

BEAAP 2017 Summary Report

PREPARED BY

LAUREN STOPFER, CLAIRE DUVALLET, AND AMANDA FACKLAM

The Biological Engineering (BE) Department is committed to advancing a respectful and caring community that enables all of our students to succeed at MIT. We encourage applicants who bring a diversity of thought and experience to our student body, including students from groups underrepresented in STEM, students with non-traditional academic backgrounds, and students from academic institutions which have not historically sent many students to MIT. We recognize that applicants receive disparate degrees of support during the graduate admission process, so we created the **BE Application Assistance Program (BEAAP)**.

BEAAP is a volunteer-based, student-run program which provides assistance to BE applicants from underrepresented groups. Applicants are paired with a graduate student who can answer questions about BE and MIT, provide feedback on materials to create a stronger application, and guide applicants through the BE application process. BEAAP is supported by the BE Graduate Admissions Committee and the BE Graduate Student Board. BEAAP mentors are trained by a faculty member on the Graduate Admissions Committee on BE's admissions criteria and by the Communication Lab on providing feedback for application materials.

“It was great to be matched to a mentor that is in a place where I hope to be a year from now. This program helped not only on my applications, but also got me more excited to pursue a graduate degree in BE.

BEAAP has been one of the highlights of my application process.”

-BEAAP participant

BEAAP 2017 - Executive Summary

This year, 52 student applicants participated in BEAAP and 44 MIT BE graduate students volunteered to be mentors. The majority of mentees learned about BEAAP through the MIT BE website. Our graduate student volunteers were numerous, enthusiastic, and broadly representative of BE's entire graduate student body. **We believe that one major strength of BEAAP is that it draws upon our entire BE community, and gives all students a way to give back to our community and contribute to diversity initiatives.**

We recruited volunteers by emailing BE students and hosted a workshop in early October to give mentors insight into BE's admissions process and criteria and to train them in providing feedback on application materials. Prospective students applied to BEAAP through a form on the BE website, and were followed up with to confirm interest. We matched applicants and mentors on a first-come first-serve basis, with some attempt to match on research interests or undergraduate institution. Mentors and mentees were introduced via email and asked to drive their relationship, with BEAAP leadership available for support.

The majority of mentees reported that participating in BEAAP improved their applications. Many also used BEAAP to learn more about being a graduate student at MIT and in BE: some became more interested in applying to our department, whereas others realized that they would be a better fit elsewhere. We consider both of these outcomes a success for BEAAP. One striking theme that appeared throughout mentees' comments was that **the existence of BEAAP, a program that strives to encourage diversity, made them more interested in applying to MIT BE.**

Recommendations

To continue being successful, BEAAP needs BE to expand its outreach and recruitment efforts. We recommend that BE establishes **protocols for the active recruitment of a diverse student body**. BE leadership should **identify a staff or faculty member to coordinate all outreach activities, including non-BE efforts** (e.g. BTP and OGE conference attendance, MSRP research alumni). This person should **ensure that prospective BE applicants identified through all relevant recruitment get channeled through BEAAP**. In this way, we can ensure that prospective students remain connected to BE and increase their likelihood of applying to our program.

Conclusions

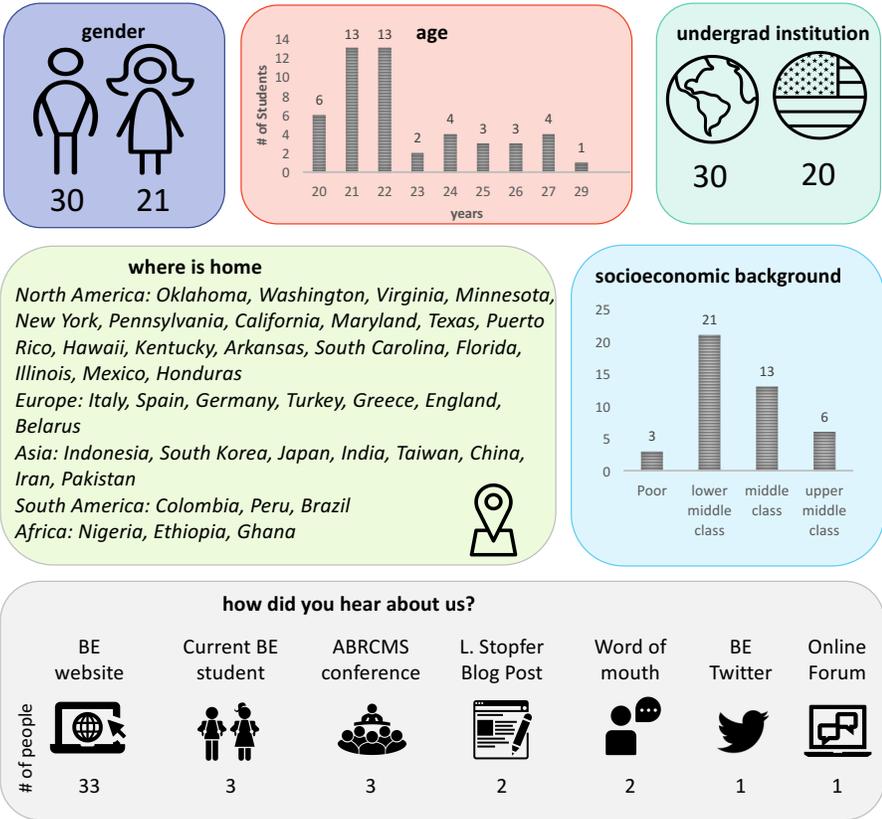
Because of BEAAP, MIT BE is more attractive and accessible to students who are often missing from our admissions pipeline. BEAAP succeeds in providing support to students who may have less support and makes **BE's commitment to diversity explicit and public**. Furthermore, BEAAP is easy to organize and has enthusiastic participation from a broad portion of the graduate community. Despite being entirely student-led, **BEAAP needs clear and committed departmental support to continue being successful and increase its impact**. After two successful years, we believe that BEAAP presents an opportunity for the department to sustainably and effectively expand its outreach activities. Because of BEAAP, BE faculty can **offer recruited students a way to enter and remain in the pipeline leading to MIT BE.**

