Dear Friend of UPOP,

A word from the director...

UPOP has done it again, running three Team Training Workshops during IAP and Presidents' Day Weekend, involving 324 students. Kudos to the staff, and we also could not have done it without a wonderful and dedicated team of mentors (56 this year, 15 of them new to UPOP) and the 200 great employer recruiters, some of whom are former UPOPers, who participated in the Employer Networking luncheons. My deepest thanks to everyone involved.

That said, it's also worth remembering that UPOP is a yearlong program. The Training Workshops have quickly receded into the background as the team leaps into a spring term filled with the momentous task of helping almost every single one of our students find challenging positions in industry or summer research programs, plus holding additional professional development seminars, reviewing student, mentor and employer feedback, embarking on the project of reworking the "back end" of our website with its database of students and employers, and, yes, the UPOP team has already started planning the next IAP workshops.

Our mentors are so great that it's difficult to single them out individually, but this year we added two new mentors to the list of our Deshpande Award recipients. My sincere thanks and congratulations to Ralph Inglese '82 and Ed Keisling. You can read their bios and those of all our mentors here.

Finally, I want to let you know about the large number of notes we have received from students, mentors, and recruiters, reinforcing the importance and impact of the UPOP program. One of our mentors has hired quite a few MIT students, and commented that they are all smart, but some of the students simply sit at their desks and write code. However, he says, the UPOP students are different: "They take an active interest in what is going on in the company as a whole and look for ways to contribute that go above and beyond. I desperately need all of my engineers to do that."

In these days where the world needs engineering and science more than ever, we can all take profound satisfaction in helping our students and our graduates develop the communication, teamwork and decision-making skills they need to apply their knowledge so as to have an impact in the world.

Joel Schindall '63
Director

Undergraduate Practice Opportunities Program
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UPOP mentor Rich Kremsdorf '69, sporting his "blue hat" organizing role, led students through the new Team Creativity module that he developed together with another mentor, Paul Edelman '78.

New "Team Creativity" module effective and "unexpectedly helpful"

Dozens of top-notch industry professionals (many of them MIT alums) mentored 324 UPOP students in 46 teams over our annual series of intensive workshops: two weeklong workshops during IAP, and a three-day workshop over Presidents' Day Weekend.

New this year was the Team Creativity module, developed by longtime mentors Rich Kremsdorf '69 and Paul Edelman '78, with feedback from UPOP staff and the UPOP Advisory Board. Team Creativity incorporates Edward DeBono's Six Thinking Hats into a structured brainstorming activity, demonstrating a way to manage a project that maximizes group brainstorming effectiveness. The delivery of the module was timed to give the students a foundation for developing their week's project, and the students were enthusiastic:

- "Helped us organize our thoughts and focus our project solution."
- "I like the Six-Hat Theory, and it's unexpectedly helpful."
- "I was very surprised to see how effectively this method worked. I will definitely use this in the future."
- "I learned a new, effective way to brainstorm."

UPOP's three Team Training Workshops pack many experiential modules, such as Team Creativity, into the 9-to-5 days, focusing on communication, decision-making, and teamwork as key skills for success in the workplace. Although UPOP is a yearlong program, running workshops and employer information and networking events throughout the year, the Team Training Workshops are the most "visible" core of the program.

Here are the team photos from the Class of 2018 workshops:

[Session 1](#) (Jan 11-15, 2016)
[Session 2](#) (Jan 25-29, 2016)
[Presidents' Day Weekend](#) (Feb 13-15, 2016)
Networking Luncheons:

**Six new sponsors, dozens of new companies, and many UPOP-alum recruiters**

UPOP's Friday Networking Luncheons over IAP were among the biggest "career fairs" held on campus this spring. UPOP saw its largest employer engagement yet, with a total of 11 sponsors (six of them new) and more than 200 employers converging at Walker over the course of the two sessions held January 15 and January 29.

