Students seek group on housing problems

By Niraj S. Desai

In response to the Freshman Housing Committee’s recent report, an undergraduate student committee has proposed the creation of a working group composed of students and faculty to examine problems in the present residential system and to recommend solutions alternative to the FHC’s plan to house all freshmen in dormitories.

Six members of the faculty or senior administrators were enlisted to join the group — already includes a number of students — but Associate Provost Jay K. Kelsey has expressed enthusiasm for the idea.

Segal and Antico hope that the student/faculty group will retain control of the group, at least its chair. In addition to the student organizers, who have expressed interest in participating in the working group, other faculty members and undergraduate students are expected to join, Segal said.

A number of students, many of them former members of the USHC, have met twice in the past two weeks to discuss formation of the working group and to begin formulating a response to the FHC report.

(See page 2 for more)

Graduate housing plan supported

By Linda D’Angelo

The Offshoot of previous committee

The proposed working group is an offshoot of last year’s Undergraduate Student Housing Committee, which was chaired by Segal. Whereas the USHC took a broad look at undergraduate housing in anticipation of the Freshman Housing Committee’s report, the working group will limit itself to recommending changes for specific problems in housing.

The joint student/faculty group will not issue a final formal report, but will make recommendations periodically as its discussions continue, Segal said.

Unlike the USHC, which had its report reviewed by the UA, the working group will not have its recommendations approved by the UA Council or any other body, according to Segal.

The UA Council did not approve formally the working group. But members and administrators in Segal and Antico hope that the working group will retain control of the group, at least its chair.

(See page 2 for more)
Students organize housing group

(Continued from page 1)

Efficacy of FHC plan questioned

At a meeting of about 15 undergraduates and former undergraduates last night, the consensus was that the FHC recommendations would work against its stated goals for the residential system.

The FHC apparently believes that distributing freshmen randomly through the dormitory system — though reducing students' identification with their living groups — will encourage identification with MIT as a whole and break down barriers between groups, David L. Atkins '90 asserted. But it is unrealistic to assume that simply scrambling many different kinds of people together will result in "one big happy family," he argued. Rather than trying to make itself a community of individuals, MIT should build a community of groups, Atkins said. "Build bridges between the islands, don't flood the sea."

A number of students argued that weakening students' attachment to their living groups would hurt the support system that those groups provide, especially to freshmen.

UA may repeat holiday shuttle

(Continued from page 1)

from student faces. He said that while FinBoard was "hoping to cover as much of the cost as possible," the "most important thing was that we provide the best service for students." Lin noted that the "few mishaps" occurred during the day. He said that the "few coordination problems" were due to the "experimental nature of the service, and that "as a first run, it went very well." One problem was the 9 am shuttle arriving a bit late on campus, which meant that "we missed a few students," Lin said.

The next shuttle, the Wednesday shuttle, was a bit late on campus, which meant that "we missed a few students," Lin said. While FinBoard was "hoping to cover as much of the cost as possible," the "most important thing was that we provide the best service for students," Lin noted. The UA "could have limited the service, and sold tickets in advance," he explained. But it is unrealistic to assume that simply scrambling many different kinds of people together will result in "one big happy family," he argued. Rather than trying to make itself a community of individuals, MIT should build a community of groups, Atkins said. "Build bridges between the islands, don't flood the sea."

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GSC housing plan raises first-year grad spaces

(Continued from page 1)

those spaces to students who had been first-year students in the previous year. Thus, graduate dormitories would be free to recognize de facto tenure, Vail noted.

Through the quotes, the committee hoped to establish a framework which would ensure a high percentage of first-year spaces, while still allowing for flexibility within the dormitories themselves, Vail said. "Each house has a different character, and functions in a different way," she explained. The GSC respected these differences and thus was able to balance the needs of both first-year and continuing graduate students, she stated.

The GSC plan has "clear broad base support in the graduate community," Vail said. Members of the administration, such as Associate Dean for Student Affairs James R. Towey and Dean of the Graduate School Frank E. Perkins '55, also "basically support the plan," she said. Perkins, however, has expressed reservations about reserving the Albany Street dormitory entirely for first-year graduate students, Vail added.

