
2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Octet Collaborative



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Executive Director	1
Mission, Vision, Board of Directors & Faculty Advisors	3
Impact	4
2023 Priorities	5
Listening Well	6
Pursuing Wisdom	10
2023 Financials	11
Partners	12
Team Members	13





LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Octet Community Member,

Thanks to you, Octet successfully rolled out its first year of in-person programming in 2022-23. These engagements promoted intellectual hospitality and wisdom at MIT for the blessing of all. It was a proof-of-concept year centered on promoting human flourishing and wholeness and was met with affirmation and excitement by faculty, staff, students, and alumni alike.

Wendell Berry writes, “The thing being made in a university is humanity... human beings in the fullest sense of those words—not just trained workers or knowledgeable citizens but responsible heirs and members of human culture.”¹ The Octet Collaborative is advancing this at MIT by encouraging the integration of heart, soul, mind, and strength for the glory of God and love of other (Mark 12:29-31). This integration takes the form of events, classes, and activities for faculty, staff, and students that advance intellectual hospitality and promote wisdom in areas of shared concern—civil discourse and science and tech ethics being among them.

During these times of conflict and ideological difference, the ability to build connections is vital. Octet's Diálogos events included dinner, musical performances, a speaker, and roundtable discussions that promote productive conversations on sensitive topics. Our guest speakers—academic and public thought leaders—shared their perspectives on race and identity, the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, gender, sexuality, and technology, as well as mental health and faith. These events were complemented by a January-term class (IAP) called “Disagreeing Well” that equipped participants with empathic listening skills. Providentially, these offerings took place just as MIT was vetting and approving its own Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom statement.



¹Wendell Berry, “The Loss of the University” from *Home Economics: Fourteen Essays*, 1987.

In the effort to promote wisdom, Octet also provided a second IAP class on science, tech, and ethics that offered ethical frameworks for issues like artificial intelligence and gene editing. This work will expand significantly in the coming years with the “A Better Future” initiative, which includes a for-credit class in the Media Lab, colloquia, Jeffersonian dinners, podcasts, and articles on the pressing science and tech ethics issues of our day.

Finally, Octet provided monthly digital newsletters and podcasts to unify the Christian faith community. Essays, interviews, updates on individual members and para-church ministry activities were also included to encourage Kingdom aspirations for all of God's people at MIT.

Thank you for being a valued partner in this work. It is with joy and excitement that we share this snapshot of the year with you.



“Gloria Dei vivens homo!”²

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mia Chung-Yee'.

Mia Chung-Yee
Executive Director



²Irenaeus’s quote meaning “The glory of God is a flourishing human being.”

MISSION

The Octet Collaborative is a community of students, faculty, and staff at MIT, dedicated to human flourishing, formed by the historic Christian faith. It is a hub for Christian learning that embodies a holistic vision of what it means to be human within the academic vocation.

VISION

The Octet Collaborative envisions MIT as a place where Christ-centered wisdom and practices equip faculty, staff, and alumni to promote a holistic view of self and other, exercise intellectual hospitality, engage science and ethics, and pursue sabbath rest.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ruth Chang, *Board Chair*

David Chan, *Vice Chair & Treasurer*

Nathan Barczy

Paul Burke

Mia Chung-Yee

Ehi Nosakhare

David Williamson

FACULTY ADVISORS

Glen Comiso

Senior Director for Institute Affairs in the Office of the President

Daniel Hastings

Interim Vice Provost for Faculty, Interim Institute Community & Equity Officer, Professor of Aeronautics & Astronautics

Ian Hutchinson

Emeritus Professor of Nuclear Science & Engineering

Anne McCants

Professor of History, Margaret MacVicar Faculty Fellow

Rosalind Picard

Founder & Director of the Affective Computing Research Group at the MIT Media Laboratory, Professor of Media Arts & Sciences

Troy Van Voorhis

Robert T. Haslam & Bradley Dewey Professor, Department Head of Chemistry

2023 BY THE NUMBERS

NEWSLETTER IMPACT

600+

Newsletter subscribers

23%

Increase in subscribers from August 2022 to May 2023

62%

Newsletter open rate

PROGRAMS IMPACT

35

Fellowship meetings hosted for the MIT community

190+

Attendance at five public events in 2022-23

100+

Podcast episode downloads

NETWORK IMPACT

80+

Supported Christian faculty & staff at MIT

230+

Alumni connections across the world

120+

Funding partners during FY2023



2023 PRIORITIES

01

LISTENING WELL

Octet's mission is to tend to the whole person—mind, hand, heart and soul—within one's academic vocation. To advance listening well at MIT, Octet's Diálogos events promote dialogue across differences, an IAP (January term) course promotes freedom of expression and civil discourse, and the interviews with MIT community members featured in the monthly e-newsletter tends to the whole person.



