



# MIT150 Idea Bank and Survey Findings

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FINAL REPORT



MARCH 9, 2012

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

# MIT150 IDEA BANK AND SURVEY FINDINGS

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## Introduction

*“The MIT150 Celebrations... have described the earliest dreams of our founding and produced provocative, sometimes even luminous, visions of the future.”*

*- MIT President Susan Hockfield to the graduates at the  
June 3, 2011 Commencement ceremony*

The MIT150 celebration commenced on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and concluded on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011 (please see <http://mit150.mit.edu/> for reference). During that time members of the MIT family as well as many beyond got the chance to experience the best that MIT has to offer, from art installations and dance performances to interdisciplinary symposia and an Institute-wide Open House. The celebration evoked an undeniable affinity for the MIT community, and it became apparent that the energy garnered for the Institute by the MIT150 celebration should be continued. The question of how this should be done, and how to best leverage the support generated from MIT150, was posed to the community through the opening of the Idea Bank, a crowdsourcing tool for collecting ideas and creating a conversation among community members that has been used for other important dialogues at MIT. As yet another extension of the Institute’s information-gathering effort, a four-page MIT150 Survey was developed and made available to the public on the Idea Bank website.

The Idea Bank was opened to the MIT community on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2011, and the community was notified about the Idea Bank in several different ways, including communications from the President and Vice President of Institute Affairs, articles in *The Tech*, and spotlights on the MIT homepage. MIT community members were asked to deposit their ideas for how to continue celebrating MIT and capitalizing on the success of the celebration, as well as to respond to and rate other people’s submissions. To help generate ideas, respondents were presented with a series of questions, including:

- What did you find most surprising or delightful during MIT150?
- What MIT150 activity generated the most interest and chatter amongst people around you?
- Share your favorite MIT150 experience: what did you enjoy or find most meaningful about the MIT150 celebration? How do you suggest we create similar experiences in the future?

While the majority of the questions included as part of the MIT150 Survey invited free response, several of the prompts were more focused – asking, for example, whether respondents had visited the MIT150 website, and whether the Institute should continue to host an Open House – and if so, how frequently.

The scope of activity on the site which will be described in this report took place between September 21 and December 31, 2011. During that time the site experienced **3,633 visits by 2,688 unique visitors, with a total of 15,828 page views**. People visited an average of over **4 pages per visit, and stayed on the site for almost three minutes**.

## Executive Summary of Results

### *MIT150 Idea Bank*

The vast majority of comments were positive, with respondents praising the event for bringing together the entire community – reaching beyond MIT to include surrounding cities and neighborhoods. The call for ideas to keep the energy from MIT150 going evoked 26 responses from members of the MIT community. Deposits were made by staff members, students, faculty members, and individuals not indicating direct affiliation to the Institute.

**The two most popular topics (75% of all responses) were about *FAST* (Festival of Art, Science, and Technology) and the Open House.** The top three recommendations, as well as exemplary comments, include:

1. Keep the *FAST* art installations and light illuminations that are already installed around campus, and bring back *FAST* in the future (31%)  
“I don’t think any of us could have predicted how successful and how important the *FAST* Festival would be at MIT. Not only were meaningful conversations fostered across disciplines, but the resulting platform allowed for discussions far, far beyond the campus. This stirring of ideas, this rich experimentation, concentration and adventuresome energy is precisely how the story of Massachusetts Institute of Technology should be told: by example! The *FAST* Festival formed a broad community, and MIT stereotypes were celebrated even as the clichés that formed them were exploded.”
2. Have smaller division- and department-wide Open Houses throughout the year, and hold the Institute-wide Open House again every couple of years (31%)  
“I fully support the open house every few years. MIT’s impact in science, engineering, and business is well known. However a major part of the value MIT provides is less quantifiable- inspiration of the next generation in STEM and stimulating discussion of technology in the public. Our physical campus – labs, people, etc. – is one of the most ideal tools possible to engage the public and especially young people.”
3. Keep the MIT150 Exhibit open (8%)  
“The MIT 150 exhibit at the MIT museum exhibit was fantastic. This really was a great way to capture the essence of MIT’s history - and was fascinating and fun! If possible, we should keep this exhibit in some capacity moving forward.”

Many commenters praised the art installations and light illuminations around campus, and wished that these would become a permanent part of the MIT landscape. Several respondents also recommended having an Institute-wide Open House every two or five years, and smaller department- or division-based open houses every year to allow participants to experience MIT in greater depth than would be possible in an Institute-wide Open House.

