Class of 2009??

Steve Solnick

Talking with some friends last week, one jokingly asked, "Would you send your kid to MIT?"

It was a joke, I think, because, although we were all sitting around complaining about our workloads, he actually said he would want his son or daughter to follow in his footsteps. As for myself, I just had to do all over again knowing four years ago what I now know, I'd choose the same school. I'm going to miss MIT when I leave. I may even feel a little sad when I read about the old Alma Mater. I wouldn't miss my class reunions for anything. Money if I ever make any. But I wouldn't want to send my kid here.

It was a real shock for me to say that, but once I realized it there was no going back.

It really is a matter of trust and luck. I just wouldn't trust my son to any school. I can't run a thousand and a few school while there I read about the old Alma Mater. I wouldn't miss my class reunions for anything. Money if I ever make any. But I wouldn't want to send my kid here.

There's one key to understanding the ground rules of this little struggle. She gives the cards against the student from Day 1. I got to be an undergraduate student, there is a key to understanding this whole thing. I read the Harvard Crimson, took three weeks off from classes to follow up some activities of interest to me. I travelled and eventually ended up at Sea board; his roommates, they made up the work with each other, during Harvard's reading period.

My God, right? These guys took a month off without inking an essay. I have to plan to work for weeks to get a day off. Why?

Because the structure of MIT just isn't set up to recognize the important things by ignoring the structure of MIT. Most students have two or three problems each day. A day missed in lab could screw up a schedule for weeks. At Sea board, folks were doing fascinating work in their majors but never left with the time to consider what any of it means? Wading — as an old teacher of my life: doing fascinating work in your major but never left with the time to consider what any of it means?

Time is what it's all about. Who controls your time: you or MIT? I will probably never go to class reunion for Harvard's reading period.

The essential of an undergraduate education is having the time to explore and grow. Graduate students focus solely on their fields of study; they are researchers, dedicated academics-in-training or scientists-in training. Undergraduates are endowed to create the intellectual landscape. That fact should be independent of whether they're scientists-to-be or historians. The world we live in is not one that is set up for our lives. I rode from Boston to New York on Amtrak once with a first year Harvard Law student. He was a graduate of The College (that's what they call the undergraduate component up the creek). He recounted the time he and his roommate, who edited the Harvard Crimson, took three weeks off from classes to follow up some activities of interest to them. He travelled and eventually ended up at Sea board; his roommates, they made up the work with each other, during Harvard's reading period.

I have put up with this in the past and given blood, but a particular incident which involved a friend of mine occurred which I will not tolerate. Basically, he was harassed by several people in the TCA office because, when questioned if he was going to give blood, he responded truthfully that he didn't think his physical condition was appropriate. TCA is supposed to be a service group, but in fact they are doing the MIT Community and the Red Cross a considerable disservice. It is a shame that such an irresponsible group of individuals guilty of these actions can be running the blood drive. I regret that I found several other people I know cannot be in good conscience participate in the TCA blood drive. There may be few, but they are surely needed donations that the TCA has lost. We are human beings, not commodities for blood which can be tapped upon command. People do not want to be reminded to give blood, but they should not be pressured or forced into doing this, or made to feel guilty because they do not choose to.

William T. Ralston '82

Pressuring blood donors

Dear Sirs,

I regret that I have cancelled my appointment to give blood. This is due to the harassment I and several of my friends have received from people in the blood drive.

There are many people who are never asked if they plan to give blood, or when asked they respond just yes. However, there are some people who, for their own personal and private reasons, choose not to give blood. For this they receive endless badgering and harrassing.

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William T. Ralston '82

To the editor:

As Blood Drive Chairman, it is my responsibility to handle problems as they arise. Bill Ralston raises an important issue, and it is everyone's advantage to hear both sides.

First, I do not feel that, as Bill says, the people running the drive are irresponsible (this opinion may sound obvious, because that group includes me, but it is my honest opinion). We are people with a cause, yes; but I will vocally for the entire group in saying that none of us condone harassing a person into donating. Needless to say, we do not consider what we are doing to be harassment.

We have defined, over the years, a level for our donor recruitment effort that we feel brings in the most reliable donors without unduly pressuring people into donating. I talked with Bill soon after receiving this letter, and I hope he understands this position.

This does not solve the problem of people who push the Blood Drive so hard that a person ends up giving almost against his/her will. An unwavering donor who only gives once and then refuses because of the tactics used against does too little good; nor does a person who doesn't give, due to ignorance of the process or the need, benefit us. Obviously, a middle road in our recruitment effort is best. Almost as obviously, keeping everyone involved on that road is almost impossible.

Our goal is to provide a convenient, easy way to give blood.

Clearly, it is to our advantages to have willing, happy donors. Bill's letter points out that the problem of harassment may be more acute than we had realized before. As a direct result, since the third day of the drive we have had a large poster by the entrance of the Sales talking about the problem. I will repeat the message here: if anyone has been, in their minds, either pressured by anyone involved with the Blood Drive, talk to any blood donor, talk to any blood donor. Talk to a volunteer and we will do what we can to help solve the problem.

If you decide that, for whatever reason, you cannot give at the drive, the need for blood is acute. There is a donor center in Boston at 99 Brookline Avenue (the Boston Red Cross Chapter); it is open every day except Sunday, and we would urge you to give there.

Tom Vernon
Fall '80 Blood Drive Chairman