Emily Wick and Coeducation at MIT & Sailing at MIT

Bob Gray ’64

Context: Women at MIT: 1871–1951
Ad Hoc Committee on The Place of Women at MIT: 1952–1957
Emily: 1959–1973
Epilogue

Slides https://ee.stanford.edu/~gray/SBYC_Wick.pdf

Last edited 08/01/2019 at 16:54:47

Photo courtesy 1956 MIT Technique
Harriet Fell, ’64, from the MIT Museum archives. Published in March 14 2014 issue of Science review of [Bix 2013] by Maria Klawe.

Caption: “On the leading edge of a wave. The 25 women who entered MIT’s class of 1964 matched the graduation rate of their 874 male classmates.”

1960 was a pivotal year
“Until the Institute could commit itself to educating women in significant numbers, and could provide suitable living conditions, coeds were not overly ‘successful’. . . . Before 1960 women entered MIT at their own risk. If they succeeded – fine! If they failed – well, no one had expected them to succeed. In 1960 the Institute committed itself to the education of women as well as men . . . The class of 1964 entered in 1960 knowing that MIT believed in women students. It was the first class in which coeds, as a group, matched the proportion of B.S. degrees earned by their male classmates!”

Emily L. Wick [Wick:70]
Prologue — The 1870s through 1951

1861 MIT founded in Boston *(Boston Tech)*

1871 Ellen Henrietta Swallow (BA Vassar 1870, Chemistry): 1st woman admitted to MIT — as an experiment as a “special student” — *no tuition, hence no official record before graduation, allowed to take fewer classes*

*Excerpt from Records of the Meetings of the MIT Corporation December 14, 1870*

It was voted to confirm the recommendation of the Committee on the School of Industrial Science that Miss Ellen H. Swallow be admitted as a Special Student in Chemistry — it being understood that her admission did not establish a precedent for the general admission of females.

**first woman graduated from MIT (BS 1873, Chemistry)**  
Vassar granted her a MA upon submission of her MIT BS thesis, Smith granted her an Honorary ScD in 1910.

1Probably first American woman to receive a science degree anywhere. [Clarke:1973]
1875-76 Swallow marries MIT Professor Robert Richards, *raises funds* from Women’s Educational Association (WEA) of Boston (founded 1871) for women’s facilities (lab and reception room).

MIT changes admissions policy to admit “special students” for “advanced instruction in Chemistry . . . without distinction of sex.”

1878 Ellen appointed Assistant Instructor *becomes Fellow of AAAS*

1879 Women given privilege of being examined for a degree under the same conditions as men. *(admissions another story)*

1882 Original women’s lab scheduled for demolition, Ellen and WEA *raise funds* for new lab and “suitable toilet rooms . . . and a reception room somewhere in the building”

MIT decides to admit women as *regular* students *(chemistry only).*
1884  Ellen appointed Instructor at MIT²

Margaret Cheney (1855–1884, ’82) Reading Room established, provides “oasis”, “refuge”, “haven”

9/1/2005 Technology Review: “Everybody came there, it was our place. The rest of MIT wasn’t too welcoming.” Emily Wick

1890 1st club for MIT women students founded Eta Sigma Mu (HΣM) Society. Begins as secret select social organization. Soon drops secrecy and actively recruits members, eventually inviting all women students to join. In 1895 name changes to The Cleofan

Cleofan lasts until spring 1934.

1893 2/11 Institute Committee founded, undergraduate student governing body.

²She held the title until her death.
Around 6% of the 1187 MIT undergraduates are women. Percentage not achieved again until 1970.
1899/1900 MIT Women’s Association (MITWA) founded “to promote greater fellowship among Institute women” — specifically alumnae. Ellen fears that MITWA “will never be a success, because we have no dormitory life, no campus, and hence no college spirit” so she is elected President

1900 The Tech 1/3/1901
1904 Katharine Dexter ’04 (Biology), member of Cleofan, marries Stanley McCormick — son of Cyrus McCormick. KDM a major supporter and fundraiser for MIT women. Her endowment valued at $51 million in 1997, then the largest from an individual donor.

Prominent activist for women’s right to vote and birth control.

