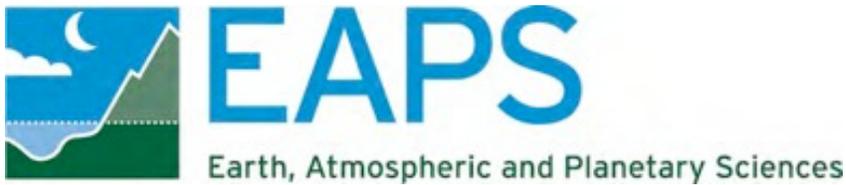


From: **Robert D van der Hilst** [hilst@mit.edu](mailto:hilst@mit.edu)   
Subject: EAPS Community update, COVID-19 (18 June 2020)  
Date: June 18, 2020 at 9:09 PM  
To: [eaps-dept](mailto:eaps-dept) [eaps-dept@mit.edu](mailto:eaps-dept@mit.edu)

RV



Campus police: 617-253-1212  
MIT Medical COVID-19:  
Hotline: 617-253-4865  
Updates: <https://medical.mit.edu/news/2020/01/2019-novel-coronavirus-updates-1>  
MIT COVID-19 updates: <https://covid19.mit.edu>  
EAPS/MIT message archive: <https://eapsweb.mit.edu/news/2020/covid-19-eaps-updates>

### Thursday 18 June 2020

- General comments:
- Taskforce 2023
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- Summer 2020
  - o Ramp-up
  - o EAPS UROP Summerfest
- Fall 2020
- Building updates
  - o Earth and Environment Pavilion
  - o Lecture Hall (54-100) naming contest to start 22 June

### To all members of the EAPS Community:

We are rapidly approaching the summer solstice (this Saturday), but it feels all but a normal start of the summer. Well into June, there is a lot going on, in part because of current affairs and in part because work that got delayed by COVID-19 did not disappear, and few of our staff, leadership, and perhaps most everybody else feel the break we all so richly deserve. As usual for issues at the Institute level I refer to the MIT COVID-19 site and to the daily messages from the Dean's Office, forwarded to you by Michael. Here I add a few comments for our community.

In the past weeks we were all made painfully aware of the ongoing systemic racism and injustice. The conversations and readings helped raise awareness of the deep and complex issues on all scales—and that underrepresentation of minorities and people of color in the geosciences is worse than in other STEM fields—but also encouraged us to make a difference. In this message I will not add further to my earlier communications (on 6/2, 6/8, and 6/10), except to express my hope and optimism that together we can and will achieve lasting positive change. Thank all students, staff, and faculty who helped organize

achieve lasting positive change, to thank all students, staff, and faculty who helped organize the day, and to share this message from the students:

*"Thank you very much to everyone who attended last week's #ShutDownSTEM event and for your many thoughtful contributions to the discussions. We are overwhelmed with optimism by the high turn-out and productive conversations. To ensure that these important DEI conversations continue in EAPS, the student organizers will be sending out the compiled (and anonymized) thoughts from the #ShutDownSTEM discussions along with a letter that outlines a suggested framework for implementing the action items. Please be on the lookout for a message from your student leaders in the coming days with more information. Further, tomorrow (Friday 6/19) we celebrate [Juneteenth \(Zoom @ 3pm\)](#), and next Monday's inaugural meeting of the DEI reading group is one of several excellent means to continue thinking and conversing about DEI in EAPS."*

### **Taskforce 2023:**

Much has happened since we came together at the Marriott for the department-wide retreat to hear the recommendations of Task Force 2023. It's hard to believe that it was only a few months ago. The Task Force steering committee and working group chairs are now in the final stages of preparing a white paper reporting the Task Force recommendations. Once this is complete, the white paper will be shared with the EAPS community, and there will be an open comment period during which anyone in EAPS can share feedback. Although the Task Force developed most of its recommendations before COVID-19 and the important discussions about race and inequality occurring this month, the recommendations are still very relevant to our current world – indeed, these recent events have underscored the importance and urgency of some of the recommendations. And I should emphasize that not everything resulted in a slow-down: a number of the recommendations are already being implemented, and the recent development are likely to accelerate some of the changes. For example, the Provost is making resources available to appoint a DEI Officer at each School, and department heads within the School of Science are pushing hard to get extra staff also at the department level. The next stage of the process will be to develop a plan for prioritizing and acting on recommendations laid out in the white paper, at which point we should also consider the above-mentioned action items from the #ShutDownSTEM discussions. I express my sincere gratitude to the Steering Committee (Taylor, Rick, Megan, David W.), the leaders and members of the working groups, and everybody else who has been participating in and contributing to this remarkable endeavor.

### **360° Surveys:**

As one of many efforts to improve the EAPS community, we have launched so-called 360° surveys as a leadership development opportunity for our faculty members and staff leaders. Faculty has been informed about this by email and in person in a recent faculty meeting (on 5/28), but the roll-out has been slowed down a bit because of the events of the past weeks.

