Tom Curtis

Characteristics of the president

Some time in the next year, the MIT Corporation will choose the next president of MIT. Although most of the speculation so far has centered on Tom Curtois, the next president should also look closely at the characteristics Jerome Wiener's successor should have.

President should open policy discussion

For instance, the next president must be a strong leader. We need someone who will provide direction for the Institute. The new president should be willing to open discussion on policy issues. The MIT Corporation will be choosing the next president for a job that is clearly not a well-known general policy for the Institute. For example, what is MIT trying to be? Does it want to remain a research institution interested only in a specialized vocational education or should it provide a more broadly-based education?

And what should the faculty do? Should they be primarily teachers or researchers or consultants? These are serious questions and the next president should at least be willing to attack them.

The next president should also be willing to express his personal opinion on such issues as South Africa divestment if that is necessary to open discussion on that campus.

Spokesman for technology

The new president should also provide leadership at the national level. As the president of the most prestigious engineering school in the nation, he will be expected to speak for technology. This role will be crucial as the general perception of technology was hurt by the Three Mile Island incident and the discovery of hazardous chemical dumping. The president should be a personality which will be able to raise the image of technology.

Although the president will need to be a strong leader, he should also respect the opinions of others. Decisions which should be made prominently whenever reasonably possible.

This is an important point. Often strong leaders do not have enough respect for the views of other people. John Silber was a leader in the fight for civil rights at the University of Texas, yet at BU he has often been accused of not hearing the views of the students and the faculty.

Must handle finances

The president should also have some ability to tackle financial matters. There is no question that MIT is in a financial crunch. Fundraising efforts are less successful, and government research funding is declining. The new president should speak out and lobby for more research funding as Wiener did.

He should also be able to come up with creative cost-cutting measures when funding comes up short.

Finally, there is the question of whether the next president should be an insider or an outsider. An insider has the advantage of already knowing how the MIT system works. However, an outsider would probably bring in new ideas on how to improve the Institute. Since the last several presidents have been from MIT, it might be a good idea to bring in an outsider who would be willing to challenge the status quo.

Whoever the Corporation picks will not be perfect. No one is a perfect leader and a financial wizard. However, the committees who make these choices must on that president should keep these characteristics in mind. We don't need a Silber here.

RC

Steven F. Frann '80 — Chairman
Thomas Curtis '80 — Editor-in-Chief
Karen Mueller '80 — Executive Editor
Pandora Bereman '80 — Business Manager
Bob Wasserman '80 — Executive Editor
Volume 85 Number 22
Friday, May 4, 1979

PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT
Night Editors: Eric Sklar '81, Stephanie Polock '82, Jon von Zellows; Associate Night Editor: Marion F. Wiese '80; Production Manager: Rebecca L. Weyng '79; Graphics Artist: Linda Schaffi '82, Richard Davis '80, Rudy Defina '81, Glenn Katz '82, Lisa Janickovic '80, Dave Solo '82.

NEWS DEPARTMENT
News Editor: Bill Cimino '80; Associate News Editors: Gordon Beattie '80, Jay Glenn '82, Richard Beattie '82, Camper Dearest '82, sedan Katz '80, Glenn Katz '82, Lisa Janickovic '80, Dave Solo '82.

PHOTOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT
Photo Editors: Charles M. Stevens 80, Robin C. Stearn '80, John Bartolozzi '80, John Jackson '80, Shawn Wilson '81, Roger Chen '80, Bruce Kaplan '80, Lisa Janickovic '80, Aaron Reepor 81, Elaine Douglas '81.

I'm glad to see that President Carter has announced the lifting of price controls off of domestic crude oil. It's a step in the right direction. For example, President Ford was planning to do that when he was in office. Only recently have we seen the results of the price controls. It's probably too late to reverse the effect of the prices of oil for the consumer. People are already used to the higher prices.

Another thing that people are looking forward to is the possibility of being able to travel more cheaply. The new president should be willing to open discussion on the lifting of these controls.

Still, people insist there is 'no evidence'. The purpose of the oil companies is to make profits. If you want to make profits, you need to be able to sell your product.

Back to the question of whether the next president should be a strong leader, we need someone who will provide direction for the Institute. The new president should be willing to open discussion on policy issues. The MIT Corporation will be choosing the next president for a job that is clearly not a well-known general policy for the Institute. For example, what is MIT trying to be? Does it want to remain a research institution interested only in a specialized vocational education or should it provide a more broadly-based education?

And what should the faculty do? Should they be primarily teachers or researchers or consultants? These are serious questions and the next president should at least be willing to attack them.

The next president should also be willing to express his personal opinion on such issues as South Africa divestment if that is necessary to open discussion on that campus.

Spokesman for technology

The new president should also provide leadership at the national level. As the president of the most prestigious engineering school in the nation, he will be expected to speak for technology. This role will be crucial as the general perception of technology was hurt by the Three Mile Island incident and the discovery of hazardous chemical dumping. The president should be a personality which will be able to raise the image of technology.

Although the president will need to be a strong leader, he should also respect the opinions of others. Decisions which should be made prominently whenever reasonably possible.

This is an important point. Often strong leaders do not have enough respect for the views of other people. John Silber was a leader in the fight for civil rights at the University of Texas, yet at BU he has often been accused of not hearing the views of the students and the faculty.

Must handle finances

The president should also have some ability to tackle financial matters. There is no question that MIT is in a financial crunch. Fundraising efforts are less successful, and government research funding is declining. The new president should speak out and lobby for more research funding as Wiener did.

He should also be able to come up with creative cost-cutting measures when funding comes up short.

Finally, there is the question of whether the next president should be an insider or an outsider. An insider has the advantage of already knowing how the MIT system works. However, an outsider would probably bring in new ideas on how to improve the Institute. Since the last several presidents have been from MIT, it might be a good idea to bring in an outsider who would be willing to challenge the status quo.

Whoever the Corporation picks will not be perfect. No one is a perfect leader and a financial wizard. However, the committees who make these choices must on that president should keep these characteristics in mind. We don't need a Silber here.