1906 NCAA Spurred on by President Teddy Roosevelt, the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS) founded to regulate football and “other collegiate athletics.” All early documents refer to participants as “young male,” “boy,” or “young man.” Sports, athletics, and physical education are aimed at “the needs of young white males who they envisioned would be the country’s leaders.” [Carter:2006]

Women and minorities are invisible.
Name changed in 1910 to *National Collegiate Athletic Association* (NCAA). In the Constitution, By-Laws, and Executive Regulations, women are explicitly prohibited from competition with men in sanctioned events. Not changed until **1982** in reaction to enforcement of 1972 Title IX.

Sailing never falls explicitly under NCAA regulation, but spurred by NCAA threats and power, many individual programs, colleges, and universities adopt NCAA rules in the 1960s for *all* intercollegiate sports!

**1913** Institute Committee becomes *Undergraduate Association* with INSCOMM as legislative and executive branch. Activities approval.

**1916** MIT moves from Boston to Cambridge. *About 1% women*
1923 MIT appoints Architecture Librarian Florence Stiles ’23 to an unofficial post as advisor to women students.

President of MITWA in 1935, official "advisor to women students" in 1939.

1917 Committee on Women’s Athletics founded by physical educators with a goal of standardizing rules for women’s sports. Along with similar organizations evolves in 1971 into the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW). Ignored by NCAA.

1930 Intercollegiate Yacht Racing Association (ICYRA) established

No explicit gender-based restrictions.

Changes name to Intercollegiate Yacht Racing Association of North America (ICYRA/NA) and, in 2000, to Intercollegiate Sailing Association (ICSA).
1935-6 Led by Walter “Jack” Wood ’17, MIT Sailing Pavilion built and opened. First fleet of wooden Tech Dinghies, designed by MIT Naval Architecture Prof. George Owen & built by Herreshoff Manufacturing Company — founded by Nathanael (Nat) Greene Herreshoff (MIT 1870) and his brother John in 1878, Bristol Ri. Tech Dinghy 1936

1938 February: Cleofan revived as Association of Women Students (AWS), approved by INSCOMM
1945 Margaret Compton (Mrs MIT President Karl Taylor Compton) works with MITWA, Technology Matrons\(^3\), & Florence Stiles to establish first MIT Women’s Dormitory at 120 Bay State Road in Boston — over 1.2 miles from MIT campus.

Stiles states that dormitory should help improve the esprit de corps of the women students, and hence the graduation rate — women performed well in class in comparison with men, 

*but only 1 in 20 typically graduated.*

MIT admissions for women limited by availability of on-campus beds + approved housing with family

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\(^3\)A social service organization for professors’ wives, name changed to MIT Women’s League in 1975, opened to community in 1986
1946  Emily Lippencott Wick comes to MIT as a PhD student in chemistry from Mount Holyoke (BA chemistry, 1943, MA organic chemistry, 1945)

Chooses MIT because it has a good chemistry department, her Dad is an alum, and it is near Rockport on Cape Ann.

Lives part time at 120 Bay State Road.

1947  

Emily & Coeducation + Sailing
1948 Dorothy (Dotty) Leaman Bowe begins work as an MIT secretary. Meets students, faculty, and President Compton. Advises and coaches students, especially women, and becomes their advocate. Women students were ignored or harassed by some faculty, staff, teaching assistants, and students; both in person and in print.

1949 March 26: New England Intercollegiate Sailing Association (NEISA) formed in Cambridge as part of ICYRA. Leonard (Len) M. Fowle, yachting editor of the *Boston Globe* and correspondent for the *New York Times*, is a founder and leader of both NEISA and ICYRA.

1951 Emily receives PhD in Chemistry at MIT — one of only 19 degrees awarded to women. Becomes Research Associate at MIT, then goes to work at Arthur D. Little.

*Rumblings and rumors increase of poor treatment of women students by faculty, staff, and other students.*
1952 Dean of Students E. F. Bowditch suggests MIT should either “eliminate women students, at least undergraduates; or decide we really want women students, plan an adequate set-up, and then deliberately go out and get more good girls.”

Ruth L. Bean appointed Assistant Dean, given responsibility for women students in 1955.

2nd Generation Tech dinghies (fiberglass, Cape Cod Shipbuilding)

1953-55 MITWA survey of alumnae shows strong success rate, 93% were employed and active in their specialized fields.

1953 Revised ICYRA regulations make explicit that member institutions must be either all male or coeducational and that women-only institutions are not allowed. ICYRA attempts to explicitly follow standards of the NCAA “with possibly some modifications.”
Ad Hoc Committee on the Place of Women at MIT

1954 Dean Bowditch writes MIT President John R. Killian suggesting an *ad hoc committee on the place of women at MIT* to consider all aspects of admissions, housing, and student life. Killian writes Chancellor and Provost Julius A. Stratton asking him to bring together a group of representative people to do this.