Proposed by the Housing Office, the 50/50 Plan is another option to the current graduate housing system. Under this plan lines would be drawn "right down the middle" of the dormitories, according to Vail. Fifty percent of spaces would be allotted to first-year graduate students through lottery, with a one year non-renewable lease. And the other half of the available graduate housing spaces would also be distributed by lottery, but with renewable leases.

The two plans differ in the amount of space they would provide. Vail said. The GSC plan would provide spaces for approximately 58 percent of first-year graduate students, as compared to the 54 percent which the 50/50 Plan would house; the difference is 52 spaces. In short, the GSC housing plan "would ultimately house more first-year grad spaces and that is a plus over the 50/50 plan," she concluded.

But Vail was quick to point out that the GSC plan is only a "temporary solution" to the lack of available housing for graduate students. "A firm commitment needs to be made at all levels of the administration" because the only real solution is to create "more graduate housing," she explained.

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Troop reduction on summit agenda

The White House said yesterday that President Bush will talk about a possible reduction of US troops in Europe when he meets with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev off Malta later this week. But presidential spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said the Administration does not want to "get the cart in front of the horse" on the matter. Fitzwater said no action will be taken without consulting NATO allies.

The Dutch government said yesterday that Defense Secretary Dick Cheney is warning a troop withdrawal will not come before an agreement between the superpowers on conventional arms. Cheney stopped in the Netherlands on his way to Brussels, Belgium, for a meeting of NATO defense ministers.

Cholesterol tests deemed harmful

Federal health officials said yesterday that cholesterol screenings in shopping malls and other public settings can be both hazardous and inaccurate. Government investigators found that many testers failed to follow basic hygiene rules in collecting blood samples and often are poorly trained.

Wilder certified in Virginia

Virginia's state board of elections has certified Democrat Douglas Wilder as the winner of the Old Dominion's race for governor. But Republican opponent J. Marshall Coleman is calling for a recount. Official returns show Wilder defeated Coleman by less than half a percent of the votes cast. Wilder, the first black elected governor in the nation's history, is moving ahead with inauguration plans.

Eastern pilots to negotiate today

Less than a week after Eastern Airlines pilots ended their more than eight-month walkout, negotiators for the carrier and the union will meet tomorrow for contract negotia-

Get a piece of the wall

This Christmas, you might get a lump of coal — or a piece of the Berlin Wall. Entrepreneurs are betting rabble from demolished sections of the Wall will be a hot-selling gift item. Ten dollars will buy a two-foot cube of the wall, complete with authenticating papers.

Prague continues to give in to protests

In Czechoslovakia yesterday, millions of people ignored general strikes called to protest the new government. As protesters took to the streets for the eleventh straight day to demand new elections, Communist leaders offered new concessions to the emboldened opposition.

In an extraordinary move on Sunday, the new Commu-

Nehru dynasty in jeopardy in India

The government of Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi appears to be in jeopardy, as latest counts continue to in-

Colombian plane crash kills 107

A caller to a radio station yesterday in Bogota claimed drug traffickers were responsible for blowing a Colombian jetliner. The jet crashed shortly after takeoff, killing all 107 people on board. A witness said the plane "exploded, broke in two and fell in flames and smoke." The caller said a group known as the Extraditables blew up the plane in an effort to kill live police informants. Officials have not been able to confirm the claim. 

El Salvador breaks Nicaraguan ties

Salvadoran President Alfredo Cristiani said Sunday that diplomatic and commercial relations with Nicaragua will remain suspended until Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega stops intervening in El Salvador. Cristiani made the announcement suspending relations Sunday to protest alleged weapons smuggling to leftist guerrillas in El Salva-

Weather

The chilling winds of autumn will once again blow across the area as a cold front, crossing the area this evening, brings the next warm-up. Strong northwest and northerly winds will advect colder air into the region during the next couple of days. A disturbance approaching from the northwest on Thursday brings the next threat or snowfall. The medium range outlook, for later this week and into early next week, suggests below-normal temperatures and normal precipita-

Compiled by Reaves M. Lerner and Frankiel Melina
The FHC plan likely to create problems

The Freshman Housing Committee's plan to randomly assign all freshmen to dormitories should not be implemented. This committee does address legitimate issues, such as the value of diversity in the undergraduate experience, but the proposed solutions fall short. The committee will likely introduce more problems than they were meant to solve.