2017 BEAAP Summary

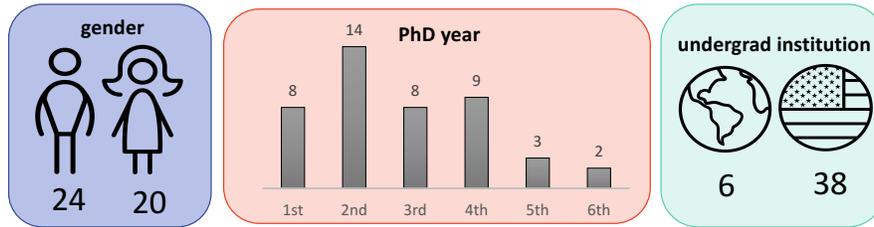
Mentors and mentees

This year, 52 student applicants participated in BEAAP and 44 MIT BE graduate students volunteered to be mentors. The majority of mentees learned about BEAAP through the MIT BE website, though some also found out about our program through other avenues like social media, MIT blogs, and the ABRCMS conference. From our volunteers, it is clear that there is significant graduate student interest in participating in BEAAP: 44 students out of 126 total BE students volunteered, volunteers were fairly evenly distributed between 1st and 4th years (with some 5th and 6th years even participating), and the gender ratio of volunteers was about 50/50 (as compared to most other BE leadership activities, which skew female). We hypothesize that the relatively low time commitment involved in volunteering and the relatively high "feel good" reward of giving back to our community and contributing to diversity-focused initiatives may explain the high interest in BEAAP among our student body. We believe that one major strength of BEAAP is that it draws upon our entire BE community, and gives busy upper-years a way to give back to BE that's compatible with their busier research lives.

52 applicants participated in BEAAP



44 MIT BE Graduate students volunteered to be mentors



Names redacted				
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Mentee recruitment

In 2016, the BEAAP application was posted on the MIT BE website under the Application Assistance tab for prospective graduate students. The website is our most common tool to recruit participants, as 33 of the 45 mentees who responded noted they learned of the program through the BE web page. However, in 2017 we tried several other outreach strategies:

ABCRMS

This year, two BE graduate students attended ABCRMS, joining the Biology and OGE booths along with Darlene Ray from the Biotechnology Training Program. BEAAP was featured on the handout given to students about BE (Appendix 4). Three students indicated they learned of the program through the conference.

In the future, we recommend having an established process to send students to ABCRMS to recruit for BE and advertise BEAAP. Furthermore, establishing clear and timely follow-up with students contacted at recruitment events will hopefully increase our yield into BEAAP and eventually BE.

Word of Mouth

We asked current students to pass along news of the program to their networks (email in appendix 1.1), and 5 students noted they heard about it from an announcement made through one of our students. Three students noted they heard about it directly from a BE student, and 2 through emails sent by advisors at their school.

In the future, we recommend that BEAAP leadership continue asking graduate student volunteers to publicize BEAAP to their undergraduate and other networks. Furthermore, we

could begin to establish relationships with these networks and continue advertising BEAAP to them even after our primary BE graduate student contact graduates. Such relationships, however, should be maintained by a BE staff or faculty member rather than BEAAP student leadership.

Social Media

We attempted to use social media as a way of advertising the program. We compiled a list of schools to tag in the posts by searching for schools with strong BME/BE-related majors and high proportions of underrepresented students (e.g. historically black colleges and universities), as well as schools which were rated “best value” for BME/BE majors. Several announcements were made through Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, however it was challenging to coordinate these posts as we do not have posting rights for the MIT BE accounts. Only one student noted they learned of the program through twitter, so revisiting our social media strategy should be a priority in 2018. Examples of social media posts are in Appendix 2.

Other

Two students noted they learned of the program through a blog post titled “My recipe for getting in” on the MIT graduate admissions blog, written by Lauren Stopfer. Another student wrote he learned of BEAAP through a Japanese graduate school forum.

Mentor recruitment

We sent an email to bestudents@mit.edu in August, with follow-ups in early and late September (Appendix 1.4). We asked mentors to indicate their year, lab, undergraduate institution, undergraduate major, citizenship status, and whether they were available for the workshop. We also asked mentors how many students they would be willing to mentor.