1955 In January Stratton appoints committee: (with no alumnae!)
Professor Leicester F. Hamilton ’14 (Chair)
Assistant Dean of Students Ruth L. Bean
Suzanne Z. Deutsch, Technology Matron’s representative on Women’s Advisory Board (Mrs Professor Martin Deutsch)
Assistant Professor of History Elspeth Davies Rostow (Barnard ’38, MA Radcliff ’39, Mrs Professor W.W. Rostow)
Associate Prof. Kenneth R. Wadleigh ’43
Women students
For some time this office has felt the need of an extensive study of the place of women students at the Institute and for a closer integration of women students into the whole educational program for undergraduates. The special committee appointed by the provost and chaired by Professor Leicester F. Hamilton is now at work, and its recommendations should contribute immeasurably to the general welfare of women students.

from 1955 President’s Report

— unfortunately overly optimistic prediction

December: Director of Athletics writes to Athletic Administrative Board and Committees for the Planning of Athletic Facilities and Program regarding “basic assumptions that it is felt must be made in considering the need for additional athletic facilities at M.I.T.” including:

2.0 That we plan in the Athletic Program to include facilities for approximately 200 women.
2.1 That there be no intercollegiate program for women.
2.2 That there be a limited intramural program for women, such as badminton, archery, bowling, etc.
2.3 That there be no required program for women.
After several discouraging attempts to participate in MIT sports, Antonia (Toni) Deutsch (later Schuman) is welcomed by Jack Wood and Hatch Brown at the Sailing Pavilion — provided she can handle a Tech Dinghy and a 110 and tie the prerequisite knots. In 1956 following her crewing in several regattas she becomes the first woman to receive an MIT Junior Varsity letter. AWS President in Junior Year, namesake of MIT Toni Deutsch Regatta.

— but women still not allowed in the Athletic Association or Varsity Club!

1956 John Rule replaces Bowditch as Dean of Students. Strong sentiments expressed in publications, classrooms, rumors, letters, meetings — against admitting women undergraduates.

Harvard Crimson chimes in:
Coeds, Even Few people are aware that M.I.T. is a coeducational institution. Indeed, to Most Harvard students, the idea of a feminine mind concerning itself with electrochemical engineering or mining and metallurgy seems somewhat revolting. from March 2, 1956 Harvard Crimson

6/21/1956 Letter from Margaret Alvord, Housemother of 120 Bay State Rd, to Hamilton:

In reply to your request for a statement of my opinion as to whether girls should attend M.I.T. or not, I can say in confidence that over the period of years that I have been Director of the Dormitory, doubt as to whether they belong in the undergraduate school has grown into certainty that they do not. . . . they would receive a a more rounded education under more normal conditions in any of a number of good colleges . . . Then if they still are serious about it, they could come to M.I.T. as graduate students . . . if, as Dr. Killian asserts in his annual report, we are committed to produce as many active scientists as possible and to maintain the standards of excellence expected of us, then there is little in the records of the girls who have lived in the dormitory in the past ten years to justify their continuance in the undergraduate school.
Years later in 1970 Alvord writes to Emily

While I was still at 120 orders came around I suppose from Killian, for us to take a stand on should we or should we not continue to have girls — and I found myself in distinguished company — Elspeth Rostow & Dr Herbert Harris & I opposing undergraduate coeds. We drew such immature lulus now and then that I felt a girl could get her undergrad work or at least 1st or 2 years just as well at Wellesley or Holyoke.

Context: Many complaints made regarding Alvord’s lack of support for and interest in dormitory residents.

I found no supporting evidence in the Archives that Elspeth Rostow opposed undergraduate coeds.

Dr Herbert I. Harris MD was a psychiatrist and MIT medical director and wrote in his 7/31/56 letter to Hamilton:
The business of raising a family takes from five to fourteen years at a minimum. During this time, had a male student had her place, he could have been contributing profitably in his professional capacity. At this time, when there is such a shortage of engineers, one wonders if we are justified in taking positions away from male students for female . . . With so much conflict at an emotional level, it becomes plain that their intellectual efficiency must almost inevitably become impaired . . . I think that the presence of women students in the student body has a definite leavening effect and their presence is almost universally welcomed, I believe, by the faculty and the student body. My concern is for their own welfare, however, and not for the pleasure and ornamentation they can contribute to MIT.

