

MIT-Woods Hole Joint Program in Oceanography and Applied Ocean Science and Engineering

The Joint Program of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) offers advanced degrees in oceanography and applied ocean science and engineering. Graduate study encompasses virtually all of the basic sciences as they apply to the marine environment: physics, biology, chemistry, geology, and geophysics. Students who choose applied ocean science and engineering may concentrate in the major fields (aeronautics/astronautics, civil, electrical, environmental, and mechanical/ocean engineering). More than 170 scientists/faculty from the two institutions participate in the joint program. In the 2022 – 2023 academic year, there were 154 students enrolled in the five areas of study offered: biological, chemical, or physical oceanography; marine geology and geophysics; and oceanographic engineering.

Since all MIT faculty involved in the joint program are members of an academic department, their individual accomplishments and awards are reported through those departments. These include the departments of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Biology, Civil and Environmental Engineering, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences and Mechanical Engineering.

Admissions and Open House

As part of several updates to admissions and matriculation processes, the Joint Program was one of 10 early-adoption programs of the Slate platform. On March 13-14, 2023, with COVID-19 restrictions much-reduced, the Joint Program hosted the first in-person open house since March 2020 for our newly admitted graduate students. Thirty-eight admitted applicants were invited to participate in the two-day event at both the MIT and WHOI campuses. The event included welcome and introduction sessions, tours of the campuses, presentations from our Student Representatives, as well as discipline breakout sessions, and social events. Admitted applicants also had access to the extensively developed website utilized during the height of the pandemic that included videos recorded from our current students in the five disciplines, video tours of the two campuses, and links to resources at MIT and WHOI. Feedback from participants was very positive and prospective students commented that the ability to meet in-person with students and faculty was insightful and enjoyable. The wealth of information provided through the website was also noted as having a positive effect in influencing their decisions to accept our offers of admission.

Returning from COVID-19

Throughout the pandemic the students, faculty, and staff in the Joint Program worked to find creative ways to stay connected as a community. With the return to campus in full swing for the 2022–2023 academic year, in-person events increased markedly. Grad Appreciation Week saw students attending events like: Lunch & Lego, Cookie Hour, and Coffee & Therapy Dog Walks. Overseen by the Student Representatives, we sponsored a number of student events, including monthly trivia events, potlucks, holiday gatherings, a musical production, and weekly breakfast social hours. Individual disciplines also

carried out student centered events throughout the year with additional support for our students taking general exams.

The MIT-WHOI Joint Program Awards 20 Doctoral Degrees

The Joint Program awarded 20 doctoral degrees in 2022-2023, and 12 master of science degrees. Degrees were conferred by MIT on May 31, 2023. Professor Mick Follows, Director of the MIT-WHOI Joint Program, and Dr. Ann Tarrant, Associate Dean of the MIT-WHOI Joint Program, hooded the Joint Program graduates on May 31, 2023 during MIT's Commencement Activities. The WHOI graduation ceremony scheduled with all Joint Program graduates was held on June 2, 2023.

MIT-WHOI Joint Program Advances Naval Officers Master's Program Support

The MIT-WHOI Joint Program's master's degree program for US Naval Officers has conferred degrees to 90 officers, dating back to the first award in 1970. Traditionally these students were supported by the US Navy or WHOI during their enrollment, and opportunities to work under the supervision of an MIT Professor was limited. To broaden collaborative opportunities for these students and further the strength and jointness of the Naval Officers master's degree, the Joint Program requested MIT funding be made available to support Naval Officers who choose to complete their degree under the supervision of an MIT Professor. VPR Maria Zuber obtained approval for this funding as of AY23. During this inaugural year of funding for Navy students, three students were supported. Two more students will benefit from this funding support in the upcoming academic year, for a total of five.

Personnel Updates

On January 16, 2023, after 22 years at MIT, Kevin Kirwin retired from MIT and the role of Videoconferencing Assistant for the MIT-WHOI Joint Program. Kevin responsibilities encompassed all classroom technology management and upkeep to ensure the MIT and WHOI campuses connected via Zoom for classes seamlessly each day, while also acting as the technical liaison between MIT and WHOI. Geoffrey Bisnette was hired to assume the role from Kevin's capable hands and began on January 30, 2023.

Mick Follows

Director

Professor, Department of Earth, Atmospheric, and Planetary Sciences