*Rationale:* Members of the faculty serve as leaders in our department and broader (professional) community and as role models for members of our groups and beyond. In addition to research, they make a difference to other people's scientific and professional lives, through their leadership, mentorship, and ethics. In particular for senior faculty, however, it is often hard to get feedback on these aspects of their jobs, or for others to give it to them. This is a serious challenge: as members of the faculty we should welcome opportunities to grow and improve, while those we affect may feel unable to get their voices heard (for instance because of concerns about confidentiality and fear of retaliation).

To that end, I have made resources available to engage an outside consultant, [MOR associates](#), to conduct 360° surveys for all faculty. Early next week I will send an email with more information about this process, but for now I want to emphasize that the survey and reporting process is designed to ensure confidentiality and anonymity and that from the aggregate report the person being surveyed will not be able to trace back responses to individuals. I sincerely hope, therefore, that you will be willing to help when invited to do so. The process has started with seven people in leadership positions and three volunteers, and it is my hope that all faculty members will participate.

[Note: This is not a substitute for but complementary to the group/lab level training by MIT's Violence Prevention & Response ([VPR](#)) or the Institute Discrimination and Harassment Response Office ([IDHR](#)) mentioned in Taskforce and other conversations. One thing at a time.]

### **Summer 2020:**

**Research Ramp-up:** The research ramp-up started last Monday, and I thank Michael, Scott, and Brian for all their hard work, and all lab PIs for their patience and cooperation. I have the impression that the partial re-opening has gone smoothly, both at the department level and at MIT in general. For the latest news and the outlook on next step, please see the [email from VPR Zuber](#) (just in)

**EAPS UROP Summerfest:** As of today, we have 93 undergraduate students doing research in EAPS this summer. This total includes UROP, MSRP, and a few students not affiliated with either program. The summer UROP team (Ellen Lalk, Meghana Ranganathan, Julia Wilcots, and Amanda Bosh) has set up slack channels for students and mentors, and has arranged a number of opportunities for the students to get to know others in the department. These include weekly social hours (last week's theme was Trivia Night; this Friday will be Share Your Pet Night), and the twice-weekly Summer Seminar Series (S^3). EAPS S^3 has hosted three speakers so far, on topics from rivers on Titan, to science journalism, to library resources. S^3 talks will be available online as well. The team will also hold a mentor training session this Friday (tomorrow!) at 2pm. We have also encouraged collaboration across departments by making our S^3 series open to the ~20 students (+staff) at Haystack Observatory. In turn, they have invited us to their summer seminar series. Thank you, Amanda and everybody else who has been working so hard to organize this historic EAPS Summerfest.

### Fall 2020:

Much is still to be determined about campus operations, residence capacity, academic calendars, and many other issues, but important decisions were [announced by President Reif](#), yesterday. More soon, I am sure.

### Building updates:

**Earth and Environment Pavilion:** Hot of the press – This afternoon I joined a Zoom meeting in which the architect firm Anmahian Winton (AW) presented the *concept design* of the Pavilion to President Reif and others. While I have not heard the formal decision, I am pleased to say that the design was well received, and I fully expect that AW get the green light to go to the next phase, the *schematic design*. We are also close to finalizing a major gift for the Pavilion, which would bring us close to the \$30M target. Close, but not quite, so Angela and I have our work cut out.

**Lecture Hall (54-100) Naming Contest:** The MIT lecture hall on the lower level of building 54 – a.k.a. 54-100 – will be an integral part of the Pavilion, and its renovation is included in the scope of the AW design. This is made possible by a gift from Shell, but it will not be named after the company. Instead, after months of constructive dialogue and engagement, EAPS and Shell have jointly decided that the 54-100 lecture hall will be named through a contest. In a two-step process, members of the EAPS community will be able to submit names and select the ones that will then be reviewed and ranked by a panel composed of EAPS and Shell representatives. This was put on the back burner at the breakout of COVID-19, but I am thrilled to announce that the contest will start soon: we are aiming for Monday 22 June! At the onset of the contest, the complete guidelines and rules will be shared with the entire EAPS community at: <https://eapsweb.mit.edu/54-100-naming-contest-rules>. I take this opportunity to thank a group of faculty and students that I have consulted with throughout the process leading up to this agreement, and I hope you will all participate in this rather historic event of naming such a prominent space on campus.

That's it for now – more soon. As always, please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or comments – wherever you are, we love to hear from you.

Stay safe and well!

Rob  
Head, EAPS

### Contacts:

Rob van der Hilst, for faculty and general matters  
Taylor Perron and Megan Jordan, for matters related to education/teaching  
Michael Richard, for all matters related to staff and general building issues  
Jen Fentress, for all matters related to communication and online teaching

