Stephanie Pollack

On being denied an MIT education

Usually, MIT students can handle any numbers that are thrown in their direction. When the numbers are 19 percent or $7400, however, some people do break down. The two numbers before him were serious difficulties. This is the story of three such students, who are fighting — and losing — a battle of numbers with MIT.

These students asked that their identities be hidden to avoid reprisals from the Financial Aid Office, which they consider their primary adversary. Their complaints changed to protect the truly innocent — those whose only crimes are desiring an MIT education and being unable to pay for it.

"Mark," a freshman who insists that he "will not leave MIT because of tuition," nevertheless, he has not yet paid any of this term's fees, and he does not have the funds to do so. Much of his career at MIT has been spent fighting with the Financial Aid Office about how much his parents earn and can afford to pay. He is still waiting for the Institute to acknowledge the devastating effects of a sharp drop in his family's income which occurred recently.

"How will he pay for next year?" Mark, who has not registered for the draft, will join ROTC. He is not happy about the decision, but needs the scholarship to pay for MIT. At least he is not alone. Mark claims to know at least 10 other students who appeared in the various RO TC offices around campus "within two days after they announced the tuition increases." There may be other ways to deal with profoundly high costs, but withdrawal is not one of them. "Ken" withdrew from the Institute earlier this term, although not because of financial pressures. He now ruefully notes that "money would have been a good reason not to enroll." At any rate, he claims that, although he withdrew, he "will definitely return." This would be fine if all charges were similarly excused, but students are expected to pay some pro-rated portion of their tuition. Withdrawal thus becomes an expensive proposition, with all of the tuition coming out of the student's pocket.

"Not only was this year's tuition undoubtedly not. He is close to the loan ceiling, and his parents have never been able to contribute more than one-quarter of what MIT believes they are capable of paying. Although he has received "fairly large" financial aid until this term, he will fall two terms short of what he needs because of his withdrawal. He is understandably bitter, especially since MIT's frequent contention that its high costs will be more than compensated by high starting salaries after graduation. Ken may never graduate.

"Jane" does not plan to graduate. She is seriously considering transferring to a low expense college. Jane is putting herself through MIT using her parents' money as a percentage — they would rather I stay at home and get married." Not exactly a splendid idea, she has enough money for one meal per day. "Any more," she says, and "I don't eat at the end of the term." Last summer she worked multiple jobs and ridiculous hours to earn enough to pay for school. She uses Social Security benefits to help her rent, but President Reagan has proposed drastic cuts in that program. What about loans? "I am planning to start my own business when I graduate. I won't be able to pay back loans," Jane does not know where she will transfer, but she hopes it will have a financial aid office which unlike MIT's will not laugh when she explains how many hours she worked over the summer.

There are the stories of three students who don't exist as far as the Institute is concerned. Official MIT policy, as repeatedly expressed by President Paul Gray, states that "talented students with the capacity to do MIT-level work will not be denied an MIT education because of lack of money." True, but Jane and Ken have received an education, but not about what Gray or they — expected.

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To the Editor:

It has come to our attention that a number of members of the MIT community were offended by some of our actions this past weekend. We, the brothers of Pi Lambda Phi, would like to both apologize to and clarify the situation for the community.

We trust The Tech's coverage of the external situation. We want to explain the motivation behind our actions. Our initiation week is very important to us. One of the main thrusts is the development of a sense of togetherness among the pledges. Another is providing them with something both memorable and enjoyable. To accomplish these goals, we try to come up with some harmless funs and pranks.

Two of this year's hacks were the placing of goat heads and the staging of a mock rally ad vo cating capital punishment for homosexuality. Neither of these activities was intended maliciously towards any person or group. In retrospect, the grossness of the heads was underestimated. The rally was so blatantly reactionary that we should be obviously farce, down to the details of costume and burden. In both pranks, our error was our insufficiently sensitive perception of the community's reaction.

The specific individuals and groups offended have already received personal apologies. We would like to take this opportunity to apologize in public to any other members of the community we have offended or hurt. Our intent was clearly not to embarrass MIT or its fraternity system.

We are still not sure if the present focus is the result of our insensitivity or the community's reaction. We really had no idea that anyone would get this upset, again, we are sorry.

The brothers of Pi Lambda Phi

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