

## **Welcoming Remarks**

**Eric Grimson**  
**Chancellor of MIT**

Let me first offer a welcome to everyone on behalf of MIT and its administration. We are delighted that this conference is being held here, and as Dick said, more than 300 people from almost 50 countries. I think this is really fantastic.

If this is your first trip to MIT, welcome, and I very much hope that you get a chance to take a little bit of time during the breaks and explore the campus and get a sense of some of the vibrancy of this institution. It's a little quieter now because many of the students are gone, but you will get a sense of the pulse of the place and the things that make MIT, I think, special. If this is a repeat visit, welcome back. You already know about the vibrancy of the place, and I hope you get to drink from the fire hose yet again.

As Dick said, this is the 11th year of operation of LINC and the sixth conference to be hosted by it. Many parts of MIT, as he noted, do support LINC – OCW, OEIT, ESD, iLabs – but also the senior administration. We very much resonate with the premise of LINC, which Dick highlighted. Namely that with today's computer and telecommunications technologies, every young person can have a quality education regardless of his or her place of birth.

Indeed, as I noticed on LINC's website, it has a wonderful quote, at least in my mind. It says, "Until recently, the assets of a country lay buried underground such as oil, gas, gold, silver, and diamonds. Today, the key assets of a country lie buried between the ears of its citizens. Educating the mind is the key to a better tomorrow for all." It's a wonderful quote, and it's a concept that in many ways, I think, is even more relevant today than it was 10 or 11 years ago, when Dick launched LINC.

As I'm sure you're all aware, education at all levels, but especially higher education, is in the midst of a tsunami, a tsunami of change fueled by many things – fueled by internet, technologies, fueled by computer technologies, but also fueled by people. And we here at MIT have, in many ways, been in the middle of this for years. MOOCs, Massive Open Online Courses, as represented by MITx and edX, which will be featured in this morning's plenary session, certainly represent one way to bring tertiary education to all. And of course, there are others.

I want to just say a few words about why MIT chose to launch MITx, why we partnered with Harvard to launch edX, now joined by more than two dozen other very strong universities and colleges around the world, and why we remain firmly committed to leveraging the tools and the role of online technology in education, whether remote or residential. I think our history of involvement in online tools and educational issues probably goes back a long time. I'm not certain that William Barton Rogers, our founder, did it in 1861, but I'm sure he had the idea. I think perhaps one of the most visible efforts was our launching of OpenCourseWare more than 10 years ago.

Now, Cecilia d'Oliveira is here. She can tell me if I have it right. My recollection when we launched OCW was that the primary motivation was to distribute teaching materials to our colleagues around the world, other educators. But it quickly grew to be something more, and we learned from that. We've had more than 100 million visitors, including several hundred thousand regular visitors each month. They come to view videos, they come to do problem sets, they come to work their way through course materials.

We also learned, I think very importantly, that more than half of those viewers are self learners. They're not college students. They're people of all ages, and that caused us to think here at MIT about other ways in which we could explore this. Over the past 10 years, we have explored a range of experiments in online tools for changing the way we think about teaching, and that culminated in the launch of MITx and then edX.

I want to just give you – because they get lost a little bit in the sense of MOOCs – when MIT launched it, there were three reasons why we really wanted to do this, and we still firmly believe that we can harness, if you like, the energy of the tsunami to accomplish those three goals. The first was to rethink the residential educational experience in a world of online access and online tools. Whether that's using SPOCs – if you haven't heard the term, it's the opposite of a MOOC, a SPOC is a Small Private Online Course – or other methods, how do we think about using those tools to empower and strengthen what happens for our students here on campus?

The second reason was we wanted to provide an MIT quality educational experience, and I should say, an MIT heart educational experience, to anyone around the world with the desire to do so and with access to the internet, again, using MOOCs. Thirdly, and equally importantly, we wanted to conduct research on learning. We wanted to mine the incredible data that is available to us as we think about what happens in those online courses in order to better understand how students learn, how we can tailor our delivery to lead toward the ultimate goal of a more personalized educational experience that matches the capabilities of that student with the technologies that we can provide.

I think this latter point really very naturally fits with MIT's core values. We are fundamentally a research institution that cares, at the same time, deeply about education. Hence, we are very eager to engage in some very deep and extended research on that topic in order to better understand how to link learners with teachers, with pedagogy, and

with the technology. So for example, we've already begun to explore, together with our partners that edX, how to create automated tools for assessment of a wide range of areas, whether that's questions on electronics, on physics, on chemistry, on abstract mathematics, or even tools to grade short 250-word essays automatically, to provide immediate feedback to students, which we think is one of the great things that will strengthen what we can do in this domain.

We've also begun to explore ways to collaborate with other institutions, such as teaching classes in a blended fashion with community colleges here in the United States and starting, I think in a few days, we're going to be teaching an introductory class on programming to high school students in Chicago. And we're going to continue to experiment with how to use these tools to create better experiences for our own students.

So in many ways, as Dick put up when he put up his slide, the focus of this year's conference, I think, is very proper to MIT's role and why we're excited to have them here. Realizing the dream, education becoming available to all. Will the world take advantage? As Dick already highlighted, many of us are very interested in the technology. I certainly am. I'm delighted to see what we can do with it. But the technology alone will only be part of the answer. It will also be the opportunity, the access, and frankly, the local support – whether it's from local governments or simply local individuals – to provide the opportunities to really change the way education is delivered around the world.

So hopefully over the next three days here at LINC, you're going to learn about the kinds of complexities being addressed by all of you, learn some best practices, and help articulate some of the places where we still have work to do. And I hope you especially get a sense of the rapid change that is happening as these online tools come along and how they can fit into the mission of LINC to really take the next step in providing quality education around the world to anybody with the desire and the capability to access it. I hate to put you on the spot, Dick, but since you put me on the spot, I do trust that you'll give me a good sense at the end of this of lessons learned that MIT could use as we think about how we change the way we teach as well.

With that, I hope you get a chance to enjoy Boston. I especially hope you get a chance to enjoy MIT. And I trust you will have a very productive and fascinating conference over the next three days. Welcome.