Concerns raised about CFYP report

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flexibility for students and to introduce some accountability. "Flexibility without accountability is unrealistic. You have minimum accountability now; people are faking."

Vedanathan feared that under the proposed system, many students would "do what [was] done now, and said that departmental requirements were set up so that any student should be able to switch majors in their junior year.

Students in their second term at MIT currently "overload and fail to understand," he said, qualifying the two as different concepts.

Sixteen percent of freshmen, three percent of sophomores take more than 60 units, one percent of juniors, and two percent of seniors take more than 42 units, according to Canizares.

On the other hand, five percent of freshmen, 21 percent of sophomores, 42 percent of juniors, and 58 percent of seniors take fewer than 42 units, he said. All figures were compiled after drop date.

Sumithra Bellam '89 accused the CFYP of focusing on the 16 percent of freshmen who take more than 60 units, but Canizares explained that he was more worried about the current system's inflexibility, than about the incidence of overloading. He hoped students would take fewer subjects, and explore other areas as well and add that the term "underweighted sophomore" should be changed.

"The term implies a confused student, but actually [what such a student is doing] should be encouraged. The Undergraduate Academic Support Office should be more gentle," he said, referring to forms that request a student's major.

Responding to concern for the student who takes 43 to 48 units in the first term and still doesn't do well, Canizares said, "I don't think that pass/fail is the cure. The student's problem may be in preparation or study habits. He may be in the wrong place—either taking the wrong mix of classes or in the wrong school. The earlier the signal that the student is not doing well is heard, the better. There's a lot less trauma in failing or getting low grades [earlier in one's academic career]."

Changing perceptions at MIT

A lot of the courses freshmen now take are pre-requisites for upperdivision classes, and students who take them at a later time would be behind their peers. Anthea Chen '91 said.

Canizares said that students may have indeed taken a subject, but not learned it well. All departments are more flexible than they appear, he noted, repeating the impression on employers and graduate school, but Canizares said that these improvements would change as more students took advantage of the system.

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