Mentor workshop

Before we began matching applicants with mentors, we hosted a workshop to provide volunteers with insight into BE’s admissions process and criteria and to train them in providing feedback on application materials. We hosted the workshop on October 6, which was earlier than last year and mostly driven by the fact that we began recruiting mentors much earlier than last year. This year, we also provided mentors with a cheat sheet to guide them in giving feedback (Appendix 3.3).

Agenda

Friday October 6, 2017 11 am – 12 pm (before BATS)

- Claire explained the motivation behind the program, results from last year, how the program works, and mentor expectations (10 mins)
- Doug spoke about what the department is looking for in applicants (20 mins)
 - Notes in Appendix 3.1
- Lauren presented coaching tips on SOPs and provided a cheat sheet (10 mins)

- Amanda described the range of experiences mentors had in 2016, and mentee feedback (5 mins)
- Answered mentor questions (5 mins)
 - Notes in Appendix 3.2

Workshop Feedback

On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the most favorable response), all mentors who responded to the post-program survey rated the workshop to be helpful in preparing them for answering mentee questions (score 4 or 5) Again, 100% of mentors indicated (score 4 or 5) they felt supported by the BEAAP team after the workshop, and that the workshop provided just enough guidance. Anecdotally, we also know that mentors very much appreciated having the opportunity to learn about BE's admissions process and criteria from Doug.

Suggestions from mentors for 2018 workshop:

- Begin to build repository of common questions asked by mentees and suggested responses for mentors to reference
- Update BEAAP leadership and mentors with the latest changes in application details

BEAAP Implementation

Application and Matching Process

Prospective students applied to BEAAP using a google form under the "Application Assistance Program" tab for prospective graduate students on the be.mit.edu page. They were asked their name, gender, ethnicity, immigration status, where they are from, age, socioeconomic background, why they wanted to participate in BEAAP, and their previous academic experiences. Applicants were sent a follow up email asking them to confirm they would like to participate, and to send along a draft of their personal statement or resume (appendix 1.2). Every student was admitted to BEAAP unless they were not applying to the BE PhD program this cycle. If students did not respond and confirm their participation in BEAAP, they were sent one reminder email.

Amanda and Claire matched mentees to mentors on a first-come first-served basis, trying to match for any similarities (e.g. in UG major, institution, immigration status, research interest). Mentees were introduced via email to their assigned mentor (appendix 1.3). Mentor/mentee pairs were asked to drive their own mentoring relationships, and the BEAAP leadership team remained available for support if needed. There were instances of both mentees and mentors starting the conversation. Communication occurred over email, phone, and skype, and some local mentees met up with their mentors in person. 90% of mentees responded in a post-program survey that the application process, follow up form, and match email provided enough guidance to establish a fruitful mentor relationship.

Why do you want to participate in BEAAP? (sample responses from mentees)

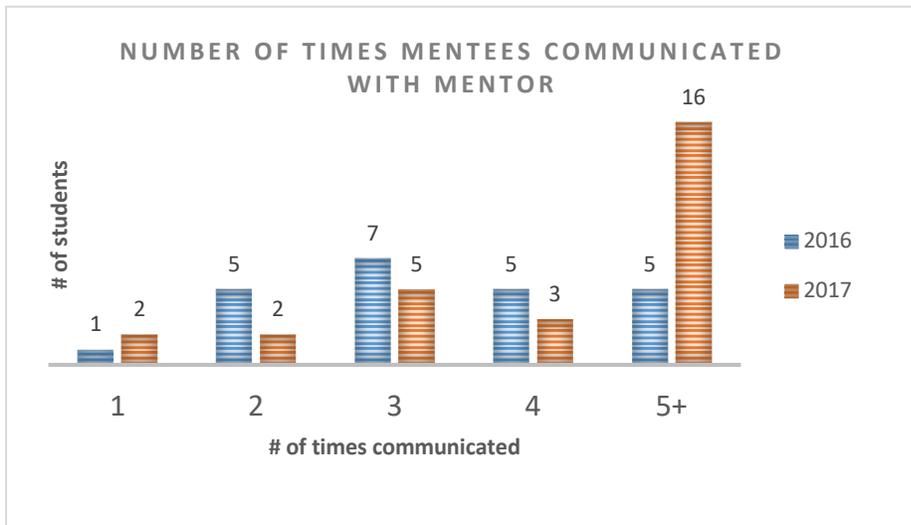
"I have spent almost all my life in South America, and have not had a lot of experience in North American universities. Since I am not familiar with the application process, I would greatly benefit from some guidance and helpful advice from the BEAAP. Unfortunately, in my society, science and nature are extremely undervalued. As my country goes through an economic and political crisis, these fields are the first ones to be cut from the budget. In addition, research in Synthetic Biology is virtually non-existent. In the United States, however, especially in MIT, this and other fields of research are given their deserved importance. Almost all scientific publications that I find mind-blowing and awe-inspiring come from MIT's BE department. It would be a dream come true to make a part of such a team, so I might as well 'give it a shot'."

"Participating in the BEAAP would be a great opportunity for me because it allows me to understand the expectations of being in the MIT BE student body. Most graduate programs would only provide minimum prerequisites for applying and not elaborate their true expectations, including the characteristics of the ideal candidate. There are many variables in the application process, so it is hard to gauge on which variables have priority. Therefore, a great resource would be current graduate students, as they have experienced this application process. I do not have peers who have gone through this process, so I lack advice that could help me excel in the application. I hope that the BEAAP would provide me the opportunity to learn from previous experiences. In the future, I could use my experience to help students from my previous institution provide their best applications."