Arguments against continuing coeducation are countered by referral to the MITWA alumnae survey of 53-56 and by AWS and others with statistics of successful careers by women MIT graduates in research, teaching, medicine, law, business, and government.

Many observe that the graduation and attrition rates would improve if the resources were provided to improve the academic and personal environment for women students.
Killian prods Stratton to prod Committee: Stratton to Hamilton

“There is now a very strong feeling expressed by the President and by Jack Rule that we must come to grips with the problem of women students, and arrive at some early decisions . . . Even though your report may be still incomplete, may I not have whatever is ready . . . I should particularly like to have an expression of the views of the several members of your Committee on what course the Institute should follow. It is not all necessary that these should be unanimous.” 10/17/56

Hamilton submits a confidential memo to the President, which becomes known as the Hamilton Report.

Much of the understanding of the “report” and its impact follows “New faces in science and technology” by Evelyn Fox Keller [Keller:81]

Key excerpt:
The committee’s deliberations continued until the early fall of ’56, culminating in a report recommending that M.I.T. cease accepting women students as undergraduates. *No copy of the final report is available*, but some of the correspondence affecting the final recommendation is. . . . In retrospect, it appears that the Hamilton Report marked a crisis in the relations between M.I.T. and its women students. The report itself produced a vociferous reaction. Many were disturbed by its conclusions; even more were disturbed by the picture it portrayed\(^1\) . . . The choices were clear: either to discontinue the admittance of women undergraduates or to strive to improve their circumstances. *The Record shows that the former alternative was unequivocally rejected*, and gradually, efforts were begun to effect the latter.

\(^1\) By at least one account, *the reaction was so acute that all copies of the report were ordered burned.*
That’s the legend, but it’s only partially true.

In 1986 when the files on women students were transferred from the President’s Office to the recently created Archives, another story emerged:

_There was no formal committee report_, Hamilton provided _his own_ statistics and _his own opinions_ arguing that women undergraduates have no place at MIT. Subsequent correspondence between Stratton and committee members suggests they were unaware of the contents of Hamilton’s confidential memo supposedly representing the committee deliberations.

_There is no public evidence that the committee ever met,_ much less “deliberated.”

From MIT Archives AC132, Box 18, _Women Students_ Folder:
LHM was Loretta H. Mannix, Stratton’s highly regarded Administrative Assistant.

The location of such a “restricted file,” or if the file even exists, is not public.
To continue the story:

Memorandum to Dr. J. A. Stratton:

Dear Jay:

May I venture some suggestions for clarifying policy with respect to women students at the Institute?

Since the Hamilton Committee has failed to come through with anything helpful, I would suggest that we seek to make administrative decisions, first, by reaching some tentative conclusions in our top administrative group, and then reviewing these with the Academic Council. These administrative conclusions should, I suggest, deal with both the long term and the short term problems, and I shall make some observations about each.

Memo. to Dr. Stratton

October 22, 1956

I would venture the concluding observation that I do not see how the Institute, having admitted women for so long, can now change its policy, nor do I feel that even if such a change were practical we should do it in view of the growing feeling that women should have access to our great universities.

Yours sincerely,

J. R. Killian, Jr.
President
1957 Stratton proposes new policy on undergrad women and Academic Council approves, summarizes policy at an informal tea for resident women students 4/24/57.

The Tech article 4/26/57

More Coeds Later, But Fewer In Fall, Sees Stratton At Tea

“Women are here to stay, and it is our hope to make them feel more a part of the MIT community” is the Institute’s official policy on Tech coeds as voiced by Dr. J. A. Stratton at an informal tea given at Moore House on April 24 for resident women students.

Dr. Stratton and Dean Fassett explained to the coeds that their place in the MIT community has been under serious consideration for some time and it has now been decided to expand and amplify facilities specifically for women as rapidly as means can be found.

Since it is considered unwise and improper for the Institute to admit Freshmen women beyond its ability to accommodate them, plans have now been made for housing 14 Freshmen in the present Women’s Dorm at 120 Bay State Road, with 3 upperclassmen in residence as unofficial advisors. An additional number of women commuters meeting the required academic qualifications may also be admitted to the Freshman class.

Also, a separate section of Bexley Hall will be made available to 33 undergraduate women in September with Prof. and Mrs. William F. Bottiglio as faculty residents.

