Dr. Susan Hockfield  
President  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Office of the President  
Room 3-208  
77 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139-4307

Dear Dr. Hockfield:

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has completed its compliance review of the Physics Department at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), a recipient of NASA financial assistance. This review was conducted pursuant to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), and the NASA Title IX implementing regulations at 14 C.F.R. Part 1253, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs receiving Federal financial assistance through NASA. The review was conducted to determine whether MIT was in compliance with NASA Title IX regulations and, specifically, to ensure that the Physics Department was providing equal educational opportunity regardless of gender.

Based on an evaluation of the data provided by MIT and from on-site interviews and observations, NASA found the MIT Physics Department to be in compliance with the NASA Title IX regulations. NASA notes with approval the extent and variety of promising practices MIT is undertaking in its efforts to increase the participation of women in its Physics Department and to ensure equal educational opportunity regardless of gender. In particular, NASA notes that MIT has very high numbers of women in its undergraduate Physics program relative to other universities' Physics programs.

However, NASA finds that MIT's current complaint and grievance procedures, both as written and implemented, need to be substantially improved to ensure prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging actions prohibited by Title IX. MIT has stated that it recognizes its current grievance process should be reviewed and can be improved.

MIT reports it had established a working group, prior to NASA's Title IX compliance review of the Physics Department, that is reviewing present policies and procedures regarding complaint handling. The group is presently working on revising the complaint handling process for complaints raised by or against faculty.
Finally, MIT reports that it has completed its review and revision of its Guidelines for Raising Complaints of Harassment. NASA is pleased to note that this document responds to some of the concerns raised based on our review. For example, the guide now clearly states students' rights to file a complaint with external agencies, and provides a list of resources available to address harassment issues.

NASA has provided a number of specific recommendations to ensure Title IX compliance regarding MIT’s complaint and grievance procedures, as well as a host of other recommendations designed to strengthen MIT’s compliance regarding other Title IX requirements. MIT reports that its policy and procedures working group will carefully consider NASA’s recommendations regarding the revision of the complaint and grievance procedures. NASA will contact MIT in six months to follow up on the university’s progress in implementing these recommendations.

NASA found MIT to be very responsive in facilitating the review prior to, during, and after the on-site visit. NASA wishes to thank Dr. Alison Alden, Vice President for Human Resources and Title IX Coordinator, Dr. Marc Kastner, Dean of the MIT School of Science and former Chair of the Physics Department, and his staff for their cooperation, especially Ms. Heather Williams, who served as the Physics Department’s primary liaison with NASA throughout the review.

Under the Freedom of Information Act, it may be necessary to release the report and related records on request. If NASA receives such a request, it will seek to protect, to the extent provided by law, personal information which, if released, could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy.

Enclosed please find a copy of NASA’s report of the compliance review. If you have any questions regarding this correspondence, please contact Mr. Miguel A. Torres, Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) on 202-358-0937 or Mr. David Chambers, Senior Civil Rights Analyst, Program Planning and Evaluation Division, ODEO, on 202-358-2128.

Sincerely,

Brenda R. Manuel, Esq.
Assistant Administrator for
Diversity and Equal Opportunity

Enclosure
cc:
Prof. Marc A. Kastner/Dean, School of Science
Prof. Edmund Bertschinger/Department Head, Physics
Heather G. Williams/Assistant Dean, School of Science
Dr. Alison Alden/Vice President for Human Resources/Title IX Coordinator
Mark DiVencenzo/Deputy General Counsel