02

PURSUING WISDOM IN INNOVATION AND SCIENCE

In January 2023, Octet hosted an IAP (January term) course for the MIT community titled "Science, Technology & Ethics in the Real World," featuring MIT faculty and alumni in industry to promote moral and ethical formation within one's vocation.



COMING SOON

EXPERIENCING AWE AND WONDER

Octet prepared and planned for new initiatives that will launch over the next two academic years, aimed at inviting the MIT community to experience awe and wonder through nature and the arts to encourage curiosity and unity. Programming will include an IAP class on music and the brain, guest artists and performers, ecologists and astronomers, and continuing contemplative prayer and lunch, which began in October 2023.

LISTENING WELL

Diálogos: Dinner and Discussions

Historically speaking, universities have always valued pursuing truth with a spirit of discovery. Though highly aspirational, this is only possible when a community values intellectual hospitality—the sustained practice of humility, curiosity, openness, and genuine engagement. In such a community, participants are more eager to listen than to speak, to pursue understanding rather than conflict, and to embrace introspection and self-awareness in balance with self-expression. Hardly a passive posture, this kind of hospitality encourages a rigorous yet respectful engagement with ideas through critical thinking, discernment, and an enduring willingness to consider and reconsider. It is with this spirit that Octet hosted four intellectual hospitality events in the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

WHAT ATTENDEES ARE SAYING:

"A breath of fresh, constructive air in the caustically simplistic, hateful conversation usually heard."

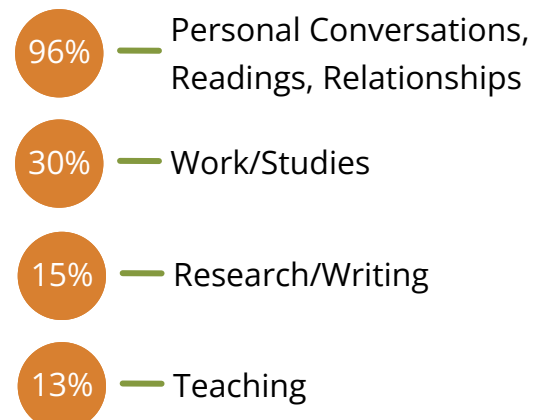
"It was amazing. It dovetails nicely with the work [DEI] is doing."

"The event was a welcoming, inclusive space for dialoguing with others about an important topic. I enjoyed the food, beautiful music, presentation, and discussion time."



*Of the 35% of event attendees who responded to the survey.

Diálogos attendees* indicated that they plan to incorporate the event's content into:

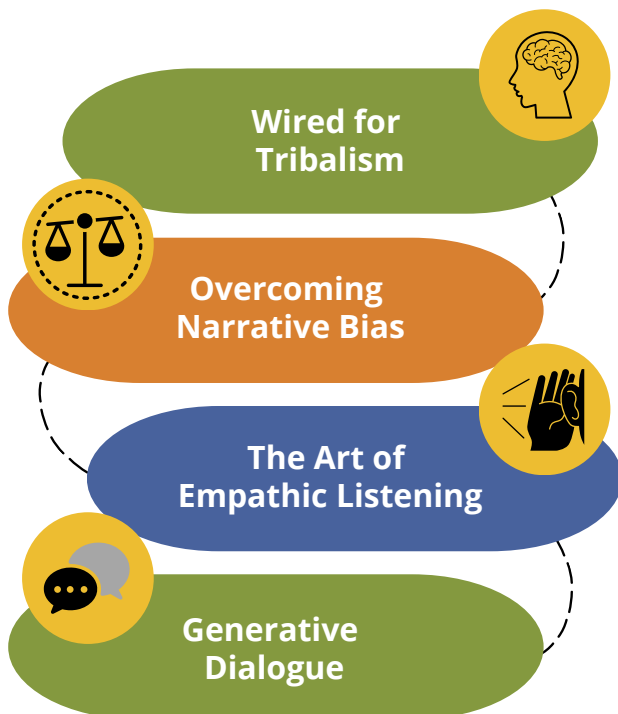


LISTENING WELL

Disagreeing Well: IAP (Independent Activities Period) Course

In January 2023, Octet offered an IAP class that was available to MIT students, staff, and faculty to learn techniques that would encourage civil discourse. Nathan Barczi, Octet's Associate Director and Senior Theologian, received training provided by the Ideos Institute in October 2022 and taught the four-week course to roughly ten participants (attendance was variable). Participants were paired up to practice empathic listening and response.

