Paul Gray and Norman Kehlman, the presidents of MIT and Wellesley, have informally discussed the possibility of establishing a joint degree program between the two colleges. This, although far from fruition, is deserving of serious scrutiny at both institutions.

First, however, the prospect of the current Wellesley-MIT exchange must be examined. The Provost's Office began such a study last year, although the results have not yet been released. The exchange raises some questions which are relevant to a broader joint degree program, and statistics on the popularity of the various course offerings presumably included in this study — are needed to find some answers. Among the queries which demand attention: Should MIT instead offer the more popular courses — or degrees — here? The exchange, and perhaps a joint degree program, might weaken MIT's humanities program by limiting course offerings or drawing the better students to Wellesley. Alternatively, such programs, by eliminating duplication between the schools, could be the best way of using scarce resources.

Other aspects of the idea which require close scrutiny stem from significant differences between MIT and Wellesley in course requirements, admissions policies, and educational goals. Should the program utilize a special admissions process? Should it be restricted to those majors not available at one of the two colleges? How is this idea related to that of a residence exchange? How would such a program contribute to overcrowding in some MIT departments?

These questions should form the basis for consideration of the program. Although any joint degree scheme would probably involve few students, it could beneficially widen the educational opportunities of students at both MIT and Wellesley. The questions raised by this initiative are not trivial; many of the attractiveness of such a program for students of both schools indicates that a search for answers begins soon.

Full stomachs but empty promises

The seemingly encouraging news that only twenty-eight percent of the freshmen and sophomores on mandatory commons are eating in the dorms in fulfilling their schedule requirements is misleading. These statistics cannot be compared to those of the past and could become a basis for continuing inaction in the future.

Almost two-thirds of the freshmen were behind schedule in early December of last year, so the requirements were decreased by twenty percent. That no-controversy decrease is no more accurate than any other figures.

More worrisome is the possibility that the Institute will use the seemingly optimistic statistics as a basis for continuing to neglect implementation of most of the proposals made in 1979 by the Admissions Committee on Campus Dining. The reduction of mandatory commons was supposed to be accompanied by a host of improvements in the dining program, including speaking programs, facilities, and advertising; some of these changes have been made. However, the improvements have not been enough and are still needed.

These programs are unfair to most freshmen and sophomores because they do not exist. Even if these students are gradually adapting to the new dining system, the promises which were made should be kept. The Institute can easily try to use statistics such as these to demonstrate the success of the dining program, or still for two years until the graduation of most students present when the dining committe report was released. The difficult task, but one which must be undertaken, is for the administration to keep its promises.

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Opinion

Column/Ivan Fong

Ethereal pride, not separation

There are few human characteristics more emotive or forceful than that of ethnic pride. Historically, wars have been won and lost, nations have risen and fallen, and individuals have lived and died — all stemming from the collective action of this complex and fiery emotion.

While ethnic pride, in and of itself, should be openly expressed without fear of shame or repression, there is considerable danger when such actions are construed as threatening the feelings and rights of others. The line between ethnic pride and racism is a fine one.

At MIT, as with all colleges, students of vastly differing backgrounds are thrown together in a multitude of educational experiences. Unfortunately for many, such healthy interactions are never realized.

It is human nature to feel more comfortable among those with identical beliefs and backgrounds. Thus the formation — formal or informal — of MIT groups based on a common culture, sexual orientation, or religion is beneficial to all as long as the prevailing attitude remains one of openness and learning. A problem arises, however, when this idea of promoting social interaction among group members becomes an excuse for separating oneself from the activities and interests of the larger community.

Past incidents at MIT have demonstrated that this problem has, at times, led to an atmosphere in which a small spark can easily flare. More important, it may be that the perception of such an atmosphere is what causes the heightened tension which surrounds student conflicts involving racial, sexual, or religious differences.

The issue of separation stems not from whether such an attitude is justified, but from minority students who agree that there is a definite need for support groups to handle their special needs.

Rather, it is the result of the perception that the need for support system can be replaced by interaction between the groups: we are not here merely to enrich the cultural education of others.

Accordingly, it is the responsibility of both sides to aim for a level of awareness in which ethnic pride is not an excuse but an expression of unique identity. This goal can be achieved, as long as it remains true that MIT is an appropriate place for students of all backgrounds to learn from and with one another.

Peter H. Richardson
Director of Admissions

Who left article?

To the Editor: Last Friday, as an article from a Special Issue of the National Vanguard was discovered on the Admissions bulletin board (3-107). Would the person who is responsible for placing it there please stop by 3-108 to discuss it with the content with me.

Peter H. Richardson
Director of Admissions

Adam... you take from the birds of the air and the beasts of the field, from the fruit of the vine and the grain from the harvest.

and Eve... you take dictation.