Time for a new look at place at humanities

By Tom Curtes

Last week, the completed results of the Student Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP) survey showed that over half of the students support additional requirements. At the very least, this support should be seen as a mandate for serious reexamination of the current structure of the humanities requirement virtually assures that these goals will be accomplished.

The distribution courses to satisfy the requirement. These writing courses are broadly based, to think that any three of them can accomplish the structure of the humanities requirement virtually assures that these goals will be accomplished.

In short, the MIT humanities, arts, and social sciences requirement approach to make moral decisions in the real world. The problem can be solved only with a more structured humanities requirement. This would require students to take courses in specific fields, and thus assure that students would be able to choose fields into which they fit. One possible solution would include the following:

1) A requirement that students take courses in different fields. Although students are broadly based, to think that any three of them can accomplish the structure of the humanities requirement virtually assures that these goals will be accomplished.

2) A requirement that students take a course offering a discussion of social, ethical, and moral issues. With the increasing numbers of computer frauds and illegal dumping, an acute need for an ethics course for engineers, scientists, and managers has developed. Such a requirement would at least assure that students have an opportunity to thought about ethical issues that they are likely to encounter in the real world.

3) An economics requirement. Although economics is not "hard core" humanities, an understanding of economics is vital to gaining an understanding of the world of today. Tax revolts, Constitutional amendments to balance the federal budget, inflation and recession are all making headlines. College graduates should be able to understand these issues.

To be certain that students gain a well-rounded understanding of human civilization, MIT must structure its humanities requirement. One idea which might be considered is to include only those problems not only from the technical point of view but also from the social and economic points of view and gain the ability to communicate effectively with people outside their particular field.

When is news editorializing?

Leigh J. Passman

When is it news as presented and when does it become the verge of editorial comment?

For the last two weeks, The Boston Globe has been giving the executive and legislative action to raise the state's legal drinking age from 19 to 21.

However, in this past Wednesday's (Feb. 21) evening edition, what had become the familiar triple-deck, two-column headline — "Globe: Sobriety/Drinking Age" — was not to be found on page one, but rather on page 17, the first page of the new Metro/Region section.

Instead, the Wednesday morning Globe featured a front page human headline "At 11:17 p.m. 'Cruising' Became Deadly for 4."

The accompanying article reported the death of four women under 18 in what appeared to be an unquestionably alcohol-caused accident.

What makes the article fascinating and potentially controversial is its timing and the placement within the paper. Accident fatalities, even ones as tragic as this one, are seldom reported on page one or even as a major headline. They are not usually considered the "desirable" scoops for anxious young reporters on a large metropolitan newspaper and therefore not the treatment of the story significant and alarming.

Taking the visibility of the drinking age debate, the Globe story cannot be viewed as the usual preoccupation of a newspaper with the treatment of the story significant and alarming.

Not only does this story raise several questions, but the scope of such an emotionally charged article can be viewed as the paper's attempt to capitalize on a "hot issue" and sell newspapers, or likewise the placement and scale can reflect the editorial opinion of the Globe. One would hope, and common sense would dictate, that the Globe's treatment of the incident runs deeper than just trying to sell newspapers and the headline and emotional tone of front-page treatment of front-page treatment clearly reflect an attempt to highlight the degree and seriousness of drinking and driving among Massachusetts high school students. One must therefore ask whether such coverage is an obverse aspect of editorializing and therefore whether it is responsible, objective journalism.

Believe there is no correct answer; what is or is not responsible journalism is a matter of personal and arbitrary choice. The Globe has the right to be sensationalistic; that is the choice of its editorial staff and publishers.

Likewise the Globe can be inconsistent in the balance of its coverage if its editorial staff and publishers feel that it sells newspapers, that again is their right.