

# Individuals

## 2022 Infinite Mile Awards

Francis Borrego  
Everyday Leadership  
CAPD

The Employer Relations Team is tasked with recruiting employers to offer our students career options, obtaining revenue from these employers to support the Office, as well as stewarding our students through a hiring process to make the best personal choices. Francis first joined the office in 2018 as a temporary career counselor, but quickly moved into the position of Assistant Director for Employer Relations.

Francis's demeanor and communication style make him a strong networker with Employers, while also supporting students and colleagues in the ways they need. Francis is approachable, which allowed the team to grow in trust quickly, which translates to even better service for students. He is a thoughtful partner when troubleshooting problems and enhances projects; he provides well-thought-out responses and finds ways to be supportive of his team members and colleagues.

These qualities made him exceptionally well placed to usher the Employer Relations Team through the pandemic. The work of the team which includes encouraging on-campus recruiting and gaining employer sponsorship for programs was complicated by the COVID protocols and lock-downs. Much of the employer sponsorships rely upon in-person access to career counselors, the Employer Relations Team, and in-person activities with students. The revenue generated from these sponsorships helps to fund some of the positions in the Office, as well as many of the programs CAPD offers to students. The pandemic created a downturn in on-campus recruiting activities and revenue generation. It certainly was a concerning situation to be in, but through it all, Francis kept calm; at least, he gave the appearance of being calm. This allowed the entire team mental space to think strategically about solutions. Francis dug deep and engaged his team in finding creative solutions for supporting student recruiting needs and identifying ways to provide added value to employers in a virtual recruiting world. He led his team in developing a new Employer Connection Program sponsorship plan for 2020-21 and actually recruited 17 employer members! This was extraordinary as he had to completely transform the services offered to recruit these members. His calm leadership allowed the team to thrive in unprecedented circumstances.

Francis Borrego has proven himself to be an extraordinary employee who demonstrates everyday leadership in all his interactions. He fosters strong relationships and strengthens ties within CAPD. He provides humor and wisdom on the Slack channel and is always ready to assist. He has lifted up the Employer Relations Team, which has allowed them to be their best selves. It is my honor to present Francis with the OVC Infinite Mile Award for Everyday Leadership.

## 2022 Infinite Mile Awards

Patrick Brown  
Serving the Client  
OGE

For many of us, the circumstances of the past two years have brought additional responsibilities, complex problems, and countless hours. However, even in that context, Patrick stands out for his devotion to a wide range of new challenges, while performing his usual work with excellence.

For months now, Patrick has been relied upon non-stop to assist with major Institute level projects. He has had to re-prioritize his work in the office in order to enable the 3% increase in student stipends which occurred in December. Due to challenges resulting from systems changes, Patrick was on the front line bearing the brunt of complaints, often not kindly conveyed. Although he was not responsible for the problems, he handled the complaints and criticism expressed with grace and compassion.

In addition, Patrick contributed mightily to enabling MIT to be prepared for the unionization voting process. He was constantly accessible, working evenings and weekends regularly for months. At the same time, Patrick has managed the allocation process for fellowships to enable departments and programs to recruit their most talented and desirable admits. He has had to be available to School Deans offices and department administrators and faculty, following up and explaining processes repeatedly. His goal through it all has been to help the depts/programs achieve their goals. He has been, and continues to be, so incredibly selfless, charitable and obliging in working with all constituencies.

When OGE embarked on the journey, almost 3 years ago, to create new office spaces, Patrick assumed the role of project lead working closely with the OGE Director. The multitude of challenges with respect to architecture, space and operations limitations and staff needs were exacerbated by Covid, but Patrick never lost his cool, maintaining optimism and excitement about the outcomes. He also led the process of moving to the new locations in the midst of holidays and the heightened Omicron covid environment.

Patrick Brown has been nothing short of amazing during a time when we have all struggled to consistently bring our best selves forward. No matter how hard the task or how stretched or weary Patrick has been, he has managed to rise to the challenge with aplomb. I am grateful to be able to present him with the OVC Infinite Mile Award for Serving the Client.

