

Dean for Undergraduate Education

During the past year the Office of the Dean for Undergraduate Education (DUE) has seen important progress in a number of areas critical to student life and learning at MIT. The first section of this report contains highlights of efforts in which the dean and his immediate staff are involved; many more highlights are contained in the sections relevant to the individual offices.

We continue to work closely with personnel in the Office of the Dean for Student Life (DSL) and with others to establish community as the critical third leg, with teaching and research, of an MIT education. Freshman orientation continues to evolve following the decision to house all first-year students on campus. This past year we enhanced significantly the academic aspects of orientation. For example, a session raising issues of academic integrity and how we deal with them was a prominent feature. We expect to place increasing focus on academic aspects of MIT in freshman orientation in the next few years.

DUE continued its close collaboration with the Committee on the Undergraduate Program on a number of important educational issues and opportunities. These included student advising and mentoring and the implementation of the Communication Requirement. With the class entering in fall 2004, essentially all undergraduates will be under the new Communication Requirement. In general the implementation of the Communication Intensive subject in the Major (undergraduate requirement) in departments this past year went very well.

We made much progress this past year in establishing administrative support for the Cambridge-MIT Exchange in DUE. While the Cambridge-MIT Institute still provides some resources to DUE for administering the exchange, the expectation is that eventually this support will not be needed. Fundraising efforts are underway to provide resources for the long term for the incremental expenses students in the exchange incur.

The d'Arbelloff Fund for Educational Excellence continues to support important efforts in educational innovation. During the past year we focused on helping successful projects make the transition into the educational and budgetary mainstream, as well as supporting a few new projects.

The Enrollment Management Group, chaired by the dean, had an especially challenging task this year because of budgetary pressures and changing admissions policies by several of our competitors. Our recommendations to maintain financial aid at levels that support our educational goals were accepted by the president and Corporation, despite the negative budgetary implications. The Institute actually had an extraordinarily successful recruiting year, with an admissions yield of 65 percent, significantly higher than we have ever achieved before. This is very good news for the future, but poses short-term challenges in terms of housing those students. We are working with DSL to minimize crowding and associated social and educational problems.

Several related efforts to improve Information Technology (IT) capabilities within DUE offices and for our users are underway. Initial projects have concentrated on the Student Financial Services and Admissions offices; it is likely that other offices will soon be involved as well. We view these efforts as long-term investments that should be coordinated within DUE and in the larger MIT IT environment.

The past year saw the launch of the Task Force on the Undergraduate Educational Commons, a largely faculty group that has the charge to look broadly at the General Institute Requirements and other common elements of the MIT undergraduate education, and to recommend content and structure for the future. This is a major opportunity for the Institute to continue to lead in engineering and science education nationally and internationally, and its launch was the culmination of a lot of effort by a number of people, including the dean and others in DUE. We expect that DUE staff will continue to play a critical role in the task force and in the eventual implementation of its recommendations.

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Dean for Undergraduate Education

More information on the Office of the Dean for Undergraduate Education can be found on the web at <http://web.mit.edu/duel/>.