Additional ideas included taking the MIT exhibit on the road to encourage K-12 math and science education across the nation, offering more symposia to undergraduates like the Brains, Minds, and Machines symposium, and bringing back the Johnson Games, which used to bring faculty, staff, and students together in lighthearted sports-related competition. Others lauded the “Book of the Day” selections that came from the “150 Years in the Stacks” initiative by the MIT Libraries to demonstrate the diverse offerings in the collection, and the MIT150 Timeline (please see <http://mit150.mit.edu/timeline>) for providing a fun and unique way to look at MIT’s history. One respondent also called for the Institute to consider creating the position of Chief Diversity Officer to coordinate and focus all of the Institute’s efforts to improve diversity on campus.

## MIT150 Survey

The enthusiasm characterizing Idea Bank submissions was also observed among the responses to the survey. Perhaps due to the more focused nature of several of its questions the response rate for the survey was higher than that of the Idea Bank – with submissions being received from 69 respondents, 42 of whom completed the survey in its entirety.

What may have been merely a “sense” that the celebrations strengthened our collective sense of community before the results were tallied was afterwards established as demonstrable fact – with 72% percent of respondents agreeing to the statement that “MIT150 deepened my connection to MIT”.

The clear message sent by those who responded—over 68% of whom were members of MIT’s staff, and approximately 50% of whom participated directly in the planning of an MIT150 event—was that there were aspects of the celebration that should be retained. Specifically:

- **The Open House was highlighted as an event worth repeating, with most suggesting that it be held at the Institute level every three to five years.**
  - Many described the interaction of MIT students with members of the larger Cambridge community at the Open House as having been of particular significance – with respondents focusing on the value of “students doing hands-on activities with kids” and the event “help[ing] [them] feel that MIT was serious about its commitment to the Cambridge community.”
  - Indeed the community outpouring of support for the Open House was described to have been such that holding it in a larger venue in the future would be warranted.
- **The Convocation was applauded as having represented an important moment of pride for the Institute** – a true celebration of MIT’s long history of contribution and service.
  - While several respondents noted that in the future the Institute might consider including iconic speeches in keeping with that delivered by Winston Churchill at the 1949 Mid-Century Convocation, emphatic appreciation for the music that was featured at the Convocation was expressed by many within the survey set as well.
- **The support expressed for FAST was overwhelming**, as evidenced by 89% of respondents highlighting the festival as the single event apart from Convocation and Open House having had the most meaningful impact on them. (Additional information regarding FAST can be found at <http://web.mit.edu/provost/reports/ArtsatMITFinal6-20-2011.pdf>.)
  - The community’s appreciation for the opportunity FAST represented to celebrate the *visual arts* seems indicative, especially when considered with the community’s interest in *the music* of the Convocation, of a general interest in seeing the arts not only integrated, but *featured*, in major Institute Events both now and in the future.
- **Finally, the celebration’s publicity campaign seemed effective** - with over 98% of respondents saying that they had visited and used the MIT150 website.

## Suggestions

"Inventional Wisdom" the slogan of our 150 celebration, captured well MIT's curiosity, creativity and spirit of collaboration. As President Hockfield said at the beginning of this academic year, "we emerged from MIT150 with a fresh appreciation for our institutional history, culture and mission - and well primed for the ongoing task of inventing the future."

Not only did the Idea Bank and survey results provide useful insights into what made MIT150 successful, they prescribed actions to be taken should we hope to see the spirit of community and sense of excitement generated by the celebrations continue.

- First and foremost, respondents were emphatic that **FAST Light should return**. The over twenty installations featured at this, the culminating event of *FAST: the Festival of Art, Science and Technology*, captured the imaginations of those who gathered on MIT's Campus and along the Charles River to marvel at the beauty made manifest through veritable collaboration, digital fabrication, and efficient lighting. The overwhelming response was that future *FASTs* should be held, be run for a longer period of time, and continue to allow artists to interact directly with their audience.
- The **Open House should return and be held every three years**.
- MIT should **continue hosting symposia**, as well as find ways to engage the rich and diverse artistic community here on campus. The structure of the competition for *FAST* involvement was particularly energizing, and could serve as a model for future endeavors.

Finally, as we look ahead to the 2016 celebration of MIT's move to Cambridge, we hope to utilize the ideas generated in the Idea Bank to keep the energy and spirit of MIT150 going. As one Idea Bank participant put it, "The MIT 150 exhibit at the MIT museum exhibit was fantastic. **This really was a great way to capture the essence of MIT's history** - and was fascinating and fun! If possible, we should keep this exhibit in some capacity moving forward."

