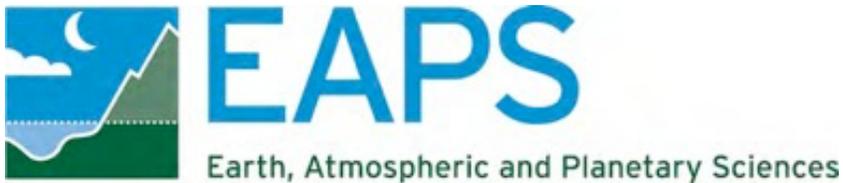


From: Robert D van der Hilst hilst@mit.edu 
Subject: EAPS Community update, COVID-19 (28 March 2020)
Date: March 29, 2020 at 11:59 AM
To: eaps-dept eaps-dept@mit.edu
Cc: Michael J Richard mj@mit.edu, J. Taylor Perron perron@mit.edu, Jennifer Fentress jfen@mit.edu, Megan Jordan mkjordan@mit.edu, rvdh rvdh@mit.edu

RV



Campus police: 617-253-1212
MIT Medical's COVID-19 hotline at 617-253-4865
EAPS/MIT message archive: <https://eapsweb.mit.edu/news/2020/covid-19-eaps-updates>
MIT COVID-19 updates: <https://covid19.mit.edu>

Saturday 3/28/2020

To all members of the EAPS Community:

The last couple of days seemed a bit calmer, with more time for things I normally deal with, and I hope it is the same for you. Slowly but surely things seem to be falling into place. But as we are transitioning away from frantic crisis management we should remain patient when faced with hiccups in implementation of new policies and execution of news practices. And, from an operational point of view, we should remain vigilant and alert and prepared for further change, especially when, as we are approaching the peak, measures will be increasingly informed by city and state government policy, from 'stay at home' advisories to disaster declarations. Situations can be frustrating, especially if communication lags behind change on the ground, but please realize that this is new for all of us and know that many people at MIT (and at EAPS) are doing their very best (often working long hours) to navigate the Institute (and department) through this uncharted but choppy waters. And please don't hesitate to contact me if there is a problem that needs a quick solution. You are EAPS, and EAPS is here for you.

Public health: Our safety remains the top priority, so before giving updates and general info please let me remind you to protect yourself and others (see also [CDC](#) advice and [MIT Medical News](#)): (1) Practice common sense personal hygiene (e.g., washing hands); (2) Be social but practice physical distancing (stay home as much as possible; try e-Drinks with friends); and (3) Get enough rest and stay fit (remember to keep distance from others when exercising outside). Physical separation does work, so please do it to protect yourself and others. And, as more people get infected, please be prepared and read carefully the [Guidance for when you become aware of a person with \(possible\) exposure to COVID-19](#) and know what to do if you think you might be infected: call MIT Medical's COVID-19 hotline at [617-253-4865](tel:617-253-4865) to speak with a clinician, who can evaluate your situation and tell you what to do next.

Limited Access Plan (LAP): With all but a few people working remotely, effective 3/25, MIT has effectively closed many buildings in order to reduce the campus footprint of services (cleaning, security, EHS, all sorts of deliveries, etc.) allowing more essential personnel to stay home and deal with the impact of the health crisis on their own lives. Over the past week we have reduced EAPS campus presence to near-zero by doing all teaching remotely, meeting online, and locking down labs and any other on-campus activities that required in-person presence. As of today, those who are on the exempt list have card access, whereas anybody else needs to use online tools or call the police should access be needed. Once a week, Michael Richard and Scott Wade will check all EAPS spaces, so if you have any concerns about your office or lab please contact them.

On-campus research: It was painful to halt our cutting-edge laboratory research, but since we decided early in the process to stop experiments and focus on protecting sensitive equipment and saving unique samples and cultures the impact of the lock-down (on 3/25) was small. I thank all lab PIs for their understanding, corporation, and patience (when rules kept changing), and Michael Richard, Scott Wade, and Brian Smith for their hard work coordinating with the Dean's Office to get it all sorted out. Of course, research that we can do remotely (such as, reading and writing papers and proposals, preparing for exams, processing data, thinking, solving problems, discussing research with individuals and groups, designing experiments, planning for missions etc. etc.) will continue. (Note: With labs in stand-by mode, please consider [donating Personal Protective Equipment](#), a.k.a. PPE, to hospitals and regional centers.)

