By Bob Lefkowitz

HSSP is a program run by MIT students to teach high school students in a fashion different from that ordinarily seen in high schools. To accomplish this, everything is left up to the individual instructor, who can be anyone from a family friend to a professional. Only the routine administrative details are standardized.

Thus, it is rather difficult to talk about HSSP as an organization. Each prospective teacher submits a course description which is incorporated into a catalogue. The teacher chooses the material he wishes to cover and his course format, and embarks on his own ideas of creative occupational education.

The complete freedom to teach whatever course one wants leads to a rather strange curriculum. This term, for example, there is "An Aesthetic History of the Stencil" and "The Art of Batiking" (Batiking is a Javanese art of preparing fabrics with dye and beeswax.) Of course, there are also many serious courses in mathematics, humanities, science, and computer.

Few requirements

In order to participate in the well-known program or to become a teacher, no one is required to have any previous knowledge, qualifications, or prerequisites. This leads to several problems for both teachers and students in the HSSP program.

First, most students are the wide background of the students entering courses with no prerequisites. Some students will be ahead of the teacher, while some will be behind. Both groups are dissatisfied, and the teacher's program is usually altered to accommodate one group or the other. The lack of any written work removes much of the burden from the teacher. The students must find the motivation to do the work on their own. As many will not do so, the course passes them by. Furthermore, the teacher has fewer ways to determine how effective his presentation has been and may not adapt himself to the students.

The use of textbooks varies. Approximately half of the courses require textbooks which are perhaps costly back-ups. This is probably the only way in which HSSP resembles high school.

Short schedule

Classes are held on Saturdays and the term is usually scheduled to be ten weeks long. Unfortunately, nationwide exams and holidays whittled this down to an average of six or seven weeks in which any productive work can be accomplished. Even though the classes are two hours long, having only six of them is a major obstacle to accomplishing anything productive.

Yet despite all these faults, HSSP seems to work quite well. This year, over 900 students and 80 teachers have registered initially. Some will probably drop out before the term is over, but most will remain, and maybe come back next year.

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Wiesner warns Senate of surveillance dangers

Appearing at a Senate subcommittee hearing last week, President-elect Jerome Wiesner warned that an ever-growing computer surveillance network is threatening our country.

Identified in nationwide newspaper as an expert on computer technology, Wiesner chided senators reminding the Senate investigators they could not be certain how wide-spread of well-hidden the information apparatus is. "I suspect that it would be much easier to guard against a malicious oppressor than to avoid being slowly but increasingly dominated by an information Frankenstein of our own creation."

Wiesner was asked whether the threat of government surveillance ever deterred people from exercising their constitutionally protected right to petition and dissent. Marked by the left, he replied, realities that their activities are probably monitored, but I have... operated under the premise that I should not allow myself to be inhibited by such a possibility." He did note that students told him their fear of official dossiers had been a factor in their decision to avoid political activity.

Wiesner testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights.

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THE TECH