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OPINION LETTER TO THE EDITOR

# MIT Turing laureates propose creation of School of Computing

An open letter to President Rafael Reif

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By MIT Turing Laureates | Sep. 20, 2017



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There comes a time, in the course of scientific evolution, when a discipline is ready to emerge from the womb of its parent disciplines and take its own place in the world. For computer science, or more accurately, for the field of computing, this moment is now.

Born from a combination of mathematics and electrical engineering, with the original intent of speeding up calculations, computer science has grown to encompass all information processing and most communications and now to provide an alternative evolutionary path to intelligence. Computer science is rapidly becoming an essential part of most academic disciplines, and students are voting with their feet. One third of MIT undergraduates are majoring in computer science. This trend is unlikely to slow down anytime soon.

We, the 7 active MIT Turing Award winners, therefore write this open letter to recommend that you consider the bold step of establishing a School of Computing at MIT. The new school, a brother to the Schools of Engineering and Science, will allow the field of computing, with its many



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Today the study of computation is housed primarily in the EECS department within the School of Engineering, but departments are limited in their ability to hire and grow. They are effective organizations up to a certain size, but the discipline of computing has outgrown this size. Computing needs the ability to itself grow new departments that will interact organically with neuroscience, physics, statistics, and many other fields in addition to electrical engineering. The new school will reflect the reality that the computing paradigm transcends current computing devices, and the new framework will enable new research collaborations as well as support the continuation of existing ones.

By creating a School of Computing, MIT will help to restore some balance between the Schools of Science and Engineering and help to prevent the teaching of computer science from becoming fragmented. The new school will have the resources to tailor computational thinking to match the particular needs of departments across the Institute, and the capacity to hire the best teachers to meet those needs.

Creating the new school will also allow us to recognize the unparalleled history of computing innovation at MIT. Naming the new school will provide a unique opportunity within the Institute's ongoing fundraising campaign. The computer industry is an economy unto itself, and a School of Computing will not only better interact with this industry scientifically, but also better tap its vast financial resources.

We therefore urge you, at this critical time, to lead MIT in the pursuit of "Computer Science in the large", rather than

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pioneer of things to come, to build an organization that will play a major role in the future of computing and continue MIT's leadership as the world's preeminent technical university.

Sincerely yours,

*Butler Lampson, Turing Laureate 1992*

*Ronald L. Rivest, Turing Laureate 2002*

*Barbara Liskov, Turing Laureate 2008*

*Shafi Goldwasser, Turing Laureate 2012*

*Silvio Micali, Turing Laureate 2012*

*Michael Stonebraker, Turing Laureate 2014*

*Tim Berners-Lee, Turing Laureate 2016*

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