The Visiting Committee noted that graduate students were often confused about the roles of ODSA and the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School. Residence/Orientation Week

Some committee members suggested "a complete review of the current residential policy at MIT." The institute's residence system is "blissful from other universities' perspective," Sherwood admitted. MIT alumni on the committee, however, had no complaints about the system, he added.

"We do look at it [residence week] every year," Sherwood said. "We're trying to fine-tune the system." The Dean's Office is currently examining "what we can do to minimize the negative impact [of fraternity rush]," Sherwood said.

Sherwood recognized the benefits of moving some orientation to a later point in the year.

Advising

The Visiting Committee recommended that MIT pay greater attention and allocate greater resources to its advising system. It proposed: (1) naming one advisor that a student would have for several years and providing that advisor with incentive to get to know the student's work; (2) identifying a freshman's professor as the freshman's advisor; (3) making fuller use of associate advisors; and (4) placing a stronger emphasis on student relations and support in faculty review processes.

The ODSA is pursuing the idea of identifying freshman instructors as advisors, Heine said. The ODSA is also expanding the role of the associate advisors. "(In) the spirit of the suggestion [for men]," he said.

The emphasis on student relations was the most important recommendation, Heine said. Professors need to know that involvement with students through advising, seminars and living groups is of value to their departments, Heine said. "People need release time from their other activities," he added.

Other issues

- Student satisfaction: The Visiting Committee preferred that MIT's white, middle-class climate and engineering focus be made "as generally happy. Women, minorities, gays and students in the social sciences and humanities be satisfied.
- Student Life Survey: The Committee recommended that more refined and meaningful survey be given in the future.
- Pace and pressure: Important aspects of a college education are perhaps being sacrificed in the pursuit of academic excellence.
- Extracurricular activities: students should be encouraged to balance their schedules with extracurricular activities.
- International students: The Visiting Committee reported that international students have some difficulty adjusting to life at MIT. Graduate students are concerned about losing funding. The needs of international students should also be addressed.
- Women: The Committee recognized the need for more pressure and urged that the issue be handled in an educational manner.
- Blacks: The Committee recognized the lack of black faculty and recommended the active black alumni support of students.
- Minority students: The Committee recommended peer advisors to help minority students deal with academic performance, financial aid and the MIT environment.