## 2022 Infinite Mile Awards

Kendra Leith  
Everyday Leadership  
D-Lab

Kendra Leith has been a key part of MIT D-Lab for much of its history, demonstrating both every day and exceptional leadership over the course of 16 years. Kendra started working with D-Lab in 2006, just a few years after D-Lab got off the ground, helping with the first International Development Design Summit, a program that gained so much traction that more than two-dozen summits followed over the next 15 years. Soon after her initial experiences with D-Lab, Kendra embarked on a master's degree at MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning and served as one of D-Lab's first teaching assistants. In 2011, she returned to D-Lab to take on other firsts by shaping and overseeing user and market research for D-Lab projects and establishing an evaluation strategy for the Scale-Ups program and the USAID-funded Comprehensive Initiative on Technology Evaluation (CITE).

As D-Lab's research portfolio grew, Kendra took on greater and greater responsibility for the research team. In 2017, she was appointed Associate Director for Research, leading a team working in off-grid energy, biomass fuel and cookstoves, water purification, local innovation, and home heating, while also co-founding the Lean Research initiative. She has managed the complex and diverse D-Lab research portfolio in a way that makes everyone feel valued and able to do their best work, notes one colleague. Kendra is a tour-de-force, notes another. In addition to overseeing a complex research portfolio, Kendra is a skilled researcher in her own right.

With an unwavering commitment to D-Lab's mission, Kendra has always been a consummate team player, contributing to the overall health of D-Lab's cross-cutting programs in addition to the well-being of the D-Lab staff. In recent years Kendra has volunteered to lead a complex effort to establish ethical guidelines for evaluating sources of funding for D-Lab, been a contributing member of D-Lab's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Committee, as well as the Career Pathways Working Group. A D-Lab colleague notes that, "Kendra truly cares about her colleagues and supports them. In the last several years that I have worked with her, I have been amazed by her kindness, self-awareness, and integrity, and inspired by her strategic and critical thinking. D-Lab wouldn't be what it is today without Kendra's leadership." Observes another staff member, with exceptional emotional intelligence, Kendra is a great advocate for other staff members, and, at the same time, she doesn't shy away from difficult conversations.

The first word that comes to mind when I think of Kendra is trustworthy, says a colleague. Stated another way, a member of the research team says, Remember the song from the Chevrolet truck commercials back in the '90s, Like A Rock! ~Like a rock, standin' arrow straight; Like a rock, chargin' from the gate; Like a rock, carryin' the weight; Like a rock.' Kendra is our our rock - dependable, long-lasting, ready to step up, doesn't stop until the job's done. D-Lab thanks you for being their rock, Kendra and it is my pleasure to present you with the OVC Infinite Mile award for Everyday Leadership.

## 2022 Infinite Mile Awards

Christine Muir  
Serving the Client  
Admissions

While they will never know it, behind the emails that our 30,000+ applicants receive during their application process is someone who works tirelessly to ensure that every message is carefully and thoughtfully constructed.

Christine is the embodiment of grace under pressure: in an office that sends out communications in a constantly shifting environment, she is always ready to help staff find the right words. She carefully crafts emails with an incredible attention to detail, and is not fazed by last minute requests. Christine is always willing to work with teams to send time-sensitive messages (amongst dozens of scheduled communications). Christine is incredibly thoughtful and always ready to brainstorm to find the most effective way to communicate with students and families. Our work requires us to interact with incredibly diverse populations at various stages of the college search (and selection) process, which comes with unique challenges. That said, her contributions are always spot on, and her suggestions always come from the position of benefitting the student.

One admissions colleague said:

“Christine Muir is truly in a class of her own when it comes to the positive impact she has on our office. She is incredibly thoughtful in everything she does. She is meticulous in checking, double checking, and then checking again that data and content are correct.”

Another said:

Christine “cares deeply about the work, our applicants, and doing right by them and takes things to heart when they don’t go exactly according to plan. Her attention to detail and her care are her superpowers. Beyond the work, though, Christine makes our office better. She always says hello! And “I hope you are having a great day!” Regardless of how stressed she is or how crazy the time of year it is, she always makes time to make sure people are ok. These little touches have long-lasting and powerful impacts, of which, I am a recipient. She is the embodiment of servant leadership and I am honored that I get to work alongside her every day.”

