Reorganization Shows Added Sensitivity

Students and faculty alike should be pleased by Provost Mark. S. Wrighton’s reorganization of the Academic Council. Last week’s changes point to an increased sensitivity in the administration both to students’ needs and to pressures held in abeyance and mounted from outside the institute.

For students, the most important change in the appointment of Arthur C. Smith to the combined position of dean for undergraduate education and student affairs. Five members of the faculty or administration have proven themselves more interested in improving students’ lives and increasing their sense of value than Smith. Unlike many administrators—including his predecessor, Shirley M. Mcely — Smith asks students for input before creating policies that will affect their daily lives. By exercising a progressively advanced education and many other important issues facing today’s students points to a bright future for student welfare over the next few years.

It is especially important that students realize what will not be accomplished through Smith’s promotion. While Smith will now be in charge of both the Undergraduate Education Office and the Office of the Dean for Student Affairs, students will probably not notice any major changes in either of these bodies. Wrighton’s claim that the new position will streamline the decision-making process is largely unfounded, but such a merging certainly never hurt, especially when it comes to such issues as the participation of gays in the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps.

Though the power of the new position is in fact with Smith, it would be dangerous in the hands of anyone less interested in student welfare. Giving control of both educational and extracurricular life to one person requires someone responsible and sensitive enough to wield that power wisely. We can only hope that Smith’s leadership will be as patient and understanding as it is, if not, waiting even a year to reorganize the Academic Council, as the administration did this time, could have disastrous consequences.

The editorial in this reorganization may be the current result of the selection process. In having Smith report directly to Wrighton, as opposed to Associate Provost for Institute Life Samuel J. Keyser, the key has been to make the majority of students, who prefer the current system, to make their views known to President Charles M. Vest and other high officials. Though Smith reportedly like to see all students live on west campus, this philosophy is far more popular outside the student body of the student group (Cohen, J. Brian, Smith).

More important is the fact that Keyser, the chief proponent of changing the selection process, no longer holds any position associated with student welfare. Who names student representatives to the administration? It is good to see Keyser, whose views on housing seem to be gaining some ground within the Undergraduate Association, put outside the direct line between students and administrators.

While the appointment of Sheila E. Wildman ‘60 to the position of associate provost will probably not affect most students, it represents a praiseworthy effort by the administration to focus on several long-standing issues. Wildman’s two main responsibilities, tenure and government relations, have become increasingly important in the wake of former Associate Provost Jonathan Richmond’s departure and the creation of the Contract Audit Agency. Asking a senior, well-respected faculty member to assume responsibility for such matters signals the right signal to all the involved parties.

Wrighton’s reorganization of the Academic Council is a significant step forward for all members of the MIT community, especially students. We can only hope that the structural change will be as beneficial in the long run as the current appointments are in the short-term.

Letters to the Editor

Campus Groups Misrepresent Radicals For Capitalism

MIT Radicals for Capitalism actively promotes individualism — in the distress of some campus organizations. Groups, seeking to make us as conservative reactionaries, have distorted our views with quotes taken out of context. They have also been trying to associate us with racism and greed.

Radicars for Capitalism represents the organization projects conservatism, standing instead for reason and individual rights. Like the National Rifle Association and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), it is a well known as other special interest groups like the National Rifle Association and the AFL-CIO, its influence has helped make law. But Radicals for Capitalism projects conservatism and, instead for reason and individual rights. As such, its most controversial principle, is an office of self-refre, of taking responsibility for one’s own life and happiness. We reject bigotry — of the individual or of the individual by the crowd. We stand on individual cooperation and individual responsibility.

Reuven M. Lerner '92

Aid to Elderly Comes at Others’ Expense

Column by Mark A. Smith

Welcome to campaign season. Television viewers are currently being bombarded with advertisements by both the major candidates for president and other political organizations.

Betrayal as well as special interest groups, these organizations utilize tactics based on emotion rather than factual data. Typical commercials depict a couple social security recipient home caring for a loved one, which Medicare does not cover. The advertisement presents a quick and powerful pitch for long-term care health for the elderly. In what seems to be a public spec- 

AARP is the ultimate asset with extensive experience in senior care. The ad is designed to create a sense of dependence, the end of the commercial urges people to vote. The fine print at the bottom of the ad reveals the true nature of the organization. The ad is being funded by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP).

Just who is the AARP? The organization is arguably the most powerful political lobby in the country. Though it is not as well known as other special interest groups like the National Rifle Association and the AFL-CIO, its influence has helped make Social Security, Medicare, and other govern- ment programs for the elderly and senior political goals.

Unforeseen to most of the public, the organization has been directing an increasing amount of its resources recently towards seniors’ issues. Between 1978 and 1990, the federal government has increased spending for the elderly by 52 percent. Money spent on elderly citizens, by contrast, has declined, by 4 percent. In 1965, Social Security, Medicare, and other programs consumed 16 percent of the federal budget. By 1990 this number had risen to 29 percent. Stated another way, spending for the elderly makes up 29 percent of the roughly $350 billion federal budget, and will certainly be paid through higher taxes on future generations.

Social Security programs become increasingly more important as our society ages. The program began in the 1930s as an income sup-

8 million senior citizens, financed through payroll taxes that make up a mere 2 percent of GDP. Between 1978 and 1987, federal government expenditures for the elderly increased by 52 percent. By 1987, the number of elderly people living in poverty. We must continue to provide ade- 

we must continue to provide adequate support to senior citizens in need. Our system does have one fundamental flaw, however. Much of the benefits of federal programs go to wealthy seniors who do not need income supplements. In many cases, we are transferring resources from senior citizens who possess the same wealth of the average wage earner. Many elderly people still own their own homes and command a sub- 

An exposé of the program by the Senate Finance Committee last year revealed that senior citizens are paying more than $300,000, absorbed over $19,000 in medical expenses for the elderly in 1987. By 1990 this number had risen to 29 percent. Stated another way, spending for the elderly makes up 29 percent of the roughly $350 billion federal budget, and will certainly be paid through higher taxes on future generations.

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AID TO ELDERLY COMES AT OTHERS’ EXPENSE

Some people might mistakenly oppose these cuts on the grounds that wealthy seniors already make sufficient contributions the programs to take care of their own parents, which Medicare does not cover. The advertisement presents a quick and powerful pitch for long-term care health for the elderly. In what seems to be a public spec-

COLUMNIST

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