"I am a chemistry major - a nontraditional major to be applying to a bioengineering program - at a small liberal arts college which has a very small engineering department that does not carry research fields that I am interested in. However, through external research experiences, I am passionate about pursuing bioengineering with a focus in biomaterials. Because I do not have access to resources that may be available at a large research university with a bioengineering program and my school has not historically sent many students to MIT, I would like to get help on my application through the BEAPP program and talk to current graduate students who are currently pursuing the research that I envision myself in."

Mentor/Mentee Communication

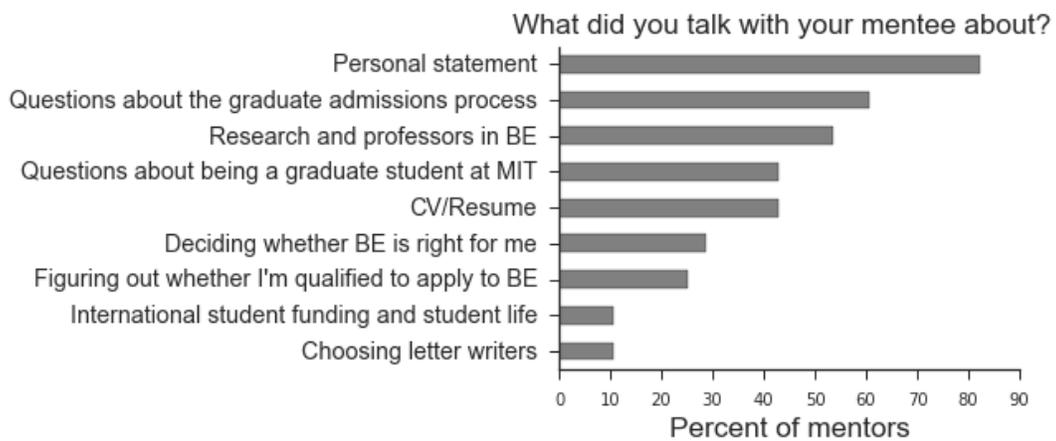
Most mentors communicated with their mentee multiple times, with a majority communicating 5+ times. This is a large jump from 2016, where most mentees only had a few interactions, and is likely due to the longer program period.



96% of mentors talked with their mentees about their SOP

~60% discussed Research/professors in BE

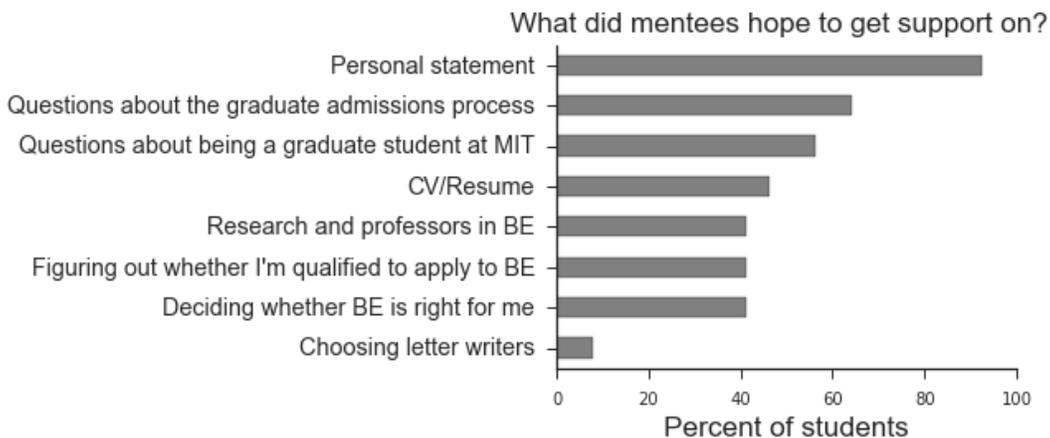
~30% discussed deciding whether to apply to MIT BE



Mentee Expectations

To investigate if our description of the program was setting accurate expectations for mentees, we surveyed them after the program regarding what they expected to get out of BEAAP.

A majority of students hoped to get support on their personal statement, and many were also curious about being a graduate student at MIT, and how the graduate admissions process works.



Most survey respondents noted BEAAP matched or exceeded their expectations. Only one student noted the program fell short of their expectations, but unfortunately did not detail why.

"I felt really supported throughout the process. My mentor not only answered all my queries but also gave me valuable feedback with my Statement of Purpose...The information I got from my mentor about graduate student life strengthened my conviction to apply to the program."

"I am very glad that I had the chance to make use of this great resource and that I had extra support and guidance during this process. Thank you very much!"

"It exceeded my expectations! My mentor provided great feedback about my personal statement that I hadn't heard from anyone else, as well as answering general questions about MIT BE and the application process."

Mentor Expectations

To evaluate if we were clear in articulating expectations for the mentors, we surveyed them after the program about what they expected to get out of BEAAP, and if their experience matched their expectations. Most mentors indicated that they expected to provide application tips to applicants, and that in this regard BEAAP matched their expectations.

