

# MIT Industrial Liaison Program Faculty Knowledgebase Report

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2024 MIT Startup Ecosystem Conference

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April 30, 2024 8:00 am - 5:30 pm

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8:00 AM

Registration & Networking

9:00 AM

Opening Remarks  
Gayathri Srinivasan  
Executive Director, [MIT Corporate Relations](#)



Gayathri Srinivasan  
Executive Director  
[MIT Corporate Relations](#)

Dr. Srinivasan is a distinguished scientist who received her PhD in Microbiology from The Ohio State University in 2004, where she contributed to the discovery of the 22nd amino acid, Pyrrolysine (2002). She first came to MIT as an NIH Postdoctoral Fellow in Prof. Tom Rajbhandary's lab, where her research focused on understanding protein synthesis mechanisms in Archaea.

Dr. Srinivasan subsequently moved into the business development and technology licensing space, serving in MIT's Technology Licensing Office, where she helped commercialize technologies in medical devices and alternative energies. She then moved to UMass Medical School's Office of Technology Management in 2009 and to Emory University in Atlanta in 2014 as the Director of Public and Private Partnerships for the Woodruff Health Sciences Center. In 2019, Dr. Srinivasan joined Emory's Office of Corporate Relations as Executive Director, and in 2021, she led the Office of Corporate and Foundation Relations.

Catarina Madeira  
Director, [MIT Startup Exchange](#)



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Catarina has been working with the Cambridge/Boston startup ecosystem for over 10 years and joined Corporate Relations with a solid network in the innovation and entrepreneurial community. Prior to MIT, she was part of the team that designed and launched the startup accelerator IUL MIT Portugal, which was later rebranded as Building Global Innovators. She was based in Lisbon and worked in direct relation with the Cambridge team. She held positions including Operations Coordinator, Program Manager, and Business Developer. The accelerator soon achieved steady growth in large part due to the partnerships that Catarina led with regional and global startup ecosystems. After that, she worked at NECEC, leading a program that connects cleantech startups and industry. In this role, she developed and built a pipeline of startups and forged strong relationships with both domestic and European companies. She has also held positions in Portugal and France, including at Saboaria e Perfumaria Confiança and L'Oréal as Technical Director and Pharmacist. Catarina earned her bachelor's in chemistry and pharmaceutical sciences in Portugal. She went on to earn her Master of Engineering for Health and Medicines in France.

9:15 AM

Inside Real Innovation: Challenges for Corporations and Universities

Eugene A. Fitzgerald

To move from an idea to market, a technical concept must be implemented for a market application. Incremental innovation involves introducing uncertainty predominately in only one aspect of innovation (technical, implementation, or market application) to minimize risk and use current organization knowledge. For more fundamental innovation that results in larger impact over a greater amount of time, uncertainty must be simultaneously introduced in market application, technology, and implementation. Processes to optimize such search for value are unnatural in hierarchical organizations. Corporations and Universities working in a 'Third Place' will be more effective at shaping such long-term innovation productivity, producing new enterprise that can bridge the gap between organizations.

10:00 AM

University and Corporate Tech Transfer  
Gayathri Srinivasan  
Executive Director, [MIT Corporate Relations](#)



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[MIT Corporate Relations](#)

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Lesley Millar-Nicholson  
Executive Director, [MIT Technology Licensing Office \(TLO\)](#)



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Executive Director  
[MIT Technology Licensing Office \(TLO\)](#)

Lesley Millar-Nicholson is the Executive Director of MIT's Technology Licensing Office (TLO) and was part of the Founding Leadership team of MIT Office of Strategic Alliances and Technology Transfer (OSATT) formed in 2019. As TLO Executive Director, she leads a team of technology transfer professionals. Together, they manage MIT's intellectual assets and technology transfer process involving over 11,000 unique pending and issued US and foreign patents, and hundreds of copyright and open source assets. The team engages broadly with stakeholders to facilitate engagements leading to licenses for qualified third parties to deliver on the TLO mission to have impact through technology commercialization.

Prior to arriving in Cambridge Ms. Millar-Nicholson had served for ten years as Director of the Office of Technology Management (OTM) at the University of Illinois, Urbana/Champaign.

