Attitudes toward MIT women change over time

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school like this and that I should go somewhere else, that I didn't belong here. I liked MIT fine on the exam, and this is what I liked about it. I would say that female students had some number of incidents like that," she said.

Sometimes the discouragement came from fellow students: "Back then, students referred to women as 'coeds.' In general it was very much that girls didn't belong. That's how the term -- coeds were considered worse than animals."

Administration supportive

"But the administration was really supportive. Any time we reported incidents like that, they'd be handled. We did think that MIT wanted female students to succeed and that the administration had our best interests in mind."

The circumstances also changed as MIT's relationship with the female students, said Jensen, whose friendships from college have lasted almost 20 years. "The best thing was that the women were a more supportive of each other," she said.

For example, the Association of MIT alumnae, Jensen said, "began with female students, inviting them for dinner, offering an evening of parties, and presenting an academic award to one of the senior female students."

Other changes that MIT students helped each other through a big sister/little sister program, which involved writing to freshmen before they arrived at MIT. "We also started talking about questions about MIT and offering tutoring assistance," she said.

Women more accepted after McCormick Hall opened

After McCormick Hall opened in the early 60's, the number of women on campus increased. Bonny S. Kellermann '72, a political science major and student body president, said that the biggest difference she noticed was the decrease in sexual harassment.

"There were already numerous programs at MIT that bring science and engineering students, ranging from campus tours to workshops, to have MIT students visit secondary and elementary schools to talk about science," she said.

"It is not uncommon at all for the driving force for creating a science tour program, to have MIT students visit secondary and elementary schools to talk about science," she added.

"We had to be careful not to prejudice against these efforts not have been coordinated by MIT as a whole in the past, but I think consistent effort to do this would take these initiatives as an institution, going beyond the mission of higher education and research."

Commission has widespread support

This committee was only the beginning of MIT's institutional role in promoting science and technology in the United States, according to Latanision. "We are still doing it, even with the expected questions of funding sources, there seems to be widespread support for MIT's initiative."

"Having various deans, professors and other people within the Institute behind the program represents a serious commitment on the part of MIT," Latanision said.

In an article describing the committee's findings, Latanision wrote: "Science and mathematics in K-12 is not somebody else's problem -- it's a common problem, a common responsibility and it is now time for MIT, as an institution, and as a presence in Cambridge, of Massachusetts and of the United States, to engage the problems of the younger students and secondary areas of math and science education."