However, mentors had a range of experiences and we recommend that the BEAAP leadership continue to refine how expectations are communicated to mentors. The goal of BEAAP is not necessarily to get every student admitted to BE, but rather to provide support to students who would otherwise have fewer resources guiding them through the graduate school admissions process. Thus, whether or not a mentor's applicant is invited to interview should not be how they measure their success as a mentor, but rather how much their student's application process improved. For example, a student who applies to BEAAP unsure about whether BE is a good fit for them and ends up realizing that HST is a better fit for their interests and strengths is a success in the eyes of BEAAP leadership.

Additionally, applicants are not screened (apart from ensuring that they are applying to the PhD program) in order to prevent BEAAP leadership from having to make arbitrary decisions about

who “deserves” assistance or not. Thus, some students may be less in “need” of BEAAP’s assistance, which can be disappointing to mentors. We recommend that limitations of the process and their rationale be clarified and emphasized at next year’s workshop.

“Expected to help someone craft an application. Experience matched expectations, maybe exceeded them as applicant was eager for lots of help.”

“I hoped to help applicants navigate an unfamiliar process. I think my advice was useful, but my student was pretty well-prepared for the application.”

“I expected to be a source of support for students who are interested in the BE program but are not sure. After first correspondence, I have not heard from my student.”

Did Mentees find participation in BEAAP useful?

A majority (92%) of students rated their participation in BEAAP as making their applications better, and 92% noted the existence of BEAAP made them more interested in applying to BE.

“I would not have had a chance for admission at MIT BE without my mentor.”

“I am immensely grateful for all the help I got! I feel there were a lot of unspoken rules (or at least guidelines) about statement essays, CVs, and the application process I had no idea about. Additionally, BEAAP helped relieve a lot of the “am I doing this the right way” anxiety in the application process. Regardless of the application outcome, I feel more sure that the decision will be based on my actual profile and experience, instead of my ignorance about the application system.”

We asked survey participants to comment how BEAAP affected their interest and eventual decision in applying to BE, and the responses were diverse.

Some felt it increased their interest in applying:

“I was already very interested, but had concerns about the life as a grad student outside the lab in MIT. My mentor shared some of his personal experiences and that definitely helped me feel much better about applying to BE.”

“It certainly strengthened my interest to apply in the program and I eventually did.”

Others realized they were a better fit elsewhere.

“BEAAP made me realize that a different department was a better choice to pursue my research interests.”

“I realized MIT BE might be too focused on the biology side of things, on the molecular level, instead of the macro level at the biomass-energy scale.”

One striking theme that appeared throughout the comments was that students noted that the existence of BEAAP, a program that strives to encourage diversity, made them more interested in applying.

“Valuing diversity and care for its student body (and incoming student body) is very important to me in a graduate program - I was really impressed that MIT BE had an actionable program to support that! It made me more interested in MIT BE.”

“I realized that MIT BE is devoted to helping under-resourced and first-generation students and, thus, realized the BE community would be a good fit.”

“MIT has been my dream school not just because of the world-class faculty and infrastructure but also because I was told about the sense of camaraderie amongst peers and congeniality. The BEAAP initiative is a testament to it. It definitely made the application process somewhat easier for me and most importantly, gave me the confidence to apply. Looking at the kind of support that you guys are providing to interested students, I can only imagine how amazing it is to be a part of this community. This initiative definitely helped me realize that BE would be a perfect fit for me.”

75% (29 of 39 respondents) ended up applying to MIT BE

Comparison with BEAAP 2016

2017 was BEAAP's second year. The most important difference between BEAAP 2016 and 2017 is that we started the process much earlier this year, recruiting volunteers in the late summer and opening up the BEAAP application in early fall (as opposed to mid-to-late fall, as in 2016). Likely because of this longer cycle, mentor and mentee pairs communicated more times throughout the program than last year. Compared with 2016, we had more mentees (37 vs. 52) and mentors (30 vs. 44), likely also driven by the longer recruitment periods. We were happy to see a mix of returning mentors and new mentors, including some upper-year students who were not involved last year. This year, we attempted to diversify our outreach efforts by posting to MIT BE's social media accounts, asking graduate students to send information about BEAAP to their undergraduate networks, and sending students to attend ABRCMS. While initially promising, these outreach efforts will need departmental support to be successful in future years.

Recommendations

Outreach

Our primary recommendation for 2018 is to continue expanding BEAAP outreach and to coordinate it with BE's own efforts. BEAAP leadership should advocate for a BE staff or faculty who can serve as the point-person for all BE-related outreach activities. For example, the Biotechnology Training Program and Office of Graduate Education both send students to recruit at many minority-serving conferences. BE should synergize with these efforts and ensure that students identified as being interested in BE get connected to BEAAP so that we can follow up with them and increase their likelihood of applying to our program. Additionally, BEAAP was

included in the bounceback email to students after emailing the BE Academic Office last year - we did not check that this was still the case this year, but next year's BEAAP leadership should ensure that this is still the case.