Girls who would like to live in Bexley next September are asked to sign up in room 7-192 as soon as possible.
Emily returns to MIT as Research Associate

4 October Sputnik Launched
Shortage of engineers noted

1958 February 25 The Tech: “Coeds Fight Expulsion From INSCOMM, Seek Status as a Group”:

INSCOMM removes AWS representation claiming “the number of coeds at MIT is so small as to invalidate any claim of representation”

Adjacent article “Tech Coeds: Play A Special Role” concludes with “To many, it would seem that the latest Institute Committee action lacks the ring of hospitality.”
ICYRA notes that “where sailing is a regulated sport, it is a part of the athletic program which in most colleges is regulated to some extent by outside groups such as the National College Athletic Association (NCAA). The policy of this and other similar groups does not recognize the participation of women with men” and begins consideration of creating an Affiliate Membership for women’s sailing associations. [Bently:1958]

1958 MIT intercollegiate championship sailing team includes a female crew, Carol M. Dorworth ’60.
1959 Emily Wick appointed Assistant Professor in the Department of Nutrition and Food Science at MIT — only woman faculty member at MIT outside of Humanities. 20 women in the 120 Bay State Dorm.

Julius Stratton becomes MIT President.

Emily’s formal responsibilities for MIT women lay in the future, but by default a role model and actively talking with women students about the Institute and careers.

Katharine Dexter McCormick pledges $1.5M for a women’s dormitory on campus.
“[the dormitory is] an unprecedented opportunity to advance the professional development of our women students. Women have made substantial contributions to scientific and technical progress in the past . . . Women’s potential for achievement in these fields represents one of the great latent resources of the country.”

from 1960 President’s Report

1961 Kenneth R. Wadleigh becomes Dean of Students in July.

The University of Rhode Island, an NCAA school, announces it will follow NCAA rules in all sports and exclude women from all intercollegiate sports and refuse to play any teams including women.

NEISA adopts NCAA prohibition (to be effective in 1966), but actively supports formation of the Women’s Intercollegiate Sailing Association (WISA) and the New England WISA (NEWISA) “To encourage and promote women’s intercollegiate sailing; to form college sailing teams; to inspire interest in sailing; to create and instruct sailing groups.”
NEISA provides high level liaisons, advice (led by Len Fowle and Jack Wood), organizational cooperation, and goal of eventual merger.

MIT plays active role as a host and fields a women’s team including MIT NEWISA student representative Eleanor (Ellie) Chance.

1962 Sailing and fencing approved as women’s club sports, but women had very low priority in using MIT athletic facilities.

Herzbrun: Sailing? Did you [take] advantage of the MIT. . . did they have a sailing team? Wick: Well, I did. Sure MIT did, but I did not do a lot of it there because I had a boat out here in Rockport and I did not want to use up my goof off time in town. But, when things got thick, I would walk down to the sailing pavilion and smell the fresh air. Emily Wick Oral History [Wick:92]
1963  Stanley McCormick Hall opens, attracting national publicity.  1st tower of McCormick Hall houses about 125 women, significantly increasing the number of women admitted.  Undergraduate women required to live in McCormick.  Wadleigh hires Radcliffe Associate Dean Jacquelyn Mattfeld as Associate Dean of Student Affairs, responsible for women’s program.  

(Emily’s predecessor)

MIT Catalog mentions “up front” that MIT is coeducational.  

Emily is the first woman at MIT promoted to a tenured position.
1964 Emily Signs up for the *Committee on Student Environment*, meets Dean Wadleigh.

Dotty Bowe appointed secretary to Mattfeld, moves into Dean’s office.

MITWA becomes the Association of MIT Alumnae (AMITA).

A women’s athletics program formally established beginning with 44 women students.

WISA incorporates several ICYRA procedures, Ruth Beckley ’67 chairs NEWISA Scheduling Committee.
In response to appeals from women’s sports and athletics organizations and its own long range planning committee, NCAA categorically rejects participation of women in their championship events: “The games committee shall limit participation to eligible male athletes” [Carter:2006,NCAA:64]
Note women’s sailing team organized in fall 1964, in advance of NEISA enforcement of prohibition of women on varsity team in 1966,

“... from 1965 when it was an earth shattering first occasion to have fifty women enrolled in the first year class”

Emily Wick, Tech Talk, 3/28/1973

Academic Council again takes up question of women’s future at the institute, with some faculty and administrators still regarding training women undergraduates as a risky venture.

