"No grades," said p/f report

By Kenneth Stone

"One of the major purposes of pass/fail was to relieve the anxiety and sense of pressure felt by incoming students during the year of transition from secondary school to work in a university of high quality and high expectations. It was also hoped to develop in each student a more mature motivation for his university education and a more active, expressive involvement in his studies, and to give him a sense of freedom to make a wider choice in the allocation of his time among his subjects when a topic within one of them especially excited him. These attitudes, it was felt, might persist throughout the senior years," said a report to the faculty on the four year trial of freshman pass/fail grading submitted by the Committee on Evaluation of Freshman Performance (CEFP) on February 1, 1972.

Last week, the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) considered major changes in the pass/fail system. Part of the proposal before the CEP is standardization of hidden grades for all freshmen and grading of senior reports to all freshmen for the spring semester.

The report stated, "The use of evaluation forms relating to freshman performance in subjects should be continued.... We recommend that it be made as clear as possible to the freshmen that it is in their own best interest first to initiate detailed and thoughtful evaluation forms and to request more feedback from instructors whose comments are not illuminating, and third to keep a personal file on all written feedback."

As a faculty meeting in March of 1972, then-Chancellor Paul E. Gray '54 said that the original intent of pass/fail had been to remove the "unnecessary and unproductive" pressure of recorded grades, but not to remove the pressure to adjust to a new environment. The intent had been for the student to have more access to the kind of information that would allow him to assess his own progress.

The CEP report stated, "We call the attention of the院长 to the fact that the transmission of unofficial grades to anyone for preciously and able staff," according to the MIT Corporation Visiting Committee on Student Affairs. In the report of their May 1981 meeting, obtained last week, the committee focused on the Undergraduate Academic Support Office (UASO), but also commented on the ODSA in general and student feedback.

"The Institute (ODSA) should more explicitly recognize the socialization process as a long term going process in which many offices and individuals play a part," stated one committee member. "Freshman orientation is a part of this process," he continued, but the ODSA does not continue the process "when it comes time [for a student] to choose or change a major and to decide on a job or graduate school."

The Committee recommended the Dean and ODSA staff members meet regularly with students and student groups. The Committee also reported the recent reorganization of the ODSA "provides a good structure to complement students' participation in the academic program."

The Committee presented two recommendations to the MIT administration. It suggested that the administration consider having the Dean report to the Provost. The Dean then would report to the President.

The Committee also recommended the administration place the Dean on the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP). When the Visiting Committee met at MIT last May, an evening was set aside for "an open presentation of issues by the students." Approximately 60 students attended that session, and commented on the lack of ODSA contact with students, overcrowded dormitories, mandatory committee, escalating tuition, and academic pace. The Committee listed those issues in an appendix to its report, and one Committee member wrote an additional appendix "as a result of the interaction with students."

By Andrew Robbins

The Office of Dean for Student Affairs (ODSA) as a whole seems better organized than previously and able staff," according to the MIT Corporation Visiting Committee on Student Affairs. In the report of their May 1981 meeting, obtained last week, the committee focused on the Undergraduate Academic Support Office (UASO), but also commented on the ODSA in general and student feedback. The Committee recommended the Dean and ODSA staff members meet regularly with students and student groups. The Committee also reported the recent reorganization of the ODSA "provides a good structure to complement students' participation in the academic program."

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By Gene Chang

The fraternities and sororities on the MIT campus are Alpha Phi Alpha, Kappa Alpha Psi, Alpha Kappa Alpha, Omega Psi Phi, and Phi Beta Sigma. The black sororities at MIT are Alpha Kappa and Delta Sigma Theta.

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