BEAAP leadership should continue to ask mentors to use their undergraduate networks and expand our social media strategy (pending departmental support). Also, they should consider reaching out to US universities or research programs which predominantly serve underrepresented groups, either through social media or targeted emails. Without these efforts, we expect the BEAAP applicant pool will remain dominated by international students and not expand to include many domestic students who could potentially benefit from participation. BEAAP leadership should coordinate with the BE staff or faculty to keep track of the connections made by BEAAP graduate mentors and their undergraduate networks, so that these relationships can be maintained ever after our primary contacts graduate.

Ideas for outreach to underrepresented applicants from 2016 mentors

- BMES
- Summer research programs: NSF REU, AMGEN, MSRP
- Minority-serving conferences: ABRCAMS, SHIP, NSBE, AISES, SACNAS
- Professional groups (SWE, NSBE)
- MIT BE Social Media
- Historically Black colleges (email advisors or program chairs)
- University offices serving underrepresented groups (e.g. LGBTQ office, multicultural office, etc)

Ideas for outreach to underrepresented applicants from 2017 mentors

- Quora or WordPress
- NSBE (national Society of Black Engineers)
- ERN conference in STEM
- MSRP
- Quant Bio
- iGEM Giant Jamboree
- ACS conferences
- MIT Converge

Mentor workshop

In terms of BEAAP implementation, our main recommendation for 2018 is to explicitly discuss mentor expectations, measuring success, and limitations of the process at the workshop. In both 2016 and 2017, we found that some mentors were disappointed by their experience because it did not "succeed" or their student did not "need" their support in the ways that they had hoped. We believe that mentor disillusionment is the only true danger to the longevity of BEAAP.

We hope that engaging mentors in setting expectations and recognizing BEAAP's limitations at the workshop is one way to counteract mentor disillusionment. Specifically, mentors and BEAAP

leadership should discuss what success can look like, beyond admission into BE. An applicant who realizes they should take a year off before applying or that they are a better fit at another program are both successes in our eyes. BEAAP leadership and mentors should also explicitly discuss the limitations of our process at the workshop. For example, we do not screen any applicants based on whether they seem "worthy" of our help in order to protect ourselves from having to making difficult and arbitrary decisions. Rather than simply telling mentors about these expectations and limitations, we recommend facilitating a discussion so that mentors can come to these conclusions themselves, and in the process hopefully resonate with them more.

Another option to prevent mentor disillusionment may be to provide mentors a holistic view of the positivity of the entire program. For example, mentees' positive feedback, collected at the end of BEAAP, could be sent back to all mentors. Thus, even if an individual mentor did not have a great experience, knowing that they were part of something larger than themselves may be enough to prevent their disillusionment.

Appendix

1 Communication Emails

1.1 Email to networks

Dear XXX,

I'm contacting you on behalf of the [BE Application Assistance Program](#) (BEAAP), a student-run program that the MIT Biological Engineering Department launched last fall to support PhD applicants with a diversity of thought and experience. This includes students from groups underrepresented in STEM, students from academic institutions that have not sent many students to MIT, and students with non-traditional academic backgrounds. We pair current BE graduate students with PhD applicants in order to answer questions about the process and help strengthen their applications.

We hope that BEAAP will be able to support some of you in your coming applications! If you have any questions about participating, you can find more information on the [website](#) or by emailing beaap@mit.edu.

1.2 Email to BEAAP applicants

Dear XXX,

Thank you for your interest in the [BE Application Assistance Program](#)! BEAAP is a volunteer-based student mentoring program which pairs graduate student volunteers with applicants from underrepresented groups to assist them in preparing strong applications for the MIT Biological Engineering Department's PhD program. **BEAAP aims to assist applicants who would otherwise have few resources for support during the graduate admissions process.**

BEAAP is a student-run program coordinated by the [BE Graduate Student Board](#). Graduate student volunteers are not official representatives of the BE department and participation in BEAAP is not a guarantee of admission. Graduate student volunteers have been trained on BE's admissions criteria and providing high-level application feedback to help you strengthen your application. Mentors can answer other questions based on their own experiences, and may not have answers to all of your questions.

If you are still interested in participating in BEAAP, please reply to this email with a recent draft of your statement of purpose and/or resume. We'll use these to pair you with a volunteer, so there's no need for them to be final. Once we review your materials and pair you with a graduate student volunteer, we'll send you both an introductory email. What happens after this is up to you - we're available if anything comes up, but other than that we ask that you lead the relationship with your mentor!

Please let me know if you have any questions, we're looking forward to hearing back from you!

Best,
Claire
on behalf of the BEAAP team

1.3 Matching email

Dear <mentor> and <mentee>,

Congratulations, you've been assigned as matches for the BE Application Assistance Program! <mentor> is a <Nth> year PhD student in the <faculty> lab. <mentee>'s BEAAP application responses are pasted at the end of this email.

<mentor> has been trained in providing high-level feedback on application materials, and is also aware of BE's admissions criteria. We've encouraged <mentor's pronouns> to respond to all other questions from <mentor's pronouns> personal experience, but please do reach out to beaap@mit.edu if there's anything you're unsure about.

What happens next is up to you both - the BEAAP leadership team is here to help if anything comes up, but we expect the mentee/mentor pair to drive this relationship.

