2012 Doctoral Student Exit Survey

Highlights

The following highlights are based on data collected from the 2012 MIT Doctoral Student Exit Survey. The survey was open to all graduating doctoral students from July 2011 through the end of June 2012. 437 graduating doctoral students responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of 76%. The survey asked graduating doctoral students about their experiences at MIT, financial support and debt, activities while in graduate school, plans after graduation, and their job search. A full report of overall frequencies follows the highlights presented below.

Overall Satisfaction

- 65% of respondents said they were Very Satisfied with being a graduate student at MIT; 91% said Somewhat or Very Satisfied
- 60% of respondents said they would Definitely select MIT were they to start their doctoral career again, with an additional 27% saying they would Probably select MIT.

Please rate the following:

- 84% of respondents rated the quality of their overall academic experience Very good or Excellent.
Academic Experience

- Among the areas in which respondents received advice from their advisors, advice on their dissertation research was reported to be the most helpful, followed by advice on the selection of a dissertation topic. Advice on nonacademic career options was rated the least helpful.
- 88% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “the intellectual climate of my program is positive;” 78% agreed with the statement “the social climate of my program is positive.”

Financial Support & Debt

- The most common source of financial support for respondents was a research assistantship, with 92% listing it as a source.
- 88% of respondents reported that they will have no debt directly related to their graduate education when they receive their doctoral degree, and 78% of respondents will have no undergraduate debt.
- Of the 12% who reported having debt, the mean amount of graduate debt was approximately $20,000.

Professional Development and Future Plans

- 82% of respondents were a TA at some point in their graduate studies, and 88% of those who were a TA found the experience somewhat or very helpful for professional development.
- 88% of respondents were an RA during their time at MIT, and 97% of those who were an RA found the experience helpful for professional development.
- Over half of the respondents who planned to remain in the US planned to stay in Massachusetts. The most popular non-US post-graduation destination was South Korea, followed by Switzerland.
- 47% of respondents planned to do a postdoc or further training in the year after graduation, and an additional 46% planned on being employed in non-postdoc positions.
- 31% of respondents planned to work at a university, and 33% planned to work in industry.
- Of those who planned to be employed following graduation, 43% of respondents said they found their job through networking, followed by 37% who applied directly to the employer and 31% who found the job through contacts in their department (respondents could choose more than one method).
- The mean salary of those with employment plans after graduation was approximately $76,000.