LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Resolution possible in Wolfe decision

President Charles M. Vest has already charged us to learn about the human element of science, in addition to math and engineering. "May the Institute forward into the next century, Charles Vest thinks globaly," Oct. 19.

But MIT is kicking off the brilliant teacher of Psychology, which is one of the most successful attempts to examine human issues in science.

Jeremy M. Wolfe '81 was denied tenure last spring by the council of the Whitaker College of Health, Sciences, and Technology, most of whose members have no direct contact with Wolfe's or his work. Wolfe has been told he must leave MIT by June 1991.

Introduction to Psychology, a HASS-D course with an enrollment of about 150, is the most popular voluntary course at the Institute. It consistently receives the highest ratings in the Course Evaluation Grade. That's no surprise, since Wolfe is not only an inspirational and gifted teacher and brilliant researcher, but one of the rare professors who truly cares about students, and helps students love what they do.

This year an unprecedented number of students were列入 out of numerous HASS-D courses. Suddenly, there are not enough spaces in the classes for the students who are required to take them. If Wolfe leaves, 9.00 as we know it will be gone. This will leave at least an additional 500 students per year in search of non-existent HASS-D courses. So in addition to bringing an academic tragedy, the loss of this course will potentially derail the entire HASS-D system.

In addition to teaching 9.00, Wolfe administers the Program in Psychology at MIT, and is the advisor for all psychology majors and minors at the Institute. Without him, there will be no psychology program at MIT the top-rank major university without one.

Not only would psychology majors and minors be left stranded, but also the hundreds of students who each year concentrate in psychology. And a major brand of intellectual endeavors would be lost.

So why do we need psychology here? Why don't we need teachers committed to teaching? Shouldn't they be spending their time on research?

All of us, regardless of our field of study, will need an understanding of human behavior. At this year's presidential convention, Paul E. Grass '45, now chairman of the MIT Corporation, asserted that an excellent science and engineering education will not alone suffice for future leaders of the scientific community.

He challenged incoming students to also learn about human behavior and interpersonal dynamics, skills that will be absolutely vital for people working in an increasingly global community.

Vest, in Friday's Tech interview said, "I believe eminents must understand more about the societal context in which they practice their profession." I personally believe that not just at MIT but all other leading universities, undergraduate curriculum needs to be broadened to include more of the humanities and social sciences to better define what we mean by that.

Nonetheless, tenure decisions at the Institute are based almost solely on research. At the age of 35, perhaps Wolfe has not yet won a Nobel Prize, but his vision research is world class.

That should not, however, be the only issue. If MIT is an institute of higher learning, and not merely an industrial park, tenure decisions must have more to do with teaching, and with contributions to student life.

Wolfe teaches a huge lecture class that virtually no one skips. He has taught me and countless other students that both learning and teaching can be a rewarding and enjoyable experience. And he cares.

This style should serve as a role-model for other faculty, rather than be eradicated. The new administration now has the opportunity to take a bold step.

Students, let the new president and provost know your feelings about this issue.

Rebecca Kaplan '92

Elimination of ROTC will not change policy

The current faculty plan concerning the relations between MIT and the Reserve Officers' Training Corps is misguided. Cutting MIT's ties with the ROTC program will do nothing to strengthen the Department of Defense. It will only hurt those students who want to attend MIT and participate in ROTC.

As the MIT Committee on ROTC chairman, Alvis W. Drake '57, stated in the Oct. 19 Tech editorial, "free' access to the Place for the students to participate, however, a thought to make a change?

The MIT policy today, Congress would not, nor should it, move to eliminate the current policy.

Therefore, the real battle is not going to be here on the MIT campus, it will be in the hearts and minds of the voting public. Not until there is a significant number of vocal students, and general public who want to see the end of ROTC, the program will not be changed.

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