

MIT installs first campus chaplain: Preparing students for accomplishments beyond the laboratory

News in the [November 13, 2007](#) issue

An iconic temple of scientific inquiry has embraced a new relationship with organized religion. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology this fall installed its first chaplain in the school's 146-year history.

Robert M. Randolph, an ordained Church of Christ minister, accepted the mantle of chaplain to the institute in a ceremony September 30. Randolph has worked at MIT for 28 years, most recently in the role of senior associate dean.

The new job "marks a change at MIT," Randolph wrote recently in his blog. "Attention is being paid here to the role of religion in the human experience. I will be chaplain to the whole institute, believers, nonbelievers, the uncertain."

Administrators also hailed the creation of the new post as an important step for an institution that aims to prepare graduates for accomplishments both in and beyond the laboratory.

"In this new century, it's critical that universities address issues of social justice as a community, and equip students to thrive in a diverse global community," said Larry Benedict, dean for student life, in an e-mail.

Added Benedict: "Establishing the position of chaplain to the institute now will help us . . . graduate students even more fully prepared for leadership."

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology has long relied on a board of chaplains from the greater Boston area to minister to MIT students. That model currently includes 19 board members representing faith groups that range from the Assemblies of God to Vedanta. The board will remain intact even as Randolph fulfills

his new duties.

“This will offer the chaplains some institutional support,” Randolph said in a press release. He expects that by reporting to the institute, he’ll be able to put a public face on collective chaplaincy efforts and exercise “a bigger and more public role.” – *Religion News Service*