

July 31, 2020

Dear MIT Faculty:

The Physics Graduate Student Council (PGSC) strongly endorses the creation of a joint doctoral degree program in Physics and Statistics as proposed by Professors Jesse Thaler and Michael Williams.

The PGSC are the elected representatives of the 250 graduate students in the MIT Department of Physics. Our role is to look out for the welfare and interests of the physics graduate student body, as well as to interface between our constituents and the Department and Institute administrations.

Our [MIT Physics Community Values](#) state that “We value the multitude of ways to be a physicist and the many paths through our field and Department. We strive to speak and act in ways that support and include all members of our community.” Furthermore, “Much of physics research is interdisciplinary. We value the richness that interdisciplinary research brings.” A Ph.D. program in Physics and Statistics would help our Department better embody its values as well as provide wide-ranging benefits to our constituency by:

- **Enhancing the academic experience** of graduate students working at the boundary of these fields by providing affiliation with the [MIT Statistics and Data Science Center](#) and its resources.
- **Improving mentorship and advising** of graduate students by providing them with more targeted guidance and opportunities in their field of study.
- **Building community across existing academic boundaries** by formally connecting students doing statistical research in different [physics research divisions](#) together with one another, as well as with the larger [Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in Statistics](#) community.
- **Expanding access to career opportunities** by providing graduate students dual credentials in physics and statistics, as well as by establishing OPT visa eligibility for international students in careers directly related to their program of research.

The PGSC strongly urges the Physics Department and the MIT Faculty as a whole to enhance the ability of graduate students to pursue lines of work that cross traditional disciplinary boundaries and to expand opportunities for graduate student engagement in more individualized programs tailored to their needs. A considerable amount of groundbreaking contemporary research has happened at the interface between different fields, and many cutting-edge modern discoveries, from gravitational waves to the Higgs boson, have involved large collaborations bringing together experts from a number of different subjects.

The mission of MIT is to “advance knowledge and educate students in science, technology, and other areas of scholarship that will best serve the nation and the world in the 21st century.” The importance of training researchers who possess deep knowledge of multiple areas of study and who are able to effectively work in a multidisciplinary setting is only going to increase in the future. The joint Physics and Statistics Ph.D. program is an important step that the MIT faculty can take in the right direction.

Thank you,

Physics Graduate Student Council Executive Board 2020-21

Website: <http://pgsc.mit.edu/> Email: [physics-gsc-officers@mit.edu](mailto:physics-gsc-officers@mit.edu)