

DATE: January 14, 2020

TO: International Scholars in F-1 status with STEM OPT

RE: Clarification of prior memo regarding possible visits by US  
Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

FROM: Penny Rosser, Director

The memos the International Scholars Office sent on January 9, 2020 regarding potential Department of Homeland Security (DHS) employer verification visits, have prompted questions from several of you and others in our community. I understand the news of possible visits was sudden and concerning, and I want to provide reassurance and clarification.

The memos **were not** a response to a specific event, complaint, or notice of an imminent visit to MIT. To the best of my knowledge, none of our Greater Boston peer institutions have received F-1 STEM OPT employment-related site visits.

MIT remains deeply committed to our international students and scholars and their involvement in Institute life. Our campus, classrooms, and research endeavors are greatly enriched by their contributions.

DHS announced last year that it was likely to increase these types of visits to companies and universities. My intention was to disseminate helpful information that would prepare postdocs, visitors and other researchers in F-1 STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT) status, as well as their supervisors, in the event they are contacted regarding a visit at some point in the future.

The DHS announcement about such visits refers **only** to the employment of foreign nationals in F-1 immigration status with approved STEM OPT Extension work authorization. It **does not** indicate visits will be conducted in reference to enrolled undergraduate, graduate, or visiting students, or foreign nationals in their *initial* 12-month period of post-completion F-1 OPT.

The international offices at MIT regularly remind students and scholars of the steps they must take to maintain their immigration status and documentation. In light of the DHS announcement, we felt it was necessary to remind supervisors and F-1 workers with STEM OPT work authorization of their roles in:

- Drafting and signing the training plans (Form I-983) to be sent to DHS with STEM OPT extension applications;
- Ensuring that the ongoing training and work is consistent with the plans; and

- Answering questions about that training and work, if asked by government officials.

Form I-983 references the possibility of DHS site visits to verify the training information.

If you have additional questions, my staff and I are available at (617) 253-2851 and [ischo@mit.edu](mailto:ischo@mit.edu). The International Scholars Office and International Students Office are working to organize Q&A sessions early in the spring semester, and will be in touch with details shortly.