Sexual harassment, comm. wants public policy statement

By Gordon Hauser

The Ad-Hoc Faculty-Student Committee on Sexual Harassment has prepared recommendations calling for a public declaration of Institute policy and the formation of a group to review Institute procedures concerning sexual harassment, according to Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Peter Elias, chairman of the committee.

The recommendations will be presented to the Committee of Educational Policy (CEP) for faculty endorsement at the Wednesday evening next week.

According to Elias, the current policies and procedures of MIT are good. He recommended a call for a full declaration of these policies and procedures to "raise community consciousness" concerning sexual harassment as well as to demonstrate just how seriously the Administration views the subject, he explained. In addition, he said that the ad-hoc committee has recommended that a group be formed to review "the evolution of procedures" dealing with harassment. Elias added that a series of articles which appeared in The Tech last October concerning faculty-student relationships are now beginning to implement the declaration of policy.

O A source in the Administration said that "since the articles in The Tech, the kind of attention of a reasonably serious complaint concerning sexual harassment has been received about once a week from employees and students." The source added that the ad-hoc committee had material partially completed prior to the articles.

"I think there is a good bit of consensus for the recommendations by those who have studied the issue," Elias said. "What will come out of the CEP will have to be consistent with the recommendations...it's then the Administration's ball as to what will be done." He said he expected that the committee's work would be finished after the CEP meeting, except to advise the policy group after its formation.

Undergraduate Association Vice-PresidentChuck Markham said, "It's then the Administration's recommendations, Elias explained that there were two possible routes for reporting complaints: a legalistic route using hearings and disciplinary committees, and a counseling mode utilizing informal means. He explained that he was "strongly against the legalistic route" as were others, since the present recommendations include the informal counseling route. "It is easier for someone to talk to their advisor instead of filing formal charges," he said.

Markham stressed that informing the community of the issues involved in sexual harassment is extremely important. "There are many members of our community who need to realize that flashing nudity on the screen during a slide show or making passes in the lab is unacceptable behavior."

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By Grace Ralston

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