Presentation Features Testimonials by 4 Students

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The skit; they noted that the woman had to be more assertive, but more importantly, the male had to be responsive to what the woman was saying and her body language. The two actors then re-enacted the scene with more communication. This time the female told the male that he was making her feel uncomfortable. He got the message, and conveyed the program's message: better communication can resolve relationship problems.

The emcees went on to say that miscommunication is the main problem in certain relationships. These include relationships between people of different gender, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic class, and sexual orientation.

Students present testimonials

Following the skit, four MIT students gave testimonials from their own experiences. The first was written by an African-American male and read by a friend. The student explained how he had experienced racism in his hometown of Memphis, Tenn. and as well as in Boston. The racists in Boston are “not as blunt,” but they are still present, he said.

He said that he was involved in the incident last spring when racial epithets were shouted at four students while they walked by Phi Beta Epsilon. When he was trying to “seek justice,” he was made to feel bad and like a trouble-maker, he added. He also noted how he was called stupid by peers and told him Cs were good and that he should learn from his mistakes.

For the second narrative, an Asian-American female sophomore from a poor socioeconomic background. She said it took her entire freshman year to adjust to her new life at MIT. She added that people should learn from each other, share with each other, and not prejudge one another.

For the last part of the presentation, program coordinators had the freshmen clap their hands to show that they were parts of different groups. This was intended to show the students how diverse their class is. For instance, freshmen were asked to clap their hands if they liked classical music, were from South America, or knew somebody who had died from substance abuse.

The diversity presentation was created by a student-run group consisting of five upper-class students and 12 freshmen from Interphase, according to Susan Allen, an administrative assistant who helped coordinate the program. Allen said that last year’s program, Sexual Positions — which addressed date rape and other gender issues — was a success. The students wanted to do something similar, and they decided to focus more on ethnic diversity because of last semester’s PBE incident, she said.

After the presentation students broke down into their MOYA groups, ate dinner, and discussed the presentation with facilitators.

Fresh enjoy presentation

Patrick R. Kwon ’97 said he found the presentation to be “on the whole helpful.” However, he believed the discussion would have been better if it had taken place in Kresge with everybody taking part. Sometimes having small groups discuss this issue can be “dangerous” because it can “provide a one-sided view,” he said.

On the other hand, Lisa H. Haich ’97 found the small group discussions to be “more personal.” She liked the testimonials, but felt that the clapping game was a little inappropriate.

Before the event, Ted E. Johnson, assistant director for programs in the campus activities complex and a facilitator, said he expected the students to be a little surprised time that most of the students will come into such a diverse group, she said. “My hope is that [the freshmen] begin to...it’s okay for people to be different,” she said. Unfortunately, people tend to ignore differences when they should be learning from one another’s differences, she added.

“From what I could see, the program went really well,” Allen said. She noted that students seemed to learn the most from the testimonials.

This program is going to be part of a series. This year’s presentation and Sexual Positions will be played on MIT Cable this term, Allen said. Next year the group hopes to focus on a different issue.

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