Staff education program changes

By Jules Meilere

"Unforeseen problems" in the administration of MIT's continuing education programs for staff and hourly employees have led to a decision by the Personnel Office to consolidate these programs under one office as of January 1, 1974.

According to Penelope E. Mead, MIT personnel relations, the present division of the Institute's fourteen-year-old attempt "to increase the knowledge and skills of our employees for administrative and technical jobs then sought" has led to these problems.

"The way it is now really doesn't have any satisfactory statistics as to how the program as a whole is working. With the new organization we will continue to offer the same benefits to employees but will also be able to have some specific idea of what is going on."

The present program, as explained by Mead, "offers MIT employees the opportunity to take part in courses either at MIT or other universities limited to night school for those employees paid by the hour. The courses at MIT are free of charge, and if an employee decides to go to another college he or she is entitled to a tuition reimbursement."

At present the yearly reimbursement for the tuition up to a maximum of $3000 with an additional return of 50 percent for any amount over $3000 up to a total of $750, however, said she was hopeful that these figures would be raised to 100 percent for $750 in the near future.

"One of the more important changes we've made recently is to extend the number of people eligible for the program." Mead said. "Now, even as an MIT employee working only half the time or a departmental aide, you can receive 100 percent of your tuition reimbursement." It's possible to use this opportunity whereas only 5.6 percent of the employees paid by the hour did so. "All together the program cost $200,000 dollars last year with the average reimbursement being about $335." Another recent change that Mead cited dealt with those employees who are in a few years of retirement. "We now let them select courses which they feel will be meaningful for their retirement year. We've pleased to have included this in our plan and feel that it will have significant value for our long term employees." She said that the search for an engineer to analyze feasibility of implementing aids was a no hard set of statistics with which to prove that this program is valuable as a promotional tool. "But we know it is. One person who the personnel department, who used our programs recently got promoted. But we haven't stopped by and told us we would never have known."

"I believe we would have done pretty well if compared to other industries and companies but again I can only say it, not prove it."