

Dear Course 15,

You likely hear us speak often about how “community” serves as a cornerstone of all that we do here in the Course 15 department. We try to make it a point to ask you “*how are things going?*” during our community lunches, when you step into our office, and when we see you around campus. Additionally, the MIT Sloan Undergraduate Student Advisory Board (composed of your peers) always provides phenomenal insight to the academic and social experiences of being a Course 15 major. So much so that we make it a point to seek their counsel before making various department decisions that will impact the student experience.

Looking to broaden the ways in which we can get feedback about Course 15, this past summer we put together a climate survey. The survey would serve as a way to collect more information about some specific questions we had about how our community experiences Course 15. Below you will find a report that contains information regarding the breakdown of students who filled out the survey, their responses, summary of those responses, and some brief reflections on what the responses might indicate: areas that we seem to be performing well, potential blind spots, and where we can make improvements. These survey responses are of great importance in our efforts to build community and create a culture that reflects our communal aspirations. We think we are doing a good job, and at the same time it is important to verify/validate these assumptions in different ways.

We invite you to take a look at the report and provide any additional feedback. Looking forward it is exercises like these surveys and intentionally checking in with all of our majors (and not just waiting for you to stop by) that will allow us to learn more about how we can best build, serve, and grow our community.

Please note that rising junior and seniors were selected participants because they were most likely to have spent multiple semesters as a Course 15 major.

Total Respondents (n = 29) (a 44% response rate)

Class year	2020: 9	2021: 18	(blank): 2
Major	15-1: 6	15-2: 13	15-3: 10
Course 15 = Primary or Secondary	Primary: 22	Secondary: 7	
Domestic and International students	International: 2	Domestic: 22	
Gender	Female: 11	Male: 18	Non-binary, Transgender: 0

Race/Ethnicity	Asian	Black/African American	Black/White:	Hispanic:	South Asian:	White/Non-Hispanic:	Not reported:
# of Respondents*	5	3	1	2	1	10	7

*Note: respondents entered their own responses for this prompt.

Summary of Responses:

While this survey does not fully represent the experiences of all Course 15 students it provides some insight to some of the areas highlighted at the top of this report. It should also be acknowledged that

additional questions may have provided a more robust collection of data, but in interest of keeping the survey short, and ensuring a favorable response rate we chose to keep the survey under 20 questions. Raw data of the responses can be found on page 5.

Community and Sense of Belonging:

Most respondents reported that they feel a sense of belonging to the Course 15 community. With the exception of 3 students all students responded “definitely yes,” or “Probably, yes” to the question “Do you feel connected to the Course 15 community.” The majority of students also responded the feeling that their identities are validated within the Course 15 community (2 students responded that they felt that their identities were sometimes valued).

The frequency in which students either make appointments or “drop-in” to check in with us is an important metric that reflects feeling as though they belong in this community. All but two respondents have visited our office at least once. Approximately half of the students who took the survey said that they visited our office 3-5 or more than 5 times. Most of the respondents also reported attending at least one Course 15 event (2 did not attend any).

Peer relationships are important social connections and there is a wealth of educational scholarship that one’s peer network has impact on one’s academic and social success. As such, it was important to look closely at whether students felt comfortable asking other Course 15 students for help with assignments and group projects. Thirteen students responded that they definitely felt comfortable asking their peers for help. Fourteen students responded that they probably felt comfortable asking their peers for help. Two students responded that they probably did not feel comfortable.¹

Advising

An important function of our office is to coordinate the advising process for Course 15 majors. There were a number of questions designed to provide information about advising from faculty as well as the Office of Undergraduate Education. When asked whether students were comfortable reaching out to faculty for academic issues or professional goals 23 students responded “Definitely yes” or “Probably yes.” Six student responded “Somewhat uncomfortable.” When asked about whether respondents felt comfortable reaching out to the Office of Undergraduate Education with academic questions 23 students reported they were “Comfortable,” 6 students reported that they were “Somewhat comfortable.”

When asking respondents about their experiences in reaching out to faculty and the Undergraduate Office about issues outside of their academics or professional goals 19 students responded that they were either “comfortable” or “somewhat comfortable” with speaking with their faculty advisors (11 and 8 respectively). Six students reported being “somewhat uncomfortable” and 4 students stated that they were “uncomfortable.” When asked about reaching out to the Undergraduate Office about non-academic matters 26 students stated that they were either “comfortable” or “somewhat comfortable” (17 and 9 respectively). Three students reported that they were “somewhat uncomfortable” or comfortable (2 and 1 respectively).

¹ This question could have been improved if the survey specified Course 15 undergraduate students rather than *just* Course 15 students (which could be considered undergraduate or graduate).

