The Tech, Cambridge Massachusetts

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in the news

Frosh poll shows energy top concern

By Patricia Jeff and William Lauer
Editor's note: Patricia Jeff is a frosh and William Lauer a sophomore. This year's entering frosh class is a "vintage" MIT crop — one very much in the MIT tradition and culture — and definitely not energy as students tended to be in the last '60's and early '70's," according to Professor of Political Science Walter Dean Burnham.

Burnham based his conclusion on the results of a poll conducted during R/O Week. Freshmen were asked their opinions on several political topics by staff of the Public Policy Program in the Political Science Department. Over 240 students responded to the questionnaire.

The survey asked the freshmen their views on: United Nations Ambassador Andrew Young; the recognition of Cuba by the United States; the construction of nuclear power plants; the use of fewer students to access oil; and President Carter's job performance. It also asked the question, "What is the greatest constant problem facing the United States?"

The freshmen overwhelmingly picked the energy crisis as the country's most important problem, with "International Relations" placing second. The distribution would look very different in a Gallup poll of the American population. Burnham commented, "Here the leading issues would be the economy (inflation and unemployment) with energy further down on the list." Only 4 percent of the freshmen surveyed listed the economy as the most important problem, and only five percent listed poverty.

"Young's performance as United Nations Ambassador received mediocre ratings from the group, with only six percent calling his performance "very good." President Carter did somewhat better, with 41 percent assessing his handling of his job favorably. "Carter is doing somewhat less well among those MIT freshmen than among the population at large," Burnham said.

The respondents favored US recognition of Cuba by a better than three to one margin. "This generation of students is no longer interested in the Cold War rhetoric," Burnham noted.

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Terms off from MIT help many students

By Jordana Hollander

Sometimes between their arrival at MIT and their graduation, a student finds the need to leave the Institute briefly is an important part of their education. The most common reason for taking a term or more off, according to the Office of the Dean for Student Affairs James Bishop and several students interviewed by The Tech, is a lack of motivation. Most students become serious of the problem when their grades start slipping or when they realize they are not attending classes for several weeks. Some are told by the CAP that they would be good idea to take a term off and decide what they want to do at MIT. Others begin to recognize that the field they are studying is not what they want to do for the rest of their lives and that they need to reconsider their goals.

An example is provided by Michael Burnham '78, who said that he was convinced when he arrived that he wished to major in biology. He became involved in a URI project, but during his sophomore year he realized he was not interested in it. The next term, he took classes in humanities courses. After several weeks of not attending classes he decided to take a term off to rethink his plans.

Once a student decides to leave for a while, he can either merely not register for the next term or formally withdraw. If a student does go through the Dean's Office he is encouraged to discuss his plans with his advisor and with his parents as well as the deans staff. Bishop noted, if the student is serious he is rarely discouraged by the deans.

A few students have definite goals in mind when they leave the Institute, but most people's plans are much more vague. Undergraduate Association President Peter Becker '78 left for two different terms, once just to get away from MIT and the second time to work as a particular job for a term. The first time he left he was away for four years and held a variety of jobs. After he returned he took the fall term off to work as a programmer at CBA for the presidential election.

Those who do not have definite plans usually find jobs, although some travel and attend seminars or courses. Most students go to MIT, going to seminars, reading for courses or participating in study, and in general catching up with themselves. Being away from the Institute has proved quite beneficial for many of those who return. They often find a new perspective on the school and on what they want out of it. Since going to MIT is now a common choice — not just following a pattern of going to school — their attitude toward their studies is greatly improved. As a result, their grades also improve, as in the case of one student who took a term off after being on probation twice and graduated with a 4.0 cum after he returned.

Unless they have been away for several years, students have little trouble getting back into their course work. According to the Office of the Dean for Student Affairs, most students leave before they start serious work in a major and return during the fall term regardless of whether they leave. Therefore, few people have problems with "getting out of orbit" with their work if they need to take courses only off in the spring during the fall. Students interviewed by The Tech said that they were able to

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Much of Boston was in darkness Wednesday night as a power failure hit the Back Bay, the Fenway and the South End. Most of the area was dark, with all areas back to normal by 1:25 a.m. A spokesman for the Boston Police said that no lighting occurred during the blackout.