Tom Curtis

Join an activity to help people

At Friday’s freshman picnic, opening speaker Peter Richardson ’48, then a member of the Class of ’52, urged the Class of ’79 to “trust for others.” Before his words got lost in the shuffle of R/O week, freshmen—and upperclassmen—should consider them carefully. How should you care for others for your time at MIT?

Activities want and need help

One way is through activities. You may not realize it, but the MIT community is served by one of the most extensive collections of student activities in the nation. Student organizations, service groups, a yearbook, and this newspaper are all provided to the MIT Community at a very low cost. Most of them are subsidized by students who donate their time to make them run.

And for them to continue to run, they need your help. Some organizations are in the verge of extinction because they don’t have the staff to go on doing their job. In the last few years, MIT has lost a newsletter, a magazine, and a political action group. All these groups disappeared mostly because of a lack of staff, not of a lack of work.

Even groups which are not facing imminent death are short on staff. Many groups have important positions open, but nobody to fill them. Certainly, no group is going to turn you down if you volunteer. Many groups have important positions open, but nobody to work, organizations are on the verge of extinction because they don’t have the staff to go on doing their job. In the last few years, MIT has lost a newsletter, a magazine, and a political action group. All these groups disappeared mostly because of a lack of staff, not of a lack of work.

It is very important that everyone volunteer his time to some group. Keeping the activities in service is a cooperative effort. If you do your part, you’ll be part of another activity and we’ll both be better off; we’ll get the benefits of each other’s contributions, and we’ll also get the benefits of knowing that we’re doing something for other people.

Develop skills, acquire a hobby

The benefits you can derive from involvement in activities are numerous. You get to sharpen your abilities to deal with other people. You’ll get to know some administration. You’ll develop some administrative skills. In some cases, you get to develop skills which are specific to a particular activity. If you work as a business manager, you learn accounting; if you work as a reporter for The Tech, you can learn to write.

You don’t need to pick your activities solely on the basis of what will help you in a future job. However, you may want to pick an activity which would be more like hobby. This way your activities can become a blend of work and fun.

You don’t need to choose your activities on the basis of what you did in high school. MIT students take courses in all the MIT education to broaden their horizons. As far as activities go, you can do this by trying something you have never done before. MIT organizations usually do not assume any prior experience. I had never had any journalism experience before I joined The Tech.

An important year for political activity

There is one special reason to join governmental and political organizations. Over the past few years, the MIT administration has proposed several policy changes, many of which would have been detrimental to students. Without a concerted effort on the part of many students, we would have now more restrictive drop date policies, more stringent grading policies, and for less student responsibility on the part of the students. This is a battle MIT must win.

You can thank the students for this current state of affairs, and you owe it to future classes to maintain or improve the quality of life at MIT.

This year promises to be another important one for political activity. The recently recalled Undergraduate Committee draft now contains a proposal for compulsory common meal plan for residents of dormitories, which would take effect with the Class of 1984. This proposal has already sparked quite a bit of controversy. There is also the possibility of MIT’s investments in companies that do business with South Africa. Furthermore, there are always issues popping up that nobody expected.

So urge your fellow students to follow through on Richardson’s advice by getting involved. Make sure you stop by the Activities Midway Thursday evening. I hope to see you there.

The Tech

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Tuesday, September 4, 1979

MIT overreacts to Grogo

To the Editor:

Once again the MIT administration has raised us from its long slumber. In the grand tradition of the Thursday sex-guide scandal and Jews for Jesus vs. MIT Hillel, we have once again a Grogo incident. It seems that traditional that, when faced with a possible instance of its collective behavior, the administration will choose the always ill-considered massive overkill response.

Two years ago, when people were upset because a gorilla from Uganda might be taken as a degrading trophy for a black person, the administration made it possible for the situation to get completely out of hand. An adversary-situation was established through Committee on Discipline regarding an inordinately conceived back picture. The administration seemingly was more concerned about its image than anything else, since it entertained ludicrous proposals such as the summary expulsion of the entire TCA, found a stagpole, and resorted to the machinery to stamp out the gorilla. Fortunately, someone in the administration called a halt at the circus when the level of campus tension became apparent.

Properly, it should have been noted that some people were upset by the possible interpretation of the Grogo picture, and an apology would have sufficed. In subsequent years, precautions such as making sure that gorillas don’t too closely resemble actual freshmen would have been taken.

This year, due partly to a misunderstanding within the picture-taking Committee, Grogo once again in the freshman pictorial. This time, however, the address was Technique, MIT, not Kampala, Uganda. Thus, the

Steven Solnick

Housing guesses and praise

Today, a variety of thoughts which made a pit stop in my brain this weekend on their way to sure oblivion:

* * *

To show that columnists don’t always have to say bad things about people, congratulations to the Admissions Office! No, not about that great freshman class they’ve got out (I’ll reserve judgment on that for a while), but rather on their mathematics. There are now 104 freshmen (worry, freshmen) on campus. Assuming that all of the 27 to 30 freshmen arrive eventually, the final class size should fall awfully close to the target 1050.

What’s with those no-shows anyway? Did they just overstay?

* * *

Among resources available to freshmen this week was the “Undergraduate Association Social Calendar - Fall 1979.” Now this is a new one on me. But if the new UA Social Committee actually manages to keep this from being a flop, it’s an important one for political activity. The Undergraduate Association is one of the most important groups on campus. You can thank the students for this current state of affairs, and you owe it to future classes to maintain or improve the quality of life at MIT.

* * *

Another entry in the panic-department, and an entry not to be sneezed at, is the announcement of the new house to be established early, with otherwise-prescribed house policies, for freshmen to visit. There are now 1048 freshmen on campus. If a new dorm is available, freshmen are partly to help the living groups get to be more available.

* * *

Yesterday was Technique, MIT, not Kampala, Uganda. Thus, the