Letters To The Editor

Center Would Address Women's Concerns

We—students, staff, and faculty, propose the establishment of a Women's Resource Center at MIT. Many other universities of MIT's caliber, such as Princeton, Dartmouth, and Brown, have established women's resource centers. Although there are some resources for women on the MIT campus, they are not centrally coordinated, fully supported, or publicized, nor are they made available to the full MIT community.

As MIT's Women's Resource Center will provide a centrally located space on the main campus, accessible to the entire MIT community. It will have a paid director who will be responsible for coordinating events and services for women and those members of the MIT community concerned about gender-related issues. One of the key goals of the center would be to address the unique problems faced by women from ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds.

Among the services that the Women's Resource Center could provide are education for women and men about gender-related issues and concerns; information about career planning, scholarships, and grants for women; programs that provide women with mentoring and networking opportunities; support, counseling, and crisis hotline for rape/abortion and other gender-related problems; and advocacy for individuals filing sexual-harassment or assault complaints.

Establishment of the MIT Women's Resource Center will require support and funding from the administration. We welcome individuals and organizations to come forward to share ideas and express support.

Deborah A. Fonda, Claire L. Sullivan

Condoms Are An Imperfect Defense

This letter is a response to Claire M. Woodman '95's letter regarding the efficacy of condoms and the spermicide nonoxynol-9. In reducing the spread of the human immunodeficiency virus, which causes AIDS, "[Attitude About Condom Use Must Be Realistic," April 10].

My first concern is the discrepancy in the reported failure rates for condoms in preventing pregnancy. Both Woodman and I used the same source, Contraceptive Technology, for our facts regarding condoms. Although the source did give a theoretical 2 percent failure rate among "perfect users" only one study has produced such results.

The average failure rate for all studies reported was 12 percent. The most commonly cited reason for failure was the lack of use of a condom. Realizing that people don't always act in a rational way during a sexual encounter, it is unlikely that most will use a condom every time. It is therefore impossible to advise condom use knowing that many will probably not use one. Even for people who knew their partners were HIV-infected, there was a 17 percent failure rate for using condoms.

Confusion has also arisen over the efficacy of the spermicidal agent nonoxynol-9 in reducing HIV transmission through sexual contact. Woodman claimed that the spermicide has been proven effective in killing the AIDS virus. True enough. Nonoxynol-9 has been shown to be effective in inactivating HIV under laboratory conditions. However, recent concerns over the tendency of nonoxynol-9 to cause ulcerations in vaginal and rectal tissue has caused public health officials to re-evaluate what role the spermicide should play in their comprehensive "safer sex" guidelines.

According to the 1988 edition of "Guide to Safer Sex and the Condom," published by the Family Planning Association and the Health Education Authority of the United Kingdom, "spermicides . . . may give extra protection." However, the 1991 edition of the same guide did not mention possible protective effects of the spermicide, but rather advised against its use.

Robert Terwilliger '92

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ethanol, methanol, ethylbenzene, and
formaldehyde; to name a few are collected by
the facility office, and disposed of by licensed
storage, and disposal facilities. Recently hired
collection staff have reduced pickup time considerably, normal amounts of waste chemicals in containers up to one gallon
in size are covered by Institute overhead.
Empty solvent bottles are very convenient for
collecting hazardous waste.

By setting a good example, as we attempt
to do 7.62, we may influence the attitudes
and practices of others with whom we work,
and create good work habits from the start for
new lab personnel.

As scientists, we know that the "stuff" we
generate in our labs doesn't disappear once it
leaves the laboratory. The good stuff ends up
in the journals; the fish in Boston Harbor,
our lungs, and our children may be getting the
leavings if we are not careful. Earth is a finite
place, a "closed system." What will the final
products be like if we are careless about the
place, a "closed system." What will the final
products be like if we are careless about the
place?

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Engineering Students Needed

for Campus-Wide Energy Survey

Job Description: XENERGY, Inc. has been contracted by the MIT Office of Facilities Management Systems to survey campus buildings as part of an energy accounting study. Engineering students are needed to conduct a room-by-room inventory of lighting, computer and laboratory equipment, as well as utility services.

The position requires good communication skills in interviewing MIT faculty and staff about the operating characteristics and occupancy schedules in each room of a building. Attention to detail and accuracy is a must. Training will be provided by XENERGY.

Time Requirements: Flexible, 10 to 15 hours per week during business hours Monday through Friday, April 20 to May 29.

If interested, attend an orientation session April 16, 5:30 pm, Room 212, Building 42 (Central Power Plant).

Wage: $10.00 per hour.

Contact: Paul Lyons, XENERGY Inc.
Three Burlington Woods
Burlington, MA 01803
Tel: 617-272-5700 Ext. 222