MIT's Affirmative Inaction

By Brooke Schwartz

(Assas reported in the article MIT's employment plan underway suggests on page one of this Issue, the Institute has been the subject of much public discussion regarding Education and Welfare to revise its affirmative action plan. The request was made last spring, when a letter was sent to the Institute by Representative Congresswoman Barbara Jordan, a black woman from Texas, who was elected last year. The letter was a response to a request by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) for guidance on how to develop an affirmative action plan. The letter was signed by MIT's President, Jerome W. Hesky, and the chairman of MIT's Committee on Equal Opportunity.

In September 1969, which some people might consider an awkward month for the Institute, the Faculty Council of the Institute (which few people remember) endorsed the goal of appointing 30 new black faculty members over the following five years. This was to be a major change for MIT, where black students have been a small minority. As a result, the long-standing prejudices that kept black students out of the Institute were challenged. The Institute's response was to begin recruiting black students and faculty, and to develop an affirmative action plan to meet the requirements of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

The September 1969 AA plan, developed to meet the requirements of the EEOC, included the establishment of the Opportunity Development Office within the Academic Dean's Office, responsible for the recruitment of black students and faculty. The plan also included the establishment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Committee, which would oversee the plan. The plan was approved by the MIT Faculty Council in October 1969.

In May 1970, MIT had not yet broken down its employment classifications, so there were no job titles available to black faculty members. As a result, the plan was not yet in effect. The plan was revised in June 1970 to include the establishment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Committee, which would oversee the plan. The plan was approved by the MIT Faculty Council in October 1970.

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