CAES: engineers return to academia

By David Sorensen

Building 9 is just an inconvenience to most people; nobody seems to have any classes in it and one must zig-zag through its modernistic architecture between buildings 7 and 33. But for several dozen corporations interested in specializing, broadening, or changing their fields, it is home.

They are involved in the Practicing Engineer Advanced Study Program, and the building itself is known as the Center for Advanced Engineering Study. The handbook of the program describes each of them succinctly, if not very adequately: "The Center: The MIT Center for Advanced Engineering Study was established to provide ways to help experienced professional engineers and scientists maintain the level of competence needed for continued leadership in an age of unparalleled technological change."

"The Program: The Practicing Engineer Advanced Study Program enables experienced engineers and applied scientists to work in depth in technological areas pertinent to their professional programs, using all the resources for education and research in technology offered throughout MIT. In this key, way, people from industry, government, and education can broaden and deepen their technical competence, improving and extending the most fruitful period of their professional careers."

In an interview with The Tech, Dr. Paul Brown, administration director of the Center, elaborated on the purpose and general functioning of the Program:

"Basically, the people we get fall into three major categories of interest. First, there is the guy who feels that his knowledge is incomplete in some area in which he is specializing or wishes to specialize. He would be likely to take a relatively narrow range of subjects, and, in a few cases, might go on to take a graduate degree from MIT in his field of specialization.

"Second, there are the executives who just want to broaden themselves over a wide range of subjects, usually to better familiarize themselves with a field that they were not previously involved in.

"Third, we have some people who wish to change their field to a different area. This, of course, is entirely dependent on the company that sends them, and usually the changes take in direction in which they were already biased or showed a talent for. For instance, a mechanical engineer in an oil company might go into something like surface chemistry."

The structure of the Program is keyed around flexibility. The man, who range in ages from late 20's to 50's, spend one or more terms at the Center, on leave of absence from their company.

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