Menand committee nixes writing credit

By Thomas J. Spinak

The HumanITIES Department, faced with gross procedural irregularities, the Committee on the Humanities Requirements has denied distribution credit to the Writing Program’s chief introductory course, Writing and Experience. Sources close to the Committee charged that the subcommittee reviewing Writing and Experience’s distribution status had violated usual procedure by inviting a faculty member not directly concerned with the subject to testify before it. Special Assistant to the Provost Louis Mianth III, chairman of the Committee, agreed that the subcommittee had erred from normal procedure in permitting one of the implementers of the Writing Program to testify before it.

The subcommittee met with Professor Albert Gurney of the Humanities Department and the Literature Section once, according to Menand. “We were trying to be fair to all sides. We do not operate in an adversarial role—each person made sure that there were no adversarial proceedings,” Menand asserted. Humanities Department sources close to the Committee expressed “deep outrage” at the conduct of the proceedings and that of some Department members.

“The Humanities Department offered its services to the Committee gratis in an effort to show support for the Program,” one professor said.

“I was highly surprised at the choice of two known partisans to be delegates to the Head of the Department to speak against the Program,” he added. In its decision, the Committee laid particular stress on concern for “understanding the number of values in societal, historical and cultural contexts.” The Committee also required subjects on the distribution list to call for reading and writing assignments as well as classroom discussion that demonstrated that experience.

“The cultural context in which research written skills should be significant feature of any Humanities Department subject in writing,” the Committee found. Writing and Experience, whose subject matter consists predominantly of student’s writing judged on personal experience, does not adequately meet this objective,” they concluded.

“The Committee respects the views of most members of the Writing and Experience staff that writing, for them, can be taught and learned without formal assigned readings,” the report said.

“Formal reading assignments were evidently a central issue in the Committee proceedings.”

The Committee acknowledged that the Writing and Experience staff expressed a willingness to sign formal readings to make the course more acceptable to the Department and to the Committee.

“This willingness appeared to be reluctant and did not demonstrate a fullness of agreement with the criteria for Humanities Distribution,” the Committee reported.

“Furthermore, the spirit of the course is to evaluate form and content for effectiveness within the peer group relaying writing to the Committee on the Humanities Requirements,” the report noted.

Hunger — the global disaster

By David Potter

Present trends of world population growth will be followed by a food crisis without global disaster.

Institute Professor of Nutrition Nevin Scrimshaw explained in a lecture held Wednesday that an increased number of countries are suffering from a food production deficit and must import food to support their rapidly growing populations.

Responsibility for food production, which used to be more evenly distributed throughout the world, has dramatically shifted to North America, especially to the United States. Iowa alone produces 10 per cent of the world’s corn. In spite of tremendous productivity, surplus food now gone and the world now has less than a forty-day food supply on hand.

Scrimshaw emphasized that increasing population is not the only source of the world nutrition problem. There is also an increasing demand for food because of rising affluence in many third world countries. Per capita demand for food is rising with income, and production — which is already short of the world’s needs — is projected to fall even further as world population increases.

“Apparently the Committee’s decision was based on misrepresenting us and ignoring our testimony,” said the testimony from the Committee. “I almost feel invisible.”

The DNA controversy: an overview

By Mark James

Recombinant DNA research may be underway soon at MIT if the Cambridge City Council accepts the guidelines drawn up by the Cambridge City Laboratory Ex- perimentation Review Board (CLERB) since its establishment in 1977.

The Labor Department recently released December statistics which show improvement in the national economy. The inflation rate index showed its smallest increase in over 3 1/2 years, while the national unemployment rate used to fall from 1.1 to 1.7 per cent.

According to a report issued by the U. S. Commerce Department, the growing use of electronic computer banks to store data on many patients may endanger the confidentiality of such information, which is often available to many organizations but not to the patient.

A history of the conflict

By Mark James

The controversy surrounding the recombinant DNA controversy has been as intense as the problems it first raised.

The source of both the controversy and the power of the recombinant DNA technique lies at the ability of researchers to join a segment of DNA, an segment of DNA, to another segment: when these two segments combine, the vector’s gene complex is then inserted into a host — the bacterium A. Cal.

This permits the multiplication and replication of DNA sequences from almost any source, thus providing a powerful method of understanding how the genes present in those sequences operate. This understanding may give greater insight into the mechanisms of hereditary ailments.

The technique may also pose unknown dangers, since it is not