Academic incess

As the term gets into full swing, the members of the Class of '67, re-
dazed from the traumatic experience of corralling a thesis advisor, are being hit
now is the time to apply to graduate school.

Unfortunately for many undergradu-
ates, their graduate school of choice has no desire to accept any MIT seniors in their field. That misguided school is
Massachusetts Institute of Technol-
ogy.

Surprising as it may be to some, some undergraduates develop such a
fondness for the Institute and its pro-
grams during their undergraduate years that they very much desire to
work for their advanced degrees here.

If an MIT senior has a good academic record and majored in some form of en-
gineering, he has been well travelled, being admitted to his departments
graduate school. MIT seniors are also wel-
come into graduate programs by the
Departments of Geology and Geophysics, Food and Nutrition, Mechanical En-
gineering, and the graduate programs in the
School of Humanities.

However, as a senior has majored in physics, chemistry, or mathematics, as many MIT students do, he is very likely to hear from MIT over him in favor of another student whose record is no better or even less impressive, who also does not come from
another university.

It strikes us that there is something deceptively innocent about this behavior.

We have heard two arguments ad-
vanced for a department's refusal to ac-
ccept certain undergraduates into its
graduate school. The first is that it's a
sign of a weak graduate program when a
department is not accepting its own
undergraduates. The argument runs that a department can't afford its own products when it is unable to attract stu-
dents from other schools.

This argument is fine when applied
to schools with a low grade anymore
graduate output, but other graduate schools seem hardly enough to the power of
MIT's science departments. After all, the
Institute likes to talk about the high
quality of its undergraduates and surely
the major science departments at least a reasonable job educating their students. So we wonder how the School of Engineering, with its own large
undergraduates for decades, managed to get itself ranked first nationally among engineering schools.

The second argument advanced for
not letting undergraduates attend their department's graduate school is the
"academic incess" theory, which, roughly stated is: "Son, you know, all we can teach you is to be somewhere else and listen to somebody else's point of view.

It is undoubtedly true that many MIT undergraduates would be better off att-
testing somewhere else to get some
work. Another viewpoint, another set of people, and even just another town and campus life will undoubtedly do many
us a world of good. However, it seems that all departments get this argument for at least every third year or so when a really outstanding undergradu-
ate comes along.

So we end up puzzled. Are some MIT
departments guilty of harming their un-
dergraduates, perhaps actually allowing them to graduate school here, or are some de-
partments guilting their own students, all of their undergraduates, even the best of them, a vague fear for their reputation?

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