On-Campus Education Restart

It is not yet known what form MIT instruction will take in the 2020-21 Academic Year. Current discussions are wide-ranging, with the two stable equilibrium points being a fully on-campus restart (here the Physics Department has already assigned instructors, and knows what to do) or fully remote instruction.

Besides these, several intermediate schemes are being considered, including ones which allow some amount of on-campus learning but with reduced density. No matter what path is chosen, there will be many, many logistical challenges. The question is which set of challenges we choose to face.

Some of our peer institutions are facing financial pressure to re-open (see this Op-Ed from the president of Brown) and MIT will be too. Students are deciding whether to enroll for AY20-21. We are fortunate that MIT’s revenue streams are reasonably balanced compared to many institutions of higher leaning, but tuition is not the only source of revenue that is facing risks at the moment.

The explicit mission statement that begins all discussions of academic continuity reads: “by the Fall, with time to prepare, we will deliver learning experiences for all our students at a level of excellence that befits MIT’s mission.”

As more details become available about how that will happen, we will update this note accordingly. No date has been identified as a decision point, I personally speculate that some guidance will come in mid-May to early June.