UROP Lobbyists Needed

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waiver that exempted student salaries from employee benefits and overhead charges. But the government eliminated that waiver when it revised its rules about how universities can bill the indirect costs of doing research to the government. Indirect research costs include money used to pay for administration, libraries, and the physical plant.

The rules changes were intended to correct what the General Accounting Office called "the lax oversight practices" of agencies supervising research activities and monitoring indirect costs. The rules changes were not designed to affect UROP, according to Chitaley.

"UROP is an unintended victim of efforts to make indirect cost rules more uniform," Chitaley said.

Personal stories needed

In the packet for students, Tsao plans to include information describing the problems facing UROP and what students can do to help, along with two sample letters and addresses of senators and congressmen. The packets should be available sometime in the next two weeks, Tsao said.

“Our duty is to raise students’ awareness of this issue. First we have to start here, but the ultimate goal is to raise awareness in DC,” Tsao said.

Earlier this year, Wrightson made an unsuccessful effort to lobby government officials involved in the process. Tsao hopes that direct appeals by students will have a stronger impact.

Letters to congressmen definitely need to be formal, but Tsao said it was more important to include a personal statement about how UROP has affected them.

“If a congressman gets five letters that are inspiring and motivational, ... then even five letters can make a huge amount of difference,” Tsao said.

The group of students Tsao has organized will work to keep students informed and motivated by keeping themselves well-informed and abreast of what is going on with UROP, Tsao said.

Chitaley is organizing a separate lobbying effort directed at congressional staffs and the heads of agencies that sponsor research at MIT.

“We're going to try to get a small group of students to go to Washington later this month. They will basically try to meet with agency heads and tell them about the importance of UROP and getting this waiver back,” Chitaley said.

GSC to Begin Shuttle

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meet the demands of the students.

Mario Bercaro G also supported the shuttle, citing the high cost of buying food locally and the transportation difficulties. Juan D. Bruno G, who cooks daily and shops once a week, agreed that the shuttle was a good idea and said, “It’s about time someone came up with an idea like that.”

Shuttle to run through semester

Laverde also provides a weekly bus service for elderly customers. He does not know whether or not it makes money, but is willing to fund it because he feels it is a worthy service. The MIT shuttle is “a shot in the dark,” he said, because he is not sure how successful it will be.

“He’s doing it as a community service,” Cuthbert said. Cuthbert said he does not know if Laverde will break even from the arrangement.

The shuttle will run through the end of the semester; then Laverde and a Graduate Student Council representative will determine whether it is worth continuing next semester.

Laverde thought 50 riders per week might be a reasonable benchmark for gauging its success. Cuthbert estimated that possibly 100 people would be using the service every Saturday.

The shuttle will be a standard school bus seating between 35 and 40 grocery-laden passengers, Cuthbert said. It will depart from MIT at 11 a.m., 12 p.m., and 1 p.m. every Saturday. Return trips will leave Laverde’s Star Market at 12:40 p.m., 1:40 p.m., and 2:40 p.m. Additional service may be added if there is more demand, said Cuthbert.

The bus will pick students up at building E40, Senior House, Ashdown House, Burton House, Tang Hall, Edgerton House, and across the street from RANDOM Hall.

Although the grocery shuttle is being launched under the auspices of the Graduate Student Council, all students will be welcome to use it, Cuthbert said.

(Vijay Bhushan contributed to the reporting of this story.)