Faculty considers Lincoln Lab and writing requirement

(Continued from page 1) explained. "The university has a right, a duty, to perform its public service to educate the public...Lincoln. In this sense, it is very quiet."

The report points out that Lincoln now contributes about $5.5 million annually to administrative overhead costs that are shared between the lab and the campus. The institute could lose this income if it severed its connection with Lincoln, and would have to charge its own research sponsors more overhead to make up for the difference. Says James J. Culliton, vice president for financial operations: "Whether this is a blessing or a set of golden chains is your own interpretation." Smullin commented.

But has exercised little control over the direction of research at Lincoln, Smullin continued. "Effectively, the program is decided entirely between Lincoln and the government." The committee considered whether Lincoln's work fell within guidelines adopted by the Executive Committee in 1969 prohibiting "new obligations in the design and development of systems that are intended for operational deployment of military weapons."

The lab is in "substantial compliance" with the guidelines, the report states, but there are some borderline cases where "hazardous decisions seem inappropriate." Such cases are inevitable at a military lab, the report concludes, stating "the proper question seems to be "Why is MIT still involved?, not "Are the programs within the guidelines?"

Pointing out that Lincoln's long-term purpose was not made clear when it was founded in 1951, Smullin called for continued attention to the lab by the standing faculty review committee. The interim report represents the first written output from the committee, which has existed since 1975.

Provost John M. Deutch '61 agreed that conversion of Lincoln to non-military work is "not going to be possible" in today's climate of federal funding priorities. "We must deal with it as a military lab that the Institute is managing for the nation," he said, expressing his belief that "this nation is well served by having this program...the nation is well served by having a pass, Hoffman said."

Hoffman suggested that the "marginal pass" category of papers be eliminated. The report concludes. It recommends no change in this part of the requirement except narrowing the "marginal pass" category of grades on the freshman essay exam. Students ignore the difference between a marginal pass and a pass, Hoffman said. The committee anticipates problems in the administration of Phase Two, which requires a ten-page paper in the student's area of professional interest. "Finding literate, competent outside readers to evaluate the 100 Phase Two papers submitted this year has proven to be extremely difficult," the report states, admitting that its present system cannot handle the number of papers it will need to evaluate annually.

Hoffman suggested that because Phase Two papers concern a subject in the student's major, they should be graded by the student's department. This change could be made after allowing "time to get a common conception of the standards for general writing" and would relieve the load on the writing committee, he said. Responsibility for the quality of students' writing is vested in the whole faculty, Hoffman stressed. He felt that it was therefore inappropriate for departmental faculty to judge students' writing.

The committee will report on Phase Two next year. The only comment on Hoffman's report came from Deutsch. "This program will only succeed at MIT...if the reading is done in academic departments rather than centrally," he said. "I do not believe that this is a matter that should be left to central administration."

The faculty approved the restoration of the title of Naval Engineer: for the professional degree offered by Course XIII-A. It also approved the reorganization of four master's degrees previously offered by Course XX under the name of Master of Science in Applied Biological Sciences.

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