Registrar Updates Transcript System for Improved Efficiency

By Venkatesh Satish

The Registrar's Office will finish computerizing student transcripts next month as part of an office-wide restructuring program, according to Registrar David S. Wiley PhD '61. The new system will affect all students enrolled this term, Wiley said. The previous method of generating transcripts entailed keeping records on paper and updating them every semester using adhesive labels, Wiley said. "It was a really outdated, old-fashioned system. ... It was an intensive manual effort." "Any corrections at the end had to be done by a typewriter," Wiley said. "We have wanted to replace the old system with a modern system for a long time." Other reasons for the change included student opinion and delays in providing transcripts, Wiley said. "The old system meant delays for transcripts, especially during January and February when applications for graduate schools were due," he said. "It has always been difficult to get the transcripts done in a timely way." Student opinion played an important role because students "keep reminding us every year that it takes a long time to generate a transcript," Wiley said. "In order to speed this up, we wanted to go to an electronic system and we have finally done that."

The new system will eliminate many of the inefficiencies created by the manual records, Wiley said. "In the past, the labels that we placed each term could only be generated after all the academic information was in. Now, we will be able to generate transcripts at any time, not just to January," he said.

"Students will see an improvement in the overall quality, and on the back of the transcripts there will be more information regarding the meaning of grades and the definition of our departments," he added. Students will also see an improvement in the appearance of the transcript, Wiley said. Transcripts will have a colorful border and a light gray background -- the official MIT colors.

While the new system should expedite the process of obtaining a transcript, it will take a few months to attain full efficiency, Wiley said. When the registrar's office staff becomes "comfortable using the system, we hope to get the two weeks that it currently takes to get a transcript during crunch time down to a few days," he said.

The time window is necessary so that the staff can verify each transcript as it is generated, Wiley said. "Every time we produce a transcript, we want to make sure it is correct. Once everyone gets accustomed to the new system, the process will improve even more," he said.

"We hope to get to the point where we will complete the transcript with fast service. Initially, we will have to check it, but after about six months, in off-peak times, we should get the transcript done on the spot," he added. A final report on all the new developments in the registrar's office will be released Friday, Wiley said.

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