The FHC views loyalty towards one's living group as undesirable. It views allegiance to one's living group, departure from the undergraduate experience, but the proposed solutions fall short. The committee will likely introduce more problems than they were meant to solve.

The report neglects important related issues. The FHC proposes a new dormitory for undergraduates. While new dormitories may be needed for all undergraduates, the problem is that freshmen currently select housing on the basis of limited information. Rather than eliminating choice, the Freshman Housing Committee should focus on increasing the value of information presented to students. The committee should also consider the possibility of housing pairs of freshmen to dormitories should not be implemented. This committee does address legitimate issues, such as the value of diversity in the undergraduate experience, but the proposed solutions fall short. The committee will likely introduce more problems than they were meant to solve.

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The Freshman Housing Committee's plan to randomly assign all freshmen to dormitories should not be implemented. This committee does address legitimate issues, such as the value of diversity in the undergraduate experience, but the proposed solutions fall short. The committee will likely introduce more problems than they were meant to solve. US motives in El Salvador were never pure

In the upw2op over the recent rebel offensive in El Salvador and the murder of six priests there (apparently by the military), one question is rarely asked. Why are we in El Salvador?

Ten years ago, when civil war broke out in that country and United States involvement rose to unprecedented levels, the nation was being swept with calls for renewing hostilities against the Soviet Union. The success of Soviet-supported movements in Angola and Nicaragua, the fall of the Shah of Iran, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan were pointed to as examples of a still in the balance of power towards the Soviet Union. It is debatable that Soviet gains in the 1970s were ever as important as the growth of US ties to China and Egypt, but powerful interests wanted to end the rivalry North Americans felt after Vietnam and congressional revelations of Central Intelligence Agency murder, disinformation, and subversion throughout the world. Ironically, it was the Iranian hostage crisis, which had nothing to do with Soviet-American relations, which persuaded many voters that a "stronger defense" was needed.

Intellectuals were easily found to justify renewed intelligence. The most infamous was Jean Kirkpatrick, who was awarded a post at the University for her efforts. She argued that the kind of corrupt dictatorships the United States frequently supported gave way to democracies, but once a country becomes communist, it has entered a totalitarian black hole from which it may never escape. This argument always sounded more convincing than it actually was. Even in 1979, one might find some intellectuals willing to prove this. Except for Russia, no country became communist before World War II, so the average age of communist regimes was probably around 30 years. Places like El Salvador and Nicaragua, the West's support threaten to win, their supporters are not so dumb to say things like that, so they have to make up other reasons for supporting the Salvadoran regime. "We have to give them guns and money so we have leverage to pressure them for human rights."

They said this after Archbishop Oscar Romero was killed in 1979, and after four American churchwomen were raped and murdered by the Salvadoran National Guard in 1980. And they say that now. But the victims do not appreciate the efforts.

"We must bolster the moderate governments against the extremists." Who is an extremist? Roberto D'Aubuisson, founder of the ARENA party, is widely considered a killer and extremist. Salvadoran President Alfredo Cristiani, current head of ARENA, is the latest to be dubbed a "moderate." Who brought Cristiani into the party? D'Aubuisson. D'Aubuisson can order some more assassinations, then send Cristiani to the funeral, thus permanently silencing critics of the government and showing the government's concern for human rights at the same time. We are supporting a fledgling democracy? El Salvador has had elections for decades. Whenever political movements without United States or right-wing support threaten to win, their supporters are physically eliminated.

Don't listen to anything Bush or the Congress says in support of money to El Salvador. It's smoke in your eyes. Nothing that happens in El Salvador can hurt the people here. Nothing our government is likely to do in El Salvador can help the people there. Why are we in El Salvador? For one reason we can be proud of. It's time we got out.

