Outgoing Council a 'Team Effort'

By Vidip Bhushan and Daniel C. Stevenson

The 1993-94 Graduate Student Council was characterized by "a big team effort," said outgoing GSC President Caryl B. Brown.

"What I could have done on my own is minuscule compared to what we were able to do as a team."

The GSC made significant headway on the issues of harassment and safety and pushed hard for MITnet in graduate dormitories and the graduate student body. They should also reach out more to married students, he said. There is much room for improvement in the quality of the life of graduate students," and that by definition they had been successful.

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Progress was made despite the fact that there was no rallying call, Brown said. "There wasn't one issue that really brought the good students together," he said. "We had to be more proactive by looking outside and asking what can we make better."

As examples, Brown and Gittins mentioned recent GSC efforts in the areas of combating harassment, improving personal safety, and the expansion of MIT's Ethernet into graduate dormitories as examples of successes. They also highlighted student involvement as a key area to improve. "One of my personal goals was to try to increase people's participation in GSC events and awareness of the GSC and what we try to do," Brown said.

Participation in the GSC was up, Brown said, and many of those involved are first-year students. There is much room for improvement though, Gittins said estimating that only 10 to 20 percent of the graduate students body. They should also reach out more to married students, he said. Brown had tried to create or strengthen department-level councils, he said, with only limited success.

"Some of the departments have very active, high-quality organizations that have socials and bring in speakers," he said. They wanted to "learn from those departments that are successful and transfer those lessons to departments that don't have any [such council] or aren't successful."

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No one issue was highlighted by the outgoing council. "The gathering was sponsored by the Alumni/ae Office."

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To Start a Company

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engineering and management majors, students also represented fields in science, architecture, and the humanities.

The competition began early in February, when the 33 teams submitted five-page business proposals,Bosses said. He added that each summary included a description of the idea, analyses of the potential market and competition, and a brief action plan.

Business plans for ventures which have already received funding are not eligible for the $10K Competition, Bosses added.

Nine teams were picked as semi-finalists in early March, at which point they began to prepare business plans. The plans included an executive summary, quarterly final projections for two years, annual projections up to the fifth year, and a break-even analysis, Bosses said. Having a working model, as each of the semi-finalist teams did this year, was also advantageous, he added.

Six finalist teams were chosen by late April to prepare a short presentation. Following the presentations, the teams were questioned by the central judges. The final winner was then chosen for the overall quality of the idea and strength of the plan — "a powerful idea with a well-done plan," Bosses said.

The finalists were: Up & Comers, Trading Card Co., manufacturing personalized sports action cards; Sensfx, enabling flexible manufacturing and process control through wireless technology; Hyperlearning Inc., computer-aided interactive learning guides for math, science, and engineering; MediaLink, developing products to deliver multimedia content over existing infrastructures; and The Labor Market, and on-line employment agency.

Sterwave is currently in the process of incorporating, filing patent applications, and continuing its technology development, Hughes said, adding that they hope to have a full-scale prototype by the end of this year.

Several members of last year's winning team, now Novos Packaging Corporation, have started to take their plan to market. Novos is developing Pillowpak, an inflating packaging product for medical equipment. Other teams have stayed together but moved on to different projects.

"The packaging market is hot," Novos President Nicholas De Luca said to Brown. "You've just got to find a niche and go for it."