Opinion

A 1976 view of MIT grading

By Wells Edidman

In May 1969, several MIT students, including Steve McManus and myself, formed the Grades Study Group (GSG) to investigate possible alternatives to the grading system at MIT. Professor P.J. Werth, who at that time was an active member of the administration, helped us recruit faculty members and students to participate in this study. He also arranged for each of MIT's six unit grading credits for students who were taking courses in the GSG. At the time, we were repeatedly told, the faculty members would not be receptive to such another proposal for changing the Institute's grading system. Prof. Werth then wrote up a final student report on our work. It is traditional for MIT students to "just fade into the gray" at times and then return to life. Therefore, here is a report of some student members of GSG's research and proposal materials for a grading system, circa 1970.

I. Introduction

If Jack Jagger and Keith Richards had attended the Tart, they might have liked our proposals for grading. Please allow me to introduce them to the following:

I'm a man who made the grade,
I've been around for a long long time,
Sold many a poor tool to the line,
Lost my share of the prize.

What's the nature of my grade?
Just the nature of my grade.

I'm the teacher and I'm the student,
And I'm the one who's on the watch for all that's out to mangle.

What's the purpose of my grade?
It's the purpose of my grade.

I'm a man who made the grade,
I've been around for a long long time,
Sold many a poor tool to the line,
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