Job market construed in 1986

By Katie Schwartz

The first signs of a new American industry could be seen in 1986. The job market for graduates in engineering, but MIT students are holding their own, said Director of Career Planning and Placement Robert W. Weatherall.

On the other hand, it was a "boring time for people outside science and engineering than it previously has been," he said, with improved graduates' prospects in architecture and management. He felt careers in consulting, finance, and the government are increasingly open to MIT graduates in all departments.

There has been no surge in recruiting by the defense industry, he explained. Weatherall observed, "You'd think they would have been going gungo for Star Wars," he said, since President Reagan had backed more funding for Strategic Defense Initiative research.

But no restrictions made Graduates from the School of Science also found jobs in industry at all degree levels. "We wish more students would realize that they could major in science and still serve to the technical job market," Weatherall commented.

Weatherall felt future trends in opportunities for engineering students were unclear. "This is an uncertain time. The signals point in different directions," he said.

Non-technical fields: good season Opportunities expanded in management and in the graduate degree level in architecture, Weatherall said, and there were also more opportunities for students seeking non-technical jobs for which they were not specifically trained.

More and more, "organizations have been valuing MIT students not because of their majors, but just because they have good problem-solving skills," he said. He felt graduates in technical and non-technical fields alike are being welcomed by consulting firms, Wall Street firms and government agencies.

Questionnaire on student values MIT needs a better idea of what kind of careers students want, Weatherall said. He has been "more and more conscious of the broad range of interests that MIT students have," and the faculty committee investigating the influence of the military in MIT this year (see story on the committee's report, page 2) was also interested in students' views on careers. "I don't think MIT has had a very clear knowledge of what students are after," he said.

Therefore, for the first time this year, the Office of Career Services sent graduates a questionnaire on what is important to them in their careers. The questionnaire asks students to indicate the importance of a list of factors such as "work contributing to the good of society," "opportunity to become a top manager," and "opportunity to implement your creative ideas."

The office has sent the questionnaire to all seniors since September, those graduating this year, and the results are expected to be completed by the summer. Weatherall will compile the results over the summer.

EECS enrollment rises, but no restrictions made

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The plan approved by the faculty in 1984 instructed CUAFA to decide each year whether to restrict freshman admissions, if the department's sophomore enrollment met or exceeded certain benchmarks. The original plan allowed CUAFA to consider restrictions on the freshman classes entering in 1985, 1986, and 1987; the faculty voted May 21 to extend the plan until the end of the academic year two years later.

EECS enrollment has dropped for the past two years, falling nearly to the benchmark levels, but this year's freshmen class shows an increase in enrollment instead of the desired decrease. The Class of 1989 is projected to contain 344 EECS majors, whereas the department believes it can comfortably handle no more than 270 students per class.

Director of Admissions Michael C. Bereske has said he expects fewer of next year's freshmen to major in EECS. The percentage indicates that the field on their applications has decreased, so the incoming class contains more women, who have been less likely to choose EECS.

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