

# corridor

Fall 2022



From the  
MIT Office  
of Gift  
Planning

# From a Scholarship Recipient: Thank You

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To the MIT Planned Giving Community:



PHOTO: DANIEL BERMAN

I reached out to MIT recently to find out who funded a scholarship I received as an undergraduate. I'd been wanting to thank them since graduation but was nervous about reaching out, wondering whether they'd want to hear from me. I'm fortunate now to be in a position where I'm able to start thinking about paying it forward, though, and wanted the first step to be thanking the person who helped me.

Through MIT, I learned that the scholarship was provided by the Towle Scholarship Fund, which was created by a bequest. I was sad to learn that the donor has passed and that I cannot personally thank them for their generosity. But I'm glad to have the opportunity to address the MIT planned giving community to show how a planned gift can make a difference in the life of a student.

The scholarship funded by the Towle family's bequest allowed me to stay at MIT for a fifth year after changing my major to Course 6, electrical engineering and computer science. It also allowed me to add a creative writing minor, which I wanted to do after completing an internship at Microsoft—I realized the importance of being able to communicate your ideas to build things and to rally people around you. I ended up settling in Seattle and spending seven years at Microsoft as a program manager before cofounding the startup Symphoni, a platform that helps small businesses succeed from the ground up. Symphoni has since been acquired by Remitly, and I'm working on a number of new projects now. My MIT education taught me how to learn, not what to learn, and I've found that that empowers you to go out there and do pretty much anything.

It would have been extremely difficult for me to attend MIT without financial support. My family emigrated from Nigeria to the United States when I was 12 years old, and I thought at the time that it was more like coming over on a time machine than an airplane—that's how different it seemed. I have always been interested in electronics, dismantling things and trying to figure out how they work, and that expanded to computers after moving here. When I was accepted to MIT and attended Campus Preview Weekend, I saw the "mens et manus" attitude reflected everywhere: If you want to know how something works, tinker with it. Don't be afraid. Just do it. After that weekend, you could not have convinced me to go to any other college.

But my future could have gone in a very different direction. It took a last-minute push from a high school teacher to get me to apply to MIT at all. Since the college system functions so differently in Nigeria, my family and I hadn't even considered it. For that reason, I actually don't like the term "follow your dreams," because your dreams are limited to what you've seen. I couldn't have dreamt this future as a kid in Nigeria.

My ultimate goal is to open up the world for others the way it was opened up for me by creating new educational opportunities in Africa and around the world, even here in the United States, so more people can follow beyond their dream. From my personal experience, I can clearly see that education is the key to building a better world. To the Towle family and all who support scholarships at MIT, I cannot thank you enough.

Sincerely,

Omobayonle Olatunji '10

COVER:  
Omobayonle  
Olatunji

COVER PHOTO:  
DANIEL BERMAN

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To learn more about bequests, visit [giving.mit.edu/bequests](https://giving.mit.edu/bequests).

# Fellowships Make a Multidimensional Impact

## Gary W. Pace PhD '75 and Jinny Hamilton Pace



As a graduate student bartender at the Muddy Charles Pub, Gary Pace witnessed casual conversations between MIT community members—and the occasional astronaut—that sometimes led to real-world collaboration and innovation. “It was a meeting place for MIT students and faculty across disciplines who might never have interacted in another environment,” he recalls. Beyond apocryphal stories of revolutionary medical advances being conjured up over beers, Pace recalls how one patron helped him call home to Australia using an electronic device he made in the basement of Walker Memorial, a big help for a graduate student in the 1970s.

Pace has seen similarly serendipitous intersections between scientific innovation, resourcefulness, and entrepreneurship in his career as a founder and investor in the life sciences industry. Now, he and his spouse, Jinny, are paving the way for new generations of biological engineers through a fellowship for graduate students.



PHOTO: REBECCA RODRIGUEZ

**Graduate student success.** The fellowship will be funded through a charitable remainder unitrust (CRUT), which provides income to the donor and/or other beneficiaries while they are living and then goes to a designated cause at MIT. A gift that generates income for the family in the present while simultaneously pledging to support fellowships was a good choice for Gary and Jinny, who have three children at home. “I think the CRUT is a great vehicle that is a win-win for all,” Pace says. “MIT was a turning point for me, and the fellowship is truly about giving the same opportunity to graduate students starting their journey.”

ABOVE:  
Gary Pace and Jinny  
Hamilton Pace

**Academic connections.** Pace was the first in his family to graduate from high school and college. “I was fortunate to win a Fulbright Scholarship and a research assistantship to Course 20,” Pace says. “That allowed me to continue what I’d been doing in food and fermentation technology. But at MIT, I was introduced to how engineering and applied biology could be applied to the pharmaceutical industry, agriculture, and life science industries.” A key difference was the entrepreneurial framing of the research. “I think I’ve always been naturally entrepreneurial, but to see students develop their ideas at MIT, to be in essence nurtured to go into industry and form companies, was a revelation,” he says. This meeting of academia and industry ultimately laid the path for his career. “I have always maintained close connections with the academic world because knowledge is fundamental to societal growth,” he says.

