Grads face cut in support

By Ken Davis

Starting next year, MIT's graduate school will face a seri- ous setback in federal funding for fellowships. According to Irwin Sizer, Dean of the Graduate School, the cutbacks will cost MIT grad students approximately $4 million next year and $5 million annually after that.

Among the programs being cut out are the National Defense Research Act, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Science Foundation trainee programs. In sum, just about all federal funds except those for some NSF programs will be lost. The number of students receiving federal fellowships will be cut from 800 that year to 300 next fall, and stabilize at about 200 in the fall of 1974.

When asked what departments would be most ad- versely affected, Sizer replied, "I can't think of any that have been immune. The blow has been felt across the board." Among the hardest hit are Urban Studies, which lostHUD fellow- ships, and Linguistics, which de- pended on the NIH for much of its funding.

One of the effects of the cutbacks is an expected decrease in the size of the graduate school. Although MIT has so far avoided such declines, there have been noted at the California Institute of Technology and many Ivy League schools.

According to Sizer, private universities will be the hardest hit by the cutbacks. State schools, especially the small ones, which probably get an influx of graduate students, draws by state funds providing for re- search assistantships enrollment in small state col leges is expec- ted to increase by 100% in the next few years. MIT has not been as severely hurt as some other private schools, since it has been more aggressive in getting other types of financial support.

Another serious long range problem caused by the cutbacks will be a decrease in the amount of basic and theoretical research being done. MIT, said Sizer, will try to use applied areas to keep basic research going. "We will regret cutting off basic re- search," he said. "We're not giv- ing it up."

"Overall, the storm will be weathered with a stronger stu- dent body. There will have to be more care in who gets tenure and is increased in the size of the facility. We will also have to be moving more socially-oriented research. This is for two reasons: we feel that they are extremely important, and, practically, that is where the money will be," he gave as examples the fields of pollution control, energy, oceanography, health sciences and technology, and transportation. "Perhaps this will be good for the country in the long run," he said.

To soften the effects of the cutbacks, MIT will try to in- crease the number of fellowships it gives out. Money is being taken out of the Sloan Basic Research Fund to set up 40 Sloan traineeships. The amount is limited by the resources available.

MIT will also look for more ways to give out research assis- tantships. Another possible source of help is industry. "We have had over the years a num- ber of industrial fellowships," said Sizer. A few years ago the figure was 52. This year it was down to 32. This decrease took place during the years when campus activism was at its high- est point, and a recession was taking place. These two factors combined to cause industries to withdraw its support. Sizer feels that it is possible for grad stu- dents to borrow the money they need. He estimated that it costs, on average, $4,000 to keep a Ph.D. at MIT, which is often more than students can afford to borrow at current interest rates.

Said Sizer, "It's important that MIT survive as a high quali- ty institution. It would be easy to maintain standards if we took only wealthy students. The dan- ger is a reduction of quality. Good students should be kept at MIT. It's better to have a reduc- tion in quantity than in quality. "It's important that we con- tinue to get skilled people into industry, government and teaching. Cutting out research is not a good way to cut down on gov- ernment spending."

Among the programs being cut back were science, arts and humanities.

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