

Dear members of the AeroAstro community,

As you have heard, Daniel Hastings, Cecil and Ida Green Education Professor of Aeronautics and Astronautics, will be stepping down as head of the Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics and as Associate Dean of Engineering for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Dan will serve as interim Institute Community and Equity Officer and Interim Associate Provost for Faculty Development.

I want to thank Dan for his strong leadership and dedication over the years, both at AeroAstro and at the School of Engineering as a whole. Since starting as department head in January 2019, Dan has spearheaded a number of programs and initiatives that have been transformative for AeroAstro. His calm, steadfast leadership helped the department successfully maintain educational and research operations during the uncertainties of the pandemic.

In 2019, Dan developed and began implementing a new strategic plan for AeroAstro. He oversaw the recruitment and hiring of five new faculty, as well as a number of new staff. Under Dan's leadership, the department received funding to support a professorship, fellowships, Small Satellite Collaborative, and the new Wright Brothers Wind Tunnel, which opened last summer. He also spearheaded key revisions of the AeroAstro graduate program, including dropping the GRE requirement and altering the doctoral admissions process. Dan prioritized and enhanced communications in the department. This was particularly helpful during the Covid era.

Dan's commitment to fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community within AeroAstro and beyond has been truly remarkable. AeroAstro was among one of the first departments to hire a DEI officer. This commitment to community translated to his role as Associate Dean of Engineering for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, a role he assumed in August 2021. Among his many accomplishments in this role, he undertook a comprehensive review of best practices across the departments, helped start the MIT School of Engineering Postdoctoral Fellowship Program for Engineering Excellence and taught the academic track for its postdocs, developed the SoE Distinguished Lecture Series featuring engineers on DEI, and helped rethink the MIT Sloan University Center for Exemplary Mentoring (UCEM) into the Program for Exemplary Mentoring (PEM) program.

As the search for Dan's replacement commences, Professor Steven Barrett has kindly agreed to serve as interim department head effective July 1, 2023. I am grateful to Steven for leading the department during this period of transition.

I am pleased to announce that Professor Kerri Cahoy will chair the search advisory committee for the next department head. With input from faculty, staff, students, and alumni, the committee will identify candidates for the department head position. I will interview the finalists and make a decision soon thereafter. The committee will start its work immediately and will generate a report with recommendations to me this fall.

I am grateful to the faculty and staff at AeroAstro who have agreed to serve on the committee, including Luca Carlone, Chuchu Fan, Youssef Marzouk, Dava Newman, Jaime Peraire, Denise Phillips, Sheila Widnall, and Moe Win. It is customary in School of Engineering department head searches for a member of Engineering Council who is not in the department to serve on the search advisory committee. I am grateful to Asu Ozdaglar, head of the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science and Deputy Dean of Academics for the Schwarzman College of Computing, for her willingness to serve in this role.

Please join me in thanking Dan for his service to AeroAstro and the School of Engineering, and congratulating him on his new interim roles.

Sincerely,

Anantha P. Chandrakasan
Dean, MIT School of Engineering
Vannevar Bush Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science