Richardson misses the target for frost

By Bob Wasserman

By now, news like "160 freshmen to be overcrowded" has become old hat at MIT. Overcrowding always seems to stem from a mistake on the part of the Admissions Office or on a great acceptance rate of prospective freshmen, but the reasons for this problem are not as innocent as they seem.

The main culprit in the overcrowding of students at MIT is the Office of Admissions. It seems as if every year Director Peter Richardson expresses the need for a number of prospective freshmen to enroll and that every year this set number is exceeded. Now, everyone is allowed to make mistakes now and then, especially in the MIT administration, but there is no reason for the Press Service to always overestimate its target for freshman enrollment?

Taking the Academic Council, a mysterious group of top MIT administration, proposed a stable class size of 1050 students to be admitted in the next few years. Previously the Admissions Office followed an off-the-cuff recommendation from the MIT brass, so the proposal by the Academic Council is a new concept. Peter Richardson, however, has managed to slip by the recommendation of the Academic Council this year by allowing 1075 students to enter the class of 1982. It seems odd that a person who has so much impact on the student environment at MIT could care so little about the problem of overcrowding.

Enrollment at MIT has been increasing since the Institute started, of course, but many of today’s difficulties began with the arrival of the Class of 1979, the largest in MIT history totalling over 1150 students. Overcrowding is a result of freshmen class sizes of only forty or fifty students, and MIT planned on further increasing class size in the future. Chancellor Paul Gray remarked that class size will be increasing as much as is reasonable and prudent, considering our existing resources and facilities.

It was soon apparent that further increasing class size was not "reasonable," and the class of 1980 was set at 100 by the Admissions Office. Unfortunately, due to a low yield of acceptance, only 1060 students accepted and enrolled in the fall of 1979. Even so, overcrowding remained high.

The last two years have been large messes for the forecasters of student size in the Admissions Office. Optimal class size was set at 100 for both the classes of ‘81 and ‘82, although each year almost twenty-five extra freshmen showed up. In the fall of 1977 the opening of Rand Hall as an undergraduate residence eased the situation somewhat, but past overcrowding persists as far as the year 1980 is concerned.

This fall, due to a shortage of housing in Boston, overcrowding reached an unprecedented level of 1050 students. Temporary housing conditions were even more ridiculous: students were housed in the Armory, the music room in McCormick, and seniors lost their assigned rooms in East Campus.

Where does the freshman squeeze come from, you might ask. Well, colleges in the 1970's are in financial straits, and the easiest way to increase MIT's income is not simply to raise tuition, but rather to get more of it. The financial crunch has also hurt the housing situation, because alumni give money for labs and libraries, not for dormitories.

Grading: the inside story

By Tom Davidson

As a student, and as the GSC representative to the Ad Hoc Committee on Grading, I feel I should air my thoughts concerning grading policy and the perspectives on grading controversy, especially since I've been a part of the committee (although only since last May), and have at the same time talked to many students who were very much against the proposals issued last year. I'll cite my personal views on the proposals released by our committee below.

The committee's first motion concerns the redefinition of grades, and I am in favor of this motion. Given the time and effort that students put into courses, the 'official' definition of their accomplishment should be something more than 'passed with credit,' etc. The current definitions, because they totally lack substance, create the impression that the letter grade should be considered important in itself. The grade, however, is only a representation of considerable academic achievement, and the definition is important in relaying a strong sense that it is not the grade itself which is important, but the gain in knowledge and skills which the grade represents.

The second motion concerns the placement on the student's grade report of information relating to the number of students taking a course, the number of students dropping the course during the fifth week, and the grade distribution for each course taken by the student during the previous term. To the student (and also to our poor parents, who currently look at our grade reports with such befuddlement after having spent $4700 per year to send us here), the subject material we have studied is of primary importance. Our courses are currently listed on our grade report only by course number, a practice which again relays the impression that the course itself is not important only the grade received for the course. I strongly feel that this practice should be stopped, and that all courses be listed by name instead of number. While the Registrar is to be commended for trying to save both tuition money and time in releasing this compact report, it is to important to realize the very poor impression this report gives about where the 'official' emphasis is being placed.

Editor-in-Chief, Paul Hubbard

feedback

Join Technique!

To the Editor:

Already the various activities on campus have begun to reach out for new members. Their efforts are usually directed towards freshmen, but at least one organization should make its pitch to current Technique editors, of course, of Technique, and because its staff is interested in pulling more students into the fold.

I have never worked on Technique — because of either involvement in sports — but my distress after seeing the content of last year's edition has caused me great concern. An examination of Technique '78 reveals a disproportionate number of photographs obviously included merely for their artistic value, and a paucity of those which capture some facet of MIT life. Karl Taylor Compton wrote a perfect definition of a good yearbook: "Each year... it presents a panorama of the life and activities of a class. Thus it becomes as time passes, the substance of memories and a tangible link with undergraduate days..." In my opinion, and in the opinion of many classmates, Technique '78 failed miserably in this respect. Its value as a college yearbook is minimal.

My year has already been lost out, but there is no need for the trend to last year's Technique staff to continue. I would urge every member of the class of '79 to at least consider expressing his or her ideas about the book. Of course, if you have no other commitments (outside of academics) why not get involved with Technique — you'd be doing