

Reading seminar on *An Inclusive Academy*

Notes from Week 1

General Discussion

Discussion around the book overview

The information in Part II of the book is useful to those beyond faculty.

- E.g., undergrads who are in charge of admission into an enrichment program can learn from the material discussed there.
- Especially grad students: it's really valuable to think about hiring before the first time you're on a hiring committee. Or even before the first time you are in front of a hiring committee.

Some goals for the seminar

- Educate ourselves.
- Discuss what we can individually do to make our dorm/classroom/research group/etc. more diverse and inclusive.
- Discuss what we can do as a community to improve diversity and inclusion.
- Learn here, and then share what we learn with our community.

Recap from Discussion in Breakout Room 1

Key topics/points discussed

- What merit means. How one can understand potential in admissions, hiring, etc.
- In many cases, we apply a variable metric for merit. However, we do not do a good job of supporting people after they come to MIT.
- In academia merit is understood as a must, but not everyone recognizes inclusiveness as central.

More detailed notes from the discussion

- Once you have a flexible way of defining merit, you have to adopt a flexible way of helping people attain their potential.
 - We are not very good at this second part.
- We consider potential for undergrad and grad students, but much less when we hire at the instructors or faculty level. There, we consider much more past performance.
 - We often assume past performance is the key indicator of future performance.
- Through reading the book, hopefully we'll see more how to take potential more into account in admissions. We need to do things more systematically.
- MIT held a [webinar with Claude Steele](#) today. Here are two important points Steele discussed:

- The idea that creating a sense of belonging can be made through brief interventions with large positive effects.
- Since the faculty are not as diverse as we would like and turnover takes a long time, building trust between faculty and students of different backgrounds is essential.
- There is a really good series made in 1993 that shows the perspective of minority students at MIT: ["It's Intuitively Obvious" Videos](#).
 - Almost all of it is still applicable to today.

Breakout Room 2

Key topics/points discussed

- Mostly discussed the six values.
- How do we measure if our measures of merit are actually good?
- To what extent do we follow up on our admissions/hiring decisions?
- Did we make the best decisions? How would one measure that?
- Other values not included in the book: teaching and learning, impact on the rest of the world.
- Is inclusivity a value that's actually held in academia?
- What does inclusivity mean to different people? Most people agree with it as a value, but people have very different ideas on how to achieve it, etc.