After much argument, the Council finally endorses raising the number of women undergraduates to 400, raising the percentage from 3% almost to 9% (but it takes years to happen).
June: Emily succeeds Mattfeld as Associate Dean of Students with responsibilities for women’s programs.

Emily joins Dotty in Room 5-108 with the intent of making it a Dean’s office which would welcome students at any time. Office always full of students.

“Between 1963 and 1972, Dotty with Emily Wick were the women’s program at MIT.”

Dotty’s “goal was to know every woman student, and she and Emily had an office with an open door” [Bowe Bio]

1966 May 2 Emily writes to the architect (Prof Herbert Beckwith) of the second unit of McCormick Hall regarding the design of the athletic facilities. She continues active involvement in the project through 1967.
Coeds first in Man Lab Regatta; win trophy for third straight year
1967 NEWISA and her sister organization, the Middle Atlantic Association of Women Sailors, organize the first women’s nationals in 1967.

Excerpts from *Athletics and the Women Students at MIT*, 17 March Memorandum from Associate Dean Wick to Dean Wadleigh:

The MIT Women’s Sailing Team has a distinguished record in that it won the 1966 New England Intercollegiate Women’s championship and was undefeated throughout the fall season. . . . Because of their demonstrated activity in athletics and their need for assistance and a structure within which to schedule meets, the question of admitting women students to the MIT Athletic Association was discussed at a meeting of the Athletic Board. Their membership was approved by the Athletic Association in February 1967.

*But women are not yet permitted in the Varsity Club.*
Fran Charles, MIT Sailing Master (at MIT since 1992), relates stories told to him by Hatch Brown, former MIT Varsity Sailing Coach and Sailing Master, and Stu Nelson, women’s Varsity Coach at MIT for 39 years and first full time women’s coach for the ICYRA:

During the mid 1960s Emily spent many weekends organizing and hosting New England women-only sailing regattas and was instrumental in founding the New England Women’s Intercollegiate Sailing Association when the New England Intercollegiate Sailing Association would not allow their participation in varsity sailing. Emily even organized the do-it-yourself sandwich lunches for the regattas. She also lobbied the Athletic Association for approval of women’s sailing as a varsity sport.

Women’s sailing and crew designated “varsity teams” retroactive to 1963, all other women’s sports still considered “club sports.”
MIT views the women’s Varsity Sailing team as having officially begun in 1969 with the Athletic Department funding of a women’s coach, Stu Nelson — a decision strongly influenced by Emily. [Kelly:2013].

1968 McCormick Hall East opens. Women seniors permitted to live off campus.
Mildred (Millie) Dresselhaus moves to MIT with an appointment as the first woman tenured Full Professor. Becomes involved with women students, begins discussions with Emily and Dotty on admissions policy and other issues.
Emily Wick promoted to Full Professor (1st woman at MIT promoted to Full Professor from within the ranks)

1969 Senior House Dorm becomes coed

There are 217 women in a class of 3955: 5.5%
3% of School of Science faculty are women
Professor Daniel Nyhart in MIT Sloan School of Management replaces Wadleigh as Dean of Student Affairs. Decides an Associate Dean focused on women’s affairs is *no longer necessary and*

*informs Emily and Dotty of intention to dissolve office!* 🕸

**1970** In March Emily Wick submits *Proposal for a new policy for admission of women undergraduate students at MIT* arguing that admissions requirements should be made the same for women as for men — no longer limit the number of undergraduate women by the number of on-campus beds.
ICYRA recognizes NEWISA women’s nationals and sets policies and procedures.

**1971** Emily’s report and recommendation adopted by MIT.
Emily writes for the 1971 MIT *President’s Report*:

The year 1971 has special significance for women at M.I.T. because it marks the one hundredth year since the first woman enrolled at the Institute. Ellen Richards wrote of her early experience, “I came to the institute in January 1871 . . . I was at that time shut-up in the Professor’s private Laboratory very much as a dangerous animal might have been. Whenever the classes came into the 1st year Laboratory the door was kept carefully shut and I was expected to stay in. I was not allowed to attend any classes.”

Today the situation is very different. Not only do undergraduate women have a diversity of living groups from which they may choose but they will constitute more than 10 percent of the entering class of 1975. . . .

After discussion of advances in women’s intercollegiate sports teams, she observes that

A high point in the history of M.I.T. women was reached when Kathy Jones ’71 and Maria Bozzuto ’73, members of the Women’s Varsity Sailing Team, received M.I.T’s highest athletic award, the Straight T, at the Athletic Association’s Awards Banquet.

