Addressing Cheating Requires More Than Just an Honor Code

The Undergraduate Association is currently exploring the possibility of implementing an honor code in response to increasing concern in the MIT community about academic dishonesty. While efforts to date at the Institute are in the right direction, attempting to focus their efforts on an honor code are wrong-headed, mere “window dressing” in the place of more substantive programs.

Cheating is a problem here in part because of the enormous pressures put on students by the Institute’s high-strung atmosphere. Many students feel that in order to succeed, they must adopt the advantage of the “gray areas” of academic honesty, often stretching the limits of collaboration on problems until they have work in which they are not their own. Any honor code implemented in such an atmosphere will simply result in a rash of students modifying their cheating techniques to work round the code.

Believing an honor code on students, the administration and UA should consider making more fundamental changes. The time should require professors to clarify state — in writing, on the syllabus — the precise policies and forms of collaboration and use of ibles which will be allowed. It is also important that MIT deignate some, perhaps ombudsmen Mary P. Rowe, to field students’ questions about specific classes. Otherwise, students may feel they are being pushed over by themselves on adopting the professor’s questions.

Honor Code Will Solve None of the Institute’s Problems

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Student Attitude Toward Cheating Is Upsetting

I was alarmed and disturbed by student commentary in The Tech on Friday ["UA Discusses Possibility of Student Honor Code," Feb. 7]. It seems to me that cheating is unprofitable because of the high-pressure environment at MIT. I find it important to know that each and every student is subjected to the same overwhelming pressures. Yet all of MIT students cheat. It is possible to succeed at MIT without cheating, and I would like to think that my peers are strong enough to overcome temptation when the sake of integrity.

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In short, an honor code will solve none of MIT's problems. The Institute must avoid the lure of a quick fix and focus on remedy the laws of the current educational environment.