At a time when the pressure on MIT students is constantly increasing, we feel this concerted effort by the faculty to lower cumulative averages would be a serious mistake.

At the heart of the controversy is the issue of individualized grades and excellence. Strictly evaluative course grading has high grades in all who desire them would not deny the faculty the opportunity to recognize superior performance.

The administration claims to have made a strong commitment to extracurricular activities and sports, but increasing the pressure on the students by offering the grading system would seriously endanger this crucial part of MIT life. The drive to learn must come from within; any attempt to impose standards from without will be counterproductive. With or without grades, there would be no lack of reward for those whose display of excellence at MIT.

We urge the faculty not to deliberately bog down the grading system. Students who would be forced by this action to sacrifice all of their time to the pursuit of high grades may react in the short run, but they must inevitably lose. And so must MIT.

The history of writing at MIT

By David B. Konetz

Since its inception three years ago, the Pilot Writing Program in the Department of Humanities has received more than its fair share of criticism from within the MIT faculty. The Pilot Writing Program was an experiment in student-centered teaching, concentrating on smaller class groups and students' criticism of their classmates' work. A radical departure from traditional university teaching, the program's methods did not meet with the guidelines that other members of the Humanities Department felt had been established in 1974.

In that year, the faculty approved a new system of Humanities course requirements. The old requirements had been in existence since 1949, and had provided the freedom for freshmen and sophomores but imposed the restrictions on upperclassmen.

Initially, put forward in February, the proposal of the Committee on Educational Policy and the Council of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences included the concept of concentrations in given fields and of required distribution subjects.

A student would be required to take three distribution subjects, one from each of several areas, and by third year, a proficiency concentration in one of fifteen fields. These concentrations would consist of two or three subjects. One of them was in Creative Writing. In 1973, Professor of Humanities Patricia Custen observed that "the demand for the Pilot Writing Program courses far exceeds the facilities available to teach them. Students, in other words, are turned away from traditional university teacher..."