*1st time that women were invited to the annual Awards Banquet!*

MIT women win the 1971ICYRA National Women’s Dinghy Championship.
Emily steps down as Associate Dean. Room 5-108 closed. Emily recommends that someone be appointed to continue her work. Dotty promoted to staff position and moves to Financial Aid.

Wadleigh writes to Killian 10/20/1971 that “Emily played the key leadership role in the successful development of a strong identity and character for undergraduate and graduate women at M.I.T. during her tenure on the administration.”

Strong student reaction. Excerpts from 12/7/71 Letter from Carol L. Epstein ’72 and Paula F. Stone, ’72, to MIT community. Copies to The Tech, President Weisner, Provost Gray, Dean Nyhardt, . . .
To Members of the Institute Community:
We are writing this letter in response to the retirement of Emily Wick from the Deans’ Office and the circumstances and issues surrounding her decision. With the demise of Dean Wick’s office as of January 1, 1972, the women students of M.I.T. will lose an integral, personal representative in the higher echelons of the Institute as well as a congenial, intimate friend who is sensitive to the problems that we, as women, must cope with in a male-run, male-oriented environment.

To our knowledge, after consulting several faculty and members of the administration, no definitive action is being taken to replace Dean Wick. The needs and position of women at the Institute have apparently failed to generate a serious commitment. We are concerned that unofficial policies will remain the same; that they will perhaps be re-examined and discussed, but that nothing will be done; that the urgency for our full recognition as members of the M.I.T. community will be ignored, and the entire white-washed, appeased, and silenced.
A standard argument used against the establishment of a separate office for women at M.I.T. is that women and men are equal, therefore there is no need for such an office. We argue that we are indeed equal, but that we have not been granted equality; although we are intellectually equal, there are parts of the Institute in which we (and our friends) have experienced personal harassment and discrimination. . . .

As of January 1, 1972, the office of Dean of Women Students will be empty, and will de facto have been abolished . . .

We would also like to set up an Institute Committee on Women’s Affairs at M.I.T. as an investigatory body to look into areas of concern to women, especially in response to input from the community. . . .

Administration reacts to strong student outcry, appoints yet another Ad Hoc Committee — on the Role of Women Students at MIT.

Meanwhile, Emily, Millie, and Paula Stone organize a meeting for women students in January 1972 to discuss issues of common interest,

but they forget to put the word “students” in the title of the flyer.
1972 January meeting organized by Emily et al. opened with a history of women at MIT by Emily. Draws over 100 women (and two men) from all aspects of MIT life and raises awareness of the immense needs and frustrations of women at MIT. Named the Women’s Forum, begins regular meetings.

21 January: official Ad Hoc Committee on the Role of Women Students at MIT appointed, including Women’s Forum members Dresselhaus & and Stone ’72 (co-chairs), undergraduates Sandra Yulke ’74, Carol Epstein ’72, Lynn Mahony ’72, Christina Jansen ’63, as well as graduate students, faculty, a member of the MIT Corporation, administrative assistants, and a psychiatrist from the MIT Medical Department.

Emily provides cochairs with a collection of relevant documents from 1935 on, including her chronology of women students at MIT along with letters, reports, memoirs, statistics, surveys, and articles.
June 23: Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972

requiring compliance by 1978:

“No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

Strongly supported by the AIAW.

👑 NCAA fights legislation ferociously with lobbying, money, and suits, claiming it spelled the “doom of [men’s] intercollegiate sports.”

Spring: Ad Hoc Committee submits report Role of women students at MIT:
A discriminatory attitude against women is so institutionalized in American universities as to be out of the awareness of many of those contributing to it. Decisions may indeed be made with no deliberate effort to exclude women — at least at times — but policy must be judged by outcome, not by pronouncement. And here we find inadequate numbers of women at all levels, most significantly so at senior levels.

Report praises the work of Emily’s office for its efforts in providing the needed services, and emphasizes the need for their continuation at the Dean’s level.

**Committee Recommends:**
- active recruitment of women
- publicity about women at MIT
- alumnae Educational Councilors interviewing applicants
- department awareness to admit more women
- a system of women advisors
- more women graduate students
Dean Nyhart hires Anne Ellison as *Assistant Dean*[^1] of Student Affairs.

*Students on Ad Hoc Committee win a Karl Taylor Compton Prize*

Emily receives a Bronze Beaver Award from the MIT Alumni Association.

