

MIT News

ON CAMPUS AND AROUND THE WORLD



Image: Bryce Vickmark and Christine Daniloff/MIT

Online courses + time on campus = a new path to an MIT master's degree

Pilot program reimagines admissions process, introduces "MicroMaster's."

Steve Bradt | MIT News Office

October 7, 2015

MIT announced today a pilot program allowing learners worldwide to take a semester's worth of courses in its top-ranked, one-year Supply Chain Management (SCM) master's program completely online, then complete an MIT master's degree by spending a single semester on campus.

MIT also announced a new academic credential for the digital age: the "MicroMaster's," which can be earned through MITx by students who pass a comprehensive examination upon the successful completion of the same semester's worth of online SCM courses. Classes begin on Feb. 10, 2016.

The announcement was made today by MIT President L. Rafael Reif in an email to the MIT community. The pilot will be led by Professor Sanjay Sarma, MIT's dean of digital learning, and by Professor Yossi Sheffi and Dr. Chris Caplice, who run the SCM program and its online offerings.

PRESS MENTIONS

Fortune reporter Claire Zillman writes that MIT is starting an "inverted admissions' program in which students who excel in a series of free online courses—and a subsequent examination—will have better chances of being accepted into the school's full master's program."

FORTUNE

"That makes MIT's approach seem pretty noble: finally, a more affordable way to get the same high-caliber degree, no matter your academic record, so long as you can prove your mettle," writes *Christian Science Monitor* reporter Molly Jackson of MIT's new path to a master's degree.

"The new combination of online courses and one residential semester will open the SCM program to many more learners," says Sheffi, who is the Elisha Gray II Professor of Engineering. "The 50-some corporate members of the MIT Center for Transportation and Logistics, who are deeply involved with SCM students, enthusiastically embraced this effort, owing to the worldwide talent shortage in this field."

"I am delighted by the potential today's announcement presents to reach so many who share our passion for learning and bring them closer – whether digitally, physically, or both – to MIT," Reif wrote.

Inverted admissions

The pilot will feature a new way of structuring admissions to a professional master's program at MIT. Learners worldwide with access to edX can take any of the first semester's worth of courses online. Those who do well in each course, and then score well on a subsequent comprehensive proctored examination, can earn an MITx MicroMaster's, and their performance will significantly enhance their chances of being accepted to the full master's program, which they can then complete in a single semester on campus.

"Inverted admission has the potential to disrupt traditional modes of access to higher education," says Sarma, who is the Fred Fort Flowers and Daniel Fort Flowers Professor in Mechanical Engineering at MIT. "We're democratizing access to a master's program for learners worldwide."

The MicroMaster's will have no admissions requirements, and will be open to anyone. The coursework will be available for free. Learners can qualify for the MicroMaster's by paying a modest fee for verified certificates and by passing a proctored exam.

For students who apply to the full master's program and are admitted to spend a semester on campus, the MicroMaster's will count toward a semester's worth of MIT credit. MIT will seek to partner with companies and other organizations to offer financial support to students in need who are admitted to the SCM master's program via the MicroMaster's path.

"Decades ago," Sarma says, "MIT reached students worldwide through faculty-authored textbooks. More recently, the availability of MIT course materials and lectures through OpenCourseWare and interactive courses from MITx broadened access to the Institute. Inverted admissions is the natural next step in MIT's engagement with learners worldwide."

Building on a strong program

MIT's master's program in Supply Chain Management is already global in its outlook: Its 36 to 40 students each year generally come to Cambridge from more than a dozen nations on five continents. In reputational rankings, SCM is generally regarded as the No. 1 offering in supply-chain management and logistics in the U.S.

The CHRISTIAN SCIENCE
MONITOR

AP reporter Collin Binkley writes about MIT's "MicroMaster's" credential and the new path to an MIT master's degree in Supply Chain Management. "Anyone who wants to be here now has a shot to be here," explains MIT President L. Rafael Reif.

AP Associated Press

Wall Street Journal reporter Loretta Chao writes that MIT will begin offering a "MicroMaster's" credential and a new admissions path into MIT's Supply Chain Management master's program. Chao writes that the announcement, "comes as many companies say they are having greater difficulty finding people with the right skills to manage increasingly complex global and technology-driven supply chains."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WBUR's Fred Thys reports that MIT will introduce a new credential for online learning, as well as a new pathway for the pursuit of an MIT professional master's degree in Supply Chain Management. "Imagine a graduate program that includes talented students who might never have been admitted to MIT in the old system, but who have now a new pathway to success today," says President L. Rafael Reif.

go.gwbur

President Reif speaks with *Washington Post* reporter Nick Anderson about MIT's new "MicroMaster" credential. "Students are going to work hard to get one semester of graduate level courses online," explains President Reif, "and they have to get something to reward them for that hard work."

