Smith to chair privacy group

(Continued from page 1) - The Tech just last week. Many of Dean administrators learned to feel that, officially, the report was finished.

"It seems almost customary at MIT to appoint a committee to write a report, only to shelve the report," Associate Dean for Student Affairs William Speer said. "I had thought that was what happened to the privacy report. I think [Professor Eugene] Skolnikoff and [Professor Robert] Paine are the only surviving chairs of the privacy committee (thought so too).

There was no sense of urgency to implement the report," Skolnikoff, director of the MIT Center for International Studies, said. "There was no pressing issue when the report came out. No one thought much about it."

Other members of the committee expressed similar thoughts. When asked what had happened to the report, Assistant Professor of Management Jeffrey A. Melman, a supplemental member of the committee, replied, "I'm trying to find out myself." Melman added that "the gears started to turn" after the report was issued. "It's as though the report was 'bogged down,' and that he had lost track of the progress of the report.

Subtle Effects

Despite the lack of attention received by the report, officials said they thought it had considerable effect on thinking about privacy at MIT. "I think a great number of people modified their procedures after reading the report," Associate Dean for Student Affairs James J. Bishop said. "In my own years with the Dean's Office, I've found that policies have been considerably on what are kept in student files."

Bishop said that the privacy report was used extensively by the administrative group established this fall to study MIT's response to the Buckley amendment. "We have used the report for ideas and for language in our policy statements," Bishop said. "The Buckley amendment puts into law many of the practices that MIT already followed, and we've recognized that fact."

The report had small effects administratively, but was still influential, according to Bishop. "MIT moves in several ways, and a lot takes place informally," he said. "There hasn't been a privacy decision handed down from above, but they have been changed."

Many members of the committee felt, however, that the informal effects of the report were directed in the wrong areas. "The committee basically found problems with privacy at MIT aren't that bad in the center," Bishop said, "but were worse on the periphery," Melman said. "But the report got more attention than the central offices than it did from individual faculty." As a result, Melman said much of the report's influence was wasted. "Where the influence was the least, the problem was the worst, and the influence was greatest where the awareness was the least," Bishop said.

"Yes, the report hit the wrong place," agreed Special Assistant to the Provost Louis Menand III when questioned by The Tech. "It would have had a lot more influence, however, if the committee had been made active. They could have insisted on information from departments, set up guidelines, and made further reports to the faculty that would have kept the issue in the public eye."

One specific issue that administrators agreed the committee would have influenced was student review and challenge of information in files, as provided by the Buckley amendment. "There would have been a process already in effect for student access to files, a process already in existence," Skolnikoff said. "The problems of challenging information in files is now much more difficult than it would have been three years ago. Reforms have a tendency to grow."

(Next issue: The future of MIT's privacy policies.)

Faculty study grades report

(Continued from page 1) unchanged, the committee suggested a number of reforms to cut down on the tendency for grades to be 'bogged down.' "Lack of willingness to flunk students publicly," said Kaplow, is one cause for the mistakes found in the records used outside of MIT. The committee also recommended that the grading system be changed so that students must report their grades the same as a system of plus or minus marks which, it was suggested, could be added to the grade system.

Steve Wallman '75, Undergraduate Association President, told the faculty that "if there's grade inflation, we're not the ones to blame."

He recommended that the faculty not concern itself with getting "normal" distributions of grades for all subjects, but that faculty members should "vote for honest evaluations of the work of their students."

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