Panel to Study Overhead Costs
Number of TAs and RAs May Decline; ABD Status is a Possibility

By Karen Kaplon

While a host of government agencies and universities scrutinizing the way MIT spends federal research money, an ad-hoc committee of faculty and administrators is taking an internal look at the efficiency of research and the funding of graduate student tuition here.

Provost Mark S. Wrighton convened the Committee on Indirect Costs and Graduate Student Tuition to study "the costs of research currently allocated to indirect costs" and the rationale behind the current method of funding graduate research and teaching assistants from the Institute's Employee Benefits Pool, according to a letter from him. In addition, the committee should "establish the priorities of the research faculty with respect to the activities supported with indirect cost dollars," the letter said.

The committee, chaired by Professor of Biology Robert A. Weissburg '64, is charged with making recommendations for improvements in the graduate education and research enterprises at MIT with emphasis on improving cost effectiveness of areas and services funded with indirect cost dollars." Wrighton said in the letter. The letter set a deadline of March 31 for the committee's recommendations.

Neither Weissburg nor Wrighton could be reached for comment yesterday.

Members of the committee include Jonathan Atlas '69, director of the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research, Robert W. Olden, director of the Sloan School of Management, Joel Minier '67, dean of the School of Engineering; Ronald R. Parker '62, director of the Plasma Fusion Center; and Doreen Morin, assistant to the provost and senior vice president. Morris said that Wrighton also attends committee meetings "when he can.

Although the committee has been meeting since Dec. 20, the institution chose to announce the formation only last week. Parker said that is because a "consultative, informal approach" was deemed in response to the MIT Sloan School of Management's Hal Varian '73 and the National Science Foundation's David Twersky '66, who have expressed concern that the committee's recommendations will not be acted upon.

In short, the changes that went into effect over the weekend are the administration's first attempt to distinguish itself from its predecessors while trying to keep MIT at the forefront of education and scientific research.

"Education is a priority throughout the last year," Vest and Whitwag have consistently tried to push the idea of education. Events such as the "Teaching at a Research University" colloquium held in September, the establishment of a "faculty fellows program for lecturers who are valuable teaching assets," and emphasis on the course "Research in Practice," have shown the current administration's commitment to the idea of education. Events such as the "Teaching at a Research University" colloquium held in September, the establishment of a "faculty fellows program for lecturers who are valuable teaching assets," and emphasis on the course "Research in Practice," have shown the current administration's commitment to the idea of education.

Whitehead Founder Dies
John Whitehead, who founded the Whitehead Institute in 1982, died Sunday of a heart attack while playing squash. Whitehead's gift of $135 million to build the Whitehead Institute is the largest single gift ever given to MIT.

Gerald R. Fink, professor of biology and director of the Whitehead Institute, said: "John's death is a personal and professional loss for the Whitehead Institute community." His "vitality and enthusiasm was certainly the spirit of the Whitehead Institute," he said.

"Although he was a remarkable philanthropist, what he gave was more than just financial support... He was a maverick force behind medical science and its visit only compounded his vision," Fink said.

Philip A. Sharp, head of the biology department, said that he believes that "Whitehead's contribution to the research institute and the young people that the Whitehead Institute will train will be remembered as his biggest contribution to MIT.

Vice President for Research J. David Linzer PhD '65 said that Whitehead's death was a surprise to everyone. His contribution of the Whitehead Institute was immense, Linzer said.

A memorial service will be conducted at the Whitehead at a date to be announced.

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