

Dear members of the MCSC community,

It is with great pleasure that I announce to you today, the appointment of Desirée Plata, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering, as co-director of the MIT Climate and Sustainability Consortium (MCSC).

Desirée succeeds Jeffrey Grossman who has served as co-director since the MCSC's launch in January 2021. She joins Elsa Olivetti, who will continue her role as co-director; Executive Director Jeremy Gregory; and myself on the MCSC leadership team.

At its root, Desirée's research aims to guide industry to more environmentally sustainable practices and develop new ways to protect the health of the planet. She and her team at the Plata Lab use chemistry to understand the impact that industrial materials and processes have on the environment. By coupling devices that simulate industrial systems with computation, she helps industry develop more environmentally friendly practices. Last year, Desirée's team illustrated a copper-doped zeolite could greatly reduce the amount of methane in an air stream, with the goal of reducing the radiative forcing of the atmosphere. As director of the MIT Methane Network, Desirée engages and leads 26 researchers across MIT and beyond in developing strategies to drastically reduce global methane levels in this decade.

Desirée is no stranger to the MCSC. She played a pivotal role in the creation and launch of the Climate and Sustainability Scholars Program and its year-long course – an effort that she and Elsa were recently recognized for with the Class of 1960 Innovation in Education Fellowship. She has also been a member of the MCSC's Faculty Steering Committee since the Consortium's launch, helping to shape and guide its vision and work. Her research with Otto Cordero, "Engineering of a microbial consortium to degrade and valorize plastic waste," received a 2022 MCSC Seed Award.

Prior to joining the MIT Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering faculty in 2018, Plata served as the John J. Lee Assistant Professor of Chemical and Environmental Engineering at Yale University, where she was also the associate director of research at the Center for Green Chemistry and Green Engineering. Prior to her time at Yale, she was an assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering at Duke University. Desirée received her bachelor's degree from Union College and her PhD from the MIT-WHOI joint program in oceanography/applied ocean science and engineering.

Desirée has received many awards and honors celebrating her research and educational contributions. In 2020, she won MIT's prestigious Harold E. Edgerton Faculty Achievement Award. She is a two-time National Academy of Sciences Kavli Frontiers of Science Fellow, a two-time National Academy of Engineers Frontiers of Engineering Fellow, and a Caltech Young Investigator Sustainability Fellow. She has also won the ACS C. Ellen Gonter Environmental Chemistry Award, an NSF CAREER award, and the 2016 Odebrecht Award for Sustainable Development. She is also co-founder of two climate and energy related startups: Nth Cycle and Moxair, illustrating her commitment to translating academic innovations for maximum benefit to society.

Desirée's passion for developing sustainable technologies that have the potential to improve the environment and reduce the impacts of climate change is infectious. She will be a tremendous co-director of the MCSC.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jeff Grossman for his leadership of the MCSC. Jeff was a key player in the ideation and launch of the MCSC. Under his leadership alongside Elsa and Jeremy, he developed new programs such as the Impact Fellows, seed awards, and Climate Scholars. He has helped the MCSC become a model for successful and meaningful industry and cross-disciplinary engagement at MIT.

Please join me in welcoming Desirée to her new role as co-director of the MCSC.

Sincerely,

Anantha P. Chandrakasan

Dean, MIT School of Engineering

Vannevar Bush Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science