Grading proposal opposition seen

By Kent Pittman

The Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) will "strongly support the effort of the Grading Committee to improve the clarity and quality of grading but... not support the final proposals" at the upcoming faculty meeting.

"A lot of students are confident that these proposals will be beaten and that they don't have to involve themselves in it..."

Professor Robert Holsiter told The Tech yesterday that the CEP will "not support" the final grading proposals at the upcoming faculty meeting.

The Grading Committee's proposals for changes in the grading practices at MIT were a topic of discussion at yesterday's CEP meeting.

According to student CEP member Eric Scullin '79, there was an overwhelming majority of the members in favor of the CEP "not support" the second proposal of the committee which would place grade distributions by subject on students' grade reports, and there was substantial support for a motion to "oppose" the third proposal which deals with the placement of cumulative grade distributions on the grade card.

On the issue of grade redistribution, the first proposal, the vote was more divided, but by a majority vote it was decided that the CEP would "not support" this motion either.

The CEP will recommend that the grade definitions suggested by the Grading Committee be revised after the first short description, resulting in "exceptionally good performance," "good performance," "adequate performance," and "minimally acceptable performance."

Scullin commented that he felt a sense of compassion among the CEP members for all the hard work done by the Grading Committee in the last year, and that this might have induced a certain amount of reluctance in the CEP about rejecting all of the proposals.

The UA Student Participation Committee held a meeting Wednesday to discuss these issues, however only 12 students showed up at the actual meeting other than Alfred Gollop '79 and John Hakala.

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Protein work wins Schimmel award

By J. G. Harrington

Dr. Paul Schimmel, a professor of biochemistry and biophysics, received the Pfizer Award in ELVY Chemistry at the annual meeting of the American Chemical Society on September 12 for his work in protein synthesis. The award is given for outstanding research accomplishments by a biochemist under forty years of age.

In his speech, Schimmel explained that the award was given for two separate accomplishments both in protein synthesis. The first area of research concerned mechanisms of certain enzymes to correct mistakes in protein synthesis. Schimmel's team published the basic papers in this area, and then moved on to the second area, the problem of recognition. He explained that some proteins have the ability to distinguish between different types of nucleic acids, transfer RNA, with great accuracy. Schimmel studied how these molecules, which he described as "witches" at differentiating between transfer RNAs, bind to these RNAs, and which parts of the RNAs they make sense of. In 1969, and moved on to the recognition problem in 1972. His work on recognition continues now, along with research in other areas.

Schimmel added that his work involved in this work, Schimmel said that after completing seven months of medical school, he decided that he would rather get a PhD. After doing some post-doctoral theoretical work in physical chemistry, he came to MIT to bring a more molecular approach to biochemistry. He found the area of protein synthesis to be one with opportunities for basic research, as well as one in which he could apply a more molecular approach.

Schimmel added that he was surprised to hear he had won the award. He explained that when he received a phone call from the editor of a journal he works on, he expected it to be about work for the journal, but to his surprise it was about the award instead. Schimmel also stated that the award, which has been won by many who "would never have come to me without graduate students." He explained that most of the actual work was done by graduate students.

Presently, Schimmel is engaged in gene regulation research, as well as continuing his research on RNA. He also teaches 7.71J (7.714), a course in biophysical chemistry.

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Department approaches related

By Lenny Martin

Editor's note: This is the second article in a three-part series on MIT Department Heads. In this article, the department heads discuss the special characteristics of their departments:

"The big thing about our department is the emphasis on fundamental research," said Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Gerald Wilson '61, one of many department heads who have told The Tech what they think sets their departments apart from others.

Samuel Jay Keyser, Head of the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy, called combining linguistics and computer science with one department "a unique experiment," and one that is working "extremely well. "It's exactly the kind of visionary move you might imagine as a place like MIT," he added. "The merger is a very, very pleasant one."

Leaders in MIT aeronautics and astronautics have traditional-ly been leaders in the aerospace industry, noted Jack Kerrebrock, Head of the Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics.

Herbert Richardson '53, Head of the Department of Electrical Engineering, recalled that the Engineering Internship Program for the seniors has been a tradition made by his department. The program combines...