Vest's Inaugural Speech Addresses Government Relations, Higher Education

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"It is no longer possible, if it ever was, for individuals or nations to think that the way in which they treat their land, air or water has no bearing on their neighbors," Vest said. The Center for Global Change Science will help to lead the way in protecting the environment. "I believe we must marshal our interests and capabilities to understand these issues and develop solutions," Vest continued.

Vest also announced the creation of the MIT Information Infrastructure Initiative, which will work to develop a high bandwidth optical communications network and create a working model on campus.

Competition between national and international interests was another theme of Vest's address. "Clearly, we must be concerned with this nation's economic well-being. We must not, however, endanger the very essence of our institution by retreating into simplistic forms of techno-nationalism," he said.

A committee headed by Eugene B. Skolnikoff, professor of political science, "helped us examine relationships in the international context, our relationships with corporations and issues on the number of international students on campus," according to Vest. He described the committee's work as one of the most important accomplishments of his first year.

"Declining interest and ability"

On a national level, Vest expressed concern at the "declining interest and ability among our young people to pursue rigorous advanced mathematics, particularly in science and engineering."

"The time has come again for us to place our expertise and stature in the service of a major national effort to rebuild the strength of science and mathematics in American schools," Vest emphasized.

He said, "the education we most directly influence, however, is the education of our own students." He discussed some of the challenges in an engineering curriculum, and stressed the need to infuse engineering students with "an increased respect for and enjoyment of effective, efficient and socially responsive design and production."

The five-year master's program debated by the Departments of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science and Aeronautics and Astronautics over the course of the year addressed this concern. "I think we are about to take a leadership role in some fairly significant evolution of the engineering curriculum," Vest said of the departments' debates.

The institute also began broadening its scientific focus with the addition of biology to the General Institute Requirements. Vest endorsed the biology proposal, saying, "I personally believe it would be a strong leadership move to do this."

Charles M. Vest presents his inaugural address to the crowd gathered on Killian Court.

Vest gets a hand with his robe in the Vannevar Bush Room before the inauguration ceremony.

Wrighton Fills Four Administration Vacancies

OSDA, Schools of Engineering, Science, HASS Change Hands

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I've heard for Professor Smith."

Smith agreed that different situations require different selection processes. "If we were talking about a really long-term appointment, then I'd say there would be a search committee. However, my appointment is essentially a short-term arrangement."

"I'm very much in favor of search committees and student participation on them. On the other hand, it seems foolish to have a committee which would have this result as something of a foregone conclusion," Smith continued.

Birgeneau is third appointment

Professor Birgeneau, whose term as science dean began July 1, replaced Gene M. Brown, who had held the post since July 1985. Brown, a former head of the biology department, left the post because he wanted to return to research and teaching.

Birgeneau's selection marked the first time students contributed to the choice of a dean. Two students — Richard R. Kerwell G and Julian P. Sachs '91 — were on the advisory committee that selected Birgeneau. The committee spent six months discussing possible candidates for the position before presenting Wrighton with its final recommendation.

"The whole process was extremely democratic," Sachs said. He added that he thought having students on the committee was not necessary because he thought the faculty on the committee were careful to think about issues that would affect students.

Godfrey was the leader in the push for increased student input in the selection of deans last year. He said he is "extremely happy" that students were involved in Birgeneau's appointment.

Godfrey said that it is vital that students have a part in the choice of deans. He said that even though there are many more faculty than students on advisory committees, it is wonderful that students can now present their views.

Professor Khoury, who had been acting dean since 1990, was appointed dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences last summer. He had been associate dean of the school since 1987.

Khoury is perhaps best known among undergraduates for the lectures on the Middle East he gave during the Gulf war. Khoury's research focuses on the political and social history of the Middle East.

Many of the issues and trends that Khoury faces during his tenure as dean surfaced while he was acting dean. For example, many Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences-Distribution (HASS-D) classes were oversubscribed last spring, resulting in lotteries and student complaints. Problems with both overcrowding and undersubscription continued last fall, when several HASS-Ds were cancelled due to lack of interest.

While acting dean, Khoury provided over a large increase in the number of students taking HASS minors on their degrees. Nearly 200 members of the Class of 1992 chose to study a minor, up from 55 in the Class of 1989.

"I think at this time that Joel has the combination of talent and experience which is most appropriate."

Mark S. Wrighton