Another commented:

“It is not a hyperbole when I say, Christine is one of the people I admire most in the office. It takes a special sort of individual to be able to deal with the unrelenting demands of our office with endless grace, kindness and good cheer, and Christine is special.”

Christine, I am pleased to present you with the OVC Infinite Mile award for Serving the Client.

Tianna Ransom  
Innovation & Creativity  
CAPD

Tianna's work with the Infinite Careers program began as a pilot that has blossomed into an annual series to improve career exploration for students. The program facilitates intimate networking events with alumni who have had non-linear career paths. Tianna implemented the series from the ground up, taking an idea in its infancy and turning it into a full-fledged program currently in its fifth year of operation.

In the first two years alone, Tianna recruited alumni from over 20 different courses to share their stories and engage in small group discussions with students. Many of the speakers were from racially or ethnically underrepresented backgrounds and their occupations ranged from professional choreographer and dancer to patent attorney. This approach to career exploration achieved positive results. Students cite feeling comfortable asking questions and hearing about paths they had not considered, and an average of 98% of students would recommend the events to others. The series has increased career exploration, an area that can often be difficult for students to focus on with everything else they have on their plates. The sustained success of Infinite Careers would not have been possible without Tianna's exceptional care and stewardship. To date, over 50 alums from around the world have shared their career paths with students. Her work helped our office expand career exploration while also supporting stronger ties with other departments like the Alumni Association.

Tianna's accomplishments led to her promotion into a new role last spring. As the inaugural Assistant Director of Career Exploration, Tianna lead the Career Exploration Series, aimed at promoting campus-wide career exploration throughout the fall and IAP. In taking on this endeavor, Tianna investigated different ways to approach the series for fall 2021. She hired our first group of Career Exploration student leaders and set up multiple meetings and drop-in zoom hours for academic departments and OVC offices to learn about the program and begin to plan events that could be part of the series. Tianna's leadership and guidance led to an incredibly positive outcome. The Career Exploration Series this past fall and IAP consisted of 63 events hosted by a mix of academic departments and programs, first-year exploration, and external companies. A total of 1,206 students, postdocs, and recent alumni attended the events. With this success, Tianna has already begun evaluating and planning for fall 2022, and the series will be a long-term program she can continue to innovate and build upon.

Tianna is a colleague who constantly thinks about how we can improve, and is never afraid to pilot an idea. MIT is truly lucky to have her leading the advancement of our career exploration efforts and I am happy to be able to present with the OVC Infinite Mile Award for Innovation and Creativity.

Julia Mongo  
Serving the Client  
CAPD

Since the office was first created in 2006, dedicated to assisting students with nationally and internationally competitive scholarships, student interest has grown exponentially. Julia's position was created, in part, to meet some of that demand. Over the course of her seven years advising, she has become a trusted advisor to hundreds of students seeking international experiences through the US Student Fulbright program. Students have commented:

- "Julia Mongo is incredibly thoughtful and empathetic - she's a wonderful advisor and was even willing to take time out of her weekend and evening to support me in the essay writing process. I felt supported throughout the whole process - from the days when I had absolutely no idea to which country I may want to go to the days when I was nitpicking the very last words of my essays. Julia always made it clear that she was there - very grateful for her!"

- "Julia is the most warm, supportive, diligent, caring adult I know on campus. Through the summer, she read my Fulbright draft essays over 20 times, and although the topic of my essays were not the most exciting, I looked forward to each meeting with Julia, as her humor and kindness would make the tough work of fellowship applications all the more bearable, and in fact, enjoyable. Even after submitting my application, I've continued to ask Julia for advice, for which she always provides me with so much support and resources. The connection and gratitude I feel for her is a testament to how special of a person she is, given that we have yet to meet in person. She is a blessing to have at MIT."

These anonymous quotes are not only a testament to Julia's success as an advisor but her growth beyond the confines of her position to serve MIT and all students at a very high level. In one capacity, Julia has gone beyond advising to become a support network to others. She has become a refuge for students who are lost at MIT, or who have not found the support they need. With this deep care has come a corresponding interest from students, resulting in tangible results of MIT students winning Fulbright Scholarships. Prior to Julia's efforts, MIT averaged seven winners per year since the inception of the office. Since her arrival, the average has gone up to nine winners per year, and the last three years have had 11, 11, and 12 winners respectively. These numbers were strong enough to make MIT a nationally recognized as a Fulbright Top-Producing Institution. Even more impressive, Julia's yield of applicants to winners was the highest of all 28 schools named Top-Producing in 2021, with a 29.5% yield! Truly remarkable for a nationally competitive award!