And in what is now an annual tradition, UPOP alums returned to Walker in droves to network and hire sophomores for summer 2016, including: Jackie Simpson '14 with Corning; Ben Potash '14 and Andrew Sommer '13 with Pioneer Natural Resources; Christina Qi '13 with Domeyard; Nandi Bugg '13 with InterSystems; Noa Flaherty '15 with Onshape, Felix Sung '14 with Seven Bridges Genomics; Jason Furtado '08 with Shoobx; Deeni Fatiha '13 with St. Gobain; and Leslie Nachbar '10 and Vicky Enjamio '14 with W. L. Gore & Associates.

Many UPOP employers and sponsors have already interviewed and begun making summer offers to UPOP sophomores, including: Ab Initio, Dassault Systèmes, Google, Microsoft, Lincoln Laboratory, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and more.

The UPOP Class of 2018 found the luncheons both fun and productive:

- "Fantastic! A great end to an amazing week."
- "Thank you for putting in so much work to teach us lifelong skills, make us feel good about approaching companies, and for bringing in so many companies. It was ten times better than any experience I have had with trying to find an internship. I'm so grateful [to UPOP]!"

Employers, too, were enthusiastic about the session and the sophomores they met. A hiring manager from Kemvi, a local startup, noted, "The enthusiasm and energy of the UPOP class was uplifting. I was incredibly impressed with the students' professionalism and communication." UPOP alum and hiring manager at Optum, Shane Picciotto '08, said, "The students came across so well at the luncheon. I had about eight students approach me to ask about specific details of what they would be working on. All had done their research beforehand and knew more about Optum than I had known when I applied!"
The Team Training Workshops: the Class of 2018 students speak ...

- This was the best decision I ever made. I would have never imagined I would have progressed so much in a single week. Sure it was a lot of information thrown all at once but it was great to be aware of it all and it pushed me to improve myself.
- As far as I can see, participating in UPOP is the best decision I've made since choosing MIT. It has opened my eyes to a world of opportunity, helped me develop new skills, and reminded me of old skills I had forgotten. I feel like I've made a worthwhile investment in the rest of my life.
- It was an invaluable experience because I learned very important skills and got a lot of exposure of what to find in industry.
- I finally felt prepared to do the networking! The networking lunch went so well thanks to my preparation from my mentors.
- I found it very valuable: not only did I learn a lot about team work, the workplace, and ways to enhance my other skills, etc. I also garnered skills in networking with not only company representatives, but mentors and my own classmates.
- I applied because I knew I needed to work on many of the skills that UPOP emphasizes. I saw it as something I should do but certainly not something I wanted to do. However, the weeklong training was not only a lot more useful than I expected, but it was actually really enjoyable. I would tell a rising sophomore that if they have the time over IAP to do UPOP they should absolutely do it, and if they don't have time, they should strongly consider making the time for it.
- It broadened my perspective on topics such as team dynamics, how people approach/think about what is most valuable to get done with limited time and resources, and gave me an interesting view on the value of time. I went into it thinking it would be pretty boring and just something I would have to go through to increase my chances of getting a good internship, but I ended up enjoying it and looking forward to it each day, and learning a lot. It gave me more confidence about jobs and 'real people stuff.' It's probably not right for everyone, but personally, even if I do not get an internship out of it, I think it was still a valuable experience because of the tools I learned and the fun I had.
- I think UPOP is the most rewarding training I have had at MIT so far. I would tell rising sophomores it is not about the networking lunch with employers but the skills they would learn.
- Networking Luncheon was awesome! I also enjoyed the Mentor Rotations very much. All in all, the day was a blast and an epic end to an epic week. I miss it already...
- It put me outside of my comfort zone and allowed me to experience things I will find out in industry so I don’t get surprised later in my career.
- I think the workshop was valuable in helping me assess my areas of weakness/areas for further improvement. I also really enjoyed getting to know my mentor.
- I think it's a great experience as it develops your soft skills in order to become a better engineer and person.

UPOP is the Undergraduate Practice Opportunities Program, a yearlong co-curricular program open to MIT sophomores from across the Institute. The program's mission is to prepare MIT sophomores to successfully integrate into and thrive in the professional world and to be strong contributors to their organizations, supported by a dynamic community of students, program staff, employers, MIT alums, and other friends of the program. UPOP offers numerous opportunities for MIT alums and companies to get involved—as speakers, coaches, employers, and sponsors.