While the MIT 150 Exhibition concluded on December 31, 2011, a team has already been dedicated to the task of actively seeking ways to curate the tremendous volume of texts, images and video that has been collected for the benefit of the broader community by the Institute on its 150<sup>th</sup> year. In an effort to ensure that the material collected is as accessible as possible, the goal of developing **an innovative and dynamic online vehicle to convey the richness, breadth, and depth of MIT's history** has been set. There seems an interest on the part of many to begin this work sooner rather than later, and the development of a permanent home for the Institute's "infinite" and indeed, living, history has been highlighted as a priority for the current year.

We have benefited tremendously from the comments and recommendations that have been received and look forward to our next community celebration in 2016!

# APPENDIX A: Survey Data

## Survey Respondent Profile

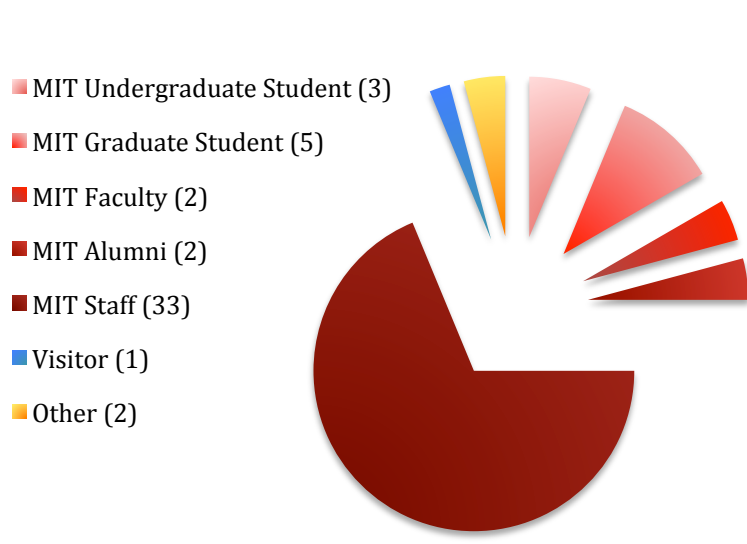


Figure 1. Reported relationship to MIT (48 responses)

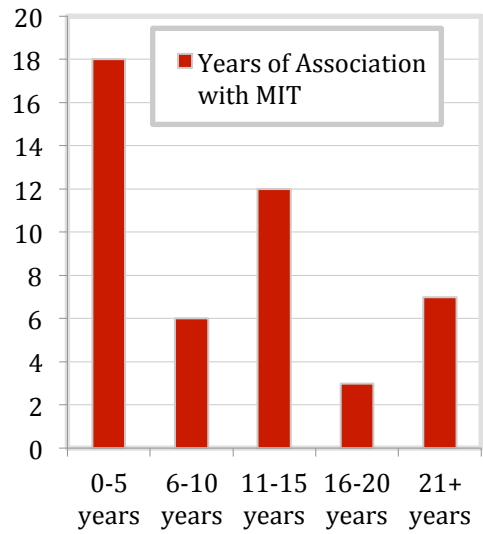


Figure 2. Distribution of the duration of association with the Institute among respondents with an MIT connection (45 responses)

