A student review of the curriculum

The report released last week by the Committee on Educational Policy on the status of its curriculum review marks the beginning of a term-long debate over the proper direction for MIT's educational priorities and policies. Although it should be obvious that this discussion merits widespread participation by students, this point must be stressed in light of the irresponsibly low level of student input into major Institute decisions made during the past year. Current undergraders will not necessarily be directly affected by the curriculum changes, but they can provide valuable insight into the strengths and weaknesses of both the present academic program and the future one.

There are many methods by which the CEP can solicit student opinion, and the wisest approach is to use a combination of several procedures. One or several polls would be a useful device to determine the effectiveness of current programs or the reaction to new courses. Surveys could be sent either to all undergraduates or to selected groups such as students currently enrolled in science or humanities distribution courses. Holding a single, large forum is an opinion-getting device which has consistently failed. A series of small, informal meetings held in living groups and attended by members of the CEP and its Undergraduate Association counterpart would be a more useful means of obtaining a broad range of student input.

Recent graduates can also be a source of information by assessing the value of the current program as preparation for a wide variety of careers. They can also provide insight into the reaction of employers and other educational institutions to MIT's core and departmental requirements. As many new alumni as possible should be contacted either informally or as part of a survey.

The present curriculum is primarily the result of only four faculty committees' efforts, so it is likely that the current review will have lasting consequences. If the review is to accurately reflect the needs and concerns of MIT's undergraduates, it must be based on abundant and timely input by a broad range of students.

Vote and be heard

The tides of student outrage at MIT ebb and flow sharply, creating immediately after major policy pronouncements and fading rapidly, especially toward the end of the term. Too often, these outbursts are nothing more than an after-effect they can have any effect on Institute decision-making.

There is, however, a group of students whose job it is to monitor and participate in those decisions which most closely affect student life. They are the officers of the Undergraduate Association and the four classes.

Sports served as proxies for student opinion to the Administration. They will be more representative and effective, however, if they are elected by a large number of MIT's undergraders. This can be done in one of two ways. One is where concerned students to make certain that their opinions will be heard throughout the year.

Mass. Institute of Taxation

Editor’s note: This is a copy of a letter sent to President Paul Gray '57.

To the Editor:

Ah, the benefits of power! Would that it was possible for ordinary, mortal freshmen to understand the complexities of finance at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Then they might see their obvious ability to cope with a $1200 raise in tuition.

You have stated that John DeRubis and Ken Dumais are exhibited in some of the other candidates. You have stated that John DeRubis plans to serve as a liaison between students and administrators. This is the same quality that Charles Moon and Bob Wallace have campaigned for and, for example, were they the ones who planned the meeting for all the candidates with Dr. Gray. They took the initiative to start communication early and involved the rest of the candidates. Charles Moon and Bob Wallace have proposed workable plans for commons, overcrowding, and campus fragmentation and will be excellent representatives of the MIT student body to Cambridge and other outside groups. If experience is important, then perhaps you should have considered one of the other candidates. There seems to be a general consensus that Charles Moon and Bob Wallace are great people, hard workers, and serious leaders, so why are you holding back? It seems that you have applied your criteria for choosing a pair of candidates in a biased manner.

Eric Aslakson '82

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Columns are usually written by members of The Tech staff and represent the opinion of the author only, not necessarily that of the rest of the staff.

Letters to the Editor are written by members of the MIT community and represent the opinion of the writer.

The Tech will attempt to publish all letters received, and will consider columns or stories. All submissions should be typed, preferably single-spaced, on a 5½ x 8½-inch character line. Unsigned letters will not be printed. Authors’ names will be withheld upon request.

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James MacStravic '84

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