, Cambridge MA

Alumnae, women students, and their families were invited to AMITA’s Annual Holiday Potluck Party to celebrate the birthday of the first MIT woman graduate, Ellen Swallow Richards (MIT 1873). The party provided a great opportunity to catch up with some friends, share good stories, discussion, and cake.

Bonny Kellermann ’72, former AMITA President, and Sandi Champion ’82 cut the cake.

Ellen Swallow Richards “In Her Own Words”

On October 1, 2008, this one-woman show presented Ellen “in her own words,” celebrated MIT women’s history and MIT’s extraordinary first alumna, Ellen H. Swallow (Richards, chemistry, class of 1873). Ellen Swallow Richards (ESR) applied her brilliant mind, chemistry training, and organizing finesse to concerns that every woman cares about – clean water, air, pure food. Her far-reaching legacy is only now being recognized. Ms. Joyce Beery Miles, our presenter, is an active member of the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, the group founded by ESR 100 years ago in 1909, as the Home Economics Association.
AMITA Alumna Leadership Series:
Networking From Small Talk to Big Impact

September 23, 2008, at Technology Review’s Emerging Technology Conference (EmTech), the first ALS session offered an inside look from experts who understand the value of networking and have applied those theories in extraordinary ways. The second session offered a practicum with something for networking gurus interested in leveraging technology tools as well as networking neophytes.

Speakers: Robin Chase SM ’86, Founder and CEO, Meadow Networks, previously CEO of Zipcar; Joe Hoppe, VP and CIO Pegasystems, Dr. Kristina Isakovich, Physics ’91, VP marketing, Fischer Scientific International, Dawna S Levenson ’83, associate director of academic programs, MIT Professional Education Programs.

AMITA Cocktail Social & Dinner at the Alumni Leadership Conference

September 19, 2008, for the first Cambridge event of the year, AMITA hosted an Alumnae Networks Dinner Table at the ALC, right after President Hockfield gave her Keynote Address on “MIT & the Innovation Economy.”

Also on Friday: President Sarah Simon, ’72, spoke about growing AMITA regions at the Workshop for Club Officers on Friday afternoon. Former AMITA President Bonny Kellermann, ’72, spoke at the Workshop for Class Giving (Fundraising) Volunteers.

2008 AMITA Annual Meeting

June 7, 2008

The annual meeting featured Associate Professor Dr. Sara Seager, MIT Department of Earth and Planetary Science, who is the newest Ellen Swallow Richards Professor. Prof Seager is a leading exoplanet researcher who came to MIT to take the ESR chair. Her work is modeling extrasolar planet atmospheres and the recombination epoch. She was named to Discover’s ‘Top 20 Under 40’ list in 2008.

About the ESR Professorship: With a total population of approximately 1,000 alumnae in the first 100 years, AMITA began the ESR Professor endowment to honor the centennial of Ellen Swallow’s degree. The chair was designed to bring tenured women to the MIT Faculty, which had only a handful of women professors at the time. The endowment was completed in 1976, and Professor Seager is the sixth woman to hold the chair.

Read about Professor Seager and her work modeling extrasolar planet atmospheres and the recombination epoch, 300,000 years after the big bang.

http://www.dtm.ciw.edu/seager/
Red Jacket 50th Reunion Alumnae Honored

On Friday June 6, a contingent of current AMITA officers initiated what we hope will be a new tradition to honor the alumnae of the 50th reunion with grey silk scarves from AMITA. Kim Vermeer had suggested honoring the 50th alumnae as they got their red jackets. When the Board decided on scarves, Sze-wen Kuo made it happen. It was delightful to have a small part in the celebration with these pioneering “foremothers.”

Lis Drake ’58 models the scarf; 2008-9 Alumni Association President Toni (Deutsch) Schuman ’58, Pat (Clougher) Sherman ’63, Joanna (Muckenhoupt) Enzman ’58, Mary Ann McLaughlin ’58.

Truth Values: One Girl's Romp Through MIT’s Male Math Maze

In May 2008, Ten NYC AMITA members attended a one-act one-woman show written and performed by fellow MIT alumna, Dr. Gioia De Cari 88. "Truth Values: One Girl's Romp Through MIT's Male Math Maze" is about Gioia's experience as a young Berkley girl pursuing a math PhD from MIT. Since Gioia graduated in the late 80's, from the Ph.D. program at MIT, she has since veered from Math to the Arts and the two collide in “Truth Values”.

Gioia wrote and produced her own performance: This was one of Gioia's first performances of the show and there was a Q&A session at the end of the performance which enabled the AMITA members to interact with Gioia.