BARRY KLINGER is a member of the MIT Committee on Central America and has followed events in El Salvador for nine years.
We would like to lead Professor Lester C. Thurow in point- ing out the underlying theme behind the Freshman Housing Committee proposal. At the last faculty meeting [November 15], he stressed this theme in the following statement: "I am not in- terested in arguments about whether or not under graduates like the current housing system or not... Let's hear some adult arguments." 

The proposal certainly goes a long way toward moving those in present and the in-out of the immature hands of freshmen and into the more experienced hands of seniors. It is carefully selected Institute housing officials. This new and improved administration will undoubtedly be better equipped to make intelligent, adult decisions.

Perhaps the next issue the Institute should consider is that of academic major selection. It is unlikely that students enrolled in making adult decisions about their own living accommodations will mature sufficiently in one year at MIT to make decisions about more important is-
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JPMorgan
Housing committee made faulty assumptions

(Editors note: The Tech received a copy of the following letter addressed to Provost John M. Deutch '61.)

I recently received and reviewed the Report of the Freshman Housing Committee which was submitted to you in October. As a former rush chairman for the InterFraternity Council, member of the Residence/Orientation Study Committee chaired by Professor Thomas J. Allen, and current chapter advisor to the Freshman Housing Committee I took great interest in the goals and recommendations of the Freshman Housing Committee. While I was impressed with the breadth of investigation and depth of thought given to the R/O process by this committee, there are several crucial issues that were raised during the proceedings of the R/O Study Committee that do not appear to be addressed in the current report.

First, the Freshman Housing Committee seems to have concluded that "R/O, by concentrating as it currently does on residence selection, makes a sense of membership in MIT secondary to a sense of membership in a specific living group," in the words of the committee's charge. As I recall, the R/O Study Committee began its deliberations holding a similar premise. However, we were given the opportunity to speak with an expert in the process of socialization, who pointed out that the current R/O curriculm is intentionally designed to strip first-year students of their initial confidence in their academic abilities. The initial self-perception is then replaced with another image more in keeping with the traditional standards of an MIT student. Although socialization processes vary widely in degree and method (from basic training in the Marine Corps to executive training programs at IBM, for example) they all share the common purpose of changing a person's self-image to conform with that of the organization. MIT's socialization process is pertinent to the R/O problem addressed by the Freshman Housing Committee because it is possible that the perceived absence of loyalty to the Institute may result from the socialization process employed during freshman year and not from the initial emphasis on residence selection. Residences and other campus groups (such as the Lecture Series Committee, sports teams, or even lab groups) provide the structure upon which freshmen rebuild their self-image, which in turn breeds loyalty to that group. If this theory is correct, then emphasizing residence selection will only change the eventual choice of support structure; it will not build loyalty to the Institute.

Second, the conclusions of the report assume that housing all freshmen together will increase the diversity of student population to which each freshman is exposed. It seems to me that this assumption ignores the possibility (indeed, probability) that freshmen will seek out like-minded members of their class to form interclass groups. It seems reasonable to assume that the diversity created by selection within a class will be any different than the diversity created by selection between classes (such as results from the current residence selection process). Furthermore, it is possible that these groups will continue their association within residences throughout their four years at MIT. However, because they will be formed on the basis of information gathered over a term, rather than over four days, it is possible that there will be even less diversity within upper-class residences than currently exists.

Finally, I was disappointed to see how little the FHC report relied on actual data. The appendix cites only one systematic survey of the most important source of data, students. The one thorough survey that is cited was conducted in 1986, prior to the time considerable change were implemented in the R/O system. (The appendix also states that a random survey of 19 students was conducted informally by members of the committee.) It seems to me that the questions raised in the charge to the committee could be addressed by a prospective study of a class from the time they are admitted to the time they graduate. The data gathered from such a study would allow the Institute to implement whatever changes are warranted on the basis of research that meets the same criteria by which its faculty's research is considered. Although such a study would be expensive, its results would be invaluable.

