Dorm must not be watchdogs

The Undergraduate Association (UA) is considering endorsing a proposal from the Office of the Dean for Student Affairs (ODSA) requiring tutors in Institute Houses to report students using drugs to the housemaster. This plan is part of an Institute-wide effort to root out drug use that began with the arrest of a student in a fraternity last spring. The drug proposal at MIT certainly merits recognition and action from the UA and the ODSA, but placing the burden of responsibility on tutors is the wrong way to address it.

A great deal of effort goes into choosing hall tutors. Applicants must describe in writing their reasons for applying and their previous counseling experience. The Dean’s Office and the housemasters screen the applications before the undergraduates winnow them further, interview the candidates, and submit their choices in rank order to the Dean’s Office.

Presumably, tutors are on an almost equal footing with other dorm residents. They play on house teams, go to house parties, and sit out in the halls talking all night, just like everyone else. However, they can also be an important resource for advice. They fulfill a civic duty simply by being approachable, concerned, slightly older neighbors.

Tutors can gently steer people on drugs toward the resources they need, such as counseling deans, Nightline, the medical department, or housemasters. The ODSA must strive to make tutors more aware of availability of resources. However, tutors’ only role should be to listen and encourage people with problems to get help; they can no more stop someone from using drugs than they can keep him from destroying himself in other ways if he is really determined to do so.

The ODSA must also train tutors to recognize drug problems — but so they can take a more active role in identifying problems, not so they can police us. Correspondingly, dorm residents should be taken more seriously when they need help if they are in trouble.

History is a sign of deeper problems. The proposal would shift the focus of the tutoring system to the legal implications of the symptoms while ignoring students’ real needs for help. At present, many students feel unafraid to approach their tutors about any problem, including drug use. Their troubles will be treated confidentially, as a good friend would. But as soon as tutors become instruments of the law, other students will be afraid to tell them what they need to know. Drug culture will be pushed underground, and more tragic deaths may result.

No one — not the undergraduates, not the deans, and least of all students in need of help — need know anything about the proposed changes as mere modifications of the present system. Though a new system, one in which the tutor is not another student but a babysitter, policeman and dean, all at the same time. The changes would take away a needed support system in the dorms, and replace it with little 24-hour deans. The new relationship between ‘tutors’ and their charges will become an impossible one, for everyone involved.

The current situation has flaws, but the proposed system is infinitely worse. The UAs must consider the changes proposed by voicing their opposition at ODSA tutor-housing meetings, in house government, and on the floor of all the tutors -should fall into the seductive trap of seeing themselves as mere modifications of the present system. The proposed changes as mere modifications of the present system to the legal implications of the symptoms while ignoring the right is exceeding expectations. That is a valid point, and indeed a plausible explanation for our current situation, but, just as the saying goes in the streets swelled to unforeseen dimensions, our current move to the right is exceeding expectations.

Why has this happened? Western civilization has undergone periods of change before, each faster and more intense than its predecessor. The agriculturization of the West, as did the Industrial Revolution, the West, as did the Industrial Revolution, which by design very few people. The virtues of the computer at one time, or another, yet he still doesn’t care for it. Today we not only don’t know what to do with our devices shall serve but we’re not even sure whether we want them or not.

The current period of flux, aptly termed the Superindustrial Revolution, is today a period of unprecedented change. It has led not only to unimagined applications of these products; when magnetism was first tamed by composers in the sixties, but paled beside the French Revolution, which is well known. The very nature of these events. As this Superindustrial Revolution, which in turn lacked the momentum Western civilization, is today experiencing a period of unprecedented change. When magnetism was first tamed by composers in the sixties, but paled beside the French Revolution, which is well known. The very nature of these events. As this Superindustrial Revolution, which in turn lacked the momentum Western civilization, is today experiencing a period of unprecedented change. When magnetism was first tamed by composers in the sixties, but paled beside the French Revolution, which is well known. The very nature of these events. As this Superindustrial Revolution, which in turn lacked the momentum Western civilization, is today experiencing a period of unprecedented change. When magnetism was first tamed by composers in the sixties, but paled beside the French Revolution, which is well known. The very nature of these events.

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