Julia sees what student uniquely need, and then fills those gaps. She has expanded students' belief in themselves and provided them a platform to be successful. Julia has further innovated within our office to develop new workshops and programs that will in turn make our students better medical professionals.

It is my honor to present Julia Mongo with the OVC Infinite Mile Award for Serving the Client.

# TEAMS



## 2022 Infinite Mile Awards

### Admissions' Customer Service Team

#### Serving the Client

- Leila Alli
- Erin Murray
- Bryan Smith
- Stephanie Mac
- Bailey Olmstead
- Shara Zimmerman
- Leah McDermott
- Shawn Rogers

In March of 2020, the MIT Admissions Customer Service Team, operating out of 10-100, welcomed what would be the last set of on-campus admissions visitors before COVID-19 fundamentally altered the way that we do almost everything.

Two years later, in the new MIT Welcome Center on the eastern edge of campus, masked visitors congregate for answers to questions and insights about MIT before information sessions and student-led tours.

In the intervening period, the team has essentially completely turned over. Despite the challenges of attempting to both learn about and convey the distinctiveness of this singularly unique academic community, the customer service team has continued to serve our clients, specifically prospective students and families, in-person since the Welcome Center opened in October of 2021. Carefully managing the transition back from virtual to actual, navigating the finer points of TIM Tickets and contact tracing, while balancing our commitment to access with the need for public and community safety, even during periods when many were encouraged to work remotely to mitigate the impact of rising COVID cases amidst the surges brought upon by newer, and more transmissible variants.

Day in and day out, they have answered the call, literally, responding to our visitors and guests via phone, email, and in-person with courtesy, accuracy, and efficiency. For their tireless dedication and commitment to serving the client, we are delighted to present the MIT Admissions customer service team with the OVC Infinite Mile Award for Serving the Client.

Pay Equity Working Group

Diversity & Inclusion

- Simona Rosu (CAPD)
- Tavi Sookhoo (CAPD)
- Greg Harris (Institutional Research)
- Sophia M Hasenfus (Women and Gender Studies, SHASS)
- Greg Batcheler (Sloan Alumni Relations)
- Kerri Tierney, (Sloan Career Development Office)
- Marina Dang (MIT School of Engineering)
- Kristin Smith (AMITA)
- Mary Jane Daly (SAP, AMITA, Co-lead)
- Deborah Liverman (CAPD, OVC, Co-lead)

Through their initiative, the Pay Equity Working Group have influenced systematic changes at the local level through research, advocacy, and programming while simultaneously sharing their efforts across the Institute, broader MIT community, and nationally to make even larger change. It began with a series of conversations over shared concerns of inequities, which quickly coalesced into a robust committee committed to finding effective ways to address the pay gap. The working group knew that women working full time in the U.S. are paid 82% of what men earn but wanted to bring more awareness of this fact to the MIT community. They brought prominent speakers to the campus, highlighting Equal Pay Days, and created branding to promote the visibility of the problem. In September 2020, a panel of national thought leaders brought their expertise to MIT in A Conversation About Pay Equity. This past fall, they hosted a Demystifying the Salary Negotiating Process workshop featuring alumni who gave advice and insight.

Because of the working group's devotion, MIT is the only college career center to have a pay equity webpage. Moreover, their page is held as a model of excellence for diversity and inclusion in career advising because most other career centers limit their advising to programming for women about negotiation, instead of heightening awareness of the overall systematic nature of the problem. Not only does the Working Group address systemic issue, they also provide solutions for MIT women that benefit all individuals as these resources are publicly available. The Working Group is now influential at the national level. Their website intentionally includes recommendations to employers who recruit MIT students and graduates to set expectations of equal pay and pay transparency at MIT. It also encourages employers to become members of the White Equal Pay Pledge and to share with all candidates their efforts around pay equity. The Pay Equity Working Group itself is working with National Association of College and Employers (NACE) to promote the Pay Equity resources they created and heighten awareness of the topic by sharing career center best practices. Hopefully by bringing this advocacy to the national level, their work will reinforce the benefit to MIT students and graduates.