Her promo: A gifted young Berkeley chick takes on sexism while pursuing a math Ph.D at MIT, where girls aren't supposed to be girls...especially girls with a penchant for fighting back with fashion! Please see her website for information on further shows http://www.unexpectedtheatre.org/

NYC Reception for ESR Professor Sara Seager

On May 12, 2008, AMITA hosted a special wine and cheese reception for the newest Ellen Swallow Richards Chair Associate Professor Sara Seager, MIT Department of Earth and Planetary Science at the American Museum of Natural History, NYC. The new Steering Committee Chair for AMITA NYC, Christina Boyle was in the house. The event, held in the Hall of Planetary Sciences, provided a venue for Prof. Seager to personally interact with the members of AMITA. The reception preceded a talk by Prof Seager about her work modeling extrasolar planet atmospheres and the recombination epoch.
Senior Academic Awards

The Association of MIT Alumnae (AMITA) has been dedicated to connecting and supporting women students and alumnae for over 100 years. The AMITA Senior Academic Award is presented to an outstanding senior woman who has demonstrated the highest level of academic excellence and professional promise through her coursework and academic endeavors at MIT.

AMITA is delighted to present the AMITA Senior Academic Awards for 2009 to two of this year’s nominees for their outstanding academic excellence.

First, AMITA recognized Ms. Amanda Lanza of the Department of Chemical Engineering. She was awarded the Merck Fellowship in 2006, and has been accepted to all the graduate schools to which she had applied for admission. She currently has a manuscript in preparation on which she is co-author, and has appeared as a co-author on two conference posters and one conference presentation.

We also recognized Ms. Alice MacDonald of the Bioengineering Department. She was the only undergraduate student allowed to serve as a teaching assistant, and was broadly viewed by students as the most effective TA they had had. She also has a manuscript under journal review as first author and another publication as second author.

AMITA is delighted to recognize these young women for their accomplishments and wish them the best of luck in the next step of their careers.

AMITA LinkedIn Group

To further opportunities for AMITA members to network and stay in touch with news around the country, we’ve created a LinkedIn group. The group is meant to be a forum for members to share events of interest and ideas for making AMITA better and more relevant to our alumnae’s needs. Please join the group through the link below, and help contribute to keeping our community vibrant!

http://www.linkedin.com/e/gis/1724747

New AMITA Website Banner

Our new website banner is designed by Gwelle Boissiere AR ’98. We will feature alumnae and a seasonal MIT campus picture in the banner. We begin with pictures of Karla Karash ’68, Catherine Coleman ’83, Corinna Lathan ’94, and a chilly picture of the great dome and Killian Court. Please be patient as we update our older web pages with our new look. Send us alumnae pictures for future banners! [use the Contact Us button to let us know you have pictures]

http://alumweb.mit.edu/groups/amita

Rebecca Saxe ’03 named to Popular Science Magazine’s Annual Brilliant 10 list of the country’s top young scientists to watch

Popular Science magazine has named MIT faculty member Rebecca Saxe to its annual “Brilliant 10” list of the country’s top young scientists to watch. The list appeared in the November issue of the magazine, which hit newsstands Thursday, Oct. 14.

Rebecca Saxe, whom the magazine called “The Infant's Philosopher,” is the Frederick A. and Carole J. Middleton Career Development Assistant Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience. Saxe, 29, received an MIT PhD in 2004.
MIT's Smith wins Breakthrough Leadership award from Popular Mechanics

As part of its annual roster of Breakthrough Awards for "life-changing innovations," Popular Mechanics magazine has awarded its top honors to MIT Senior Lecturer Amy B. Smith, creator of the D-Lab classes that foster clever low-tech solutions to pressing problems in developing nations. Calling Smith "a visionary," the magazine cited her as "an inspiration to students and volunteers who dedicate their time to improve the standard of living in Haiti, Ghana, India and other countries. She is leading a movement to tackle complex problems with simple technology." Smith keynoted the awards banquet in New York on October 15.

In addition to D-Lab, Smith runs the International Development Design Summit each summer, which brings dozens of people from around the world together for four weeks for intensive brainstorming and prototyping of solutions to local problems in the developing world. In 2009, the summit will take place in Ghana, giving the participants more direct contact with the kinds of communities their inventions are intended to serve.

Keep posted on Alumnae News and Recognition at the AMITA website:  http://alumweb.mit.edu/groups/amita

Anne Mayes Fellowship

A fellowship has been named in honor of Professor Anne Mayes ’86 who departed MIT this year due to failing health. This pioneering materials science professor received her bachelor's degree in 1986, and returned to MIT a few years later as an assistant professor, being the first woman in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering (DMSE) to rise from that position to become a tenured professor.

It was October 1994 when Mayes was diagnosed with breast cancer. After a close call with pneumonia further damaged her lungs in 2006, she decided it was time to leave the Institute. The polymers expert now lives in her hometown of Mustang, Okla., where she spends time with her husband and family--and has swapped a laboratory for her kitchen. "I am a glass-half-full kind of gal," Mayes said recently. "Though I miss practicing my profession, I am enjoying this chance to spend more time with my mother and other family. I still enjoy conducting experiments, only now the products are edible--usually."

Mayes had more than $300,000 available in discretionary funds received from her endowed chair, various awards and other sources, when she left MIT. With the help of DMSE chair Ned Thomas, the funds became the seed money for the Anne M. Mayes ’86 Fellowship, and the offices of the provost and the dean of the School of Engineering are matching MIT community members' donations dollar-for-dollar, up to $250,000.