**Multiple perspectives.** Pace sees the problem-solving skills he learned at MIT as essential to his life’s trajectory. After years of working in life sciences, often with startups that are developing novel products with nascent technologies, he’s familiar with what makes a successful company and how thinking creatively from multiple perspectives can make a new product or technology take off and have a positive impact. He and Jinny hope that their fellowship will support more of these dynamic thinkers at MIT who will go out and make a difference in the world. “When engineering and biological principles intersect,” Pace says, “you’re in a very powerful position to be able to identify and solve problems in a multidimensional way.” ●

To learn more about charitable remainder unitrusts, visit [giving.mit.edu/crut](https://giving.mit.edu/crut).



PHOTO: GAVIN HOLT

## A Ripple Effect for Students and Alumni

### Wean Khing Wong '84



Wean Khing Wong knows from personal experience that there are many ways to give back to the institutions and ideals that are important to you. Small-scale outings that she organized for her fellow MIT alumni in Southern California inspired her to found the MIT Chinese Alumni Group in 2019, which now has close to 6,000 members worldwide. As president, Wong produces free public educational programming for the group, which does not take dues and is open to MIT alumni and students of all ethnic backgrounds. Wong has also given back by establishing a bequest to MIT, allowing both her and the Institute to plan for the future.

**Opening the world.** MIT's policy of guaranteeing financial support for every accepted student played a significant role in Wong's wanting to give back to the Institute through a bequest. "I want other students to have the fortune and privilege of attending MIT and to have their world open up like mine did," she says. "I could attend MIT because I received financial aid. It changed my life and gave me the best education."

ABOVE:  
Wean Khing Wong

### Spreading knowledge, supporting each other.

Wong sees the MIT Chinese Alumni Group as another way to open up the world. As many people were isolated at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, Wong held frequent worldwide virtual meetings that provided a space for members to socialize, reflect, and share news. Now, Wong continues to host webinars and meetings featuring a range of speakers, many of whom are MIT alumni. "I am grateful to the Chinese and non-Chinese alumni and students who help this group succeed, and to all of the speakers," she says. "Their talks have formed a bridge for mutual understanding and assistance for creating a better world for all." Topics are wide-ranging but timely. For example, the increase in anti-Asian hate crimes in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic was addressed in two talks, one featuring two doctors who are MIT alumni. In another popular session, Major General William Chen (retired, United States Army) spoke about three generations of his family's history in the United States. "I repeatedly hear from participants that they'd never known how much Chinese and Asian Americans have contributed to US history, and that more public education is needed," says Wong. "Even people from different ethnic

backgrounds tell me that there are universal themes and lessons that they could apply to their own lives, and they share with me their experiences and family histories.”

**Lasting impact.** Wong studied biology at MIT, and her scientific training and essay-writing classes led to her current career as an attorney, mediator, speaker, and life coach as well as to winning numerous writing awards. “At MIT, I learned how to think, analyze, write, speak, and be creative and fair. My professors have had a lasting impact on me not only by imparting these skills, but also by their dedication to their work and the world,” Wong says. She notes that her scientific background is also valuable in cases regarding patent law.

Wong sees MIT’s educational mission, including the knowledge shared freely and with the public in the MIT Chinese Alumni Group presentations, as having a “ripple effect” in the world. She believes that MIT alumni are well positioned to effect positive change through their actions. “A person doesn’t have to give a lot of money to make a difference,” she says. ●

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For more information about making a bequest, visit [giving.mit.edu/bequests](https://giving.mit.edu/bequests). To learn more about the MIT Chinese Alumni Group and view past presentations, visit [mitcag.alumgroup.mit.edu](https://mitcag.alumgroup.mit.edu).

“I want other students to have the fortune and privilege of attending MIT and to have their world open up like mine did.”

Wean Khing Wong '84

## Register for the next Corridor Webinar



**“The US Macroeconomy in 2022: Patterns and Puzzles”**  
**Wednesday, November 2**  
**Noon—1 PM ET**  
**Online event**

The *Corridor* webinar series returns this November with James Poterba, Mitsui Professor of Economics at MIT and the president of the National Bureau of Economic Research, and A. L. “Lorry” Spitzer, MIT Office of the General Counsel. They will discuss macroeconomic developments, particularly the prospect of sustained higher inflation; the experience of past inflationary periods; and how donors can best tackle their philanthropic goals in the current environment.

Please register at [betterworld.mit.edu/corridorwebinar2022](https://betterworld.mit.edu/corridorwebinar2022). Registrants will have the opportunity to submit questions for the speakers beforehand, and we will do our best to have them answered during the event.

*If you have any questions about your registration or the event, please contact Leah Coughlan at [corridorwebinar2022@mit.edu](mailto:corridorwebinar2022@mit.edu).*



# Q&A: Accelerating Climate Action at MIT

## Maria Zuber, Vice President for Research, E. A. Griswold Professor of Geophysics



Maria Zuber is responsible for research administration and policy at MIT. She oversees more than a dozen interdisciplinary laboratories and centers, as well as Fast Forward: MIT's Climate Action Plan for the Decade, a comprehensive plan to help address the climate crisis. In partnership with Associate Provost for International Activities Richard Lester PhD '80, she spearheaded MIT's first-ever Climate Grand Challenges initiative, which launched in 2020.