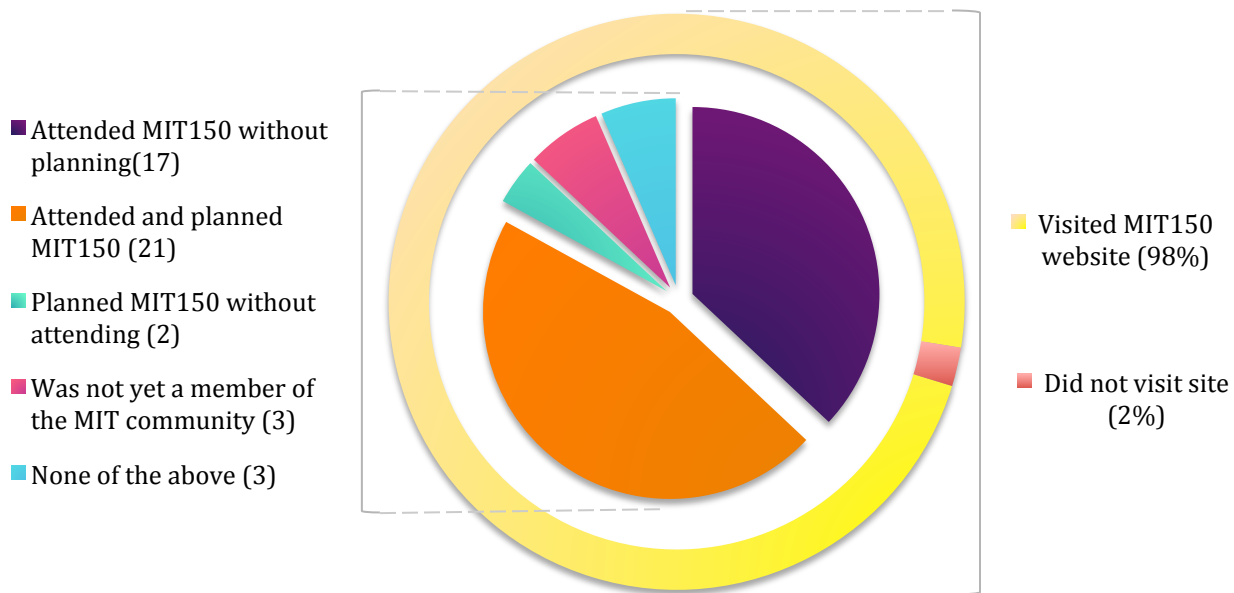


Figure 3. Respondents' Participation in MIT150 Events & Use of MIT150 Website

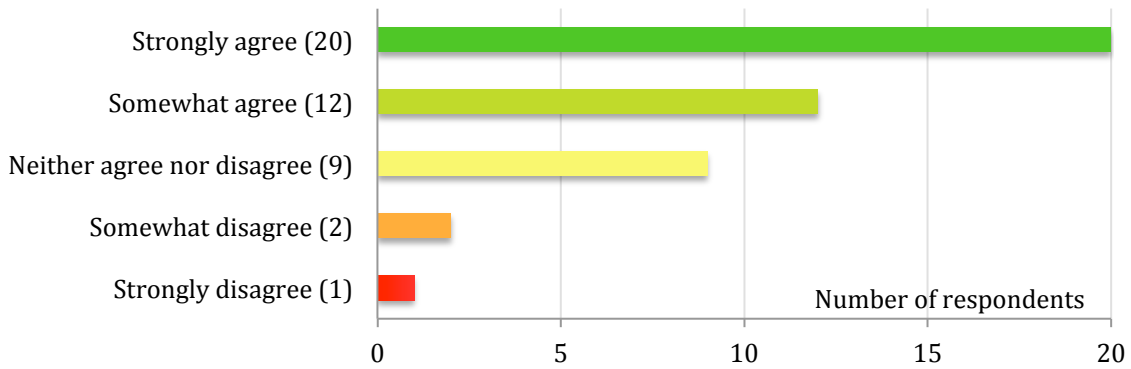
Pie Chart: Nature of Participation in the celebration (46 responses)

Ring Chart: Use of MIT150 Website (46 responses)

