MIT benefit fee injures activities

The requirement that student activities pay the employee benefit program comes as a crucial time. There are many possibilities for resolving the problem, but the administration should bear in mind one underlying issue: its actions and agreements affect student activities, which are a valuable part of this diverse institution.

Many student activities have pride themselves for years on their independence from MIT, on their ability to conduct functions with little help or interference from the administration as possible. The Office of the Dean for Student Affairs has promoted this attitude by allowing students to choose where to direct funding and space for student activities.

Student activities prospered, in general, under this attitude, displaying high student involvement and sound financial positions. The rising cost of education has caused a feeling of student involvement and now seems to be exacerbating upon the financial positions of these student activities.

The inclusion of student activities in the employee benefit program is probably a redefinition of employee status by MIT. The administration, in the past, viewed these employees as the individual group's employees. This past status created a sort of never-never land, as these groups by themselves are not legal entities.

MIT permitted employees to be Institute employees and its decisions and agreements affected them. When MIT was negotiating employee benefits, however, it did not consider the effect of its decisions on student activities. The administration dropped this responsibility for incurred costs upon the individual activities without considering the effect.

Labor and revenue intensive student groups that provide services to the MIT Community, like the Student Center Committee's 24-hour Coffeehouse, The Tech, and Ye Old Muddy Charles Puh, will feel the immediate effect of this requirement. Estimates of the costs incurred by student activities run between $50,000 and $70,000 a year.

One of the attitudes expressed by the MIT administration was that the requirement would be applied only to those activities that could afford to pay. While the type of attitude works for financial aid purposes it does not apply to these groups. All of the affected groups work at margins that provide no excess to be wasted on the benefit fee.

The groups themselves would not ultimately pay, but rather those who receive the services would end up either footing the bill or losing part of the service. The Office of the Dean for Student Affairs, for example, may no longer be able to maintain around-the-clock service. Groups that come to The Tech for typesetting services such as HoTo!AMIT and the Student Committee on Educational Policies may no longer be able to afford such services.

One of the federal government's requirements states employee benefit programs must be fair and equitable to all employees. Student employees currently receive no benefits other than sickness coverage. It is doubtful that student employees would even want these benefits. Student employees are like vacation time, sick leave, life insurance, and retirement. Individual students working only a few hours a week would receive little, if any, benefit. Students want superior wages and more jobs. MIT's employee benefit requirement prevents both.

To the Editor:
Regarding the recent comments that appeared in The Tech concerning the Undergraduate Association Finance Board in an article about the funding policies of the Student Center Committee, we would like to make the following comments:

1. The Finance Board Chairman does not make the funding decisions. These decisions are made by the entire Finance Board (all fourteen of us). We base these decisions on need and benefit to the MIT undergraduate community.

2. The Finance Board does fund off-campus activities. Both Phi Gamma Delta and Phi Kappa Sigma recently received funding for the FIH Island Party and Skuffle, respectively. We want students to realize that the Finance Board is willing to fund a wide range of events and that questions of policy should be directed to the Finance Board.

3. The Tech refers to a Finance Board member who lives in Sigma Phi Epsilon. There is presently no one on Finance Board from Sigma Phi Epsilon.

We are extremely disappointed that The Tech did not present a more comprehensive picture of the situation to prevent both sides of an issue completely and fairly when comments of such importance to undergraduates as these are reported. We do fund off-campus events and encourage any group interested to approach us directly.

Raymond E. Samuel '84
Finance Board Chairman
Kris C. Allison '84
Finance Board Vice Chairman
and eight other members of the Finance Board

Editor's note: Shown P. Scalise '83 Sigma Phi Epsilon social chairman, made the reference to a Finance Board member in his fraternity. The Tech asked Samuel to respond, and that response was printed in the paragraph following Scalise's comment.

Tech article was misleading

LSC presented Cape

To the Editor:
There seems to be some confusion as to who sponsored the lecture by Dr. Ronald Cape, which took place on November 1 and was reviewed in the November 8 issue of The Tech. The review states that it was sponsored by "The Edgerton Lecture Series," when in fact it was sponsored by The Lecture Series Committee (LSC). This confusion probably is the result of the words "An Edgerton Series Lecture" appearing at the bottom of our posters and slides. Edgerton Series Lecturers are those lecturers who have been recommended to us by Professor Harold E. "Doc" Edgerton '27; usually they are people he's heard talk elsewhere and would like to see at MIT. We like to thank him for his ideas by naming those lectures as being part of the Edgerton Lecture Series. For example, his lecture of Nov. 9 was part of the Edgerton Lecture Series.

Tim Hucicke '84
Lecture Director
MIT Lecture Series Committee