Helping activities help students

Participation in student activities is an excellent way to meet people, learn enjoyable and useful skills, and just relax. Why then did only a handful of freshmen attend the spring term midway held recently to introduce them to the wide variety of activities on the MIT campus?

We hope the poor turnout was solely a result of inadequate publicity for the event. Given the chance, it is likely that students would attend a second activities midway each academic year. This year’s failed experiment should not preclude a second attempt at a midway next spring.

Instead of being a separate event, the afternoon before registration, however, next year’s midway should take place in duPont during registration. Publicity would be unnecessary, and poor attendance would at least be a clear indication of disinterest on the part of students.

It would be unfortunate if the indifference toward the spring midway were to continue. Student activities need students. More importantly, however, students need student activities.

Brian J. Glass ’82 — Chairman
Stephanie L. Polack ’82 — Editor-in-Chief
Jon von Zellwitz ’82 — Managing Editor
Richard W. Epstein ’83 — Business Manager

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Volume 101, Number 3
Tuesday, February 10, 1981

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opinion

Gratuitous graphics

The use of a Matisse to illustrate LSC’s most recent registration day movie posters seems unfounded in light of regular, voluntary, paid attendance at these films by approximately 2500 men and women. No one is forced to view a film they find offensive.

Residents have no choice, however, when pictures they find offensive are posted in their own living groups. LSC must we know, may provide.

This year’s failed experiment should not preclude a second attempt at a midway next spring. Participation in student activities is an excellent way to meet people, learn enjoyable and useful skills, and just relax. Why then did only a handful of freshmen attend the spring term midway held recently to introduce them to the wide variety of activities on the MIT campus?

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LSC apologizes

To the Editor:

It has come to our attention that some members of the MIT community have been offended by our recent poster advertising the traditional registration day movie. We would like to apologize to these people and assure them that we will attempt to take these feelings into account in the future.

The Executive Committee of the MIT Lecture Series Committee

Avoiding “us versus them”

It’s “Initiation Season” again. Almost every fraternity with a structured pledge program initiates their pledges during February. With this in mind, I’ve been thinking recently about the differences between fraternities and fraternities here at MIT, both what they are and how they’re brought about.

The distinction between the two types of living groups is emphasized right from the start of one’s MIT career. The fraternities here rush for freshmen before they’ve had a chance to live in a dormitory. While a freshman will occasionally move into a fraternity after Rush Week, such cases are rare.

At most other schools, fraternities rush for new members after the first semester has started, giving the freshman an opportunity to live in a dormitory and make some contacts. There is also the benefit that the frats, having a rush period of a month or more, have more time to look over the would-be pledges and can make a more informed choice.

There are reasons why MIT’s Rush Week is structured the way it is. The dorms are just too crowded to take on a couple of hundred new freshmen. The fraternities, by contrast, keep open a dozen or so empty beds for a semester.

There are also liabilities with the present method. It’s dammed tough to choose between 10 and 30 people that you’d like to have in your group out of a pool of the more than one hundred you pass through your doors — all in a three-day period. It’s also an incredible financial, physical, and emotional strain on everyone involved.

By far the greatest deficit, however, is the immediate separation and alienation the present structure forces upon the freshmen. Rather than encouraging any sense of homogeneity and class unity, MIT’s orientation splits the incoming freshmen into several small groups.

I once ran for freshman class officer with another member of my pledge class. Our platform was fairly simple and, admittedly, a socially-oriented one. We wanted to have a scene of small “black parties” among the freshmen classes within the various living groups, working in ever-widening circles.

These parties would have introduced the members of the classes to each other on a small scale. Ultimately, we had hoped, we could have a full-class part and a respectable number of people would attend.

As we talked to freshmen in the living groups — and we canvassed just about all of them — we met with almost unanimous support. Bakerites wanted to meet Dek’s, and Kappa’s Sig’s were anxious about what it was like to be in East Campus.

The message was, and still is, I believe, clear. Many students wonder what it would be like to be in another living group, and would like to meet fellow students living outside of their immediate vicinity. The success of last year’s inter-living group exchange program run by LAP Markham lends further credence. Regrettably, the present system not only doesn’t allow for this, but inhibits it.

All this notwithstanding, I wouldn’t change the present structure. Most people also seem to end up in a place that they’re satisfied with. Whether it’s the best place for them, I don’t know. It’s kind of sad, though, that no one really gets to see how the other half lives.

Richard Salz

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