New environmental lab plan: student projects

By Dianee Fry

Opportunities for undergraduates at MIT to become involved in the issues of ecology and the environment are substantial and increasing, judging from the material published on available courses, research opportunities, and seminars.

Environmental lab

The interdisciplinary Environmental Projects Laboratory is an example. Organized this summer, the project has enrolled about thirty students, mostly undergraduates. Five subgroups have begun studying environmental problems in the Boston area. They will propose and initiate solutions that may be feasible on a five to ten-year base.

Students now in the project will be able to continue in the group in subsequent terms, although there will also be opportunities for new students to join. The subgroups work on specialized topics such as water quality, fuel resources, and others. A unified weekly meeting of all the subgroups is intended to provide everyone with an integrated view of the entire program.

For more courses

Nearly a dozen more formal, numbered courses dealing with ecology and pollution are offered by several engineering and science departments. They range from nonscientific subjects to project laboratories and engineering electives. In addition, subjects are offered by other departments on technology and public policy, and the impact of science on society as a whole.

The program in Undergraduate Policy Seminars, designed to "enhance the relevance of a technical education in contemporary life," offers topics such as atmospheric chemistry, low-pollution engines, water resources, economic and social views of pollution, food distribution, and others.

Freshman seminars

Environmental concerns have also found expression in the Freshman Seminar program. In addition to topics such as those already mentioned, there is an offering in the field of noise pollution. The group of students taught courses is represented in the environmental area; graduate courses in topics related to pollution control exist in several engineering departments. All departments offer "special studies" opportunities that are adaptable to appropriate student interests.

An estimate of the number of students (and faculty) now involved in ecological courses and other projects would be difficult, but the number has almost certainly shown a dramatic increase in the past year.

CORRECTION

Father Robert Drinan will not appear at New University Conference-sponsored workshop during the election season as previously reported in The Tech of September 22. Drinan campaign headquarters said that his name had been used for publicity purposes by NUC without Drinan's approval.

Sail on, oh ship of state...
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