COURSE TOPICS INCLUDED:



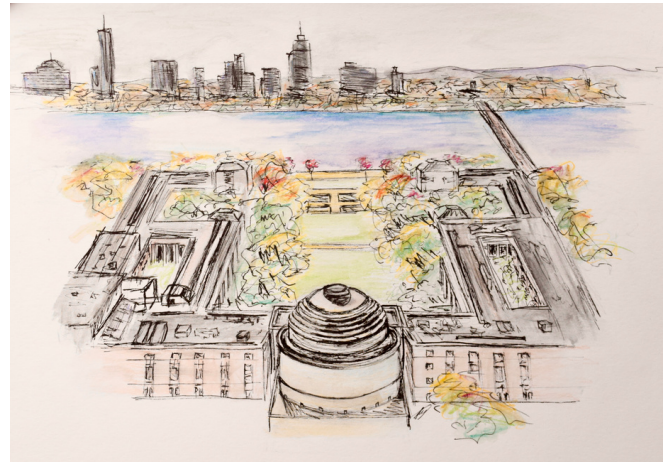
*"I have been reporting back to my colleagues each week about the exercises we tried and what I learned. I think the impact for us is that **it opened up conversations inside our team about empathic intelligence, the importance of approaching potential 'debates' from a journalistic perspective, and the importance of deep listening** such that you would feel able to accurately represent what you have heard someone else share."*

- "Disagreeing Well" course participant

LISTENING WELL

A View from the Dome: Monthly E-newsletter

The monthly e-newsletter serves as Octet's digital home, connecting partners around the world to the kingdom-building work taking place on MIT's campus. The newsletter features a monthly essay; updates on Octet's programming and events; conversations on faith with faculty and staff; and scholarly, Institute, and ministry news.



Infinite Corridor Podcast

Octet released three podcasts during the 2022-2023 academic year to share stories of faith and discovery from the halls of MIT and beyond.



FEATURED PODCAST GUESTS:



Professor of Media Arts & Sciences at MIT Media Lab, Director of Affective Computing Research Group, MIT ScD '91



Scott Francisco, Founder & Director of the Pilot Projects Design Collective, MIT SM '05



Jack Collins, Professor of Old Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary, MIT '76, SM '78

LISTENING WELL

The Table

One of Octet's faculty advisors, Glen Comiso, is a liaison to MIT's staff. A senior director in the Office of the President, Glen and two of his colleagues founded The Table, a monthly prayer meeting for MIT's 40+ Christian staff. Octet has participated, helped to lead the group, and has spent time engaging Christian MIT staff in one-on-one meetings.



Faculty Fellowship Group

The Octet Collaborative is acquainted with 40+ Christian faculty at MIT. In addition to spending time getting to know them one-on-one, Octet has consistently participated in bi-weekly faculty fellowship, alongside of other campus ministers. This group has modeled itself after the Inklings, with faculty taking turns reading their own work for critique and prayer.

Christian Meet-and-Greet

Dozens attended the meet-and-greet event co-hosted by the Octet Collaborative and the United Christian Organization. Guests enjoyed dinner and heard from faculty, students, staff and campus ministers about their experience as Christians at MIT, and first-year students heard from representatives of various departments and campus groups at the start of the semester.



PURSUING WISDOM IN SCIENCE & ETHICS

Science, Technology & Ethics in the Real World: IAP (Independent Activities Period) Course

MIT is a literally world-changing institution, equipping its students, faculty, and alumni to innovate in science and technology for a better future. But what sort of future should we be building? In this mini-course, participants explored four case studies for thinking about what sorts of technologies we should be building, asking questions of meaning, purpose, and ultimate goals. In addition to learning about both religious and secular ethical frameworks, participants discussed real-world case studies of ethical dilemmas faced by the MIT community.

THE COURSE INCLUDED:



Alumni Panel Featuring Experts in Industry



Discussions on Artificial Intelligence



Discussions on Bioethics



Discussions on Climate Science

"I learned a great deal about the benefits and drawbacks of various frameworks for analyzing moral and ethical implications of technological advancements. I am better equipped to think about and discuss these dilemmas in the future, particularly with regard to my moral responsibilities as a Christian engineer."

