Column/Ben Z. Stanger

Departments can evaluate quality of Phase Two essays

"Phase Two is designed to en-
gage upperclass students in the more specialized forms of writing that are necessary within their professional disciplines," the MIT Bulletin.

I remember walking into the Writing Center after receiving a marginal pass on my freshman writing evaluation. I thought I had written a good essay, and I wanted to find out what was wrong with it. I sat down with a member of the writing staff who made many good comments about active errors in my essay, and I left satisfied that my writ-
ing had indeed been "mar-
ginal." I took it to be a sign of the difference between the two centers.

The evaluation at the Writing Center are all competent to judge the quality of a standard English essay. But I wouldn't waste the center to give final say on whether a paper written by a faculty member, David Balbrecher for in-
stance, is good enough to submit to a journal.

The Committee on the Writing Requirement does not think this is a good idea either. The committee recently recommended a switch from central grading of Phase Two papers because of understaffing problems. Provost John M. Deutch backed this proposal at the last faculty meet-
ing, saying the program would only be justified if "grading is done in academic departments rather than centrally."

I favor this change because the goal of Phase Two is specifically to ensure com-
petency in technical writing.

Phase Two has an ambiguity of purpose which makes it difficult for students to say who should be responsible for evaluating it after it has been writ-
ten. The program can be satisfied in either of two ways: by submitting it to a paper from a UROP or course by getting a B or better in a science writing class or coop-
erative subject, such as Science Magazine (21.780).

There is, however, a difference between writing ability measured within a student's "professional discipline," as the purpose of the requirement states, and an "in-
struction in the forms, func-
tions, and style of technical communica-
tion," the purpose which makes it difficult
for collecting papers, dividing
them by department and finding interested students to read them — quite a differ-
entive strain. Above all, the committee members seem to feel that the students have fine writing skills, and that Phase Two is no more than a formality.

The editors of the on-line board of Ministry of Science, so he know as well as any one define

In the Tech editorial "Required-
ly (April 8) neglected the speci-
fic importance of the requirement
then, it is Phase I which is unlikely to stand under departmental super-

The student of Phase Two would meet its
goal of ensuring qualified tech-
ical writers.

Wellesley: a reflection of tranquility

Over the past two springs I have had the unique opportunity of taking five courses at Wellesley College. I would like to share some of my experiences there without repeat-
ing the well-known comparison that one should take a course at Wellesley-
ly.

I was convinced to take a course at Wellesley by my fresh-

men advisor. She told me that my college education really was not going to be useless unless I got away from MIT a little and saw what classes were like at another school, other than my technical orientation.

Another advisor said the qualitative differ-
cence between history courses at Wellesley, where most of the oth-
er students are engineering majors, and those at MIT, where most of the oth-
er students are history majors, and those at MIT, where most of the oth-
er students are engineering majors.

I am grateful that so many MIT students have never been to Wel-

The end effect of Wellesley's unique pro-
duction has been the development of tranquility and time

The article written by Sally Ven-

the writing department was

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miscellaneous students from various fields to attend a series of five freshmen initiatives at Mit.

But few people satisfy Phase I, or any of the three-phase framework upon which all his fu-

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