Column/Ben Stanger
Freshmen: join MIT activities

"Don't worry, you're on pass/fail."

If you're a freshman, you'll hear this statement countless times. Everyone has different opinions on how they should use this luxury, and many question whether it should exist at all. I have always supported the MIT pass/fail system, though I was nervous about talking to students and members of the administration, but interviewing has since become a natural event. The experience in writing, journalism and MIT issues that The Tech has given me has been very important. Even more significantly, however, The Tech has been a niche and even a home in many senses. In this, it shares its vitality and purpose with all other student activities. (Please turn to page 5)

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Column/Mathews M. Cherian
Issues offer opportunities to make differences at MIT

Freshmen will certainly have plenty of issues on which to express their opinions as they enter MIT this fall. I recently had a conversation with a professor in which we discussed many of the concerns facing the members of the Class of 1989.

The professor noted that in recent years MIT has been shifting from its traditional emphasis on science and engineering to a slightly more "liberal" perspective on education. Many faculty members are concerned about whether MIT is placing the appropriate emphasis on humanities, giving the students the optimal combination of science and the liberal arts. Should MIT have a more humanistically oriented core curriculum similar to the curriculum of Columbia University or the University of Chicago? Is the current humanities requirement inadequate, adequate or overkill?

Perhaps requiring more humanities is not even the answer. Maybe the course load should be designed so a student can take as light a load or as heavy a load as he wants. Students would thus be allowed more free time to delve into student government, the school newspaper, the radio station or numerous other school activities which provide enriching and broadening experiences.

The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) is another issue facing students. MIT does a tremendous amount of research for the Department of Defense (DOD). This research raises a number of questions about the ethics of working for the DOD.

Last year Professor Vera Kingiaskovsky helped to spark discussion among the faculty and the MIT community with her proposal to make differences at MIT. The faculty passed Kingiaskovsky's proposal and recently named Professor Carl Kaplan chairman of the new Ad Hoc Committee on Military Research at MIT.

An issue which was not resolved last year was MIT's South African divestment policy. Anti-apartheid groups were staging protests on campus and students were writing columns when the school year ended. With the escalation of conflicts in South Africa, divestment of South African investments will undoubtedly remain an issue on campus.

I could go on to list any number of other issues confronting students on campus. I have listed but a few to whet the freshman appetites.

The past/fail system offers a unique opportunity for a freshman to get meaningfully involved in any issue. A freshman can gain nothing or everything from his first year with the margin of academic freedom past/fail allows.

The freshman year at MIT is a time to establish good friendships, become accustomed to the workload, get involved in student activities and explore all conceivable interests. Freshmen must only refrain from getting carried away.

Just as classes before, the Class of 1989 has an opportunity to get involved in MIT, face the issues, and, most importantly, make a difference at MIT.