Discussing the Data

It's important to remind ourselves that this survey had 29 respondents. This is a response rate of 39% and represents 23% of the students who are Course 15 majors (rising sophomores and 2019 graduates were not surveyed). We do not make any inferences about whether this group of respondents represents all Course 15 students because there is great variance to the diversity of stories, cultures, histories, interests, and interests that all our students hold, nevertheless the respondents to this survey highlighted some important items for our office to consider giving some attention to. Specifically, these are the themes that surfaced:

1. It is important to make sure we identify and support approaches aimed at creating environments that feel welcoming and open for our students. This objective may assist in our goal to ensure that students can feel comfortable when they need to see someone from the Undergraduate Office or a faculty member about academic, or non-academic matters.
2. Course 15 students' attitudes about being connected to students in their major and Course 15 majors in their class year drew our attention. Regarding the question (paraphrasing) "*Do you feel connected to students in your major?*" 7 students responded "Probably not" or "Definitely not" (6 students and 1 student respectively). Our Undergraduate Education team might learn much from current Course 15 students *and* alumni regarding the challenges of connecting Course 15 students with: 1) Course 15 students in their class year and 2) and Course 15 students in general. This may be a result of students being in some classes with mostly graduate students. It also may be a symptom of our students being spread across the three majors and there not being an absolute, proscribed path through each major.
3. It seems though that our community events are valuable to students, as most of the respondents on this survey have attended (93%). In light of this, we may ask the question should we commit to more events or events targeted at the specific needs of students in the major may improve attitudes around students feeling connected to Course 15 and students within their major and class year (as highlighted in #2).
4. Ninety-three percent of students have stopped by the Undergraduate Office at least 1-2 times since becoming a Course 15 major. Forty-four percent of the student respondents have come at least 3-5 times. Finally, just under 25% of the student respondents have come by our office more than 5 times since becoming a Course 15 major. We hope that this may reflect our emphasis on creating community and designing our approach to students so they "find their home at Sloan."
5. Course 15 students' attitudes about being connected to students in their major and Course 15 majors in their class year drew our attention. Regarding the question (paraphrasing) "*Do you feel connected to students in your major?*" 7 students responded "Probably not" or "Definitely not" (6 students and 1 student respectively). When asked if Course 15 student felt connected to other Course 15 students that were their class year, 9 students responded either "Probably not" or "Definitely not" (7 students and 2 students respectively).

In closing, in sharing this we hope that we can continue our conversation about how you experience Course 15, MIT, and the social interactions that make up your student experience. We continuously want to nuance and deeply understand how our various identities and ways of knowing interact with and make valuable contributions to our Course 15 community (within majors and writ-large). Looking forward we'll seek student insight into this climate survey and keep you aware of any additional steps or

approaches we may take. We will also plan to conduct an annual climate survey each Spring semester so that we can track trends and differences longitudinally. If you would like to provide any feedback about this survey or ways we could have improved it please feel free to reach out to us. If you have any anecdotes or suggestions you would like to share you can contact Austin (aaashe@mit.edu), Natalie (npetit@mit.edu), and Scott (salessan@mit.edu).

Survey Questions

1. What is your class year?
2. Choose your major.
3. Is Course 15 your primary or secondary major?
4. Are you an international student?
5. What is your racial and/or ethnic identity(ies)?
6. What is your gender identity(ies)?
7. How many Course 15 community events did you attend this year?
8. What is the approximate number of times you visited the Course 15 office during Spring 2019?
9. Do you feel that the MIT Sloan Undergraduate Office values my identities.
10. Do you feel connected to the Course 15 students in your major?
11. Do you feel connected to the Course 15 majors in your graduation year?
12. I feel like I belong to the Course 15 community. (Choose response)
13. I feel like I belong to the MIT community at-large. (Choose response)
14. I feel comfortable reaching out to Course 15 faculty for help. (Choose response)
15. I feel like I can reach out to Course 15 students for help with assignments and/or group projects. (Choose response)
16. Describe how comfortable you feel reaching out to your Course 15 faculty/primary advisor regarding questions about your academic path and/or professional goals.
17. What best describes your level of comfort as it relates to reaching out to your advisor to discuss non-academic questions?
18. What best describes your comfort as it relates to visiting the MIT Sloan Undergraduate Office for academic advising?
19. Describe your level of comfort visiting the MIT Sloan Undergraduate Office for non-academic matters. (Choose response)
20. Please add any information that you feel would be beneficial towards building an inclusive/supportive culture that may further enhance the undergraduate experience at MIT Sloan.

# of Community Events I Attended	
0	2
1-2 times	14
3-5 times	7
More than 5	6

Feel like I belong to Course 15 community	
Definitely yes	17
Probably not	3
Probably yes	9

Comfort reaching out to faculty advisor - Academics	
Somewhat uncomfortable	6
Somewhat comfortable	9
Very comfortable	14

# of times I Visited Undergraduate Office	
0	2
1-2 times	13
3-5 times	7
More than 5	7

I feel like I belong to MIT community at-large	
Probably not	1
Probably yes	6
Definitely yes	22

Comfort reaching out to faculty advisor - NonAcademic	
Uncomfortable	4
Somewhat uncomfortable	6
Somewhat comfortable	11
Comfortable	8

I feel that the MIT Sloan Undergraduate Office values my identities.	
I feel like my identities are sometimes validated and valued	2
Yes, I feel like my identities are validated and valued	27

Comfortable reaching out to Course 15 faculty for help	
Probably not	1
Probably yes	7
Definitely yes	21

Comfort reaching out to Ugrad Office - Academic	
Somewhat comfortable	6
Comfortable	23

Connected to Course 15 students in my Major	
Definitely not	1
Probably not	6
Definitely yes	9
Probably yes	13

I feel comfortable asking other Course 15 students for help	
Probably not	2
Probably yes	14
Definitely yes	13

I feel comfortable going to Ugrad Office – NonAcademic	
Uncomfortable	1
Somewhat uncomfortable	2
Somewhat comfortable	9
Comfortable	17

I feel Connected to Course 15s in my class Year	
Definitely not	2
Probably not	7
Definitely yes	4
Probably yes	16

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