MIT chemistry ranks 4th, physics 5th

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"The rough assessment made by an earlier [MIT Corporation] Visiting Committee report indicated that we were in the top three in the nation," said Professor William F. Brice '46, department head of Earth and Planetary Sciences.

"The Chemistry department is certainly in the nation's top five," said Professor Christopher T. Walsh, Chemistry Department head. "It is, however, hard to rank the departments within this top five. For instance, how significant is one- or two-tenths of a point in this study?"

"Departments change very quickly," Brace commented. "When the professors write their opinions of the departments, they might be thinking about how the departments were ten years ago. In this case, it might be more helpful to have an additional report on how graduate students in the past ten years have done in the outside world."

The prestige of the faculty does not necessarily represent the actual quality of graduate teaching. "In other words, a famous scientist just might not have had time for his students," Brace said.

There is, however, no concrete evidence suggesting that the NAS study is unreliable, according to Walsh. "If I had to choose an organization to do this study, it would be the National Academy of Sciences," he said.

The National Academy of Sciences was organized over 100 years ago as a group of scholars which advises the President of the U.S. and identifies important national issues in science, according to Brace.

Neither professor has yet received the NAS's official report. Professor Peter Elias '44, acting associate head of Course VI for computer science and engineering, declined comment until he sees the report. Physics Department Head Herman Feshbach '42 was out of the country and unavailable for comment, and Mathematics Department Head Daniel J. Kleitman was also unavailable for comment.

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