



DR. NERGIS MAVALVALA

MIT ASTROPHYSICIST & DEAN | SHE / HER / HERS

“Women can, must, and should do anything and everything,” is what Nergis believed as a child. Now, in her role as the first woman Dean at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), she makes sure that younger women believe the same. As an astrophysicist, Dr. Mavalvala has long specialized in the physics of gravitational waves. She spent decades working on how scientists might observe these important forces, refusing to be deterred by the idea that something might be “impossible.” One day she succeeded, and in 2015 was part of the team of scientists who first observed the “ripples” of gravitational waves in the fabric of spacetime! Gravity isn’t the only invisible force Nergis has observed: as an out, proud, lesbian from a family of Pakistani immigrants, she knows firsthand how various prejudices can impact aspiring STEM students.

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