Opinion

How's and why's of funding activities

The level of funding for student activities has remained essentially unchanged for the last decade, while student priorities have steadily worn away the value of this money. Although student groups have been asking for increased funding for years, Paul Gray told a meeting weeks ago that he was not aware of the problem until that day. Gray’s comment is symbolic of the lack of communication students and administration have over funding and other problems of student activities.

Student activities play a vital role in enriching the character of lives, but the current level of student groups programming entertainment and excitement to keep students away from textbooks, foster new friendships, bring together students on a campus where personal interaction is minimal, and inject variety in what might otherwise be an excessively scientific and technology-oriented environment. Many groups provide their members with new skills and, in some cases, professional training. Student activities broaden the college experience of their members and help relieve the relentless pace of MIT.

Some large groups can furnish their own operating funds, but most depend on FInBoard and other outside sources for funding. The Office of the Dean for Student Affairs, which allocates the FInBoard’s budget, should pay greater attention to the funding needs of these student groups. Students should cooperate with administration in deciding the size of the student activity budget, following the provisions of a GA resolution calling for a framework for consultation between the students, students’ organizations, and the Office of FInBoard or FInBoard budgets. Such a framework is indispensable to a proper student budget process.

The Dean for Student Affairs office must supplement next year’s FInBoard budget to compensate for the continued effects of inflation and to fund unfilled requests. This money should be allocated according to the students’ priorities rather than administration interests. More money shouldn’t mean more strings.

Visit the committee

The Institute’s dangerous dependence on precedent has predictably prevented any change in the scheduling of the Corporation Visiting Committee on Student Affairs open meeting which will be held Tuesday evening at 7:30 in a tiny better suited to socializing, it is imperative that students postpone their workday’s activities and meet with the committee.

The advisory committee, in one of its irregular sittings, is investigating undergraduate academic support. Recommendations will eventually be made to the Corporation Executive Committee, and changes may even follow. In the past, the committee has examined various aspects of the Dean’s Office, ranging from advising to housing to athletics, with varying degrees of success.

No one is better qualified than students to assess the adequacy of undergraduate academic support programs at MIT. The committee’s work is unfinished; students should help design the programs. Students at MIT find no shortage of topics about which to complain, while whom to complain is a constant and ever-changing variable. In and out of scheduling, students should take advantage of this rare opportunity.

Comments need not be confined to undergraduate academic support. This is the first Visiting Committee meeting since the reorganization of the Dean’s Office, and opinions about the effectiveness of the new structure would undoubtedly be appreciated. Many students are also highly qualified to assess the effectiveness of the counseling, student activities, and residence sections of the Dean’s Office.

There is no guarantee that student input will be respected—there never is. But the Dean’s Office is, however, the administration most primarily responsible for undergraduate education, and improving its continuing effectiveness is an important task for students.

Guest Column

Dealing with sexuality

(Editor’s note: the name of the author of this column has been withheld at his request)

Saturday, May 8th, the LSC movie was Teenage Angel. For those of you who missed it, a 1957 drama about bigotry and prejudice in the context of a jury making its decision. The first degree murder with a manslaughter charge. The little girl from sex, you think. But the way the trial was handled, just like with any mock trial — capital punishment for homosexuals. The discussion since then has been limited, so I wish to add one more story.

The town I grew up in was a wealthy suburb which provided its children with one of the best educational tax dollars could provide. We were taught not only facts but how to conceptualize, solve problems and lead. There was no question that we would go to college and become leaders of society thereafter.

But, when I got to college, I was confronted with a question I had never given the most part in high school. It seemed I was gay; I seemed I was sexually attracted to my own sex. It was because, like most people, I was brought up with little knowledge about homosexuality and a great deal about that is true. How could I be gay? I didn’t choose to be. Was I going to do it? I was one of the most panic-stricken realizations of my life that I was now going to be deemed totally unfit and unacceptable for society. This despite years of running and encouraging, years of being told I was a capable young man with great potential; it was over.

To make matters more confusing, I didn’t particularly enjoy sex with men even though I was strongly attracted to them. Although this has changed. Conversely, I did enjoy sex with women but was not easily attracted to them. Somehow, along the line I decided to take time off from sex and then I started seeing a counselor. From him I learned that the first question to be addressed was how related to people, not whether I was gay. He told me that was the single most important factor.

This process of understanding oneself, developing a good self-image, and then deciding what is gay, refers to as coming out. In fact, everyone goes through it more or less consciously, whatever their sexuality. It is a serious, deep process for gays because of the condemnation that sti- vides prevalent in society.

One time I was home visiting my parents and discovered that the Governor of Connecticut, Ella Grasso, was holding citizens hearing in town. Mrs. Grasso was personally a very conservative Catholic, but she decided on civil rights legislation for gays. I went to talk to her about that. One of her comments emphasized the gap in understanding that exists about sexuality. She was concerned that allowing gay groups on campuses would result in pressure on others to become gay.

And what about the pressure that gay students faced every day on and off campus, my ques- tion. What pressure? The fear that you will be found out, the crude comments you may hear if you display affection toward someone you care about, the pressure of your friends discussing your true feelings when others discuss theirs, and much more.

To many people, that pressure is either invisible or only proper. Homosexuality isn’t normal, so it should not be treated as if it were acceptable. I have had that argument for a long time. For years I tried to find an analogy to explain my view to people. I have thought of one, but it is one that may make people at MIT too nervous to be willing to consider it honestly. The analogy is: just how “normal” are those few people who are actually running around in this world? That question starkly illustrates the lack of clarity with which “normal” is used. One isn’t likely to refer to serious people as abnormal but they are hardly the norm. The average, the common person. Being smart is perfectly natural. Well, it is. In some ways. Of course not. The Smart people are a meandering human phenomenon but they’re also rather unusual and different. So do you call smar- t people unnatural, sick, or immoral just because 90 percent of the population isn’t? Well, if you know much history, you know that there have been more than a few cases when that was what was said. One wonders just how humorous Galileo or Copernicus would have found a rally preaching capital punishment for genius.

The analogy is not trivial. Either, Nobody knows exactly what it is or how it develops. There are clearly genetic, environmental, nutritional, and hormonal fac- tors, to name a few. A similar multiplicity of factors is no doubt involved in sexuality. Why might you have you believe there are

Feedback

Stress fun of Olympiad

To the Editor:

Concerning the dispute surrounding the overall winner of the Spring ’81 olympiad, I feel that it is appropriate that an alternative view be aired. As a member of Sigma Phi Epilson, I would like to offer my personal interpretation of the ambiguities in the rules so that everyone can judge the students for themselves.

It is evident to me that an entire living group does not constitute the only means of forming a team; when people from various living groups decide to cooperate together, they are not just a single floor’s 24 dormitories develops a strong identification with itself, lending prestige to its own collective. Indeed, many other teams depend on their cohesiveness, independent of, say, McConnell 7th week at New House 4-5, the few are an individual team.

Finally, each manner in which entities may distinguish themselves as a part of a larger group is to clearly define themselves accordingly at the time, the rules were being formed. The lighthearted nature of Button’s claim to unified competition; their failure to register as a cohesive, single unit and their repeated breakdown into separate MIT teams only adds to their historic revisionist claim.

The Tech, Printed by Charles River Publishing, Inc.