—"Science, Technology & Ethics in the Real World" course participant

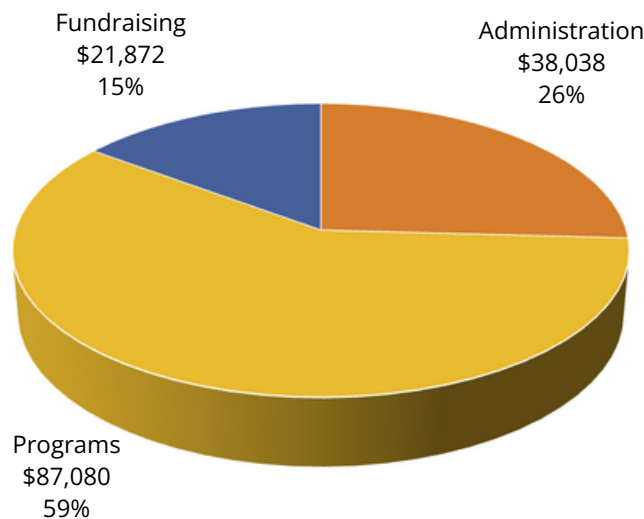
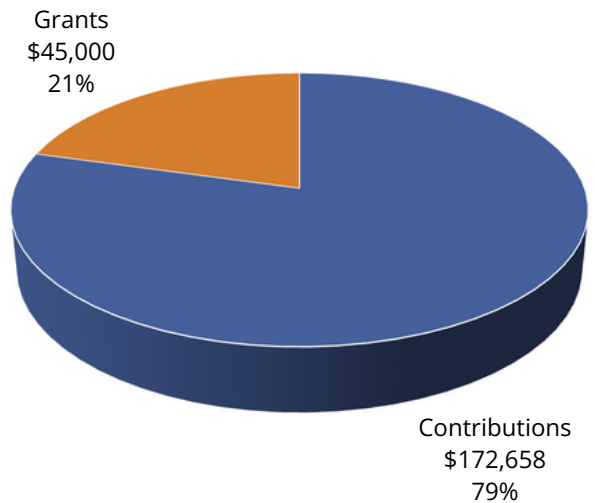


2023 FINANCIALS



INCOME

Income in the 2023 fiscal year increased 132% to \$217,658 from \$93,535 the previous year. Non-grant contributions accounted for the bulk of the increase from \$62,235 in 2022 to \$172,658 in 2023. Grants increased from \$31,300 in 2022 to \$45,000 in 2023. Assets at the end of the 2023 fiscal year totaled \$136,324.



EXPENSES

The 2023 fiscal year budget grew 86% from \$78,798 the previous year to \$146,990 as Octet launched its Diálogos intellectual hospitality event series. Program expenses accounted for the bulk of the increase at an 172% increase while administration expenses increased by 60% and fundraising decreased by 7%.

OUR PARTNERS

"I experienced something I thought I had lost."

-Diálogos event attendee



We are humbled to recognize Octet's supporters who gave \$1,000 or more in 2022-23.

John & Elli Bai • Kenneth & Joanne Barczi • Paul Burke • David Chan Ruth Chang • Sharon Chang • Edwin Cheung • Christ the King Presbyterian Church • Deborah Chung & Lan Wong • John Chung Young Chung & June Kwon-Chung • Chou Family Foundation Stephanie Couch • Patricia Dhar • Tim & Janis Dietz • Anonymous Angie Du • Daniel & Lois Frasier • Ken Grant • Daniel Hastings • Paul Hendrickson • Ian & Frances Hutchinson • Imago Dei Fund • Vincent James • Kurt & Laura Leafstrand • Joseph & Julie Lee • Travis & Katie Lee • Jon & Jill Lim • Anne Ling • Gabriel Ling • Marilyn & John Long Roger Mark • Mark Menser • Isabel & John Park • Rosalind & Len Picard • Chuck & Inger-Marie Pu • Elizabeth Slater • Andrew & Emily Stuntz • James Taylor • Jack & Amanda Whipple • David Williamson Jason Wong • John Yee & Mia Chung-Yee

THANK YOU

We are grateful for your partnership and support of this work at MIT and beyond. Thank you for making this possible.

THE TEAM



Mia Chung-Yee
Executive Director & Founder



Nathan Barczi
Associate Director, Senior Theologian & MIT Chaplain



Kim Glass
Communications Specialist



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Advancing hospitality, wisdom and wonder.