### What is the Climate Grand Challenges initiative?

The Climate Grand Challenges called on MIT researchers to contribute their best ideas to solving the most difficult

climate problems. Nearly 400 MIT faculty members and senior researchers contributed to almost 100 proposals. After an extensive evaluation, the Institute invited 27 finalist teams to develop comprehensive research and innovation plans. In April 2022, MIT selected five flagship projects to receive funding and support with the goal of bringing high-impact, science-based climate solutions to the world. These five projects encompass sustainable and resilient agriculture; next-generation climate modeling; climate adaptation and preparing for climate and weather extremes; and the reinvention of hard-to-decarbonize industries, like steel and cement.

### How are different departments across MIT collaborating on climate?

Nearly every department on campus is engaged in climate work, evidenced by the fact that 90% of departments submitted Climate Grand Challenges proposals. They are doing this work in interdisciplinary, collaborative ways. Of the 27 finalist teams, most have representation from three or four of the schools and the College of Computing. A key part of the promise of the Grand Challenges projects is that they exist at the intersection of multiple fields, involving a synthesis of scientific, engineering, social scientific, and humanistic knowledge, insights, and approaches.

### How can a planned gift benefit the Climate Grand Challenges?

The generosity of our alumni and friends is vital to our work, and many donors share our conviction that climate change is today's defining challenge.

Planned giving is part of the foundation that enables us to research and develop new climate solutions and train the next generation of climate leaders. Planned gifts made today will support the Institute in creating the innovations of the future.

### Both of your grandfathers were coal miners in eastern Pennsylvania. How does that affect your views on climate change?

My grandfathers mined coal at a time when the regional coal industry was already in decline, and along with it, so were economic opportunities. My personal experience taught me that if we want the transition to clean energy to be durable, we need it to be fair. There will be plenty of opportunity in our clean energy future. We have to make sure that communities everywhere see themselves as part of that future.

### You've said in the past that rather than despair about climate change, we should look for scientific breakthroughs that offer solutions. What areas of climate research offer hope?

Climate Grand Challenges just gave us 27 reasons for hope—we would love to be able to support all of these finalists. Across MIT we are seeing promising developments in many areas, from battery technology to building efficiency to fusion energy, which has seen truly exciting developments in the last year.

### Are today's MIT students focused on the climate threat?

Much of my optimism is because of our students. They bring incredible focus and dedication to solving this problem. Working together, I believe we can solve the climate challenge. ●

For more information about MIT's Climate Action Plan and the Climate Grand Challenges, visit [climategrandchallenges.mit.edu](https://climategrandchallenges.mit.edu).



**“I am continuously humbled by and grateful for alumni and friends who give back to MIT. So many of you have worked with the Office of**

**Gift Planning to support the Institute. Thank you! Of special note for the past few years is the remarkable increase in those who have chosen to support MIT by making a charitable distribution from their IRAs. This is a true growth area in charitable giving and provides tremendous current support to MIT to advance its mission. Thank you again for your belief in the mission of MIT and for taking such great measures to support it. Together, we make a better world.”**

**Julie A. Lucas**  
Vice President for Resource Development

To learn more about how to make a charitable distribution from your IRA, visit [giving.mit.edu/ira](https://giving.mit.edu/ira).



## Plan Now for Year-End

If you would like to make a gift in 2022 to take advantage of year-end giving benefits, now is the time to start the process!

Visit [giving.mit.edu/yearend](https://giving.mit.edu/yearend) to consult our giving timeline, or contact the Office of Gift Planning with any additional questions.

## Sample Bequest Language

Below is suggested language to share with your advisor if you would like to include MIT in your will or estate plan.

**I give [all of the residue of my estate OR an amount equal to X percent of the residue of my estate / thereof OR \$ \_\_\_\_\_ ] to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), a Massachusetts nonprofit corporation, for its general educational and charitable purposes.**

We can provide sample language if you prefer your bequest to be designated for a specific purpose. Contact us to learn more about bequests.

This information is provided for illustrative purposes only and should not be considered legal or financial advice. We encourage you to discuss these options with your advisor.

## Contact Us

Making a planned gift to MIT enables you to meet your financial goals while achieving your charitable aspirations, bolstering MIT’s world-changing programs while providing income to you and/or your beneficiaries.

Ready to start the conversation?  
Contact us today!

**OFFICE OF GIFT PLANNING**  
**617.253.4082**  
**[giftplanning@mit.edu](mailto:giftplanning@mit.edu)**  
**[giving.mit.edu/contact-ogp](https://giving.mit.edu/contact-ogp)**



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An aerial photograph of the MIT campus, showing the iconic dome of the Stata Center in the foreground, a green lawn, and the city skyline across the water in the background.

## Inside this Newsletter

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From a Scholarship  
Recipient: Thank You

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