Column/Diana ben-Aaron
Face an unpleasant choice

Next Wednesday, the faculty will vote on a new Center for Educational Policy's proposal to restrict enrollment in Course VI at the high school level. When the controversy last year, they were faced with a choice between two Tech columns on a desired policy. Joe Romm called a desirable proposal for system administrators. The Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at the end of the freshman year and a horrible proposal (similar to this year's) an expected slow of respect for the integrity of open enrollment majors. The faculty move to defer both.

I wish they could do the same this year, but it seems inevitable that they will be forced into a nuts-and-bolts debate about exactly how to prevent MIT's tradition of free choice for majors of Course VI won't collapse. The long-term solution suggested last year involved shifting resources from other departments, stepping up recruitment for other departments in the high school, and freshmen level - did materialize, and the EECs overenrollment problem has not disappeared entirely. The CEP plan sounds quite plausible until you consider individual students, and the individual student you are most likely to think of will be yourself. If you knew you wanted to be an electrical engineer (or an architect, or a doctor), you'd be in high school, you won't start anything wrong with thinking to declare a major or apply to a department at the age of 17. If you only recently decided that you wanted written on your diploma and you still aren't sure, you will oppose restrictions on majors until Course VI sinks under its own weight and has to go out of business as an undergraduate degree program.

As someone who changed from humanities to engineering at MIT, I oppose restricting enrollment in high school. The average high school student admitted to MIT knows little about engineering because science, not engineering, is taught in high school. During R.O.D. Week, the students are, at first, interested in engineering but I don't think I really knew anything about it until after R.O.D.

Under the CEP proposal, the normal options about 400 incoming freshmen this year will be governed by two application readers' estimates of whether they

(Column/Charles P. Brown
CAP reviews student grades

Fourth in a series

At the end of each semester the Committee on Academic Performance holds three day-long meetings to review the academic records of undergraduates.

The review process starts when the grades are submitted to the registrar. The registrar's office compiles lists of students with their grades, their cumulative grade point average and number of units, and records of any previous CAP actions. The list is sorted by clan and major, and any student who is registered for fewer than 36 units or who has a term rating of 3.0 or below is flagged. These lists are sent to all departments, academic and administrative (the ROTC department used to receive these until last year; now they receive only ROTC students' grade reports) and the CAP asks each academic department to recommend actions for flagged students. Initial actions include:

- a warning from the department to a student whose performance is judged marginally acceptable;
- a letter from the CAP to the student concerning over-involvement in extracurricular activities; and
- a "soft deferral" which means the student's case is tabled until the deferred action meeting. These meetings take place late in January for the fall semester and early June for the spring semester.

A soft deferral is made when the CAP wants more information and is prepared to give the student no more than a warning:

- a CAP warning, indicating a credit limit for the following semester.

A hard deferral groups the student's case into the deferred action meeting, indicating the CAP is seriously considering requiring the student to withdraw due to continued unacceptable academic performance:

- a letter containing congratulations to a student who did well after being put on warning or coming back from a required withdrawal.

The CAP devotes roughly one full day to discussing seniors and one half-day each to the other classes. A representative from each department attends these meetings and is prepared to recommend actions for students who have been flagged. The CAP listens to the recommendations and decides which action to take.

The Rhetoric distorts real problems

To the Editor:

Simona L. Gardafalk's recent article on the Office of Minority Education in The Tech Pro claims that "inequalities are discriminatory." (September 25) was filled with the misattribution of facts and many grossly exaggerated. The faked status minorities may have had special problems in M6S but they don't have then now. Gardafalk also believes that somehow minority students are not "different" and are made different only by virtue of organizations such as the Office of Minority Education. He also argues the Institute should be "color blind."

Gardafalk's analysis clearly relies on the rhetoric of reconservative, one-time liberals who now oppose all attempts at affirmative action and efforts to redress the political and economic imbalance between blacks and whites through direct government or institutional intervention. The neo-conservatives use the rhetoric of "equality" in order to argue that blacks and whites should be treated equally, i.e. any special effort group should be made by the government to provide more resources to one group than another. However, in the larger political economy outside of MIT and within the Institute itself nothing the number of minorities is taken into account.

(Feedback page)

(Rhetoric page)