October 5, 2011

Dear MIT Juniors and Sophomores:

On behalf of the Burchard Scholar Selection Committee, I invite you to apply to become a Burchard Scholar for the calendar year 2012 in the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences. Burchards will meet for two consecutive terms beginning in February 2012.

The Burchard Scholars are a group of MIT undergraduates who are appointed each year on the basis of having demonstrated unusual abilities and academic excellence in the humanities, arts, or social sciences. The appointed Scholars are invited during the year to a series of eight dinners at which an MIT faculty member or visiting scholar makes a brief presentation of work-in-progress followed by general discussion. A Burchard Scholar can be a major in any department in the Institute; no preference is given to HASS majors. All MIT sophomores and juniors in good standing are eligible to apply.

The Burchard Scholar dinner-seminars have included recent presentations by: Associate Professor of Digital Media, Nick Montfort entitled "10 PRINT CHR$(205.5+RND(1)); : GOTO 10"; Associate Professor of History, William Broadhead entitled "Judging Augustus Caesar: The Making of Rome’s First Emperor"; and MLK Visiting Artist, Donal Fox, entitled "Musical Improvisation: The Art of Making Mistakes and the Art of Discovery." Burchards also attend special events. In the past, the Scholars have been backstage to meet Yo-Yo Ma at Symphony Hall and have had a special guided tour at the Museum of Fine Arts. Such “intellectual feasting” allows both students and faculty a chance to mingle, and gives Burchard Scholars an opportunity to engage in the kind of intellectual exchange that characterizes scholarship in the humanities, arts, and social sciences.

The Selection Committee (composed of faculty in the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences) will designate up to 30 students as Burchard Scholars in 2012. If you are a sophomore or junior with strong intellectual interests in the humanities, arts, and social sciences, have done consistently excellent work in one or more of these areas, and wish to participate actively in our dinner-seminars, I encourage you to complete the attached application form.
As part of your application, a faculty member in the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences or the School of Architecture and Planning who has taught you in a HASS subject must write a letter of recommendation on your behalf. The back of the application form should be used for this purpose. Your referee must then send the application and reference directly to the Burchard Scholar Selection Committee by Thursday, December 1, 2011.

The application can be mailed to 4-240 or alternately; you can download the application form (pdf), attach your essay and résumé, and ask your referee to email your completed application to burchard-scholars@mit.edu. You can access and download the 2012 Burchard Application and Reference Form at: http://shass.mit.edu/burchard.

Note that you should apply only if you will be able to attend and participate regularly in the Burchard dinner-seminars, which will meet Wednesday evenings, from 5 to 7 pm, four times a semester.

I should add that the Selection Committee is also requesting HASS faculty to nominate Burchard Scholars directly. Therefore, it is possible that one of your instructors will suggest that you apply to become a 2012 Burchard Scholar. The application procedure is the same. But don’t wait for a faculty member to approach you; if the Burchard Scholars Program interests you, and you feel that you are qualified, take the initiative yourself!

The Burchard Selection Committee looks forward to receiving your application by Thursday, December 1, 2011. Applicants will be notified of the Committee’s decision before the end of the fall term.

Yours sincerely,

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

Enc: 2012 Burchard Application and Reference Form