HUM-D requirement debated

(Continued from page 1)

to inform students about activity on "diversity" of the reform process and to obtain student input, said UA President Bryan R. Moser. "MIT has now recognized a crisis. Student participation in the reform process cannot be ignored," he said.

The reform process is still in its early stages and student input is desired, said Dean of Undergraduate Education Margaret T. A. MacVicar '65, chairman of the Committee on the Undergraduate Program. Students had been excluded from initial discussions because "had these committees' don't have student representatives," Moser claimed.

The Committee on HASS Requirements proposed changes in the requirement in its interim report of Jan. 29. Under the current proposal, students would take four humanities distribution (HUM-D) subjects in one of four concentration areas: Social-Cultural Studies, Historical Studies, Literary and Philosophical Studies, and the Arts. Only two subjects would be offered in each of the areas, for a total of 40, compared to the 160 or so offered at present.

Under the present guidelines, students must take three HUM-D subjects in different areas of HASS and must also concentrate in one HASS field by taking three or four subjects in that field. Pauline R. Maier, chairman of the Committee on HASS Requirements, said the current system mandates a change. The major concern of the committee was the HUM-D requirement, Maier said. The only insurance that students will be exposed to different areas in HASS is that the three HUM-D subjects are in different departments, she claimed. A student could fulfill the present HUM-D requirement by taking closely related subjects from three different departments, she said.

The change would not result in less choice for students, she said. "We do not see reducing the number of subjects as a way of stopping student choice, we see it as a way of guiding student," Maier explained. The subjects in each area need to be diverse in order to maintain choice, she said. In addition, the 40 subjects should have common standards so students do not choose subjects based on rigidity, she continued.

The problem with the present HUM-D system is that the subjects that the teaching faculty according to Jim Papadopoulos '87, "Don't change [subject] titles, change teachers," he said.

The HASS Committee also recommended that MIT adopt a new Institute Requirement for a subject or group of subjects in "The Human Contents of Science and Technology," as a bridge between HASS fields and the science and engineering fields. Several students expressed reservations about this proposal. They felt the quality of the teaching would not compare to freshman core subjects in math and science.

Students also said that restricting the number of HUM-D subjects and requiring the contextual subject would result in scheduling complications and an end to the small-classroom atmosphere in the humanities. Maier replied that she is committed to maintaining small classes and that her committee has not considered scheduling yet.

The HASS committee's proposal maintains the present concentration requirement except that it calls for more conceptually less skill oriented subject matter. Many of the concentration subjects, especially economics, are too theoretical and math-in
clined, Maier said. The Committee on Undergraduate Engineering Education has produced a set of objectives for undergraduate education in engineering that makes a "serious commitment" to education in HASS, and does not treat it as "supplementary," reported Jack L. Kerrebrock, chairman of the commission. [The commission's interim report appeared in The Tech on March 6.]

The goals have "basic rationalism" from the faculty of the engineering school although much of the faculty gives science higher priority than humanities, said Kerrebrock. He added that his committee does not have a "hard prescription" to achieve these goals and encouraged student input.

The committee is trying to take a "forward looking view of engineering education," Kerrebrock said. "MIT may not stay the top engineering school if we keep doing what we have been doing," Kerrebrock said. The engineer of the future will need a "greater breadth" of knowledge and skills, he continued.

Stephen L. Chorover, professor of psychology, supported Kerrebrock's contention. "Not all MIT engineering students are going to remain at the bench where they begin," he said.

Moser said that student input is being provided through the UA forum series, an undergraduate seminar on education reform, and student representation on reform committees. He was still interested in more student post on two of the committees and that interested students should contact him, he said.

Thank You

for your support

Bryan Moser

and

Becky Thomas

When Conflict Seems Inevitable, Löwenbräu Helps Cooler Heads Prevail.