Ms. Millar-Nicholson is a past President Board of Governors of Certified Licensing Professionals Inc, a member of AUTM and the Licensing Executive Society, and a past Board Member of Cambridge Enterprise, UK. A native of Scotland, Ms. Millar-Nicholson has a B.Ed., M.Ed., MBA and is a Certified Licensing Professional.

[View full bio](#)

Thomas Holcombe  
Head of Collaboration & Scouting North America  
[BASF](#)

Thomas A. Collet  
President, CEO, and Director  
[Bilayer Therapeutics](#)

This panel will focus on the most effective approaches for operating at the nexus of university, industry, and early-stage ventures. From invention to market, creating a favorable environment for technology development, collaborations, and accelerated commercialization.

10:45 AM

Networking Break

11:10 AM

MIT Technology Review's List of 10 Breakthrough Technologies

Amy Nordrum  
Executive Editor of Operations  
[MIT Technology Review](#)

Every year, MIT Technology Review's list of 10 Breakthrough Technologies highlights the technological advances that will have the biggest impact on the world in the years to come. Join MIT Technology Review's Executive Editor of Operations, Amy Nordrum, as she presents the 2024 list.

11:40 AM

Startup Lightning Talks I

Tricia Dinkel

Manager of Partnerships & Engagement, [MIT Startup Exchange](#)



Tricia Dinkel

Manager of Partnerships & Engagement

[MIT Startup Exchange](#)

Tricia Dinkel comes to Corporate Relations with several years of experience in the innovation ecosystem and managing relationships with startups and corporates. Tricia previously worked as Director of Navigate (NECEC's flagship innovation program) at the Northeast Clean Energy Council (NECEC) in Boston where she led all operations and partnership development for 400+ startups, 65+ innovation partners, and 200+ investors & corporates in North America and Europe. Prior to that role, Tricia held positions with increasing responsibility in program management at NECEC. Before that, her experience included Director of Data Analytics and Sustainability Reporting Manager at WegoWise Inc. in Boston, Associate Director at the Committee on Capital Markets Regulation in Cambridge, Senior Sustainability Coordinator at A Better City in Boston, and Assistant Director at The Green Alliance in Portsmouth, NH.

Tricia earned her B.A., in Environmental Studies/Natural Resource Policy at the University of Colorado, and her M.A., in Environmental Science Education at the University of New Hampshire. She served on the NECEC Diversity & Inclusion Committee and as a member of the USGBC (U.S. Green Building Council), Massachusetts Chapter.

Alicia Chong Rodriguez

Founder and CEO

[Bloomer Tech](#)

Chris White

COO

[Gradient](#)

Daphne Pariser

CEO

[HeronAI](#)

Jerry Shu

Co-Founder

[Lendica](#)

Stwart Peña Feliz

Co-Founder and CEO

[MacroCycle](#)

Sujeesh Krishnan

CEO

[Kinnami Software Corporation](#)

Saman Amarasinghe

Co-Founder

[Venti Technologies](#)

12:20 PM

Lunch with Startup Exhibitors and MIT Campus Partners

[MIT Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory \(CSAIL\)](#)

[E14 Fund](#)

[Martin Trust Center for MIT Entrepreneurship](#)

[MIT Deshpande Center for Technological Innovation](#)

[MIT Entrepreneurship Club](#)

[MIT Technology Licensing Office \(TLO\)](#)

[MIT Hacking Medicine](#)

[MIT International Science and Technology Initiatives \(MISTI\)](#)

[MIT Office of Innovation](#)

[MIT Sandbox](#)

[MIT Venture Mentoring Service \(VMS\)](#)

[The Engine Accelerator](#)

1:30 PM

Startup & Corporate Engagement, Success Cases

Ron Spangler

Director, [MIT Corporate Relations](#)



Ron Spangler

Director

[MIT Corporate Relations](#)

Ron Spangler serves as the Director of Corporate Relations, managing a diverse portfolio of companies in the mining, energy, aerospace, and defense sectors. Before joining MIT Corporate Relations, Ron dedicated two decades to an industry career, primarily focusing on various MIT-connected startup companies. In 1994, he earned his doctorate in Aeronautics and Astronautics from MIT, and his extensive contributions include numerous publications and patents. Notably, Ron is also an FAA-licensed pilot with a glider rating.