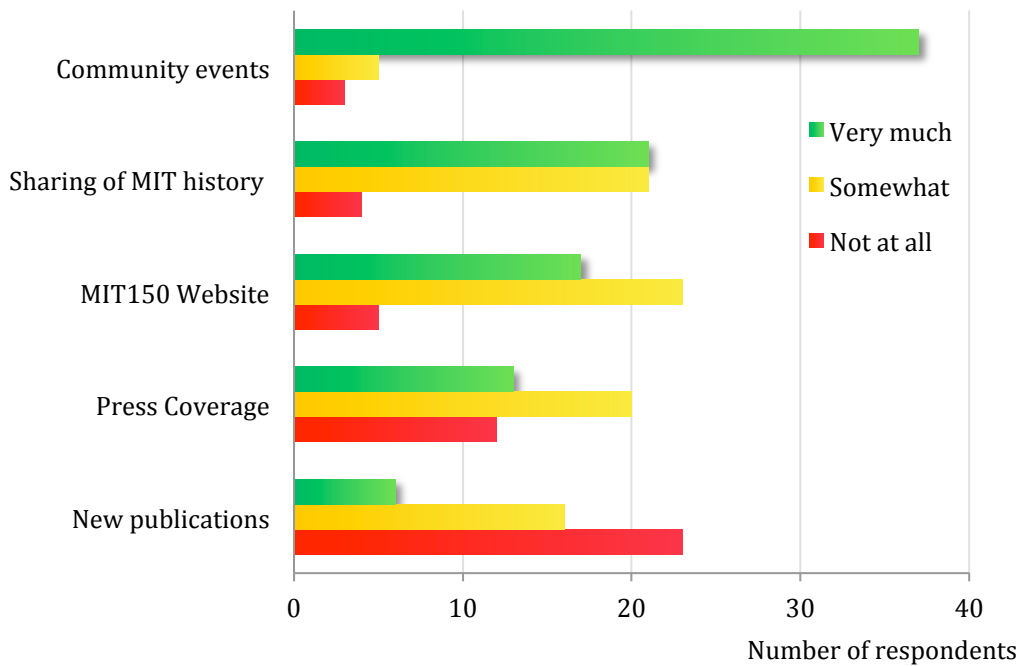


Feedback on Overall Celebration - Charts

**Prompt:** Indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "MIT150 deepened my connection to MIT."



**Prompt:** "To what extent did the following contribute to your MIT150 experience?"

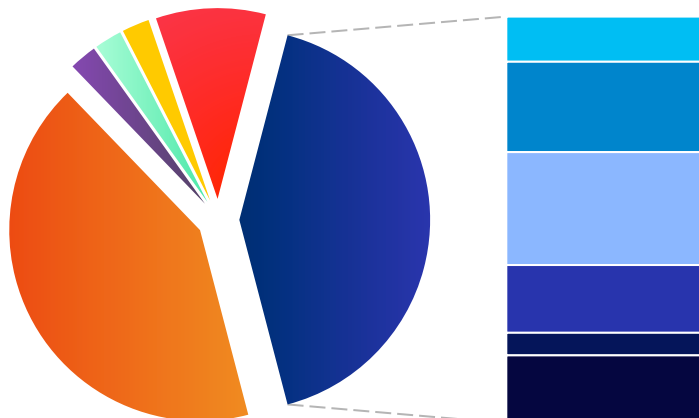


## Event-Specific Feedback - Charts

**Prompt: "If you attended MIT150 events [other than Convocation or Open House], which event had the most meaning for you?"** (48 responses)



**Prompt: "Which one event were you not able to attend that you wished you had attended?"\*** (43 responses)



*\*While the number of responses for FAST approximately tied those for the symposia in this case, the validity of the FAST data, which was listed in the survey as the default option, cannot be definitively ascertained.*

- FAST Arts Festival (18)
- Human Diversity and Social Order Forum Series (1)
- Next Century Convocation (1)
- Other - in this case, Toast to the Tech (1)
- Open House (4)
- Symposium: Economics and Finance: From Theory to Practice to Policy (2)
- Symposium: Conquering Cancer through the Convergence of Science and Engineering (4)
- Symposium: Leaders in Science and Engineering: The Women of MIT (5)
- Symposium: Computation and the Transformation of Practically Everything (3)
- Symposium: Earth, Air, Ocean and Space: The Future of Exploration (1)
- Symposium: Brains, Minds and Machines (3)

## *Feedback on Open House*

### On whether MIT should host an open house again:

- **41 of 43 respondents said yes.**

### On ideal frequency for an open house:

- **Most respondents suggested every three years**, but the distribution was bimodal (with 23 respondents suggesting a three-year interval, 4 respondents suggesting a four-year interval, and 14 respondents suggesting a five-year interval)

An open-ended survey question asked respondents to describe the “one thing that worked best about the open house”. Their responses have been summarized and organized, depending on whether they relate primarily to the content of the event, or to its organization.

- Content-related highlight of the open house:
  - “Diversity of the exhibits and the families participating.”
  - “Welcoming atmosphere dispelled any notion of a closed environment.”
  - “Family activities.”
  - “Cambridge Science Expo really helped me feel that MIT was serious about its commitment to the Cambridge community.”
  - “Students doing hands-on activities with kids.”
- Organization-related highlight of the open house:
  - Printed guide and signage was very helpful.
  - Undergraduate volunteers made the day run smoothly.

Respondents were also given an opportunity to describe the “one thing [they] would do differently for a future open house”. Their responses have been summarized and organized following the format established above.

