

## Thoughts from Abroad!

### MIT first impressions...

**Diana Malvius, October 2009**

On the surface, MIT is about the same size as the KTH campus. It is beautifully situated along the Charles River, which separates Cambridge and Boston. Wherever you go, you are never far from the river which I often see embellished by enthusiastic dinghy sailors. The campus is a green, walking-friendly area that is lined with architect-designed buildings in interesting shapes. It accommodates its own police force and hospital services to all employees and students. There is also access to the "MIT shuttles", transporting people around the area. In the evening they are baptized into the "Safe Ride" and offered to night workers, researchers and students staying late to revise for exams. It is noteworthy that there is free access to all the buildings (no swipe card required) and the public have every opportunity to walk around in these knowledge-laden corridors. I was told by someone that MIT has produced around 70 Nobel laureates over the years - an impressive figure!

As a student at MIT, we read "classes" instead of "courses", and take "units" instead of "credits". Visiting students don't have the right to take formal course credits, but we are welcome to attend the courses. I hope to have time set aside time for this because I believe it will be exciting, rewarding and interesting to experience how the course approach and pedagogy are here in comparison to KTH.

As you may notice by reading between the lines, I have let myself be impressed by MIT as an institution! Everyday life, however, is lined by everyday tasks as it is everywhere, and I am finding it easy to adapt to a normal gait. I've only been in place just under three weeks, but am already beginning to get used to "going to work". I have my office (or "lab" as they call it here) in the Aero-Astro-building which is directly connected to the main MIT building. I share the office with other graduate students and postdocs involved in the research group, which is fun, but the best feeling so far is sitting in one of the four libraries that are available here on campus. Particularly beautiful is the engineering library, which has been recently renovated and is situated just below the well-known MIT Dome.

MIT lies in Cambridge, moved across the river here from Boston in the late 1800s. I live within walking distance, just across the bridge and so technically live in Boston. However, I have not yet had time to see much of Boston, but a first impression is that it is a cozy and walkable city, at least judging by the core elements I've experienced so far, namely Back Bay, Beacon Hill and Downtown. Many houses are from the 1800s, some much older, something which I understand is unusual for the United States. I am looking forward to discovering more of Cambridge, Boston and its environs as soon as the opportunity arises... I'll be in touch!

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**The MIT Dome by night**  
(currently disfigured by scaffoldin