The Washington Post

A new MIT pilot program offers opportunities for students to earn a "MicroMaster's" credential and enter a professional master's degree

MIT's Center for Transportation and Logistics, which Sheffi also leads, has already developed and launched international programs in Colombia, Spain, and Malaysia, each offering local master's degrees but working in concert with SCM.

The traditional SCM program – which MIT will continue to offer – is a 10-month master's degree program designed for early-career professionals who want to return to school for advanced training in supply-chain management. It draws applicants with careers in finance, information technology, management, marketing, and sales, among other fields. Students in the program generally have three to eight years of professional experience, with an average age of 30.

Latest step in the evolution of learning

The pilot program with inverted admissions is the latest step in MIT's expansion of online learning. In December 2011, MIT announced the launch of MITx, which offers a portfolio of MIT courses through an online, interactive learning platform. In 2012, MIT partnered with Harvard University to launch edX, which offers online learning from many universities.

"The new MicroMaster's is an important modular credential for the digital age, and promises to serve as academic currency in a continuous, lifelong-learning world," says Anant Agarwal, CEO of edX and a professor of electrical engineering and computer science at MIT. "It also affords an evolutionary path for universities in the face of mounting costs, and a way to leverage technology to blend online and on-campus learning pathways."

The pilot program also builds upon the 16 recommendations made last year by the Institute-Wide Task Force on the Future of MIT Education, which Reif convened in 2013 to envision the MIT of 2020 and beyond. When Reif released that panel's final report, on Aug. 4, 2014, he wrote to the MIT community that the occasion "marks the beginning of an exciting new period of educational experimentation at MIT." The report, he added, presented a framework for the Institute to reinvent education for learners at MIT and beyond.

"The rising cost of education, combined with the transformative potential of online teaching and learning technologies, presents a long-term challenge that no university can afford to ignore," Reif wrote. "At MIT, we are choosing to meet this challenge directly by assessing the educational model that has served the Institute so well for so long. We are experimenting boldly with ideas to enhance the education we offer our own students and to lower the barriers to access for learners around the world."

FAQs can be found here.

Topics: [online learning](#) [President L. Rafael Reif](#)

[Massive open online courses \(MOOCs\)](#) [Graduate, postdoctoral](#)

program at MIT, according to Reuters. The program "will allow candidates to take a semester of courses at its master's degree program in supply chain management for free online and then have an opportunity to apply to its full program in supply chain management."



In an interview with Jeffrey Young of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, President L. Rafael Reif speaks about the opportunities provided by the new pathway for the pursuit of an MIT professional master's degree. "We will find people who never thought they would be able to apply," says President L. Rafael Reif.

THE CHRONICLE

Inside Higher Ed reporter Carl Straumshein writes that MIT is launching a pilot program that will provide an alternative path for students to pursue a master's degree from the Supply Chain Management program.



A new MIT pilot program offers learners an opportunity to earn a new kind of credential for online learning, as well as a new path to an MIT master's degree in Supply Chain Management, reports Laura Krantz for *The Boston Globe*. "The most important thing is to democratize access to MIT," says President L. Rafael Reif.

The Boston Globe

Eric Convey writes for the *Boston Business Journal* about MIT's new pilot for the Supply Chain Management master's program. "This approach basically inverts the traditional admissions process," said MIT President L. Rafael Reif.

Boston Business Journal

Drew Bent writes for *The Tech* about MIT's new pilot program, through which students will be selected to enter the Supply Chain Management master's program based on their performance

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in online courses. "The hybrid model allows for both types of learning to take place while also letting more students receive an MIT education," writes Bent.



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FAQs on MIT's new path to a master's degree



The future of MIT education looks more global, modular, and flexible



Letter regarding the final report of the Institute-wide Task Force on the Future of MIT Education



Institute-Wide Task



Force aims to sketch the MIT education of the future



MIT and Harvard launch a 'revolution in education'



MIT and Harvard announce edX



MIT launches online learning initiative

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