- Content-related suggestions for a future open house:
  - More hands-on activities. (This general comment was received twice.)
  - Ensure that those presenting posters can explain the social relevance of their work.
- Organization-related suggestions for a future open house:
  - Select a larger space – in addition to the Stata Center, consider using tents or making use of the space available in Rockwell Cage. (This general comment was received four times.)
  - Advise departments more comprehensively on how to engage the public. (This general comment was received twice.)
  - “Concentrate all hands-on exhibits in one central location”, to ensure that participants (especially those with children) do not “miss out [because the hands on activities are] so spread out across campus.”
  - Define the scale of the event at the beginning of the planning process, and do not allow it to expand beyond certain limits.
  - Offer open house tours to help visitors better manage their time.
  - Make the event longer to enable visitors to see everything.

## *Convocation-specific Feedback*

Respondents were asked to describe the “one thing that worked best about the Convocation”, specifically referencing that element that they enjoyed most. All responses related to the content (as opposed to the organization) of the event.

- *Content-related highlight of the Convocation:*
  - The music was wonderful. (This general comment was received nine times.)
    - The Rambax Ensemble was fantastic.  
(Counted among the nine above who enjoyed the events music, were two who singled out Rambax – which presented the Senegalese art of sabar drumming – as having been the element of the Convocation that they most enjoyed.)
  - The use of video. (This general comment was received twice.)
  - “Celebrating MIT in a manner rich with tradition.”
  - Faculty speakers.
  - “David Ferriero.” (Mr. Ferriero was the Convocation’s keynote speaker.)
  - “Signing the charter with an iPad was a great idea.”

Respondents were also given an opportunity to describe the “one thing [they] would do differently for a future Convocation”. Their responses have been summarized and organized, depending on whether they relate primarily to the content of the event, or to its organization.

- *Content-related suggestions for a future Convocation:*
  - In selecting a headline speaker, “... think Mid-century with Winston Churchill.” (This general comment was received five times.)
  - More women should be featured, especially female musicians.
  - The event should reflect more humility, with “less pomp”, and without the “techno-interface of signed tablet.”
- *Organization-related suggestions for a future Convocation:*
  - A future convocation should be held on campus. (This general comment was received twice.)
  - “Smaller receptions, before and after, rather than [holding the event in] one giant room.”
  - Consider shortening the program.
  - For those in the procession, allot less time for assembling.
  - “Have water available for all the people in regalia waiting to process into the hall.”

## APPENDIX B: Deposits in the MIT150 Idea Bank

All deposits in the MIT150 Idea Bank are copied below. Indented comments indicate a comment on a previous deposit.

### *On the Exhibit:*

- “Create a traveling exhibit about MIT, its history, and its innovations, and gear it to encouraging young people to seek careers in engineering and science. Make it available for loan to high schools, local libraries, etc.”
- “The MIT 150 exhibit at the MIT museum exhibit was fantastic. This really was a great way to capture the essence of MIT's history - and was fascinating and fun! If possible, we should keep this exhibit in some capacity moving forward.”

### *On FAST:*

- “The luminous final evening of FAST drew a huge crowd of people (many from outside MIT) who were deeply excited about seeing their city, their riverscape, and, frankly, their image of the Institute transformed. I overheard comments like “Why can't the lights on the bridge be permanent?” and “We should close Mem Drive more often.” So -- let's have FAST become a regular, recurring feature of our community life, and let's think about ways to use it to make the world more delightful beyond just a single evening; it could become a signature of both MIT and Cambridge/Boston, as WaterFire is for Providence.”
- “Continue the light illumination show or an interactive exhibit like that one every year. Still have a part of it hanging up in the building 3 stairwell!”
- “I really enjoyed many of the art installations around campus as well as the culmination event in May. Thanks!”
- “Many cities who've commissioned one-time events from artists have “claimed” those events permanently for their community -- see Providence and WaterFire. Can we find the energy and funding to put our amazing architects, artists, designers and performers out on a more permanent or recurring basis, to keep the “FAST” spirit moving?”
- “They were a constant surprise as they appeared throughout the spring and they showed off the creativity of our people to great advantage. The Big Weekend in May was spectacular and we should do it every year. It brought people in from all over the city and presented MIT as a great host and entertainer; a great civic contribution that can offset a little bit the disgruntled press we sometimes get from the city of Cambridge. This is much more important than continuing to brag about our history.”
- “I've rarely seen the public so engaged with MIT -- admittedly a tough space to get to know -- as through the Festival of Arts, Science, and Technology. I'd love to see more, whether it's showing off collaborations between MIT scientists and artists or inherently exciting and cross-disciplinary events like the Gambit video game installation at the MIT Museum.”
- “It would be wonderful to find a way to make the FAST Festival an ongoing part of the MIT community. The installations and programs were terrific, and the energy was fantastic!”
- “I don't think any of us could have predicted how successful and how important the FAST Festival would be at MIT. Not only were meaningful conversations fostered across disciplines - but the resulting platform allowed for discussions far, far beyond the campus. This stirring of ideas, this rich experimentation, concentration and adventuresome energy is precisely how the story of Massachusetts Institute of Technology should be told—by example! The thousands of people who came together (in the rain no less) for the final events of the FAST Festival witnessed a

