fight HASS vote

Robin Wagner SM '86, special assistant to the Commission on Engineering Undergraduate Education, said the Tech, "The Commission is completely supportive of the HASS proposal."

One student expressed his fear that "Shakespeare will not be a HUM-D under this proposal." The student was one of many who felt that if the number of courses were cut, only broad survey courses would be offered.

And, because not all students are willing to take more than eight slots for humanities—three to five of which are taken up by a concentration—"now you're starting to put serious clamps on the flexibility that people will have," one student observed.

Some students questioned the effectiveness of any kind of distribution requirement at all. "You pick one from column 'A' and one from column 'B' and bingo: you're a well-rounded person," one student remarked sarcastically.

"It's absurd to think that you can get a distributive education in only three slots," Andrew Bradtcheck-Leely '87 said.

One faculty complaint against the present distribution system is the amount of departmental overlap that it allows. Last August's Report of the Committee on the HASS Requirements criticized the overlap for "undermining the effectiveness in building breadth into students' programs." For example, it is possible to satisfy the distribution requirement by taking sociology classes under Urban Studies, Political Science and the Sociology program at Wellesley, the report said. Similarly, literature subjects fall under the headings of Science, Technology and Society; the Writing Program; and Literature itself.

Both students and faculty questioned the impact that MIT's humanities programs had on prospective students. At Stanford, ranked number two among schools in which MIT wins its applicants (the first is Harvard), almost 300 distribution subjects are offered among five humanities fields. Stanford also requires two subjects in writing and a "context" course for engineering students. Harvard offers about 150 subjects in its "core" curriculum.