Online teaching: After a two-week break, classes continue on Monday (3/30), all online. Over the past weeks, MIT's Office of Digital Learning (ODL) and our own staff have worked hard to prepare us all for the challenge ahead, and I think we are in as good a shape as is possible. I encourage everybody to check out the fantastic [EAPS Remote Teaching Resources](#) page that Jen Fentress prepared – Jen, thanks so much! – which also includes links to pertinent Institute resources on online teaching and inclusive practices. Most will teach from home, but if MIT offers [resources for educational continuity](#), including quiet spaces that can be booked online.

Teaching from home is not what we signed up (or planned) for, but the experience needs not be less valuable. In fact, being together (even on Zoom) may be more meaningful now than in business-as-usual mode. Students come to MIT to interact with faculty and with each other, and we should try to create opportunities to do that as much as possible. Focus on educational goals, just accept that it is different and imperfect, teach and learn the best you can, and don't get too upset when things go wrong. There is great (human) value in getting together, welcoming others in one's home, and making the best of it. Especially now. Let's Zoom!

Academic performance, exams, and promotions: Academic progress is high on our students' minds in any spring. As the current situation adds stress and anxiety, MIT has crafted new policy for grading and exams and we urge instructors to be compassionate and flexible. In case you missed it, please read [EAPS education policies and procedures during COVID-19 restrictions](#) (thanks Taylor Perron and Megan Jordan). I urge supervisors and

students facing general exams, thesis proposals, and defenses to discuss the options and ensure the best possible academic experience that the situation allows. Recognizing that interruptions in academic progress also impact the career development of our junior colleagues, last Friday, Provost Schmidt announced a temporary [adjustment of MIT's tenure policy](#). I am working with individual faculty members to see how this affects their plans and promotion schedules.

Other developments:

Faculty Searches: The circumstances make business-as-usual impossible, but faculty recruitment is continuing. Two more candidates in the "Climate" search will present and interview soon: Talia Tamarin-Brodsky on April 1 + 2 (lecture on 4/1 at 12pm), and Anita Ganesan on April 8 + 9 (lecture on 4/8 at 4pm). Maggie Cedarstrom will send info about the presentations and help schedule (online) meetings with the candidates.

In a separate effort, a potential candidate for the Stone Chair, a generous gift to EAPS from Professor Emeritus Peter H. Stone and Professor Paula Malanotte Stone (Rizzoli), has been identified. Approval for a senior appointment has been obtained, but the process of making a case is only just beginning. Given more urgent matters, the candidate and I thought it better to continue preparing all materials now but postpone the steps that involve others (incl. recommendation letters, visits with lectures and meetings with faculty and students, and—if all goes well—faculty meetings and vote) until after the peak of the pandemic.

Naming of lecture hall (54-100): As you all know, Shell-USA has made a donation to MIT to support the renovation of 54-100, with the new name of this lecture hall TBD. Over the past months I have worked with students, faculty, and Shell's office of external relationships to develop a process for a naming contest, with a combination of open nominations from the entire EAPS community, a vote, and a committee (with majority EAPS faculty and student representation) who selects the name. We are ready to go but are monitoring the COVID-19 developments to determine when it would be appropriate to start the process.

Construction moratorium: The City of Cambridge halted all construction work a week ago. That means that current work on Building 54 deferred maintenance and Building 4 lab construction has stopped. We are monitoring the situation as it would be great if some of the disruptive demolition work on the 19th floor could happen while the floors below are practically empty, but right now there is not much we can do but wait until further notices. Design of the Pavilion continues, but permits cannot be pulled, and construction not started until further notice.

Commencement 2020: As expected, MIT is working on alternatives to in-person Commencement and Hooding ceremonies. I refer to the recent [letter by President Reif](#) and ask everybody to stay tuned for further announcement on that topic.

I think that's it for now. Stay safe, enjoy the weekend, and look after each other. I am proud of EAPS and we will get through this crisis together.

Best to all, and don't hesitate to contact us with concerns, questions, or any other

comment.

Rob van der Hilst
Head, EAPS

Contacts:

Rob van der Hilst, for general and faculty matters

Taylor Perron and Megan Jordan, for matters related to education/teaching

Michael Richard, for all matters related to staff and general building issue

Jen Fentress, for all matters related to communication and online teaching