MacVicar's Death Leaves Undergraduate Void

Margaret L. A. MacVicar '65, dean for undergraduate education and creator of the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program, died on Sept. 30 at the age of 47 after a year-long battle with lung cancer.

MacVicar, MIT's first dean for undergraduate education, was universally praised by administrators, faculty and students as a leader in curriculum reform and a champion for students' needs.

President Charles M. Vest described MacVicar as "one of those rare individuals whose words and actions transformed a great institution and influenced thousands of young men and women. Her development of UROP bought a potent combination of teaching and research to the education of MIT undergraduates. She engaged her profession and her life with an intensity and a courage that have inspired and touched all." She was "an amazing woman who had a great vision for undergraduate education," said Undergraduate Association President Stacy E. McGreever '93.

At the time of her death, MacVicar was a patient at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Boston. The Institute community remembered her at a ceremony on Oct. 3 in Kresge Auditorium.

Creator of UROP

MacVicar will be remembered best as the creator of UROP, the innovative program that promotes undergraduate learning. Originally a group of 25 students when it was founded in 1969, UROP has grown to include nearly three-fourths of MIT undergraduates. In that time, it has been praised by a number of educational and scientific authorities, including the US Department of Education and the National Science Foundation.

She was also involved in the push for increased diversity among the student body, the adoption of the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Distribution System, a revision of the science distribution requirement and changes in the pass/no credit freshman grading system.

Most recently, MacVicar led the fight to make biology a General Institute Requirement, along with calculus, chemistry and physics. Following her suggestion to "take the bold move now," the faculty voted overwhelmingly at the annual meeting to add the subject to the core curriculum.

MacVicar was also the Institute official responsible for policy regarding the Reserve Officer Training Corps, and issued a statement last April criticizing the military's policy of excluding homosexuals from the program. She said such policies were "deeply troubling," and that they "run counter to the values of inclusion and equality which are at the foundation of this institution."

Smith may fill void

In the wake of MacVicar's death, the Undergraduate Education Office helped to ease faces dissolution. While the administration has not announced any plans for reorganization, it is generally understood that programs formerly run by the Office for Undergraduate Education will be administered by the Office of the Dean for Student Affairs.

Dean for Student Affairs Arthur C. Smith, who currently reports to Samuel J. Kemen, associate