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Smith also changed the way the Institute views its students at its most significant contribution as dean, he said in an interview yesterday. The change is a hard one to quantify, but nonetheless important, he said.

Administrators, faculty members, and students commented on Smith as being a student advocate. While Smith served as a faculty member and administrator, he “was also concerned about issues important to students,” said J. Paul Kirby ’92, former Undergraduate Associate vice president. “He brought faculty and student perspectives to funding, understanding, and generosity to students,” Kirby said.

Smith “has been a very strong force on behalf of students” and has articulated ideas about how to improve the undergraduate environment, said Professor of Architecture William L. Porter PhD ’69, housemaster at Burton-Conner House. “He has a real sense of the spirit of the undergraduate.”

“Art has brought a very insightful and effective advocacy on behalf of students to the Academic Council discussions,” said President Charles M. Vest. “He always forced us to see things through the students’ eyes.”

Smith joined the faculty of the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science in 1959. He chaired several faculty committees involved with student affairs and academic policy, before being named Dean for Student Affairs in 1990.

Despite being involved in many projects, “successful management means nobody knows what you’ve done and you don’t get any recognition,” Smith said.

One of Smith’s major goals as dean was to give students more independence and freedom of choice. Smith said: “I wanted to put more emphasis on letting students have responsibility for their decisions,” he said.

The objective was “to give students the authority and independence possible,” Smith said. “It’s better to give them the opportunity to make choices than to make the choices for them.”

One example of this independence is MIT’s housing system, Smith said. The housing lottery system would remain unaffected, he said.

“I will miss the opportunity to do things for students,” said J. Paul Kirby ’92, former Undergraduate Association president. “I have a real sense of the force on behalf of students,” said J. Paul Kirby ’92.

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The weather today: Cloudy, dry, 46°F (8°C) Details, Page 2

By Daniel C. Stevenson

The Committee on Academic Policy will release a survey this week to collect students’ opinions on the current grading system used by the Institute.

Faculty and students have expressed concern that letter grades do not provide a fine enough distinction between different levels of performance. The survey was proposed by Nigell H. M. Wilson PhD ’70.

Wilson said. “I really sympathize with the students. That’s one of the reasons we’re here,” Wilson said, who is a professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering and periodically teaches Introduction to Computers and Engineering. “It’s a borderline (1.00). Where a student falls on the borderline depends on whether you were lucky or not,” he said.

The possibility of changing the grading system has been under discussion since late spring, but “before we go too far on that, we wanted to get the undergraduate view,” Wilson said. The CAP may also poll faculty members, based on the results from the undergraduate survey, Wilson said.

The survey will be distributed in dormitories and independent living groups, and it will also be available in Room 7-164. They are due by Oct. 28, and the results will be on campus in November, Wilson said.

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