sliver of MIT's extraordinary output, as you say 'inspiring the world about science, engineering, technology, (and the arts).' The Festival hit on many many levels. The number of extraordinary projects that were not included because they maybe needed another year of development? or longer range support due to their scale? or simply because the FAST Festival COULD NOT BE ANY BIGGER! means that not only the projects that happened but also the many unseen projects also testify to the wealth of collaborations that are currently present at the institute. It's stunning. These unfinished projects should find their way forward. The FAST Festival formed a broad community, and MIT stereotypes were celebrated even as the cliches that formed them were exploded. Looking forward, I think it would be very interesting and squarely in the interest of art, science, and technology to make the FAST Festival a biennial or every five years affair. This will give the ideas that ultimately formed the beginning of the festival an opportunity to grow and develop, take bigger risks and to establish longer term collaborations. There are many details that would need to be mastered but I suppose that I am suggesting the convening of an internationally significant event, a kind of World's Fair for the n'th century. I say act fast...again!"

- "There have been many ideas to bring back FAST, and mine is a voice of support. However, mine takes a slightly different approach. Rather than just have FAST reiterated every year, why not make it into a Biennale of sorts that celebrates art from within MIT and around the world that use the theme of night as a common thread. Noted artists can bring their creative insight, blended with technology, while siting their work next to that of someone from Architecture, the Media Lab or anything in between (literally!). We can use this as a platform for greater discourse and collaboration, and bring art that is unique to MIT, with its blend of technology, in a very special and unique way. As potential precedent: Nuit Blanche (worldwide) or DesCours in New Orleans."
- "The Festival of Arts Science and Technology proved to be, in my opinion, one of the most impactful events of the 150th celebrations for three reasons.
  1. It highlighted, for the public, the fact that MIT is not just a Tech school, but a dynamic and well rounded institute that both supports and produces amazing art.
  2. It gave the MIT community an insight into the creativity and scope of art made by both students and staff/faculty at MIT.
  3. Its format was striking, inviting and accessible. What better way to advertise and engage than that?

My favorite MIT 150th experience was spending several days on one of the MIT sailing club's motorboats, early morning, watching the sun rise over the Charles while helping install the floating orbs that made up light-drift. I think an arts festival, in conjunction with the successful MIT open house, would be a combination impossible to pass up. I think both the festival and the open house should absolutely be repeated in the future. Thank you for this opportunity."

- "The LightBridge installation on the Harvard bridge was fantastic. I thought it was a wonderful addition to the city skyline that fit in well with the existing light scape and also spoke to MIT's culture. It would be a wonderful thing to have there for a longer period of time. As I understand it the bridge is under control of the state and the Governor would need to approve. And a more durable version of the LightBridge would need to be constructed, but I think having it there on the order of a year or more would be well worth it."
  - "I agree. Why do we need to tear a lot of the FAST installations down? I'm glad that Dis(Course)4 is still up in the main group. There is no need to take it down until it starts falling apart in a few years."

- “There are several comments posted already related to FAST, and I agree with them all. Although I missed the evening celebration, the art installations around campus were my favorite part of the 150th. I wish some of them could have been permanent or longer-lasting (like the one on Building 54!). I agree that FAST could easily become a signature event for MIT and Cambridge. I love the spirit of creativity and community that it evokes!”

