Withdrawals - 'not really dropouts...'

By Bert Balaban

Have you heard more than a usual number of stories of students withdrawing from MIT? Do you suspect that the total number of withdrawals may not be entirely accurate? 

Statistics from the Registrar’s Office show a significant departure from the usual number of stories expected them to become juniors each year. We add the 976 seniors to the fourth-year students. 

The most startling figure in Table 3 is the 7% drop-off in registration between the sophomore and junior years of the class of 1970. This is too sharp a break with the trend of the previous six years to be dismissed as a statistical fluke, and it is probably the best-documented figure in the table, so there cannot be too much doubt as to its accuracy. 

Dean William Spier, David Yohn, and Nettie Smith, of the counseling staff of the Office of the Dean for Student Affairs, were very helpful in preparing the data and subjective impressions as to why this should be. 

Dean Smith has done a study on voluntary withdrawals through the VW CAP total of which were printed in the April 9, 1971, issue of The Tech. She also has statistics on CAP actions (negotiated withdrawals and disqualifications). Unfortunately, except for those occurring during 1970, neither the voluntary withdrawals nor the CAP actions are broken down by class of 1970. There is a general change “out there,” an increase in the college education. He said he doesn’t really dropouts, but that the increasing acceptance by society of students who withdraw “very intelligently,” carefully planning what they will do while out of MIT and considering what their position will be when they return. Yohn also pointed out that there is an increasing amount of interchange among universities and predicted, “we are going to see more students who find a creative way to use a term and then re-register at a later date. I don’t think you can really call them dropouts.”