US programs: growing burden

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"Something like Title 9 takes hundreds of hours to respond to and to plan for the necessary changes — administrative time, time for the legal experts here, and staff time," Wynne said. "One new employment-security bill has added to the workload of a full-time employer doing nothing but writing descriptions of our pension plans. That's the kind of thing that begins to weigh on and burden you administratively."

These federal programs are important steps in advancing toward highly valued social and environmental goals," the ACE report says, "but they also involve costs that are not explicitly recognized or provided for by any of the sources of financial support for institutions. Only six institutions were studied by the ACE team, and differences between schools can result in great disparities in costs. The study team stated that five hypotheses, however, are likely to increase such costs.

- Large, prestigious institutions are more vulnerable than others, and feel correspondingly greater pressures for early and full compliance with federal rules, they said.
- Institutions that take the lead in carrying out federal regulations — as MIT has done in many technical areas — are likely to incur development costs of innovations that will not apply to colleges complying later.
- Private institutions generally bear a heavier burden when a program is implemented than state institutions which can fall back upon special appropriations from their legislatures or the services of state agencies or attorneys general to meet large one-time, administrative, capital and legal costs.

In addition, MIT's huge research load makes it subject to another set of federal rules and regulations governing research facilities and safety standards to protect research workers. These regulations impose both a one-time cost for facility improvements and a continuing cost for maintenance and staffing — an increase in overhead which effectively cuts the money available for researchers' salaries and materials.

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