Policy Alternative Center covers wide topic range

By Stephen Kelih

Seemingly unrelated topics—such as methods to alleviate age discrimination in the workplace, future plans for energy search and development, radiation policies, and dollar-costs of durable consumer goods—are among the subjects for research at MIT's Center for Sky Alternatives.

Headed by Dr. Herbert B. Allen, the purpose of the new-skilled Center is to "assist policy in-" posing and find sub-alternatives. "We illuminate conflicts possible, rather than tell them to do," says Halloran. Organizations contracting research include Federal State government agencies, private industry, as well as city governments.

The Center draws on all MIT disciplines for support and en-" sile. For instance, Professor James W. Seltzer of the Depart-" of Civil Engineering is in charge of a major project to develop planning systems for six-" citizen countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The EPA is operating in the area from 20 other American uni-

The Center is also working with the policy arm of the Fed-" eral Coastal Zone Management Office in Washington to come up with coastal use policies that will help coordinate management policies of the different States.

Other problems under consid-" eration include restriction of over-" population policies to reduce re-" sources contributing to incidents in industry, and the total lifetime cost of appliances such as refrigerators and television sets.

Halloran also comments that joint discussions have begun concerning a study of the technology and organization of the Post Office.

Staff education program changes

By Jules Mollere

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

According to Friscilla L. Mor-" ead, MIT personnel employee of the institution's human resources office, the "real attempt has been to increase the knowledge and skills of our employees for their own benefit and the benefit of their "chosen goals" has led to these reforms.

"The way it really means no one has had any satisfactory axles as to how the program is a whole is working. With the new organization we will be able to bring in the same ben-" efits 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 job-related courses either at MIT or other universities and to gain skills for those employees paid by the hour. The cost to MIT is free of charge . . . . If an employee decides to go to another college he or she has the right to an enrollment reimbursement."

At present the yearly reimbursement is 100 percent of the tuition up to a maximum of $500 with an additional return of 50 percent for any amount over $500 up to a total of $750. Mead, however, said she was hopeful that 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 stated. "Now, even if an employee works only half the time for the hour, he or she gets 50 percent, only 610, or about 7.5 percent, we increase the program.

Mead explained that this figure actually varies as to minus versus hourly personnel. "Nine-point-nine percent of the exempt (not paid on a time basis) personnel took this opportunity, whereas only 5.6 percent of the employees paid by the hour did . . . . All together the program cost $200,000 dollars last year with the average reim-" bursement being about $315."

Another recent change that Mead cited dealt with those em-" ployees who are within a few years of retirement, "We now let them select courses which they feel will be meaningful for their retirement years. We're very pleased to have included this in our program since they will have significant value for our long term employees.

She said that there was no hard set of statistics with which to prove due to the passage of time. "But we know it is true," in the library department who used our program recently put forward the idea that he hadn't stopped by and told us they were wondering what they were going to do."

"I believe we would come out pretty well if compared to other employees who are within a few years of retirement. What we're asking for someone 50 years or over would never have known." - Mead.

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