Dean's Office gains credibility on fee

After a month and a half, the Institute has acknowledged that requiring student activities to contribute to the MIT employee benefits fund is unfair, unwise and impractical.

The Office of the Dean for Student Affairs, which has lacked credibility among students as an advocate of student concerns and a supporter of their activities, gained at least a small measure of students’ confidence by recommending the Institute waive the fee requirement.

Senior Vice President William R. Dickson '56, in turn, made a wise and compensatory choice when he decided Wednesday to accept Dean Shirley M. McCoy's recommendation. Student activities are an essential component of an MIT education and of the MIT community; exempting them from the particularly burdensome nature of the fee is an important step in preserving their vitality.

Student activities are threatened in other ways, as well. Partitions are caused by economic demands and financial pressures; independence is threatened by administrative harrassment; potential is limited by increasing academic demands and financial burden; the benefit fund is an important step in preserving the vitality of student activities by recommending the Institute waive the employee benefits fund.

Max Hailperin

Do not price out excellence

The MIT subjects in software maintenance could take is that the projects the maintenance of programs MIT would sell on the open market. The Sloan School could handle the business side of marketing and project management. The Visual Language Workshop could design the flashy advertisements and promotions. Such a procedure would provide the added benefit of helping to unify the Institute.

The problems in implementing this plan lie not only with the MIT Patent Office but with a general unwillingness on the part of some faculty to sell their inventions to the open market. A good number of MIT faculty consider it below their dignified standards of research to market the products of their research, or to develop it to a marketable point.

The Patent Office, in all fairness, has begun to realize the potential in these fields, but they have only made plans to hire permanent staff member to handle software licensing.

MIT cannot boast a free academic environment if its students and professors are continually threatened by the chains of financial pressures. It may be necessary to curtail research in some areas, but the purse is a poor way of doing it, providing researchers, with something of more interest is much more effective. Dell is not something that should be unhandled.

Column/ Emerson L. Garfinkel

Second of a five-part series.

It is apparent that MIT tuition is $4800 a semester. This high tuition does not, however, only put a burden on the student; it presents a definite hindrance to higher education here.

Many individuals who would otherwise greatly benefit the community cannot attend school here because they cannot afford to and they do not qualify for financial aid. Those who do qualify for loans or grants feel like beggars, and students who work are at a disadvantage because they cannot devote as much time to their studies as their more affluent peers.

The need for funds exists on more levels than tuition. Professors are preoccupied with getting funding. This attitude filters down to the students, as an undue stress on job futures and placement. This attitude results in a transmutation of an ideal academic atmosphere, in which inquiry and creativity are held at a premium, to one in which the emphasis is on getting good grades, getting a good job, and getting out.

Everybody knows the disadvantages of high tuition. Very few feel pride from attending the most expensive educational institution in the country. There is no reason for tuition to be so high. MIT has an incredible and virtually untapped hidden resource—royalties from patents based on research performed at MIT. With proper administration, these royalties alone could cover tuition forever.

In the year ending June 30, 1981, MIT collected only $1.1 million in patent royalties after costs—down from $2.1 million in 1980. Karen H. Kenes, Vice President for Research, explains this low figure by saying the majority of MIT’s research takes place on the frontiers of technology, and significant money and time is required to take an MIT “finished product” and turn it into something that is marketable, even in concept.

This may be true in other fields, but it is certainly not true in the fields of software design and integrated circuit fabrication. In these two fields, and probably in genetic engineering in the not-too-distant future, faculty and students at MIT are generating final products. There is no reason why MIT should not be aggressively marketing these things both inside and outside the educational areas.

It is estimated that, by 1990, the computer industry will gross over $200 billion a year. If the decision was made now to write the most useful and needed packages, with a four-to-six-year estimated completion time, it would be possible for MIT to capture a slice of that market, say 1%. If MIT did that for one year, there would never be a need to collect tuition again.

The MIT subjects in software maintenance could take is that the projects the maintenance of programs MIT would sell on the open market. The Sloan School could handle the business side of marketing and project management. The Visual Language Workshop could design the flashy advertisements and promotions. Such a procedure would provide the added benefit of helping to unify the Institute.

The problems in implementing this plan lie not only with the MIT Patent Office but with a general unwillingness on the part of some faculty to sell their inventions to the open market. A good number of MIT faculty consider it below their dignified standards of research to market the products of their research, or to develop it to a marketable point.

The Patent Office, in all fairness, has begun to realize the potential in these fields, but they have only made plans to hire permanent staff member to handle software licensing.

MIT cannot boast a free academic environment if its students and professors are continually threatened by the chains of financial pressures. It may be necessary to curtail research in some areas, but the purse is a poor way of doing it, providing researchers, with something of more interest is much more effective. Dell is not something that should be unhandled.