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From MOOCs to Magic: Using Digital Tools to Enhance the On-Campus Learning Experience

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As a university proud of the education we offer on our campus, we often speak about the “Magic of MIT”. Each of you has an analogous phrase. But, what do we mean? So much of the magic of the (MIT) on-campus university experience lies in the unscripted in-person engagement that happens among our community members, whether it be students working together on problems or projects or students and instructors engaging in seminars, discussions, solving problems, lab classes, research, ... Why, then, have MIT faculty put so much energy into building MOOCs? Standard answers include reach —bringing MIT to the world —and reputation and impact, within a field or more broadly. But among the physics faculty who have developed MOOCs these motivations come second to using MOOCs to enhance the learning experience of our on-campus students. I'll describe some of the ways in which physics instructors at MIT are using MOOCs —or elements thereof — to deliver some of the more scripted parts of our teaching so as to create more time and space for the active, engaging, interactive, components from which the magic originates.

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