Apathy, the students, and Dr. King

At the memorial service for Dr. Martin Luther King held in Kresge, President Howard Johnson stated that the only appropriate way to honor his memory was for a great man to be re-examined our own beliefs in light of his words.

We would, therefore, like to present one of Dr. King's most famous speeches for an analysis of how it affects the MIT students and faculty. Dr. King said that "the greatest obstacle to integration is the white moderate, who would say the least, to discover that the man who had lived one's sight principles before (and charged $1,000) was ignorant, underground the other, Andy Wurth, but an impostor sent by Mr. Wurth. Suspicions were first aroused when a student wrote to the Daily Utah Chronicle saying that the lecture did not resemble the views he had seen of Wurth, nor did he feel "guilty" of the "guiltier" he is supposed to have following. A five month investigation the Utah Activity Director questioned Mr. Wurth, who readily admitted the fraud, stating that he would return the lecture fee to them, as well as three other senior's, to hold the money.

**Question:**

**Why DOES UP Maria Kivisild '69 Wear Sunglasses indoors?**

**outside incomm-- Freshman and upperclass advisors. Should the system be revamped?**

**By Jim Smith**

The advisory system at MIT has been under personal fire and for good reason. It accomplishes very little and fails on freshman or departmental level. With rare exceptions the student may go through the entire institution with literally no instance of valuable advice from his "advisor." The advisors themselves are generally understaffed and if the student has a question, the advisor must frequently look up the answer or call the Registrar. A moderately informed student is often more informed than his advisor about matters of string-pulling, writing letters of recommendation, and other basic necessities for wending his academic way through the Institute.

My sophomore year, my assigned advisor was himself a "freshman." The entire sophomore recruitment of that department was in the hands of a professor who had never even taught a class at the Institute. Each year there are crises that force the students simply to "orient." The advice of an advisor, Secretariat Chairman Bruce Kados is an often used part of his UAP platform. But there remains the problem that even if the advisor is knowledgeable he may not take the initiative at the right time or at all. It is no good for the advisor to know the options of a Harvard institute if he does not tell his advisees, or those who may not have heard of our career center at all.

Right now the freshman advisor serves little more than to join the student in the routine listing of his courses each term. The student has already made his only real choice before he hears his advisor: the selection of his humanities option (which, incidentally, is subject to five options next year). Where the advisor should serve a greater function than this may be an open question anyway, so long as there exists a full-time specified curriculum.

The upperclassmen (departmental) advisor is another case, for the student in his senior year has already made the decision to major. However, the advisor generally serves no more a purpose than does the computer which prints on the grade report what requirements remain to be filled. By the time senior year rolls around with it the only other advisor function, namely fellowship and graduate school advice, the advisor is generally more interested in his student's, seniors, of course, then look to their advisors for graduate advice. The student's advice is then somewhat more valuable than the advice of the freshman. In cases his advisor tells him he does not know him well enough. Such a situation may arise when the student asks why does the upperclassman (or, for that matter, a freshman) advisor exist at all? Does the Institute wish to delude itself into thinking that its students are being carefully guided through their important academic years? Surely the present advisory system must exist solely to delude those who do not know how it works, or to configure those who do know how it works but would like to think it was more than the mechanical nonsense which it is. I assume that the Institute would like the advisor to be more than a registration officer, that it does want him to be a "faculty counselor," that it does want him to guide the student. Now let's get to the real question, the advisor's office.

It is evident that one of the prerequisites to being a consultant would be that the advisor share some interests with the student. Even this is not always the case, when the diversity of departments and topics in the Engineering curriculum is considered. This prerequisite would be better fulfilled by the advisor's own knowledge of the student interacting with his department's requirements, graduate school or professional world. As a matter of fact and asking a professor of his choice to do all the others, it is a nomenon-una system. If the Institute scrapped the whole administration of the department advisors, it would not sacrifice, as mentioned above, any other investment in advisor orientation. It would simply gain from having each student associate with a professor of his choice more deeply.

Then, rather than educate the entire student body, it would concentrate as Harvard does, on more direct information to the student himself on such topics as course options, fellowships, and graduate schools. Many departments (my own included) are totally delinquent in this area, and of course, the placement office is itself out of touch with the entire student body. The consultant is discussed in a recent article in this paper where the advisory system remains the same. The Institute should increase its expenditure on such handbooks and mailings. Although there may be a contradiction in emphasizing exceptionally good and non-graduating advisors, the Institute should take some steps to assure the fact that students who are denied advisorship still have access to the basic information pertaining to their education and the opportunities open to them. Second, that we may be content to treat the advisor as we do: as a bureaucratic hack totally separate from those professors to whom we may go down.

College World