

## Department Student Support: Spring and Summer 2020

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The following COVID-19 related changes have been carried **out in addition to normal operations of the MIT Physics Department:**

1. Complete transition to remote instruction for both graduate and undergraduate courses. This includes reporting our instructional plans to the MIT Administration, seeking approval for minor curricular changes, and adding TAs.
2. Research ramp up to 25% density in May, 50% density soon (5 h/week from Department Head service on Lightning Committee)
3. Production of major report in university research restart during a pandemic involving 30 faculty from across the United States led by the Department Head (over 100 h)
4. Additional faculty and staff attention to immigration matters for students and faculty (continuous effort from HQ)
5. Changes to essentially every administrative procedure at MIT because of working at home, lack of access to documents, systems, and people.
6. Working through innumerable payroll problems for students, faculty, and staff owing to dislocation.
7. Completing a rebudgeting process incorporating at 3% budget reduction in less than two weeks owing to \$400M shortfall in overall MIT budget because of the pandemic. These reductions were accomplished without resorting to lay-offs. Rebudgeting has left the Department with three unfilled administrative positions owing to a hiring freeze and very little financial flexibility.

Over the same period, the Department has largely instigated and carried out the following **discretionary activities oriented primarily or exclusively at student well-being and community:**

1. Weekly office hours with students and staff taking turns moderators – (4 h/week staff and 3 h/week faculty time)
2. Daily/weekly message from DH – (March-June: 2h/day, June-Present: 2h/week)
3. DH weekly meetings with PGSC and SPS presidents (2 h/week)
4. Mentoring program being added for all core undergrad subjects and first year subjects (1.2 faculty FTE, currently over 10 h/week staff)
5. Over 75 remote UROPs created for students who lost summer positions (substantial discretionary, Departmental, and School funds, over 50 h of implementation)
6. All students invited to weekly zoom lunch with faculty – (over 10 h of faculty time, 2 h/week staff time)
7. Piazza implementation under discussion (Over 10 h faculty time, 5 h staff time)
8. New majors given more information about potential advisors and asked for more feedback about what they are looking for (several hours of staff time)
9. Restructuring of PVC (over 15 h of faculty and staff time in discussions)
10. Creation of an in-person graduate research seminar to allow first year overseas graduate students to enter the U.S. and begin their studies (over 25 h of faculty time, staff time uncertain).
11. Creation of the role of Graduate Student Advocate and recruiting of a prominent Physics Faculty member to pilot the role (10 h faculty time, 2 h staff time)

Changes to existing programs:

12. Students being added to Education Committee and Graduate Admissions committee
13. 'Casual Commencement' for our students in Killian on the day before the campus closed (ab initio organized by staff)
14. Virtual Senior Dinner; Virtual hooding reception with extensive focus on individual students (ab initio organized by staff)
15. Reconfiguration of Written General Exams for remote implementation that ensures equity among students (including equity with students who have already passed the exam) (over 20 h of faculty time)

Again, these two lists of tasks, totaling 22 separate tasks, were executed in addition to all the normal operations of

In the past weeks, the Department has received recommendations from the SPS and PGSC containing many insightful comments. The Department welcomes these recommendations and looks forward to working on them with our students. Some of these recommendations have considerable overlap with actions we have already taken in the normal course of Departmental operations and we will work with student leadership to make these directions clear. Implementing these thoughtful recommendations will take time and will have to be prioritized against non-discretionary tasks, whose scope is highly uncertain at this time. We will continue to update this list as we do things.