*On the Open House:*

- “I was blown away by the open house and the opportunity to see parts of MIT I had never seen before. Seeing all the amazing activity that happens here, and interacting with students and professors made me proud to be a part of this great Institution. Additionally, this was a great community bonding event for both MIT and the community—the music, crafts, activities were great. We should hold an Open House on a more regular basis—perhaps every 3-4 years?”
- “I concur with the reasons already stated by others; let’s have an open house every few years. I worked on the preparation and execution of the event and observed first hand the collaboration between departments for the single purpose of making the open house a success - incredible. Also, I was told by several guests that they were impressed by the variety of learning opportunities at MIT and the genuine openness of faculty, students, and staff to questions posed by even our youngest guests.”
- “An Open House focusing on the Arts at MIT during a time of year when outside as well as indoor activities might be planned would be fabulous. The FAST Festival and Arts activities during the MIT Open House in April were of high caliber and plentiful. It would be ideal if more frequent open houses concentrating on one or two areas or disciplines at MIT were planned with more lead time. Having less competition among disciplines would also allow the public to visit more of the activities presented.”
  - "I loved the Open House, with so many people from the Institute and from the community participating. Naturally, holding it with some kind of regularity would be great. The Open House could be strengthened by increasing the number of exhibitors providing hands on or interactive work with lab materials and machinery. The power of a hands on experience is so much stronger than a passive observation of someone else doing science. It should be less like magic and more like human activity that is full intelligible." "I fully support the open house every few years. MIT's impact in science, engineering, and business is well known. However a major part of the value MIT provides is less quantifiable—Inspiration of the next generation in STEM and stimulating discussion of technology in the public. Our physical campus—labs, people, etc—is one of the most ideal tools possible to engage the public and especially young people. In a direct way it is to MIT's advantage to bolster the local population's interest in STEM to foster political/financial support, collaboration with industry, and develop a future student body. At a national and global level few organizations are better suited to bring STEM into people's field of view. I have endless positive anecdotes from participating in the open house- many of young students getting excited about learning and the world around them. I also witnessed many interactions that could possibly lead to industry/MIT collaboration when parents who brought their kids started chatting with researchers. It just seems irresponsible to NOT have an open house every few years!"

- “It may be more manageable to organize more frequent open houses if they are not Institute wide. Smaller and more frequent open houses that concentrate on a given facet or area of MIT may be interesting and would allow the public more time to devote to the various activities. The Institute wide open house was somewhat overwhelming, albeit impressive. An Arts Open House would be one of the several that might be planned.

*Other:*

- “Loved the timeline, providing a real sense of the history of MIT and the people involved.”
- “Loved the book a day from the Library Stacks.”
- "As an undergraduate, the experience of being able to attend the Brains, Minds, and Machines symposium to listen to leaders in the field speak, right on the MIT campus, at no cost, was immensely valuable. I understand that smaller symposia happen more frequently, not to mention even smaller lecture series, but they are not as well-publicized and so most undergraduates do not attend. I think it would greatly improve the undergraduate experience if larger-scale, well-publicized symposia open to undergraduates happened more frequently. Additionally, it would be beneficial if it were made more clear to undergraduates which of the existing smaller-scale symposia we are welcome to attend, and if we are not welcome to attend very many (I don't know how common they are because I don't hear about them), if more of them were open to us."
- "The MIT150 celebration did a marvelous job of creating a sense of community. Bringing members of the community together for the convocation and the symposia was wonderful. The FAST Arts Festival activities surpassed my wildest expectations, bringing attention both within the MIT Community and in the broader community to MIT's wonderful contributions in the arts. The MIT Open House was a wonderful way to expose the public to the wonders of science at MIT, and surely made an impression on the many youngsters who come to campus on April 30. However, the one experience that was missing that I would have liked to have seen as part of the celebration was a community wide interactive experience such as the Johnson Games. Having participated in the previous versions of the Johnson Games (1988, 1991, 2000, and 2002) I can attest that these games provided a wonderful opportunity to develop a sense of community spirit. The fact that teams were required to be a mix of students and faculty/staff brought folks together to interact in ways that they didn't usually interact. I think that the MIT Community would be well served by holding Johnson Games again."
- "For the next 150 years, MIT could use a Chief Diversity Officer. A person who could spearhead and focus all the disparate efforts of diversity (minority, gender, 1st gen, etc.) & inclusion across the Institute. All of those issues suffer when there isn't a unified vision/goal from the top of the administration. Energy has tons of funding & research behind it. Cancer has a building. Can diversity get a focused, thought leader? Someone trained in such issues who could revolutionize how diversity can propel an institution? MIT is a leader. Always has been. But it won't always be if we can't find a way to be more open and welcoming to everyone. As a student, MIT isn't as welcoming of diversity as I expected. Differences become walls between people and there are few resources on campus to break through them. No one encourages understanding or communication between different groups. It's understandable that the decentralized nature of MIT contributes to its success in some ways (i.e. less red tape). But when our wonderful Mr. Rogers conceived of MIT, we were all under one roof in order to maximize interaction among the different groups. The more we sprawl out and separate, the more likely MIT is to lose that sense of community at our founding. A CDO would help unify us."