Institute Forms K-12 Education, Seeks Greater Role in American Classrooms

By Eva Meyn

The attempt to increase MIT's involvement in primary and secondary education, a newly founded Council on Primary and Secondary Education made a series of recommendations last fall.

The council aimed to use the media to change the national perceptions that science and technology are a hotline and that MIT is an ivory tower, using the economic future of the United States as the "hook," said Ronald M. Lantension, the council's chairman.

America's educational problems are "rooted in America's cultural values, massive social and demographic changes and global economic trends," Lantension said. "The problem is that the US doesn't realize how much of an impact science and technology have on its ability to compete economically in the future, he added.

Many collaborations suggested

The council recommended that MIT gather a committee of leaders of universities, business, government, and religious organizations to publicize the importance of science and mathematics education and sponsor the creation of a nationwide network of summer institutes for teachers.

The council also suggested that MIT faculty collaborate with schools on a long-term research program and curriculum development effort in K-12 math and science classes. MIT should form "regional and national electronic networks to link teachers and schools with one another, with colleges and universities and with other educational resources," said Lantension.

The planned network is to be called "Project Mathematicians," after the ancient Greek mathematician.

There are already numerous programs at MIT that bring science and technology to K-12 students, ranging from simple route design to institute programs to give MIT students visit elementary and secondary schools. But there have been no comprehensive recommendations for the execution of the council's recommendations, Lantension said.

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the current situation in K-12 is not somebody else's problem - it's a shared responsibility and it is now time for MIT, as an institution, and as a citizen of Cambridge, Massachusetts and of the United States, to engage the problems of the K-12 system.

Education gap may widen

One concern, expressed by Associate Provost for the Arts Ellen T. Harris, was that only successful schools will have the resources to take advantage of MIT's programs, while schools with problems would be left out in the cold. Those schools which have the resources to take advantage of MIT's help will most likely be those that are already "successful schools," she said. This situation will only exacerbate the overwhelming gap between more successful schools and those that are in trouble, Harris said.

In an article describing the committee's findings, Lantension said, "Science and mathematics education in K-12 is not necessarily else's problem - it's a shared responsibility and it is now time for MIT, as an institution, and as a citizen of Cambridge, Massachusetts and of the United States, to engage the problems of the K-12 system.

The survey also asked how students respond-

Edward C. Kennelly (D-Mass.) said about half the reports were of gender- or sex-based harassment. "It doesn't necessarily have to be a freshman or staff member who experiences sexual harassment, including reporting to a bursar, assistant provost, director of special services. "One has to be careful about sexual harassment between students, he said. This situation will only exacerbate the overwhelming gap between more successful schools and those that are in trouble, Harris said.

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Lantension noted that these efforts had not been coordinated at MIT as a whole, and that the committee hoped MIT would take these initiatives as an institution, going "beyond the mission of higher education and research."

Also among the recommendations was for an advisory committee to be created to assume responsibility for the execution of the council's recommendations, Lantension said.

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Stephanie Pinchak

Harassment on campus

At a faculty meeting just before the booklet was mailed out, Keyser released the results of a survey of 2700 faculty and staff members. Of the 194 responses received, 180 indicated they were involved in a harassment incident. Keyser reported that about half the reports were of gender- or sex-based harassment, one-third were of general harassment and the remainder were of racial, ethnic, religious or sexual nature.

Based on respondents about how much time was spent dealing with the incidents, Keyser estimated the costs of harassment were $600,000 and $1 million per year, a figure which includes an estimated $250,000 work hours but as well as settlement and court costs.