Timothy Lasch '87

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Any MIT faculty member who instructs undergraduates is eligible to receive the award. All MIT students are invited to submit letters of nomination to the Baker Foundation Committee, Room W20-401.

Recommendation forms are available in the UA Office. Letters of recommendation must be received by December 1, 1989.

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Alex Sum—University of Washington—Class of 1990

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On The Town
Compiled by Peter Dunn

Tuesday, Nov. 28
CONTEMPORARY MUSIC
***CRITICS CHOICE***

CLASSICAL MUSIC

JAZZ MUSIC
Jazz at Lincoln Square presents Sonny Stitt at 8 pm, and Charlie Parker at 9 pm, in the Lincoln Square, 460 Boylston Street, Boston. Admission charge. Telephone: 776-9667.

Wednesday, Nov. 29
CONTEMPORARY MUSIC
1100 NOVEMBER Curator: Patricia Wilford, New England Center for the Arts, 550 Huntington Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts. Admission charge.

CLASSICAL MUSIC
The Boston Symphony Orchestra performs the suite from R. Strauss' Don Quixote at 8 pm in Symphony Hall, corner of Symphony and Newbury Streets, Boston. Admission charge. Telephone: 267-9096.

JAZZ MUSIC
Jazz at Lincoln Square presents Sonny Stitt at 8 pm and Charlie Parker at 9 pm, in the Lincoln Square, 460 Boylston Street, Boston. Admission charge. Telephone: 776-9667.

Thursday, Nov. 30
CONTEMPORARY MUSIC
1200 NOVEMBER Curator: Patricia Wilford, New England Center for the Arts, 550 Huntington Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts. Admission charge.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

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CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

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Saturday, Dec. 2
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JAZZ MUSIC
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Sunday, Dec. 3
CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

JAZZ MUSIC
Jazz at Lincoln Square presents Sonny Stitt at 8 pm and Charlie Parker at 9 pm, in the Lincoln Square, 460 Boylston Street, Boston. Admission charge. Telephone: 776-9667.

(please turn to page 13)
Local favorites the Pixies deliver evening of slam-dancing fervor at Citi; Zulus play loud, fast and well

THE PIXIES
With the Zulus
tCiti, Tuesday, November 21.

By SANDE CHEN

THE PIXIES APPEARED IN A CLOUD of smoke and the crowd went wild, and rightly so. The local band definitely rocked the stage last Tuesday with a night full of fire and zeal.

The dry ice smoke, flickering lights, and primal yells from lead vocalist Black Francis produced a somewhat show-biz effect. Nevertheless, the Pixies resolutely veered away from MTVian, excluding radio fa-

vories "Here Comes Your Man" and "La Lo Love You," and combining a solid se-

lection from EP Surfer Rosa and albums Come On Pilgrim and Doolittle. Their music, intense and loud, was much more thrashy and fast live. Frankly, Doolittle sounded all the better for it.

The audience reacted enthusiastically, vio-

lently slamming and pogoing through everything, even slow songs, like the gentle "Caribou." Volunteers at front were thrown up above heads and allowed to drop to the floor. Passive observers were steamrolled by a tidal wave of bodies.

In contrast, the Pixies stood serenely, with both guitarist Joey Santiago and drummer David Loveren in the back-

ground, and singer Black Francis right in front. Their execution was perfect, and the sound they generated meshed well. Except for Francis, they seemed very removed

from the activity below. Only bassist Kim Deal spoke after most songs, and she announced a set of acoustic numbers.

The pace slowed a bit in the song "Where is My Mind?" as fans took time to sing along with Deals' "ooooo-oooo-oooo's and choruses of "where is my mind?" The tempo soon switched gears when the energetic "Nineteen Six" was performed.

Other tracks from the past included the familiar "Magician" and "Bone Machine," and mild rockers "Levitate Me," "The Holiday Song," and "Tony's Theme" as well as quick-paced "Vamos" from Come On Pilgrim. Of course, most of Doolittle was spotlighted, showing the versatility that the Pixies have, from the crowd-pleaser "Debaser" to the more subdued "Gouge Away." "Wave of Mutilation" and "I Bleed" were played especially well. Some critics have wondered if Doolittle's nation-

al acclaim has mellowed the Pixies, but this concert proves they still sustain the beat. The Pixies, along with the Zulus, another Boston band, closed the set with a rousing encore.

