Transfer students at MIT are being given the short end of an increasingly expensive stick: they are consistently and somewhat imperceptibly discriminated against by Institute policies regarding housing, financial aid, and incoming student orientations. Even Associate Dean for Student Affairs Robert Sherwood acknowledges that it is "not particularly fair to treat them as second-class citizens." Yet practical considerations, admits Sherwood, preclude MIT from treating transfer students fairly, at least with respect to undergraduate housing policies.

MIT attempts to treat many diverse groups of students fairly, even when such arrangements create disparate treatment, policies which are decidedly impractical. The Institute has made serious and, in many cases, successful attempts to address special problems which confront women, minority group members, and homosexuals. Somehow, practical objections do not seem to weaken these policies. Even so simple a change as including the names of transfers in the list of students who receive freshman mailings in the summer would make the transfer students' introduction to MIT more meaningful. Even a transfer student's release from his/her current roommate during Rush week, the Inter-Fraternity Council could at least prepare a list to distribute to incoming transfer students. The changes that housing seriously considers ever extending bids to transfer students. This action would be another step toward assimilating transfer students into the MIT environment.

MIT, which tries to be reasonably liberal in its treatment of recognized minorities, should acknowledge a minority in its midst—transfer students—which requires no special treatment, and alter its policies so as to treat them fairly by not burdening them with special treatment.

The personal touch

MIT's admissions policies should be designed with but one purpose: to select high school seniors who will be able to perform in MIT's stimulating but harried educational environment.

The ability to benefit fully from an MIT education cannot be predicted by test scores alone. Plugging quantitative factors, such as test scores, class rank, and grades, into a magic formula can yield a manner which is a meaningful predictor of success at MIT. MIT will continue to give more weight in its judgment to social and psychological factors than to academic considerations. Assessing the merits of candidates on the basis of these qualitative factors is more than reasonable, but an MIT education encompasses much more than formal academics. Horror stories abound of brilliant high school students who sweep into MIT on 800 SAT scores and snap out two years later after multiple terms of academic warnings. While high school students can separate their educational and social lives, any such split is artificial in a college environment. Students here must be able to live with the people with whom they attend classes. Social and personal pressures are just as real as academic ones. A student's ability to weather all types of pressures can be predicted, but not by any neat, arbitrary formula.

The Admissions Office's policy of placing relatively more emphasis on personal factors in recent years is, therefore, a wise one. To the extent that purpose and style should be considered important predictors of academic success, rather than characteristics which may make for an interesting class but are insufficient in themselves to guarantee academic excellence. Personal factors cannot be undervalued in the admissions process simply because they are difficult to assess. Neither should a selection process be interpreted as admitting "relatives to what was the case 15 years ago." That is to say, decisions about admissions are based, to a greater extent, on personal qualifications than was so years ago. That should not be interpreted as meaning that "less emphasis is placed on academic considerations" (as reads the page 8 headline). The Institute has not reduced its standards in that regard, over the years. Academic achievement and promise have always been, and still are, central to our search for, and selection of, our students.

Peter H. Richardson Director of Admissions

Scores still count

To the Editor:

While I applaud the article on admissions in Number 29, Volume 101 of The Tech, I'd like to point out an ambiguity and clarify it. The ambiguity emerges from the message in the first paragraph when compared to the headline in continuing the story on page 8.

Perhaps one correctly states that MIT now gives "relatively more emphasis to personal factors than academic considerations..." The qualifier "relatively" should be read "relative to what was the case 15 years ago." That is to say, decisions about admissions are based, to a greater extent, on personal qualifications than was so years ago. That should not be interpreted as meaning that "less emphasis is placed on academic considerations" (as reads the page 8 headline). The Institute has not reduced its standards in that regard over the years. Academic achievement and promise have always been, and still are, central to our search for, and selection of, our students.

Peter H. Richardson Director of Admissions

Graduation moved to holiday

To the Editor:

Earlier this year we were informed, when our bills arrived, Commencement was to be rescheduled from Monday, June 7 to Friday, May 30. Coincidently, this day happens to fall on the first day of the festival of Shavuot, which on the Jewish calendar marks the anniversary of the revelation at Sinai. This reflects an unfortunate insensitivity on the part of the Institute, which might imply that the needs of MIT's Jewish community are insignificant.

Insensitivity on the part of the Institute is nothing that is new to Jewish students. In the past, registration day or the first day of Dean has coincided with either Rosh HaShana or Yom Kippur more than once. President Gray's inauguration occurred on the concluding holiday of the festival of Sukkot. Shmoni Asaret would hardly be pointed out that major Christian holidays are incorporated into the Institute calendar.

This problem does not just reflect Orthodox Jewish students (although the attitude that the twenty some odd Orthodox graduates can be shunted aside is callous enough), but is an affront to the entire Jewish community of MIT, and to all persons of conscience on campus.

The Institute, in attempting to avoid the only possible solution, changing the date of Commencement, has claimed that it is afraid of setting a precedent of bending to the will of special interest groups. That the Institute calendar should be responsive to the members of the MIT community hardly seems dangerous as a precedent.

Unlike registration, Commencement can not be moved in the next day. It will be lost forever to these students who can not come, and the more numerous family members who will not be able to celebrate with their children, brothers, and sisters because they are Jews. And even for Jewish students and family who do participate, MIT will have once again placed them in the awful position of having to choose between religious and familial loyalties on the one hand, and academic responsibilities on the other. If this generous choice can be avoided, should it not be?

I urge everyone to notify the Commencement Committee, the Committee on Educational Policy and the Dean for Student Affairs Office of their feelings on the matter.

Stuart C. Adlow '76 President, MIT Hillel

Opinion

By Brian J. Glass '82

Chairman

Stephanie L. Pollow '82

Editor-in-Chief

Richard W. Epstein '83

Business Manager

Volume 101 Number 31

Wednesday, September 9, 1981

YOU MAY NOT BELIEVE THIS, BUT I WAS ONCE A RICH SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMAN... I HAD A WIFE AND KIDS!... A BIG HOME, MONEY, FRIENDS, INFLUENCE... BUT NOW I'M PENNiless...

WHAT WAS IT PAIN, BANANAs? BEEZE? Oh, Wha...

Feedback

To the Editor:

Before I read the page 8 article on admissions in Number 29, Volume 101 of The Tech, I'd like to point out an ambiguity and clarify it. The ambiguity emerges from the message in the first paragraph when compared to the headline in continuing the story on page 8.

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Peter H. Richardson Director of Admissions

Gee, let's see... It's been so long... I remember it was white and it had columns... and a rose garden... That's right, it's got a big rose garden...