EECS creates new graduate program

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engineeering schools have developed curricula which are packed with technical courses, but which fail to teach the practical, broader aspects of the engineering profession. "What undergraduates and academia need to realize is that you can't fully learn engineering in four [undergraduate] years," he said.

Jack L. Kerrebrock, associate dean of engineering, agreed that four years of an undergraduate education is generally insufficient to produce an effective practicing engineer. Kerrebrock felt that industry must take a greater role in the advanced education of engineers.

Siebert, meanwhile, contended that MIT should relinquish accreditation of its undergraduate engineering programs in order to achieve a more "broad-based and liberal" curriculum at the undergraduate level. Many of the practical engineering subjects can be deferred to the graduate or professional years. While some smaller schools are highly dependent on accreditation, MIT will be able to get by just as well without it, he said.

But Kerrebrock disagreed. He said he did not think MIT should give up accreditation for its undergraduate engineering program, that the School of Engineering has been accused of exercising a monopoly in undergraduate requirements, creating excessive pressure for students, Kerrebrock said.

"The nature of the [accreditation] is self-imposed," Kerrebrock said. Problems arise when students try to graduate early or take a large number of graduate courses too soon, he explained.

One method of alleviating pressure from the prerequisites, Kerrebrock said, is to trim the amount of information presented in the courses. Kerrebrock said, "In this way the student will be able to pay a bit more attention to his non-technical classes," he said.

First year committee investigates pass-fail

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Pass-fail is "a highly charged issue," Manning noted. "It is important that [it] not keep people from other issues."

"The committee's task is to examine the essential features of our current first-year academic program structure and to make recommendations and concrete proposals appropriate to improving its intellectual quality and effectiveness," according to the charge to the committee.

While no specific proposals have been made, there is a consensus on the committee that the first-year program needs more flexibility, Manning said.

"Freshman year is in some sense very rigid," agreed Jonathan Katz '90, the student representative on the committee. "There shouldn't be a standard way to approach MIT."

Most students see freshman year as nearly a time to meet requirements, Munkres said. "We should all change our attitude toward the freshman year."

Both Manning and Munkres said that in the current system, "there's too much rigid, too much fixed," and that change would be a time of intellectual excitement.

"The nature of the pursuit of study [in the freshman year], and its relationship to the subsequent three years of the academic program are fundamental to the intellectual well-being of our students," the charge to the committee states.

The activities in which freshmen engage are too separate from those of the rest of the Institute, said Katz, who also chairs the Student Committee on Educational Policy. The committee has not resolved how it will disseminate its final conclusions. As of now, no timetables have actually been set. "We're working the issues out the best we can," Manning said.

Manning was satisfied with the progress of the work. "You can't go much faster," he added.

"We are hoping to come up with something at the end of the year," Munkres stated. He felt, however, that there was "no chance of coming up with a definitive answer by the end of the year."

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