HEERF Project Team  
Collaboration & Communication

- 
- Patrick Brown (OGE)
  - David Elwell (ISO)
  - Ximena Forero-Irizarry (OVC HQ)
  - Kristine Guay (SFS/ADM)
  - Jodi Kessler (VPF)
  - Jen Lesar (SFS)
  - Mary Markle Murphy (formerly OVC)
  - Anthony Moriello (OGC)
  - Jag Patel (IS&T)
  - Amy Piantedosi (SFS)
  - Alex Roy (SFS)
  - Michael Rutter (OVC HQ)
  - Brian Tavares (OVC HQ)

The HEERF Project team had to identify the best way to fairly and equitably determine eligibility for \$8.9M in stimulus funding from a federal grant to ~11,500 MIT graduate and undergraduate students. They needed to ensure that MIT met all federal requirements, and gain buy-in from the Graduate Student Council and Undergraduate Association. HEERF grant funds can be used by students for any component of their cost of attendance (except those already covered by financial aid) or for emergency costs that arise due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In distributing these funds, MIT had to prioritize students with exceptional financial need.

After much discussion and student engagement, a tiered eligibility structure was created as well as a process for students to request this additional funding. The work with students, both grad and undergrad, helped to create and build consensus as they worked towards shared success. There were some challenges along the way, as is usual when dealing with a wide assortment of federal regulations, but the team always moved forward with positivity and a can-do attitude. They worked tirelessly and collaboratively to ensure that the process was not burdensome to students and that the students received their funds in a timely manner. They worked seamlessly as a group, stepping in to help each other out when they saw that a teammate could use some assistance.

Each team member contributed to the successful outcome on behalf of MIT students, bringing their respective expertise to bear on the many parts of the project. Together this team embodied collaboration and communication. They received a highly complex project and worked together to execute it successfully.

I am happy to present the HEERF project team with the OVC Infinite Mile Award for Community and Collaboration.

## 2022 Infinite Mile Awards

### SFS Dynamic Duo – Amy Piantedosi and Jana Haile Everyday Leadership

Jana Haile, Director of Student Financial Operations and Amy Piantedosi, Director of Student Financial Counseling both began their MIT careers during the pandemic and quickly demonstrated their superb leadership skills. They each excel at relationship building, asking questions to understand how SFS can simplify their work and improve communication among staff. They set great examples, helping staff adapt to change at the same time that they keep expectations and morale high. They have each also worked tirelessly to get to know staff at MIT, not only in SFS and OVC, but with all stakeholders.

Both are creative thinkers, embracing innovation and change when the need arises. When the crisis in the Ukraine struck, Amy suggested that one way to help our undergrad students from Ukraine was to waive the spring work portion of their financial aid award and replace it with an MIT Grant. This resulted in an additional \$1,700 for each student. Amy also implemented a policy that allowed returning students to submit their parent's most recent tax return for the initial financial aid eligibility review, instead of having the student appeal their aid decision with tax returns from two years prior. Amy participates in the SFS Student Communications Advisory Board meetings, getting frequent feedback from students about their experience with the office. She uses the information provided to elevate our service to students.

Jana, who is focused on issues related to systems and back-end processes, was determined to continuously improve the student experience. She vetted vendors and implemented a new way for students (current and former) to easily access their 1098-T tax documents. When the pandemic crisis first arose and we were all working remotely, she engaged a group discussion to think through how SFS would process checks that were mailed to our office. She spearheaded the conversation and assisted in creating a new, semi-automated process that works for our students as well as our own internal accounting requirements. In addition, when she noticed that communication within SFS could be improved, she created a weekly SFS newsletter which contained both work specific topics as well as fun notes of interest. The newsletter was a huge success and information now flows readily among teams. Jana did this for a full year while we finished onboarding new staff that could take on the responsibility.

It's obvious that Amy and Jana are doers. When they see a need for something, they analyze and research the issue, work with appropriate stakeholders and then they thoughtfully implement change. And they do all this while taking the time to listen, and act with grace.

We are pleased to present the SFS Dynamic Duo with the OVC Infinite Mile Award for Everyday Leadership.

