Permit changes affect work

By Mike McNamee

A recent ruling by the US Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) disrupts summer work permits for foreign students who could have "prolificed efforts" on MIT's foreign-student population next summer, according to Foreign Student Advisor Eugene R. Chamberlin.

The ruling, which takes the authority for granting summer work permits out of the hands of school officials and necessitates review by the local Immigration office, will affect about 80 MIT foreign students who will want to work off-campus in this country over the summer.

The INS ruling was based on the high unemployment rate among youth, especially among Vietnamese veterans and minorities, according to a release sent out by INS Commissioner Leonard R. Chamberlin.

"For several years the Manpower Administration has advised us that unemployment among American youth is of such magnitude that summer employment of aliens is depriving young Americans of needed employment opportunities," Chamberlin said.

The procedure in the past on work permits, Chamberlin explained, has been for the Foreign Student Office to process the applications for permits and to approve them. Now, Chamberlin says, the Office will have to send the applications to the Immigration Service for approval.

"It will be up to the Immigration Inspector to decide who should receive a permit," Chamberlin said. One thing that is currently concerning the Foreign Student Office, he added, is that "we don't have any general guidelines on how the local office will interpret the rules, and what will and will not be permitted," he said.

Won't affect on-campus

INS summer work permits are granted on the basis on "economic need due to unforeseen circumstances which arose after entry into the United States." This, Associate Commissioner Edward O'Connor told The Tech, applies "only if price increases and other financial problems make it impossible for a student to live on the resources he brought with him to this country."

"In the past, many foreign students have gotten summer jobs not because of need, but just to have something to do," O'Connor said. "We think this ruling will discourage them. Students that need work will probably still be able to get permits."

Neither O'Connor nor Chamberlin could estimate the number of students that will be denied permits under the new ruling. "I really don't think the numbers are important," O'Connor said. "If it means that one more Vietnam veteran or minority youth gets a job, I think it will have worked."

Chamberlin estimated that 17,000 foreign students worked on permits in this country last summer, but could not say how many would be denied permits this year. "We're urging students to get their applications in as soon as possible," he said. "It generally takes the INS several weeks to process anything, so we are trying to get the applications in early."

Foreign students are also being urged to look for on-campus work, which doesn't come under the work permit program, Chamberlin said.

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