Athena is an experiment: problems should be expected

To the Editor:

Even though I am the Student Information Processing Board's (SIPB) liaison to Project Athena, I am not writing in that "official" capacity. I am writing as a well-informed and concerned user of Project Athena.

Simson L. Garfinkel '85 points out some short-comings of Athena: "Athena system is too limited," April 8; "Athena's inequities must be changed," April 15; Scott S. Lawton '86 "Athena should encourage student input," April 11 cite Athena administration's lack of knowledge and interest in what the users want. I am writing in defense of the project and its administration.

Athena's short-comings were mentioned, including:

- High loads in the Student Center Cluster.
- Access to accounts.
- Lack of student input to Athena.

I would like to discuss each of these topics both as an "insider" and as a user.

There are often high loads on the machines in the Student Center. Often it's hard to find a terminal in the afternoon or evening, especially now that the "end of the term crunch" is approaching. These are serious problems that must be and are being dealt with.

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To the Editor:

According to The Tech ("Student apologizes in gay harassment case," April 15), an MIT student recently vandalized another student's dorm room and set a fire in that room while the victim slept. The victim was gay; the assailant's motive was rank bigotry. The only "excuse" offered was that the assailant was drunk, and the only "penalty" MIT imposed for this malicious, destructive and potentially dangerous criminal assault was to ask the assailant to apologize and pay minor restitution.

Gary L. Drescher

One might conclude that MIT's forgiveness and leniency are boundless. But just last month, when students refused to abandon a symbolic shantytown built to protest apartheid, MIT had them arrested and filed charges against them. Perhaps of the protesters had been drunk, they too would have been spared all penalty. Or was their mistake to oppose persecution instead of practicing it? Maybe if their behavior had been destructive and violent, MIT would have been more sympathetic.

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