Happy mentoring (and applying!),
<you>
on behalf of the BEAAP team

1.4 Emails to recruit BE students for volunteers

Dear BE students,

On behalf of the BE Grad Board, we are excited to announce the second installment of the [BE Application Assistance Program \(BEAAP\)](#)! BEAAP pairs graduate students with applicants from underrepresented groups to assist them through the application process and help them create stronger applications.

Graduate student volunteers:

- Answer applicants' questions about BE and provide feedback on their applications
- Attend a 1-hour workshop on BE's admissions criteria and providing feedback on application materials
- Commit to mentoring at least 1 student for one application cycle
- Contribute to making BE a more respectful, caring, and diverse community!

If you are interested in volunteering, please fill out the form [here](#). We will accept volunteers until September 25th. If you have questions or concerns, please email beaap@mit.edu.

Thanks,

Claire, Amanda, and Lauren
On behalf of the BE Graduate Student Board

Dear BE students,

A reminder to [sign up to volunteer](#) for the [BE Application Assistance Program \(BEAAP\)](#)! As a mentor, you will be paired with a prospective BE applicant to help them with their application materials and be available to answer any questions they may have about BE, MIT, or the graduate admissions process in general. We'll accept volunteers until September 25th.

If you are volunteering, please note that the BEAAP mentor workshop will take place on **Friday, October 6th at 11 am** in 56-614. Doug will go through the BE admissions process and criteria, and the Comm Lab will provide tips on how to give feedback on application materials.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Thanks!

Claire

BE Application Assistance Program

The Biological Engineering (BE) Department is committed to advancing a respectful and caring community that enables all of our students to succeed at MIT. We are looking for applicants who bring a diversity of thought and experience to our student body, including students from groups underrepresented in STEM, students with non-traditional academic backgrounds, and students from academic institutions which have not historically sent many students to MIT. We recognize that applicants receive disparate degrees of support during the graduate admission process, and encourage applicants with less support to use the BE Application Assistance Program (BEAAP).

BEAAP is a volunteer-based, student-run program which provides assistance to BE applicants from underrepresented groups. Applicants are paired with a graduate student who can answer questions about BE and MIT, provide feedback on materials to create a stronger application, and guide applicants through the BE application process. BEAAP is supported by the BE Graduate Admissions Committee and the BE Graduate Student Board. BEAAP mentors are trained by a faculty member on the Graduate Admissions Committee on BE's admissions criteria and by the Communication Lab on providing feedback for application materials.

Dear BE students,

A final reminder to [sign up to volunteer](#) as a mentor for the [BE Application Assistance Program \(BEAAP\)](#)! BEAAP pairs prospective applicants with a graduate student mentor who can answer questions about BE and MIT, provide feedback on materials to create a stronger application, and guide applicants through the BE application process.

The time commitment for mentors is fairly low. We ask that you attend our mentor workshop and that you mentor at least one applicant, which involves providing feedback on personal statements and answering any questions they may have about applying to BE.

This is a great way to get involved in BE and share your hard-earned wisdom and advice with incoming applicants! You can sign up to volunteer [here](#).

Let me know if you have any questions. Have a great weekend!

Claire

2 Social Media

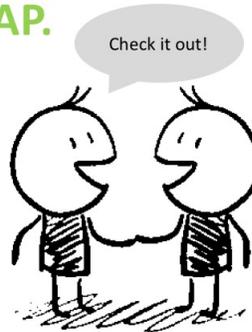
General post about BEAAP

Facebook/Instagram: We value students who bring a diversity of thought & experiences to our community, so we created the BE Application Assistance Program. Check it out if you're applying this cycle!"

Twitter: We value students with diversity of thought & experiences, so we created the BE Application Assistance Program. Check it out!

We value students with a diversity of thought & experience, so we created **BEAAP**.

Biological
Engineering
Application
Assistance
Program



Student Posts

We asked volunteer mentors to provide a Tweetable blurb about why they were excited to participate in BEAAP, and were planning to roll these out periodically during the application period.

Student #1

FB/Instagram: "I'm the first Malaysian to be in the MIT BE PhD program. I strongly encourage you to apply! If you don't try, you'll never know!" Applying this cycle? Check out BEAAP! (insert link)

Twitter: "I'm the first Malaysian in MIT BE PhD. I encourage you to apply, if you don't try you'll never know!" Applying this cycle? Check out BEAAP! (insert link)

Student #2

FB/Instagram: "Participating in the BEAAP in 2016 helped strengthen my application and cleared my mind of many irrational stresses. No matter how out of reach it may seem to get to MIT, give it a try!" Applying this cycle? Check out BEAAP! (insert link)

Twitter: "Participating in BEAAP 2016 helped strengthen my app. No matter how out of reach it may seem to get to MIT, give it a try!" Check it out! (insert link)

Lauren Stopfer

Facebook: Wondering whether to apply to MIT BE PhD? Unsure if you are a good match for the program? Want feedback on your personal statement? Check out BEAAP! (insert link)

3 Mentor Workshop

3.1 Notes from Doug's Talk (CD)

Admissions process

redacted

What are we looking for?

redacted

other considerations

redacted

Diversity

redacted

3.2 Notes from Q&A (CD)

Who should write the letters?

