Feedback

MIT aid policy discriminates

I am currently in violation of the Selective Service Act, as are the many non-registrants at MIT. We do not take our actions lightly. The consequences of refusing to register with the Selective Service can be quite severe — up to five years in jail and a $10,000 fine. When the decision is made to violate the law, it is made both with the full knowledge of what the possible consequences are and because our religious beliefs or personal convictions allow us no other course of action. We studied carefully to be tried for our actions in a court of law and, if necessary, to spend time in jail. The Selective Amendment, in violation of our Constitutional rights under the Fifth Amendment, compels non-registrants to incriminate themselves and denies our right to the due process of law. In addition, we are denied our rights under the Sixth Amendment to a public trial by an impartial jury, to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation, so to be confronted with the witnesses against us, to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in our favor, and to have the assistance of counsel for the defense. The Selective Amendment and the Department of Education regulations have similarly tred, convicted, and sentenced us without ever having accused us of a crime. Now, with your decision that MIT will abide by these regulations, you act as our executioner. I can only assume that you do not realize what the consequences of your actions will be.

Personally I consider myself lucky; the impact to my education of the denial of federal educational assistance will be small. Others are not so lucky. When they receive their bills for the fall term, they will be greeted by the notice that they must, in the space of two weeks, either abandon their religious beliefs and personal convictions, or else abandon their educations at MIT. The ones who will choose to leave the Institute are the very ones who MIT and this country can least afford to lose.

One of the things which bothers me the most is a statement you made which was quoted in both The Tech and Tech Talk: "It makes no sense to me to couple educational opportunity with beliefs about the military draft and to apply that connection only to those students who happen to be conscripts in a particular age bracket. This is the law of the land, however, and MIT will comply with it." Such a denial of the responsibilities of a citizen to uphold the Constitution must have the Founding Fathers turning in their graves. Coming from the president of an institution of higher learning it is particularly abhorrent. It has been one of the traditional roles of universities in this country to try and act as a restraining force when our government begins to stray. A number of universities around the country, including Yale, Dartmouth and the University of California have promised to supplement money lost by non-registrants; MIT should join these universities in standing up for its students' constitutional rights.

This is an extremely serious issue with potentially grave consequences for our government begins to stray. I hope that you will give serious consideration to what I have said.

Michael D. Thomas '86

Opinion

MIT aid policy discriminates

Editor's note: The Tech received a copy of the following letter to President Paul E. Gray '54

Dear President Gray,

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, handicap, age, or national or ethnic background in the administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarships and loan programs, and other Institute administered programs and activities...

These words are from MIT's policy on nondiscrimination. In one fell swoop you have managed to make these words utterly devoid of meaning. The action I refer to is the announcement that MIT will abide by the Selective Amendment and Department of Education regulations which deny federal educational assistance to students who refuse to register for the draft [The Tech, July 26].

The Selective Service Act of 1980, in requiring only males between the ages of 18 and 23 to register, discriminates on the basis of sex and age. Prosecutions of conscripts have been directed solely against those who have religious or political excused status. First Amendment rights of free speech. The Selective Amendment is directed solely against those who because of religious beliefs or deep personal convictions are unable or unwilling to register for the draft. By using economic penalties, it discriminates against persons in harsher economic circumstances, and thus on the basis of race, color, and national or ethnic origin.

Feedback

Truth lies within a little and certain compass

To the Editor: Regarding Barry S. Surman's column in The Tech [July 26] he was certainly lucky to have left his compass home. Had he not done so, he would have discovered that while the signs said that he was traveling simultaneously south on Rte. 63 and north on Rte. 128, he was actually heading west. Ah, Massachusetts . . .

Steve Serien G

Barry S. Surman responds: Then there's the stretch of road in West Cambridge where the signs are simultaneously traveling west on Rte. 2, north on Rte 3, and east on Rte 1A.