Massachusetts Institute of Technology

The MIT Career Accelerator

For 25 years, the **Undergraduate Practice Opportunities Program (UPOP)** has been one of MIT's most powerful engines for student success — preparing sophomores not just to enter the workplace but to thrive in it. In a world where technical skills alone aren't enough, UPOP provides what students need most: a structured, immersive yearlong experience that turns academic excellence into real-world career readiness.
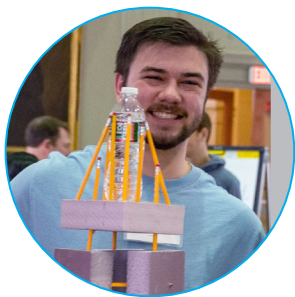
At its core, UPOP equips students with the tools, mindset, and confidence to launch successfully into their professional lives. Through hands-on workshops, individualized coaching, and direct engagement with employers and alumni mentors, participants build the communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills that set them apart from day one on the job.

TRANSLATING TALENT INTO TRAJECTORY

Established in 2001 by the MIT School of Engineering, UPOP was created to ensure that students graduate not only with exceptional technical expertise but also with the professional skills needed to navigate today's fast-changing job market. Since then, thousands of sophomores from across MIT have participated in UPOP's immersive, yearlong programming, which includes:

- Three one-credit professional development courses focused on building the fundamental skills that will help them succeed in looking for and thriving in professional positions.

- One-on-one career coaching and guidance on resumes, interviews, and navigating early career decisions

- Mentorship from MIT alumni, offering practical advice and real-world perspective

- A multiday Team Training Workshop during Independent Activities Period, where students take a deep dive into teamwork, communication, and problem-solving

- Access to a curated employer network, connecting students with internship and job opportunities

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS – AND BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

As UPOP celebrates its 25th anniversary, we are launching a $5 million fundraising initiative to ensure the program continues to evolve and expand to meet the needs of the next generation.

Why does it matter?

Today's job market demands more than just technical expertise – it requires strong communication, cross-disciplinary collaboration, adaptability, and professionalism. UPOP bridges that gap by equipping students with essential workplace skills and the confidence to pursue internships, full-time roles, and long-term career goals.

Alumni consistently credit UPOP with giving them a competitive edge in interviews, helping them network effectively, and providing a framework for navigating the early stages of their careers. For many, UPOP is more than a program – it's their first formal step in career development and a lasting foundation they draw on throughout their professional journeys.

"UPOP is the start of an amazing adventure learning about business."
—Drew Houston '06, Founder and CEO, Dropbox

What will donor support make possible?

- **Secure UPOP's Future** by growing the Endowment Fund for Program Innovation and Expansion, ensuring the program continues to evolve to meet the shifting needs of both students and employers.

- **Empower the Next Generation of Mentors** through the Young Mentor Support Fund, enabling more recent graduates to return for the Team Training Workshop and share their experiences.

- **Build Professional Networks and Community** by expanding employer engagement, peer connections, and community-building activities that help students feel supported and connected.

With support, UPOP will continue to deliver on its promise to prepare MIT students not just to enter the workforce, but to excel in it.

"UPOP helped me gain confidence in myself as a leader and teammate and connected me with a lot of amazing people. These connections have shown me that it's okay to not know exactly where my career will go and that what I do in college or even at a job doesn't define me or my ability to try new things!"

Mitali Chowdhury '24
System Engineer, XGenomes

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