redacted

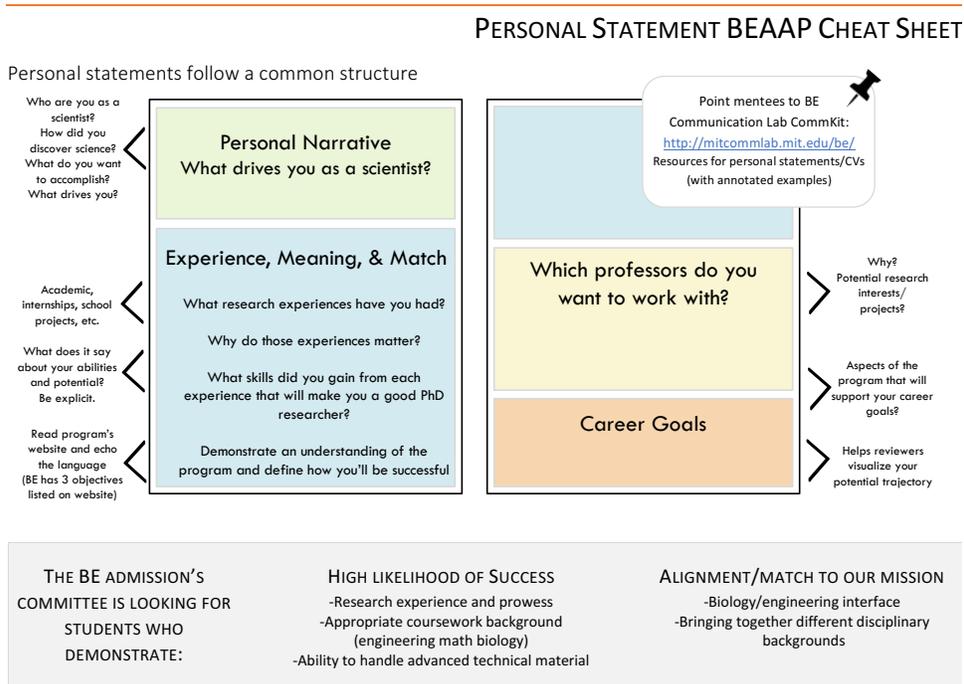
International students

redacted

Should applicants email faculty they're interested in?

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3.3 Cheat sheet about providing feedback on personal statements



BEAAP MENTOR WORKSHOP 2017

4 ABRCMS Handout

MIT Biological Engineering

Creating biological technologies from discovery to design

How do I get in?

MIT BE wants students who:

- excel in their **research and academics**
- have **strong recommendation letters**, especially about research experience
- have exposure to **biological and quantitative sciences**, including at least calculus and one or more engineering classes
- bring a **diversity of thought and experience** to our student body
- demonstrate **excitement about the research** happening in BE

Make sure to **contact your reference letter writers ASAP!**

If you want to use biology to solve important problems and you've done well in your previous research experiences, **you should apply!**

We value students with a diversity of thought & experience, so we created BEAAP.

The BE Application Assistance Program (BEAAP) pairs applicants from underrepresented groups with a graduate student mentor to support them through their application process.

bit.ly/beaap



MIT Biological Engineering

Creating biological technologies from discovery to design

Application Timeline

December 15th applications due	Mid March interview weekend	Early September orientation
Late January invitations sent	Late March admissions decisions sent	

For any questions about applying, contact the BE Academic Office at be-acad@mit.edu

What is a PhD in Biological Engineering?
See reverse side!

MIT Biological Engineering

Creating biological technologies from discovery to design

What is Biological Engineering?

Biological engineers combine disciplines to **solve biological problems**, **create biological solutions**, and **answer biological questions**.

They work in many fields:
health and medicine, biomaterials, environmental sustainability, energy, manufacturing and much more!

Biological Engineering combines:
Biological Engineering (Computational Modeling, Biomechanics, Biological Imaging, Biomaterials, Systems Biology, Synthetic Biology, Environmental Science, Energy, Food Engineering, Cancerogenesis, Neuronal Pathogenesis)

Biology: Botany, Ecology, Genetics, Neuroscience, Immunology, Physiology, Neuroscience, Evolution, Microbiology, Toxicology, Zoology, Pharmacology

Engineering + Quantitative Sciences: Physics, Math, Chemistry, Chemical Engineering, Materials Science, Environmental Science, Computer Science

What does a PhD in BE at MIT entail?

MIT BE PhDs are **research-based**. PhD students learn to **design, lead, and implement** research projects independently.

Students are **fully funded for their entire PhD**. Students get a stipend, health insurance, and don't pay tuition.

On average, a PhD in BE at MIT takes 5-6 years.

Who does this?

We train scientists and engineers who value societal contribution and collegiality and who **work wisely, creatively, and effectively for the betterment of humankind**.

You don't need a specific undergraduate major to apply, but you should have had exposure to both **quantitative and biological** fields from your classes or research.

How do I get in?
See reverse side!

Why do a PhD in BE at MIT?

MIT students conduct research at the **forefront of their fields**. No matter what you study, you can work with leaders in your field and become one yourself.

Boston is one of the best places for **biotech in the world**. There are hundreds of companies, start-ups, and research labs here!

But isn't the culture at MIT hypercompetitive and cold?

MIT has a vibrant **culture of collaboration** across labs and departments

In BE, we pride ourselves on our tight-knit community. We value a **collegial, diverse, and inclusive community**