

Architects envision new Student Center

(Continued from page 1)

The redesigning of the Student Center is a complex problem, Dackiw said. "There is no real vision of how it should be.

Dackiw and Mein cited three major problems with the Student Center's present design: unclear traffic flow and arrangement; "dark and unwelcoming" parts of the interior; and overused and underused spaces.

Mein said he would like to change the entrance "dramatically." The central area needs more light and more obvious activity, he said, and he would add an atrium and remove the central stairway between the second and third floors.

The architects said their ideas would provide more space for student activity offices, but might move some of those offices to the basement.

Dackiw proposed the excavation of 16 feet of earth from the front of the Student Center, "making entrance to the first floor less awkward and admitting more light." He later said the height of the water table might be a problem, but there would be no structural difficulties.

The Kresge Oval and Massachusetts Avenue border area are more difficult to redesign, Dackiw said. The steps leading to the building from Massachusetts Avenue would be removed as part of an excavation, he explained.

He mentioned the possibility of a tunnel connecting the Student Center to MIT's main entrance, an idea greeted by applause from some of the committee members in attendance.

Dackiw called proposals for a bridge over Massachusetts Avenue, however, "quite silly."

Immerman said later that the Institute has reserved the area under Kresge Oval for future development.

The main axis of the Institute, which extends from the Athletic Center through the Infinite Corridor and to the new Arts and Media Technology Building, is very important, Dackiw said at the end of the presentation. The axis is, however, now "confused" by the raised area in front of the Student Center.

Any changes made to the front of the building must take account of the activity that often goes on there, he said.

Person called the presentation "very exciting" in a brief question and comment session which followed. "It's about time we did something like this."

Immerman told the committee members that when making actual plans, they should consider financial constraints and have any renovations made in stages.

Mein said such an approach would be possible, since the ideas would allow the continued functioning of the Student Center during renovations.

The Stratton Student Center was designed by Eduardo Catalano, professor emeritus of architecture, and constructed in 1963-4.

A cafeteria would be sited where the stairway is now, and the front area would be glassed in and decorated with plants. Mein mentioned atria, terraces, and fountains as possibilities, saying, "I make it very loose because I don't want it taken too seriously... It's just a question of ideas."

Dackiw pictured "a very lively streetscape" which would be "a vital, active space."

The architects examined three areas: the entrance and central area of the second and third floors, the facade of the building, and Kresge Oval and the area between the Student Center and Massachusetts Avenue.

