Letters to The Tech

Free Speech: Herrnstein

To the Editor:

I am writing about the recent attempt by certain members of the MIT community to once again limit Noam Chomsky and Herrnstein the right to speak here. (The Tech, Feb. 23, 1975) I am sick to death of people who try to forbid others of differing opinions the right to speak on campus. Although they say that their intent is not to stop Herrnstein from speaking, their demand for an open session is in fact that there is no discussion on this and that an open session would be another such crook. Any sensible person does not have had such experience twice. I do believe that the lieutenants could have videotaped or displayed on closed circuit TV, that is a reasonable solution. I also believe that the past behavior of the MIT community has forced Herrnstein to demand an open session.

In closing, I must say that I am also embittered by the fact that if Noam Chomsky or someone of similar political bent was to effect denied the right to speak on campus, these same people would speak up crying "censorship!" and "We are being denied freedom of speech!"

Freedom of speech is a right available to everyone, no matter how racist or strange his views. 

David Ahecht '74
Feb. 21, 1975

The Tech's Opinion Page

Free Thought: Luria

To the Editor:

I was greatly disturbed by Dr. Luria's article (column 3 of March 4 in The Tech, especially by his implication that those who brought John Dean to MIT, and perhaps the students who saw and heard him, were brainwashed by the intense media coverage of the Watergate investigation. Dr. Luria feels that Dean may become a hero, and that his more appearance at the Institute was a failure of our educational system.

Surely by now we can all see that the impeachment has been the greatest ethical lesson of our time. The chance to interact with a real character in this drama, the chance to see how real decisions were made by those actually involved is a far more effective moral lesson for us today than the last two thousand years of fresman discussions of the theories of Plato or Aristotle.

W.S. Mitchell
March 4, 1975

Editor's Note

The Tech welcomes letters to the Editor and prints all letters it receives. Typed letters are preferred. - Editor

To the Editor:

There are more than a few inaccuracies that are common on Grade: do students care? (The Tech, March 4). Although this year's U.A. officers would like to be able to claim credit for presenting "the first large-scale student gathering on an issue critical to a student's life at MIT since the days of the General Assembly," I cannot. The U.A. or the Nominations Committee have, at various times in the last three years, run similar open forums on not only the grades issues (which have been and probably always will be discussed) but also on the functioning of student-faculty committees (run by NomCom), the role of the Dean's Office (held this last term by the U.A. during the Dean's Office visiting committee meetings) and others. In addition, all students committees and many student-faculty committees continue to hold open meetings on topics of particular concern to their members and the community.

As for the U.A.P. stating that he does not have speaking privileges, either you misquoted him or he is sadly mistaken. As stated in every issue of the UA News that appears before a Faculty Meeting, the U.A.P. (along with the other student members of CEP, and any student members of a committee that are having a proposal discussed) have speaking privileges. That the U.A.P. has speaking privileges has appeared at least twice in the last term in the UA News, not to mention once in The Tech. I hope that students will continue to express their opinions to those people with speaking privileges.

As for my not expressing an opinion on the particular topic of grades, I was just correct, I did not make up my mind at the time that my proposal was being discussed. Neither did the other student representative.

Sincerely yours,

Irwin L. Collier, G '75

Grades

To the Editor: Congratulations to Editor McNerney for his insightful commentary found on your front page on Friday, February 21, on the grading controversy. He and President Wiesner are right. The problem of student motivation is not directly addressed through the grading vehicle. It is true that policies which allow students to ignore grades often tend to cloud an important aspect of the problem. I speak of competition itself. If individuals find that some grading procedures allow them a greater opportunity to ignore the sharp edges of the struggle of one person to defeat another, fine.

However, grades are an external aspect of the relation of student to student. In addition, the degree to which positions of limited quantity are seen as prestigious (assuming the distribution of such positions remains the province of superiors rather than peers) is an aspect to which we encourage obsequiousness, snobbery, and high rates of student visits. We aren't fools, but isn't it mysterious how our house shrinks can pin the rap on all students, pretend they have no freedom to use the grades, while we're subjected and are supposed to be subjected to the equity level and, even if he works the same hours, must still borrow "a fortune."

If all students are treated the same way, it would mean a lower equity level, less overcrowding for everyone, etc. in short, a better life, a life of equality for all students.

Lawrence Jayne G

Grades

To the Editor:

In response to your articles of Feb. 28 which concerned the Class of ’79, I’d like to present a suggestion for the MIT community to think about and perhaps respond to. Namely, I suggest that MIT adopt a policy which treats all students alike instead of the current policy which favors graduate students and undergraduates.

For example, it is so easy for a grad student to get his whole life paid for by working 15 hours or so per week as a TA or RA, while an undergrad is subjected to the equity level and, even if he works the same hours, must still borrow “a fortune.”

w. s. mitchell
March 4, 1975

UA & Grades

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