Innovation seminar offered

By Mike McMahon

A seminar series is being started at MIT to encourage the study of innovation and entrepreneurship, and to explore the feasibility of educating college students in these fields.

Professor Yao Tzu Li of Aero and Engineering Sciences and the National Science Foundation grant to fund the seminar is "in the final phases of approval," Li is the originator of the series, which will come under NSF's "Experimental R&D Incentive Program." This program is also related to the MIT Development Corporation (see story, page 202), which was founded to help MIT people market any new inventions or processes they discover.

"Our economy is geared to government-originated, mission-type projects. These are large, expensive projects in which a basic idea is handed down from some governmental agency, and the individual contractors just do their own little part of the task," Li explained. He added that current technological educations are well suited to this type of system, because the individual worker is only expected to work toward a specific, well-defined goal. "This applies to college graduates and machinists alike," said Li, "they just follow the government's guidelines." Examples of the mission-type program are the space program and the defense projects. Curtailments in government spending in space and defense, along with growing concern about the environment, foreign competition, and resource shortages, are leading to an end of the large-project era. Li believes that there will be a growing need in the future for self-starters, people who can create new ideas and products and set their own goals. "The usual college education today can't train those people," Li said. "Students are taught to think in mathematical models, to apply equations to every situation that is handed down from government. The only problem is, you can't write the equations for air flow in an engine without knowing what the engine is going to look like." He emphasized that many new

products get bogged down in all the legal, marketing, assembly, and other non-engineering problems. "Which most college courses don't cover in any way," Li added.

Li, who has thirty-seven patents in his name, designed the seminar with an innovative program in mind. "Our Innovation Co-op will concentrate on methods to develop and invent new products," he explained, adding that they will work on small projects, "like designing a bicycle," He hopes to work with the Development Corp. in marketing any especially good ideas that come out of the seminar. The Innovation Co-op will be supervised by a board of directors picked by MIT and NSF, and will work with many area industries in developing the new products. Li plans to reward students with royalties and returns from any patents and licensing fees that are paid on new products.

MIT Musical Theatre Guild presents TRIAL BY JURY

Saturday, Feb. 10 at 7:30
Sunday, Feb. 11 at 3:00 & 7:30
in the Sala de Puerto Rico, Student Center
Tickets $5.00, MIT students $3.50 with ID

"The Importance of Being Earnest"

By Oscar Wilde

Directed by Joseph Everingham

Sets - William D. Roberts Costumes - Linda Martin

FEBRUARY 9, 1973 PAGE 3