Admissions might reduce class size
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High school students see more options today, so their choices are harder to predict, he said. Some colleges formerly asked candidates where else they had applied, but such inquiries are now considered an invasion of privacy, he added.

Behnke believes that MIT's actual class size is more accurate by examining subgroups of the applicants. He said that MIT's actual class size is about 12 percent larger than the predicted, which means that the yield is more than 10 percent lower than predicted. He added that the yield is more accurate for predicting the size of the next year's class.

He indicated that the smaller melt for the past two years forms a pattern and will assume about the same number of withdrawals when predicting the size of this year's class.

Students change their minds about attending MIT because they are admitted to other schools from waiting lists and decide to attend those schools. Students also defer admissions to the Institute, Behnke explained.

The Admissions Office must finish all waiting list actions by July 1 because of an agreement with the 50 member consortium (COFHE) on First Priority Mailing (FPM), according to Behnke. COFHE is a group of selective private institutions, including the Ivy League colleges.

Behavior explained that keeping applicants on the waiting list too long was unfair, felt that keeping applicants on the waiting list was an unnecessary problem in keeping next year's class size, and added that he did not know why the melt was small. "All sorts of forces seem to be at play outside," he said.

Approximately 30 students over each of the past two summers have retracted their decisions to attend MIT, according to Behnke. Between 50 and 60 students decided not to attend in the two previous years. He believes that the smaller melt for the past two years forms a pattern and will assume about the same number of withdrawals when predicting the size of this year's class.

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Melt will continue to require no admissions deposits, Behnke said.

"An admissions deposit is a fee required by some schools to receive a prospective freshman's admitted status. This fee is credited to a student's tuition payment when he or she enrolls." Other schools which require an admissions deposit have not found that it helps to predict the class size accurately, according to Associate Dean for Student Affairs Robert A. Sherwood.

"Admissions to be "cautious,"" he said. "Barring a "disaster," Behnke sees no reason to predict next year's incoming class size at this time. The Admissions Office cannot estimate the class size more accurately by enrolling qualified applicants who are accepted in the early admissions deposit group, he said.

"The waiting list is not long enough for other colleges to stabilize their class size, he continued. The COFHE institutions also felt that keeping applicants on the waiting list for too long was unfair, Behnke explained. He agreed with McLellan's statement that "there are more applicants than there are spaces."" Applicants from the waiting list very late are less likely to attend MIT because they have probably made other plans, Behnke said.

The Admissions Office cannot estimate the class size more accurately by enrolling qualified applicants who are accepted in the early admissions deposit group, he said. "There is a high variance in yield among schools and it is difficult to predict the yield for the next year," he said. "We believe that the yield is more accurate for predicting the size of the next year's class. We don't like to say no . . . we've an office of admissions, no rejections," he said.

The yield of admitted applicants typically fluctuates by as much as three percent from year-to-year, according to Behnke. Some schools have experienced changes in yield by as much as seven or eight percent between one year and the next, he added.

A three percent variation in yield implies an uncertainty of fifty students in the predicted size of the class. He believes in keeping next year's class size, and added that he did not know why the melt was small. "All sorts of forces seem to be at play outside," he said.

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