Editorial

VisComm: look at crises

The MIT Corporation's Visiting Committee on Student Affairs is charged with examining complex issues facing student activities at MIT. In its report to the Visiting Committee, the Office of the Dean for Student Affairs (ODSA) has highlighted the following issues for discussion:

- The Undergraduate Association President's (UAP) role,
- The role of the Association of Student Activities (ASA),
- Issues relating to the Student Center Committee (SCC),
- Student activity accountability and self-governance,
- Operation and maintenance budget for facilities,
- Faculty involvement in student activities,
- and The role of the ODSA.

These issues are indeed important, yet the Visiting Committee should not spend too much time looking at individual trees that it misses the forest. Despite the fact that student activities are a significant part of the undergraduate educational experience. They contribute vitally to the development of students at MIT, not solely in preparation for careers obscures the real crises facing MIT student activities. While MIT has doubled tuition in the last five years, the budget allocated to student activities has not increased significantly. Many of the over 100 student organizations on campus are slowly dying for lack of financial support. While it is well-known the Institute faces several years of belt-tightening, many groups that are also strapped for finances are not as worried about accountability and self-governance as they are about whether they can attend an out-of-state conference next term.

MIT recognizes that student activities — whether they are defined as those formally recognized by ASA or informally enjoyed by groups of students — are a significant part of the undergraduate educational experience. They contribute vitally to the development of students at MIT, not solely in preparation for careers, but as sources of learning and enjoyment while students attend MIT.

Irresistible financing of activities has been exacerbated by ten to twenty percent cuts in the previous year's funds to the allocations to the ODSA — considered part of the Institute's administrative budget — which provide many support services to MIT students and activities. If the Institute is as committed to the Institute as it claims, it should support its student activities. It must be said that the ODSA budget should be treated as part of the Institute's academic program and not as part of the vulnerable administrative budget.

ODSA cuts not only affect student activity funding, but all ODSA support for student and student groups. In particular, the merger of the Residence and Activities sections in the Dean's Office curtails support for both student activities and independent living groups. Other groups affected by cuts include intercollegiate athletics, student and independent living groups. Other groups affected by cuts include intercollegiate athletics, national and women students. In particular, the merger of the Residence and Activities sections in the Dean's Office curtails support for both student activities and independent living groups. Other groups affected by cuts include intercollegiate athletics, national and women students.

ODSA is not communicating effectively with student groups, as exemplified by the travails that surround the Finance Board's budget. While many activities need support from the Dean's Office, they do not need to be smothered with bureaucratic requirements. Overemphasizing of accountability of student activities obscures the real crises facing MIT activities.

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ASA action is unjustified

The Association of Student Activities (ASA) will hold a meeting tomorrow to consider withdrawal of its recognition of 41 student groups and seizure of their assets on behalf of the Undergraduate Association (UA). To continue to enjoy ASA recognition, a group must file a copy of its current constitution, a list of officers, and a completed activity survey with the ASA. The only public notice given of these responsibilities is an advertisement in today's issue of The Tech; ASA must then adequately inform the affected officers individually to inform them they have not complied with the requirements.

The results ASA wishes to achieve could be attained with much less ill-will. ASA does not seize the assets of organizations, however, claim to have received no such notice. With a bit of effort, ASA could have telephoned some officer of most of the threatened organizations informing them of their responsibilities; executive offices of some organizations, however, claim to have received no such notice. Without adequately attempting to contact these groups, ASA should not be so zealous in attempts to lose them. It is entirely possible that some or that some have already made other plans for tomorrow night, or that some may not read The Tech.

In addition to being irresponsible, ASA's action is neither legal nor enforced by the UA, which did not provide them in the first place.

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The rights of the ASA members shall be subject to definition by the ASA, but it should include the right to use the name, MIT, facilities, and to restrict or disband the UA should any of them be nullified. The results ASA wishes to achieve could be attained with much less ill-will. ASA does not seize the assets of organizations, however, claim to have received no such notice. With a bit of effort, ASA could have telephoned some officer of most of the threatened organizations informing them of their responsibilities; executive offices of some organizations, however, claim to have received no such notice. Without adequately attempting to contact these groups, ASA should not be so zealous in attempts to lose them. It is entirely possible that some or that some have already made other plans for tomorrow night, or that some may not read The Tech.

While ASA probably harbors no malicious intent, its methods are inexcusably slipshod. Threats to withdraw recognition from clearly extant student activities without adequate attempt to contact these groups, ASA should not be so zealous in attempts to lose them. It is entirely possible that some or that some have already made other plans for tomorrow night, or that some may not read The Tech.

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Given this arrogance, it is not surprising that ASA's action violates its own constitution. Article I states: "The rights of the ASA members shall be subject to definition by the ASA, but it should include the right to use the name, MIT, facilities, and to restrict or disband the UA should any of them be nullified. The results ASA wishes to achieve could be attained with much less ill-will. ASA does not seize the assets of organizations, however, claim to have received no such notice. Without adequately attempting to contact these groups, ASA should not be so zealous in attempts to lose them. It is entirely possible that some or that some have already made other plans for tomorrow night, or that some may not read The Tech.

The members of ASA acknowledge that this organization shall be pro- monote student activities on the Massachusetts Institute of Technology campus serve their common interests, and arbitrate conflicting interests."

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