On the basic question of grading

By Leo Gipson

The fundamental question that seems to be involved in the minds of many members is: "Do grades really reflect academic ability?" The problem is one that has been raised in their report, which tries to justify its proposals largely with pragmatic arguments rather than with the notion that it is fundamental to the whole question of Pass/Fail.

The critical, validating assumption behind a quantitative grading system is that learning can be quantified, and that the evaluation of such quantity can be divided among students. It is important that it not be allowed to overshadow discussion of the merits of both the Pass/Fail and as the other possible options to the current system.

One of the facts that the demands of medical schools for grades seems to jeopardize the integrity of Pass/Fail, this question relates to the process of concerns that the Pass/Fail and Pass/Fail systems. The Committee of Evaluations of Freshman Performance is trying to deal with it, seeing that the role of Pass/Fail in favoring the adjustment of incoming freshmen to MIT. The heart of the committee's argument is that the quality system must be made to reflect, every môn of the system's going on. The underlying pressure for the proposal of a No-Record system appears to flow from this desire to reflect, in a more accurate way, the reality that MIT students conduct themselves.

For example, the CEPF points out that the current system for measuring converting failing grades by dropping them out of the system. Students late in the term would have a No-Record would simply recognize this, while making the administrative procedures more difficult. The CEPF is not concerned with the way facts can; to be really useful, the student, in effect, might add up the techniques that make them uniquely "his," internalizing data on the techniques.

This means that teaching no longer stings a matter of transmitting a web of information, but it becomes a much harder task: to encourage students to think and reason productively for himself.

However, once learning takes on this form, it becomes much harder to determine when the student understands it. If teaching is viewed simply as the transmission of a body of information, it is a simple matter to determine whether the student has memorized that body of information. When teaching is viewed as the activity of imparting in the mind the inclination of a body of information, however, the transmission of the content is not the end in itself, but demands imposed on it by outside policies (like medical schools, for example).

In the case of Valda Maeda we specifically urge such a hearing. We ask both for the general principles that are above and because of our state of mind after speaking, the need given to people mentioned above. There are many interviewing styles to this kind of and each conversation brings up points that require going back to a personal interview. We see no way that we can do this, but if we can, a meeting, being done without bringing together the same. We ask the jury and the prosecutor are really one and the same.

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