Citation:

In your progression through M.I.T. as student, teacher, dean, friend, and mentor to women students at M.I.T., you have made a unique contribution to the life of the Institute; you have been advocate and model for a generation of women students at M.I.T. from a handful to an abiding presence. Your contributions to the growth and spirit of women at M.I.T. have left a lasting mark on the Institute.

[^1]: An Assistant Dean has significantly less authority, influence, and power than an Associate Dean such as Emily.
20 October 1972: Wadleigh writes Killian quoting the citation and adding his own praise of her work for MIT. He closes his letter with

Emily commutes to M.I.T. every day from a delightful, small, old house on the shore overlooking Rockport Harbor. . . . She is a great sailor, but I don’t think she has been able to spend as much time recently as she would like either at Rockport or sailing from our own nautical pavilion.

Physical Education Requirement extended to women undergraduates.
Epilogue

1973 Emily leaves MIT to become Dean of the Faculty at Mt. Holyoke College.

*Ad Hoc Committee prize* used to fund a women’s intercollegiate sailing trophy in Emily’s name. *Presented in appreciation for her efforts on behalf of women students at M.I.T. June 1973*

**Aside:** Boat in plaque is a Cape Cod Bullseye, a modified version of the wooden 1914 Buzzards Bay 12½ designed by Nat Herreshoff and built by his company. Cape Cod Shipbuilding acquired the rights to the original design in 1947 and produced a modified version (fiberglass, modified transom, cuddy) designed by Nat’s son Sidney. [Bullseyes,H12-1/2,CCSB]

MIT women win the 1973 ICYRA National Women’s Dinghy Championship.
NCAA changes tactics and moves to take over women’s sports, beginning at its convention by waiving the regulation barring women from men’s events. It begins to use its wealth, political influence, and long history to undermine and eventually absorb and kill the AIAW in 1982, who lose an antitrust suit against the NCAA.

In A Century of Women Students at M.I.T. [Wick:73], Emily describes the accomplishments during her time as Associate Dean of Students and ends with remaining tasks:

First, there must be more women faculty at both junior and senior levels. Women students need to observe and to communicate with women who have been successful in their field of study. . . . Such role-models are necessary if women are to be encouraged to seek careers. . . . Second, there must be more women students. M.I.T. — as a leading university in our society — has a responsibility to educate those people whose talents can best be met by the Institute’s resources.
Emily joins fellow Rockporter George Warren Smith ’28 to raise funds for 3rd generation of Tech Dinghies, designed by Halsey Herreshoff (SM ’60). Smith owns Bullseye Beaver II.

**Why the name Beaver II?** Perhaps because Smith sailed in the MIT Nautical Association Firefly Beaver, shown here preparing for a regatta in 1957.
2018 Percentage of women in the MIT entering Class of 2022 is slightly under 50.

Slides available at https://ee.stanford.edu/~gray/SBYC_Wick.pdf
# Acknowledgements

Material draws heavily from the papers of Emily L. Wick in the possession of her niece, Laura Hallowell, *The Technique, The Tech, Technology Review, The MIT Handbook*, the MIT Museum and Archives, the MIT Sailing Pavilion, the articles and book of Amy Sue Bix, the old Web pages of the Association of MIT Alumnae (AMITA) (http://alumweb.mit.edu/groups/amita.old/esr/swallow.html), and conversations with MIT Sailing Master Fran Charles and MIT Alumnae from the 1950s through the 1970s — especially in the earliest stages of this project with classmate Emma Root ’64 and throughout the project with Susan Kannenberg ’61.

Most of the photos are courtesy of the MIT Museum and *Technique*. Special thanks to Laura Hallowell and to former Class of 1964 President and Technique Photo Editor and Editor, and current Class Historian — Bob Popadic ’64, for help and encouragement throughout the project.
Sources

[Ad Hoc] *The Ad Hoc Committee on the Role of Women at MIT,* http://alumweb.mit.edu/groups/amita.old/esr/adhoc.html


[H12½] “H12½, Doughdish, Bullseye” thread, *WoodenBoat Forum*


[Gray:coed] R.M. Gray, Coeducation at MIT, work in progress — article covering same material as in earlier slides in more detail and in plain English, will eventually include added sailing material of this talk: https://ee.stanford.edu/~gray/Coeducation/MIT.pdf


[125 Years] “125 Years Ago,” http://alumweb.mit.edu/groups/amita.old/esr/swallow.html”