Core points from our pod to be shared:

Our pod focused primarily on graduate student admission as opposed to faculty hiring due to the makeup of our group. We were able to have a great discussion that included faculty perspective on formalized or in-formalized processes involving graduate admissions as well as graduate student experiences and perspective of the recruitment, prior experience, and application/hiring process.

For advisors:

- **Mentorship** is something that we all determined to be incredibly important but also lacking in some areas. Many PIs lack the time or experience for providing adequate mentorship, which may be particularly harmful to students who have less prior experience and require more guidance. This brings about a sink-or-swim mentality.
  
  **Actionable item:**
  - Provide mentorship training for PIs (maybe even start in grad school)
  - Include a faculty Q&A made available to prospective students applying to be transparent about mentoring style.
  - Formalized rubric for graduate admissions

For prospective and interested candidates/students:

- **Previous research experience** for graduate admission seems to be a highly valued quality in a candidate for most PIs. This makes sense for reasons outlined in our reading such as increasing risk aversion practices. However, some students are not able to afford research opportunities or are not able to participate in unpaid research experiences. This means that students who are financially less privileged or have had other extenuating circumstances have a much smaller chance of being accepted into a graduate program. Another point was brought up that students who do not have prior research experience may not be fully prepared for a PhD and admitting such a student may only set them up to fail. This is also where the topic of mentorship comes up (see below).
  
  **Actionable item:**
  - If a student is lacking experience, perhaps instead of sending a rejection email, provide and suggest research opportunities hosted through the institution like the SSF program, guest student opportunities, or ask students if they would like to be put on specific listservs that might provide job postings for technician positions, for example. This may assist in helping these students determine if graduate school and/or the field is a good fit for them while also enhancing their experience prior to future applications.
Include a box or section on the application to allow applicants to explain prior relevant experiences (outside of research) and circumstances for why they may not have been able to participate in research. Perhaps an optional question on the application should be included that allows students to elaborate on any extenuating circumstances that may have made taking on internships or research positions difficult or impossible for them.

- We also identified barriers to the application process. Most notably there are barriers and inequities associated with the GRE.
  - **Actionable item**
    - MIT-WHOI should permanently remove the GRE requirement. Departments should critically evaluate the admissions process to see how it has changed (or not changed). Apply what is learned from this in other areas of the admissions process.
    - MIT-WHOI should not require students to list all science courses taken on the application, their grade, and the text used. For students with gap years or multiple universities, this is a cumbersome exercise and repetitive, given the course name and grade is already in the transcript.

- Making the graduate application/admission process clear and accessible to all students regardless of background or prior experience came up as an important issue. All graduate students within our pod were aware of how to properly apply to graduate school because of exposure to other graduate students and PIs in labs who saw potential and aided in the dos and don’ts of the application process. These ‘unwritten rules’ (e.g. emailing a potential PI prior to applying to graduate school) are not universally known to people who are applying to graduate school. This leads into this feedback loop of students largely coming from other known labs and institutions who have had previous research experiences. Students who could not afford such opportunities are largely selected against within this pipeline from the start.
  - **Actionable items:**
    - Our departments can provide a transparent how-to-apply-to-grad-school document on their website for prospective students to refer to. This would be especially useful to students who do not already have a mentor guiding them through the process and would benefit students who may not already be in a lab and exposed to this sort of information.
    - Departments could also provide resources to assist students who haven’t had previous lab experience or guidance in crafting fellowship statements and applications.
    - Extension of the “virtual open house” that is made available ahead of time for interested students. Then there are opportunities to see how interested students can engage with current students or PIs.