October 5, 2011

Dear HASS Colleague:

The Burchard Scholar Selection Committee is now seeking nominations of MIT juniors and sophomores for the 2012 Burchard Scholars Program, which is sponsored by the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences.

We have all had the experience of noting one or two exceptionally gifted students in one of our classes, and wishing that we could get these students together with their counterparts in another class. We have all noted that such students have no common "center" at MIT, and are often unaware of one another and their shared interests. Such students are rarely majors in our fields, but, while pursuing a career in science or engineering, are equally interested in the humanities, arts, or social sciences, and endowed with ability in these areas.

For the calendar year 2012, we will select up to 30 such students as Burchard Scholars. The Program, which recognizes these students, and gives them a place to share experiences and ideas, is one important way that our School helps such students develop. It also builds awareness about the distinctive contributions our disciplines make to an MIT education.

As you may know, the Burchard format is a monthly dinner-seminar at which a faculty member or visiting scholar presents work-in-progress, followed by a general discussion. This kind of “intellectual feasting” allows both students and faculty a chance to mingle and, especially for students, an opportunity to engage in the kind of intellectual exchange that characterizes scholarship in our areas.

Enclosed with this letter, you will find the 2012 Burchard application and reference form. I encourage you to talk with your exceptional students, to encourage them to fill out the form and return it to you so that you may write the requisite reference. The application and reference is now available in pdf form on the website. A student may send you their application and ask that you write a recommendation on the second page. Once complete, please email the application and reference form to burchard-scholars@mit.edu. Alternately you can mail the application and reference directly to the Burchard Selection Committee (4-240). The deadline is Thursday, December 1, 2011. The Committee’s decision will be announced before the end of this term.
The same application form is being sent to all MIT sophomores and juniors. Those in good standing (there is no restriction as to major) are eligible to apply, provided they secure a recommendation from a HASS faculty member.

But please do not wait for that special student to approach you; take the initiative yourself! We realize this takes some time, and deeply appreciate your efforts. Your initiative can make an enormous, positive difference for your student — and for the undergraduate student body, and the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences as a whole.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]
Deborah K. Fitzgerald
Kenan Sahin Dean
Professor of the History of Technology

Enc: 2012 Burchard Application and Reference Form