Letter to the President

Dear Dr. Gray,

As you know, the annual announcement of next year's tuition is one of the most important events in any spring at MIT. This year is no different, and most of the undergraduates are waiting with bated breath for your decision on our bill for next year. We hope you show wisdom in your decision.

In recent years, the tuition has consistently risen faster than inflation. We realize that the equity level is established after careful analysis of MIT's overall income and commitments, so it would be foolish for us to expect you always to keep tuition increases within the bounds of current inflation. But you do have to look at it from our side, too. Increases in tuition are understandable, but when those increases are very large year after year, it becomes difficult both to accept and to pay.

The cost of education is already out of reach for a lot of people. Continued increases could put MIT out of the reach for a lot more of us. We really hope that this does not happen, Dr. Gray. Again, an MIT education is invaluable; it should not be unaffordable.

Nationally, the average increase in private college tuition between 1980-81 and 1982-83 was 15 percent while MIT's tuition increased by over 24 percent. MIT's tuition is already the highest in the United States; there's no reason we should have to boost our lead. MIT may be superior to most colleges in quality of education, but that does not mean it has to be superior in tuition rate increases.

There is also the issue of financial aid policy. Most of the undergraduates are now on some form of financial aid, and when you consider next year's tuition, you must also think about financial aid policy. Everyone who knows someone on financial aid who owns an expensive stereo as well as someone who on aid who works many hours a week to get by. Obviously, most students are not cheating the Institute, but a more careful consideration of the ramifications of aid would make the system fairer.

In the past few years, tuition has gone up faster than the equity level. This means students from higher income families are subsidizing those from lower income families. This is a reason why this rate is appropriate and should continue. In any event, both tuition and equity level should not increase at an inordinate rate.

Whatever the final decision on tuition and financial aid turns out to be, we hope you make your decision in the context of the tuition trend over the past decade. Tuition rate increases have surpassed the inflation rate in each of the past ten years. For the 1982-83 year, tuition was up over 17 percent while the inflation was less than 5 percent in 1982.

MIT's booklet "Financial Aid for Undergraduates at MIT," states "If MIT cannot meet the demonstrated and reasonable financial need of its students, regardless of financial need of its students, and cannot offer a level of financial assistance which is comparable to that at other leading universities, the exceptional strengths of the student body may be threatened." We hope these words are not mere rhetoric, but that the basic philosophy reflected by this statement will be reflected in next year's tuition rate and financial aid policy.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

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Inequity runs on time in the Student Center

The Student Center Committee has once again usurped the authority of yet another student government group, its decision to utilize $90,000 to finance an appearance by The Go-Go's during Spring Weekend intrudes into the purview of the MIT Social Council and the Undergraduate Association General Assembly.

The issue is not one of whether The Go-Go's are a good band for Spring Weekend, nor of whether there should be a spring concert at all, but of who may distribute student resources. The members of the Student Center Committee are not elected by the students and are not in practice responsible to the General Assembly. The committee is turning the Julius A. Stratton '23 Student Center into a private fund. During January it unilaterally reallocated student activity space away from the requisite approval of the Association of Student Activities or the General Assembly.

The committee has control of two monopolies in the Student Center — a coffee house and dance room — ostensibly to finance improvements and activities in the Student Center. A Go-Go's concert is neither.

Former committee chairman John Mark Johnston '84 defended the expenditure: "If someone suggests a constructive way to spend $90,000 a year in the Student Center, I'd be more than glad to do it. But if our committee can improve the entire social life at MIT, then we will be helping ourselves because we will have a better community spirit."

Community spirit is a good thing. The Student Center Committee, however, is not the proper forum for determining the best way to achieve that spirit. That job belongs to the General Assembly. The committee collects and disburses money from its monopolies. That job, too, belongs to the General Assembly. The assembly has the only just authority over student resources.

Proponents argue that Undergraduate Association President Michael P. Witt '84 has the final say in committee decisions; a joint committee of the Student Center Committee gets something done. These assertions are true. Likewise, Benito Mussolini made the trains run on time in fascist Italy. In both cases, an authority not responsible to an electorate achieved efficiency at the price of equity.

The General Assembly must exert its authority over the Student Center Committee. The assembly should collect the money from the game room and the coffee house and then allocate it as the assembly sees fit. The Student Center Committee should be stripped of its authority and made no more than an arm of the General Assembly — the only acceptable representatives of the students.

Time has Wiltted away for government reforms

Time has run out for Undergraduate Association President Michael P. Witt '84, who after much procrastinating has finally set its feet to propose changes to the UA General Assembly constitution. The proposals, however, came after the Feb. 24 deadline for referendums and take the form of suggestions rather than amendments, rendering them effectively useless.

On Feb. 16, Witt outlined the creation of three governmental bodies: a council to replace the General Assembly and assume the budgetary, legislative and representative powers of the Undergraduate Association; a joint committee to discuss issues involving graduate and undergraduate students; and a council of student representatives to advise the UA Council and the UA president.

Former UA President Chuck Markham '83 recently proposed a astounding referendum which would have asked voters to choose among three alternatives for selecting General Committee chairmen: presidential appointment, GA approval, and spring elections. It is unfortunate, even predictable, that Markham was not present at the hearing to back his proposal. The General Assembly unanimously rejected it, foolishly allowing the students from expressing their preferences on a issue the assembly must address.

Witt's offering is a classic case of too little, too late. True, he was sidetracked by the outbreak of the employee benefits issue in November, but his administration's lack of results still prevails — symbolic of the hollow silence beneath the surface of student government promises.