Institute Revises Harassment Guide

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Keyser emphasized three specific issues that will be expanded in the new guide: confidentiality of records, standards of proof, and appeals. Other than saying that "confidentiality of records has always been of concern," Keyser would not elaborate on details of the expansion of these issues. The revised booklet will also include more procedural information for the accused than the previous version, he added.

Keyser also said that the Institute may modify its sexual harassment policy but that those issues are still being deliberated. He refused further comment on these changes.

More options for students

The booklet will once again include a "road map" to the various resources available in MIT's multi-access system. This system provides students with a variety of places to begin when filing a sexual harassment complaint. Several new options will be added to help keep the "individual filing the complaint in control of the process for as long as possible," Keyser said. Each harassment case is unique, and having many options is necessary for the victims, he said.

Carson disagreed, saying that revising the booklet on guidelines for the accused to the victim, the new step in the revised procedures is the suggestion that the person filing the complaint write a letter to the accused explaining his or her view of the situation. Keyser said that though such a letter will not be suitable in all cases, it would be a good idea in many situations.

Carson called the letter-writing suggestion inappropriate. "There have been cases where these types of letters have been later used against the individual filing the complaint," she said. Carson pointed out that because the Institute does not encourage letters from the accused to the victim, the new step results in an inappropriate disparity in procedures.

Keyser emphasized that the booklet does not reflect significant changes in procedure. "It could run the risk of slowing things down," he said. Having a centralized resource system, as suggested by the ad hoc Committee on Sexual Harassment, would be less traumatic for victims, Carson added. Listing more options in the booklet is a bad idea and will further delay the creation of a centralized resource system, she said.

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