February 27, 2019

To 2019 Doctoral degree candidates:

We write today with important and positive news regarding your graduation and associated ceremonies. **On Thursday, June 6, 2019, PhD/ScD candidates will receive academic hoods AND diplomas at the “Investiture of Doctoral Hoods and Degree Conferral Ceremony” (aka Doctoral Ceremony), in the Institute’s historic Killian Court.** The ceremony will begin at 10 am. We want you to be aware of these additional key items about your ceremony:

- The Doctoral Ceremony is now the degree conferral event for PhD/ScD candidates. (Bachelor’s and Master’s candidates will receive their degrees on Friday, June 7 at the Commencement Exercises.)
- The tradition of a Doctoral Ceremony guest speaker (selected by Doctoral students) will continue in Killian Court; the announcement of the 2019 speaker will be made in the coming weeks.
- There are no tickets required for guests to attend the Doctoral Ceremony in Killian Court in 2019; you may have as many guests as you like at this event. We are pleased to be able to accommodate your requests for your parents, spouses and partners, children, and extended family members to attend.
- Your diplomas will be presented by Chancellor Barnhart, with the Department Heads or their designates investing the hoods.
- As in previous years, you will be invited to march in Friday’s academic procession and to sit together in the court, and you can obtain up to four guest tickets for the Commencement Exercises. For some, not receiving your degree and not having your name called on Friday may affect your choice to attend. The Registrar’s Office will contact you soon with instructions on how to enter or edit your attendance choices.

**Background**

Changes to the 2019 ceremony stem from multiple community conversations about addressing capacity issues in Killian Court and reducing the length of the ceremony. The changes described above have the support of the Commencement Committee and of student leadership, with whom we have worked to gather the priorities and values of students, faculty, alumni, and families as they relate to graduating from MIT.

Via several surveys and focus groups, we heard from Doctoral students and alumni that their priorities include:
- graduating in Killian Court;
- securing sufficient guest tickets for family, friends, and mentors;
- crossing the stage to receive the diploma;
- spending time with visiting guests; and
- reducing the length of time spent on the ceremony.

We are pleased that the 2019 decision to combine degree conferral with hood investiture addresses these key priorities.

Details regarding the arrangements for the 2019 Doctoral Ceremony will be finalized in the weeks ahead; the Registrar’s Office will be in touch with further information and instructions. As you discuss the schedule and attendance options with your family and friends, **please note that it is important to convey that Thursday, June 6 is your graduation day.**
Next steps

You will receive notifications this spring regarding graduation deadlines and instructions—please be alert to these messages and action items. The Commencement website will be updated as details become available.

The 2019 plan is part of an ongoing effort to address the capacity and ceremony length issues. This season’s experience will help inform the plan for next year and beyond, so we will follow up with you, new Doctoral alumni, to gather your input about the 2019 Doctoral Ceremony. Your post-graduation feedback will be extremely helpful to us. Between now and then, comments or questions may be sent to chancellor-reply@mit.edu.

We offer our sincere congratulations on your upcoming graduation and our advance appreciation for your input to come this summer.

Sincerely,
Cynthia Barnhart, Chancellor
Eric Grimson, Chancellor for Academic Advancement and Chair, Commencement Committee