Brendan Smith

Co-Founder & CEO

[SiTraction](#)

Saskia Duyvesteyn

Chief Advisor of Research & Development

[Rio Tinto](#)

Captain Aisha Saeed Harib

Head of Knowledge, Innovation, and Development Center

[Dubai Police](#)

Joshua Sarmir

CEO

[SplitSage](#)

Fostering collaborations between MIT-connected startups and corporates is part of MIT Startup Exchange mission. This panel features two successful collaborations that Startup Exchange and ILP helped form with startups and ILP corporate members. Panelists will talk about the different types of engagement, how they took shape, and what's next as they keep progressing.

2:15 PM

Startup Lightning Talks II  
Irina Gaziyeva  
Program Coordinator, [MIT Startup Exchange](#)



Irina Gaziyeva  
Program Coordinator  
[MIT Startup Exchange](#)

Irina Gaziyeva comes to Corporate Relations from the Mechanical Engineering Department at MIT where she worked 10 years as Administrative Assistant where she has supported four senior faculty members and their research groups (20-25 graduate students). Since 2018, Irina has acted as program coordinator, teaming-up with the program manager and program faculty lead for the MechE Alliance program. She has facilitated 45+ virtual seminars, workshops, and mentoring events in this informal role. Irina has also actively connected members of the MechE community to support student career development, mentorship, and networking opportunities with MIT alumni and industry. Before MIT, Irina held positions as Administrative Assistant and Member Representative at Brookline Dental and Tufts Health plan, respectively. Irina has also been a Community Organizer in Worcester, MA.

Irina earned her B.A., Management (with Innovation & Entrepreneurship track) at Clark University in Worcester, and her M.S., Program and Project Management from Brandeis University in Waltham. She has received many awards at MIT for outstanding service, and she has extensive community volunteer work to her credit.

John Greenfield  
Head of Business Development  
[Noya](#)

Tairan Wang  
Co-Founder & CEO  
[Sangtera](#)

Kanwar Singh  
CEO and CO-Founder  
[Skyline Nav AI](#)

Chris Mannion  
Founder  
[Meander](#)

Catherine O'Shea  
COO and Co-Founder  
[Narratize](#)

Michael Davies  
CEO  
[WKD.SMRT](#)

2:55 PM

Networking Break with Startups and MIT Campus Partners Exhibit

3:20 PM

Myths About Entrepreneurship

William (Bill) Aulet

Entrepreneurship in the last decade has undergone a profound transformation, adapting to the rapid technological advancements and evolving market demands. To meet these new challenges, there's a pressing need for robust and adaptable standards in entrepreneurship education that ensure future entrepreneurs are well-equipped. In this session, we will debunk common myths and misconceptions surrounding entrepreneurship, shedding light on the realities of starting and running a successful business in today's world.



4:00 PM

Investing in Science Based Startups

Katie Rae

CEO and Managing Partner, [The Engine Ventures](#)



Katie Rae

CEO and Managing Partner

[The Engine Ventures](#)

Katie is the CEO & Managing Partner of Engine Ventures. She serves as a Board Member for The Engine Funds' portfolio companies Commonwealth Fusion Systems, Form Energy, Boston Metal, and Sublime Systems. Katie has over 10 years of experience as an investor and 25 years as a tech executive, helping build Boston into a thriving tech hub. She has invested in nearly 100 companies and advised hundreds of founders from early-stage formation to scale-up. Key investments include Pillpack (acquired by Amazon for \$1 billion in 2018), Flywire, Moon, and GrabCAD. Katie has experience in managing startup accelerators and business-innovation programs — she was a Managing Director of Techstars Boston. She was also a co-founder and Managing Director at Project 11 Ventures. In addition to her extensive investing career, she has over 20 years of experience in product development, management & operations including holding management positions at Microsoft, Eons, AltaVista, RagingBull, Zip2, and Mirror Worlds. Katie holds an MBA from Yale and a BA in Biology from Oberlin College. Katie co-founded the Equity Summit, which convenes leading General Partners and Asset Managers of diversity across the venture capital industry.

Carmichael Roberts

In this fireside chat speakers will talk about taking science based startups to market. The potential these ventures have to transform sectors and the challenges they face as they invest early on.

4:30 PM

Closing Remarks

Catarina Madeira

Director, [MIT Startup Exchange](#)



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Director

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4:35 PM

Networking Reception