The Zulus, the opening band, played loud, fast, and well for an hour, using some nice sound effects like a beer bottle for a guitar pick. Despite this, and lead singer Larry Bangor's drunken antics and screaming, most of the audience at the be-

ginning remained motionless and mute, while a few wild Zulus fans tried to initi-

ate small-scale slam-dancing. By the last song, however, the afterthoughts had spread quickly, and the audience for the most part was enjoyably slamming away.

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Since 1981, GCC Technologies has evolved from a video game company into a leading developer of Macintosh peripheral products. The product offerings include a complete line of printers, high-performance hard disk drives, and performance enhancement products.

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If you are interested, GCC Technologies will be at MIT on Thursday, November 30th to conduct interviews. Or, send your resume to:

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Out Free and Ramona Ban, Boston Based Ban's huge collection of min- ute and notable details, contains ballads, parodies, periodicals, and a veritable cornucopia of period pieces. Performances are Tuesday at 7:00 & 8:30, Thursday at 8:00 & 9:30, and Sunday at 2:00 & 3:30. Tickets: $10 to $15. Telephone: 268-3555.

The Devil Among Us, an action-packed, murder mystery, contains a leading lady, a deserted street, and a ma- jor does what he can to keep things from getting too hot. Performances are Thursday at 8:00, Sunday at 2:00, and Saturday at 8:00. Tickets: $10 to $15. Telephone: 268-3555.

Evanston and Lena, South African play-wright Adam Gqedik's play about the complexities between two very different women, contains two very different men, and is set in the town of Kaiso. Performances are Thursday at 8:00, Saturday at 7:30, and Sunday at 2:00. Tickets: $7. Telephone: 207-5384.

The Bradford Marsells perform at the Berklee Performance Center on Sunday, December 3.

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notices

The Cambridge Dispute Settlement Center has announced that it is making its interior and equipment available to the public. Those interested in using CESC's resource to resolve a domestic dispute or any other dispute should contact the mediation center at 876-3736.

The Beth Israel Hospital hosts a Rape Crisis Group on Tuesdays at 7:30 pm for women who are experiencing depression in their lives immediately following or up to six months after being raped. The long-term crisis group meets Thursday at 9 pm. For more information, call (617) 774-4718.

Today, more than ever, men and women are demonstrating by their personal example that alcoholism is an illness that can be treated. If you have an alcohol problem please go in touch with the Alcoholics Anonymous group nearest you — with complete assurance that you anonymity will be protected. Call 426-6484 or Alcoholics Anonymous, Box 489, Grand Central Station, NY 10163. You will receive free information in a plain envelope. Call collect.

The Department of Public Health is associated with AIDS. For more information about this free confidential service sponsored by the Department of Public Health and Counseling Services, call 522-4900, weekdays from 8 am to 5 pm. Geraldine Boman called collect.

Volunteer opportunities

Jefferson Park Writing Center: Assist with special events sponsored by this low income housing community. We conduct art exhibits and performances in which this talented group of children and adults takes part. Contact: Sharon Cox, 497-2011.

Commonwealth Apartments - Brighton: Volunteers are needed to spend time with elders playing pictionary and/or other games. This is a perfect first time volunteer project to plan with friends or co-workers. Contact: Peter Dopp, 353-3551.

Somerville Community: Plan a party or special event, share a hobby or skill with a group of blind adults ages 23-90 who meet weekly to socialize. This is a very special group of talented people who are open to almost anything you'd like to do. Contact: Peg Buckman 625-6000, 20097.

AIDS Action Committee: Meet with clients who have AIDS. Take them to doctor's appointments, clean house, go food shopping. This is a great opportunity to support someone with AIDS. Contact: Larry Peterson, 427-4200.