The website for Professor Mayes and the Fellowship donations is at:  http://dmse.mit.edu/faculty/faculty/amayes/

"I feel so fortunate to have had a very full and exhilarating career at MIT, despite the intervening health struggles," she said. "What a blessing it was to work 14 years with so many gifted colleagues and students--they are MIT's greatest resource."

Andrea Ghez named MacArthur Fellow

Andrea Ghez 87 is an astronomer who has opened important windows of galactic observation by overcoming previous limitations of ground-based instruments.

Ghez has developed evidence that the stars closest to the black hole are surprisingly young. As Ghez continues to improve the spatial resolution and precision of instruments in deciphering the dust-obscured regions of the central galaxy, we will develop a much clearer picture of the role of central, massive black holes in the origin and evolution of the galaxies.
Andrea Ghez received a B.S. (1987) from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and an M.S. (1989) and Ph.D. (1992) from the California Institute of Technology. She has been affiliated with the University of California, Los Angeles, since 1994, where she is currently a professor of physics and astronomy. Her articles have appeared in such publications as *Nature*, the *Astrophysical Journal*, and *Astronomy and Astrophysics*.

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<th>Did you know?</th>
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<td><strong>The Forces driving women out of computer science</strong></td>
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<td>Ellen Spertus ’98 and previous MIT Professor Justine Cassell weigh in on the cultural factors affecting the declining percentage of women majoring in computer science.</td>
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<td><strong>Culture may turn potentially high achievers away from math</strong></td>
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<td>A combination of peer pressure, gender stereotyping and low expectations contributes to turning potentially gifted kids — especially girls — away from mathematics, wasting a precious national resource, a new study suggests. The study, by cancer biochemist Janet Mertz ’71 of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and her collaborators, appears in the November <em>Notices of the American Mathematical Society</em>.</td>
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<th>In Memoriam</th>
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<td>Margaret Zarudny Freeman SM ’34, who spent more than four decades at MIT as a student and faculty member, died Oct. 23, just weeks before her 100th birthday.</td>
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<td>After arriving in California from Russia in 1931 and mastering the English language, she was able to realize her dream of gaining admission as a graduate student to MIT. She received her SM in mathematics in 1934, and although she had hoped to continue her education, the arrival of her four younger sisters in Boston led her to find work instead as a designer of steam turbines for General Electric.</td>
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<td>In 1935, she married Harold Freeman, a fellow graduate student who went on to become a distinguished statistician in the MIT Department of Economics. In 1938, Freeman returned to MIT, working as an applied mathematician in the remarkable Wiener-Rosenblith electroencephalography project.</td>
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<td>In the 1960s, with the growing interest in the Soviet Union, Freeman introduced Russian language instruction to MIT by volunteering to teach the language. She later led MIT's &quot;language lab&quot; -- one of the first of its kind. After her retirement in 1978, Freeman was named an associate professor emeritus.</td>
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<td>In later years, Freeman’s home in Belmont, MA became an informal Russian Cultural Center. For those alumnae who attend the AMITA Pot Luck Holiday parties (now ESR Birthday Celebrations), you may remember her coming a few years ago, sporting a red beret. <a href="http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2008/obit-freeman-1118.html">http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2008/obit-freeman-1118.html</a></td>
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**AMITA Personal updates**

We are interested in hearing from you, our members.

AMITA’s mission has always been to provide a way for former women students to maintain contact with each other and MIT and support women students. Do you have updates on the personal and professional level? Please write in and let us know about it. Your entry will appear in the next edition of our newsletter.

**AMITA Jobs listserv**

Are you looking for a job or know of a position that is available? Join the AMITA Jobs listserv on the MIT alumni website or post your job description (don't forget location and contact information) to amita_jobs@mitvma.mit.edu. Contact Sarah Simon at sarah.simon@alum.mit.edu with questions.

**Get Involved**

AMITA’s network of alumnae of all ages is eager to connect with you and support you on concerns we all share. Activities include:
- student programs like supporting the Pan-Hellenic Women's professional day,
- discussions with professors and experts on developing your research; or why women have not made businesses of their bio-tech work (Prof. Fiona Murray); or how we meet professional challenges (NorCal)
- times like Ellen Swallow Richards’ Birthday in early December for just plain FUN and relaxation from the daily pressures of family and your work routine.

Can you help proofread our e-postings, links and mailings? Contact Webmistress Linda VanDuyne lvanduyne@alum.mit.edu, or Sarah Simon sarah.simon@alum.mit.edu

Got an idea for a meeting or activity – and want to help see it presented? Contact Sarah Simon [Sarah.simon@alum.mit.edu](mailto:Sarah.simon@alum.mit.edu) (and volunteer for the programs committee, if you can help out in Cambridge or elsewhere)

If you are interested in getting more involved with AMITA, contact any of our officers.