Alternative programs meet goals

By Jacqueline Gottlieb

Three alternative education programs for freshmen filled nearly all their openings during Residence/Orientation week. A total of 136 freshmen entered the Experimental Study Group (ESG), Concourse, and the Integrated Studies Program (ISP). Forty freshmen were accepted into the ESG program, according to ESG Associate Director Holly Sweet. This represents approximately 70 percent of the freshmen who expressed interest in it over the summer. Last year ESG had the largest number of applicants in its history, 80. The number of applicants was back to normal this year, Sweet said. "I don’t know what happened last year. It was just an anomaly," she explained.

This year’s freshmen are a more diverse group than usual, according to Sweet. "We have people from firms, from Georgia, from the West side of campus," she said. In the past most students lived on the East side of campus, and many of them came from Senior House.

In keeping with an ESG tradition, the percentage of international freshmen accepted is approximately 20 percent. The international students tend to be more motivated than usual, otherwise they wouldn’t be here," Sweet explained. "Often they do not know how their backgrounds compare with those of American students. The self-paced program suits them well.

Concourse provided spaces for 65 freshmen out of the 118 applicants, according to Concourse administrator CHM Brandon. Director Jerome Y. Letvin ’47 expressed a desire to have a physics or chemistry lab in Concourse.

In general there is a lack of labs for freshmen at MIT, Letvin said. "Not particularly for lab hours, but just so the freshmen have a lab to work in."

Letvin also wished that MIT would eliminate the Independent Activities Period. "With all the holidays, the term is very short and it is very difficult to cover all the material."

ISP filled 31 of its 35 spaces, which represents a doubling relative to last year’s enrollment in the program, according to administration Anne E. Armitage.

Created last year as part of the Science, Technology and Society (STS) program, ISP has three main goals, according to Armitage: to coordinate the teaching of humanities and of science and to create a learning atmosphere in which students get to know their professors and tutors very well.

Students participate in the main curriculum lectures in ISP. Their recitations and tutorials, usually of 10 students, are taught by alumni, graduate students or faculty.

The program can accommodate recitations and tutorials for any of the freshman courses, Armitage said. An official 6001 recitation will probably be instituted next term, she added.

ISP will offer STS11, Facts and Artificial Types, Accounts and Models, in ISP during the spring as a companion course to 6.001, STS100, STS200 and STS111 are taught fully in ISP. The program also offers five seminars each term, which concentrate on the relations between science and society.

"If a freshman wants to pursue a subject not offered in the curriculum, for example, he is welcome to do so," Armitage said. "We are not very restrictive."

ISP is located in the basement of Building 31, its lounge, three tutorial rooms and the nearby dining hall provide the space for recitations and informal get-togethers for the students.

It is possible to join ISP through add date, or for the spring term, Armitage added.

Fewer students fail freshmen writing exams

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ning, director of the Writing Department, was very pleased by the improved results. He said, "The high schools are getting the message." The improved scores did not affect enrollment in writing courses, he said. "A lot of students still want to take writing," he explained. "We have a steady enrollment."

Walters stressed that the evaluation is only one option in one phase of the writing requirement, which is called "a gradual process." Only 10 or 15 students complete Phase I through the English Achievement Test each year, she added.

The achievement test option exists "to send a message to high schools," that MIT takes writing seriously," Walters continued. Phase 1 can also be completed through a paper or a writing course, "the least popular choice," she said.

"The philosophy of the requirement is to get students to write in all of their subjects," Manning said. He added that the writing decreases is "happy about that." Writing is one of the most popular subjects for humanities concentration and in humanities courses, Manning said.

"MIT is a school with a diversity of talents and some excellent writers," Manning said. He added students who did not pass the essay evaluation should not feel bad. "Bright students can be taught to write very well. We’re here to help people."

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