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Nick

By Chris Doerr

Introducing "Math Is Radical" with a $1,000 prize for the best solution.

Announcing a contest for the benefit of our entire planet. It's "Math Is Radical," a chance for science and engineering students to take their best shot at solving some of the world's most pressing problems. And win some cash if yours is judged among the best.

Here's how to enter. Choose any problem you feel poses a threat to our planet—the suggestions above should get you started thinking.

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On April 15, 1990 we'll award prizes based on appropriateness, thoroughness, and originality of the solution. First prize is $1,000, second prize is $500, third prize is $250, and honorable mentions are $100. Call 1-800-MATHCAD (617-577-5071 in MA) for your complete "Math Is Radical" contest kit, including full contest rules, and get started right away. Enter independently, or make it part of a class project or paper. But make sure you get involved. Because our planet can use all the help it can get.

math is radical

A contest for engineering and science students.

© 1989 Mathsoft, Inc. Cambridge, MA.
Contest includes autonomous robots

(Continued from page 1)

The Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences, which along with Microsoft Corporation financially sponsors the contest, mandated the entry fee on the grounds that the fee, which covers less than a third of the cost of the parts each contestant gets to keep, would make contestants serious about the contest.

At first, Parker was nervous about the fee, fearing it would discourage contestants. In retrospect, however, he said he feels that it was good for the contest. "Once contestants put the fee, which covers less than a third of the cost of the parts each contestant gets to keep, would make contestants serious about the contest."

"Once contestants put up $50, they took the contest very seriously," he explained. "They showed up to all of our workshops and worked very hard on their robots."

No longer a programming contest

6.270 has changed from a computer programming contest to primarily an electrical and mechanical engineering contest. In expatiating this change, Oberi pointed out that S6 Appeal is for all of Course VI — not only software engineers enrolled in Course VI-3.

"In fact," he added, "six appeal currently contains mostly 6-13 (electrical engineering students)." Thus, it is natural for the contest to include electrical engineering. As for the inclusion of mechanical engineering, Oberi said that it gives contestants a more realistic design problem.

"This summer I worked at the robotics division at Motorola. I learned that there is no way to just build electronics and expect someone to work around it. They [electricals and mechanics] have to be built together."

While Oberi acknowledged Parker's theme of "making computers fun," he also voiced a broader vision. The 6.270 contest, he said, touches an array of sciences. "It requires electrical engineering, mechanical engineering and some physics as well as programming."

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Pressure, confidence and self-esteem.

Pressure to excel is inherent in any institution that strives to be the best of its kind. For many of us, M.I.T. is our first experience in an environment where the problems are so challenging and where our fellow students are so capable.

The challenge to our confidence and self-esteem can be enormous and leads to pressure to "measure up." There is a temptation to suggest changes to reduce this pressure: a lighter course load, easier grading, easier courses, less homework, etc.

Experience teaches us that in the long run self-esteem and confidence cannot come from reducing the challenges we face. Confidence and self-esteem rather are inward manifestations of a very special experience.

This experience comes the same way scientific knowledge is obtained by testing in a real situation. When we face the challenges of solving real and difficult problems; when we solve problems others have attempted and have not solved; when we break ground with new knowledge; when we see our own solutions tested by reality and verified, then we acquire confidence and self-esteem. There simply is no other way.

And recognition, when it comes, is fully deserved.

In the most basic terms, we gain confidence and self-esteem not by reducing challenges, but by meeting and overcoming them. Less pressure does not produce self-esteem, and it certainly does not provide confidence.

Our challenge is to approach every problem with this perspective. Our challenge is also to develop the attitude that only the best effort is acceptable and the belief that we can, in fact, produce the best work.

While we struggle and learn we need to remind each other that we have chosen the finest and most challenging educational institution of its kind, and that the confidence and recognition we will achieve is truly deserved.

Note: Each year the Bose Foundation sponsors a one year fellowship for a first year graduate student in electrical engineering. Please see your faculty advisor for more information or write Rhonda Long, Bose Foundation, The Mountain, Framingham, MA 01701-5168.

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