

President Reif writes to MIT community regarding Aaron Swartz

January 13, 2013

At 4:15 p.m. today, MIT President L. Rafael Reif emailed the following message to the MIT community.

To the members of the MIT community:

Yesterday we received the shocking and terrible news that on Friday in New York, Aaron Swartz, a gifted young man well known and admired by many in the MIT community, took his own life. With this tragedy, his family and his friends suffered an inexpressible loss, and we offer our most profound condolences. Even for those of us who did not know Aaron, the trail of his brief life shines with his brilliant creativity and idealism.

Although Aaron had no formal affiliation with MIT, I am writing to you now because he was beloved by many members of our community and because MIT played a role in the legal struggles that began for him in 2011.

I want to express very clearly that I and all of us at MIT are extremely saddened by the death of this promising young man who touched the lives of so many. It pains me to think that MIT played any role in a series of events that have ended in tragedy.

I will not attempt to summarize here the complex events of the past two years. Now is a time for everyone involved to reflect on their actions, and that includes all of us at MIT. I have asked Professor Hal Abelson to lead a thorough analysis of MIT's involvement from the time that we first perceived unusual activity on our network in fall 2010 up to the present. I have asked that this analysis describe the options MIT had and the decisions MIT made, in order to understand and to learn from the actions MIT took. I will share the report with the MIT community when I receive it.

I hope we will all reach out to those members of our community we know who may have been affected by Aaron's death. As always, [MIT Medical](#) is available to provide expert counseling, but there is no substitute for personal understanding and support.

With sorrow and deep sympathy,

L. Rafael Reif

