By Mike McNamara

The freshman year at MIT, I was told, was a time of educational concern and reform, in getting harder, with more work being expected of students and less latitude given in standard freshman courses.

Interviews by The Tech of instructors and administrators concerning faculty, first-year students and their courses show a trend toward less latitude in subjects that were once self-paced, increased adherence to deadlines for work, and increased pressure on students, taking place this year.

While instructors say that the amount of material they expect students to learn has not increased, increased emphasis on deadlines and moves away from self-paced study modes that are believed to be increasing academic pressure.

"The freshman year has tightened considerably this year," Assistant Dean for Student Affairs Peter Buttern told The Tech. "There are higher expectations and less tolerance of lateness. There's a lot less latitude for students." Buttern, who heads the Freshman Advisory Council, said that he did not believe that more material is being taught in courses. "I wouldn't say that quizzes are harder or that more material is given, but I know deadlines are tighter," Buttern said.

Freshman courses apparently have become stricter in the last two years, introductory physics courses 1.01 and 1.02, usually taken by half of the freshman class, have switched from the self-paced mode used in 1972-73 to a "traditional" mode, with required homework and quizzes replacing loosely scheduled quizzes taken at the student's convenience. Freshman calculus (18.01-18.02), while remaining essentially a self-paced mode entirely, has modified its structure to a "semi-self-paced" course -- deadlines are established and enforced for completion of quizzes, with penalties for late students -- one lecturer described as "self-paced with penalties and carrots."

The reasons for the increased pressure and academic emphasis are not clear. Buttern described the situation as "faculty reaction to the events of the last few years," aimed at tightening up the educational reforms which came after the student-activist days of the early 1970s. "Telling to the faculty, I got the sense..." (Please turn to page 2)

Feature

Fans 'trek' to NY for meeting

(Janet Freeman '78, a longtime "trekki," covered the Star Trek Convention for The Tech last week, her first-person report follows -- Editor.)

By Janet Freeman

One trekker can be trying. Two trekkies can be obnoxious. But take over 8,000 trekkies, mix them with their favorite stars and Star Trek episodes, add a dash of general science fiction in the form of artwork, films, and commercial items, and you virtually have "The Star Trek Convention," an event which struck the Commodore Hotel in downtown Manhattan, New York City, over the Washington's Birthday weekend.

For four days (February 14-17), a turn-away crowd of trekkies was allowed to mingle, without harassment, while immersing themselves in their favorite world. As a member of this not-nor-enough breed of people, I pre-registered months in advance in order to attend the Con, and the convention is known to its members. When I arrived, I received the standard registration packet, consisting of an OAS program, a brochure with fan club and magazine listings and plus color pictures taken from the show, and the trivia contest, all presented to each of us in a powder blue plastic bag printed with pictures of Kirk and Spock.

(Ever seen an ST (Star Trek) trivia contest? A sample question: Gary Soneva (a character in one episode) office was located at a) 66 81st Street, b) 811 East 68th Street, c) 14 East 68th Street. Good luck!)

Most people then proceeded to the Grand Ballroom, the focal point of the convention, Imagine sitting in a gargantuan office space crammed shoulder to shoulder with a 9000 people in the space four hours of science fiction-oriented films, and you've got the idea. That ballroom was completely packed despite who or what was being presented at the time. Friday night I sat through a "Star Trek anthology," the TV movie "Planet Planet" two paneled ST shows, and one ST episode. I left early, around 12:30am, when the pilot for the Night Starter series and another ST episode. To end the long weekend some time was spent in press conferences held by the convention chairman during the convention. Saturday they heard Bill Thames, costume designer for the show, and about science fiction writer who's had much written on his work; William Shatner, the illustrious Captain Kirk, speaking the Sunday panel, the panel of the show's stunt writer, Isaac Asimov (if you don't know who he is, I can't help you), Majel Barrett (Nurse Christine Chapel), Gene Roddenberry, executive producer of ST, and George Takei, who played Lt. Sulu.

The celebrities, along with other guests of the Con, were spotted at various places, some on the main ballroom during the daytime, some individually and in groups. When they appeared alone, they often held open meetings with fans. Together they formed panels around subjects like science fiction writing and production of the show.

Running almost continuously in other parts of the hotel were films in the East Ballroom, the Art Show in the West Ballroom, and the Dealer's Room on the Lobby Floor. The films included; "The original ST pilot show..." (Please turn to page 3)