

The MIT Faculty Newsletter

Vol. VII No. 1

September/October 1994

A Visit to the MIT Retirement Plan The Devil is in the Details

Jack Ruina

Most Institute faculty members pay scant attention to the Institute's retirement plan until their own retirement is imminent and often not even then. Most believe that the pension program is generous, which it is; that funds are invested responsibly and well, which they are; that all involved in managing and setting policy for the program are persons of integrity and of good will, all true. So why be concerned about the plan, its administration, or the details of its provisions? Concern would involve poring over details, footnotes, committee reports, and the like, whereas researching, teaching, and tennis are far more interesting pursuits.

I happened to get involved in thinking about university pension plans at the University of Illinois, when I was in my early thirties. A faculty committee reviewing the university's pension program needed to balance its membership with at least one representative who was under the age of 60, and I became that person. On coming to MIT more than thirty years ago, I found the benefit package for faculty compared very favorably with that of other institutions. So, like others, I didn't focus on the details of the Institute's plan until several years ago when I began to contemplate my own retirement.

To my dismay, I found that the plan seriously deprives many participants of important benefits by its unusual rigidity, paternalism, and restrictive annuity provisions; that the formula for distribution of interest earnings to retirees is not equitable or fair by almost any measure and that overall the plan has suffered from serious, if benign, neglect and from sluggishness in adapting to changing practices, laws, and retiree's needs.

Subsequently, I have met with almost every senior Institute official and committee responsible for or concerned about the pension program, even raising issues with the Executive Committee of the Corporation – which has the ultimate responsibility for the plan. When I explained my concerns, all were understanding, most were not

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Promoting Network Civility at MIT: Crime & Punishment, or the Golden Rule?

Gregory A. Jackson

Is there a computer cluster somewhere where someone can be safe from pornography and harassment? I'm sick of this.

There was more to the story, of course, although this is the only direct communication I received from Judy Hamilton (not her real name, of course). Judy went into an Athena cluster and sat down next to a male student. His screen was displaying a graphic image of a sexual act. Judy asked the student to remove the image, since it was interfering with her ability to work comfortably. He refused – loudly and contentiously. After a shouting match, Judy, feeling intimidated, left to find some place else to work. She complained to friends, and to MIT's ombudswoman. The ombudswoman sent her to me.

On its face this case involves a conflict between rights: Judy has a right to use facilities without interference, the male student has a right to display whatever images he wishes, and both cannot

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Subscriptions: \$15/year On-Campus
\$20/year Off-Campus

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Editorial

Who's Watching Our Money?

The feature article in this inaugural issue of the *Faculty Newsletter* for 1994-95 is the front page piece "A Visit to the Retirement Plan, The Devil is in the Details." At our request, Professor Jack Ruina was kind enough to describe some of the interesting, and sometimes troubling, things he discovered in the MIT retirement plan while attempting to make financial decisions concerning his own recent retirement from the Institute.

Professor Ruina has outlined several significant issues that concern all faculty members – whether or not they are close to retirement age. These include limited availability of options, lack of plan flexibility, the nature of the relationship between incentives toward early retirement and general retirement options, as well as very real concerns about actual dollar value upon retirement.

It seems that at this point in time a general review of MIT's retirement plan would certainly be in order.

Since its inception, the *Faculty Newsletter* has attempted to serve as a means of communication among the faculty, from the faculty to the MIT community at large, as well as among the MIT community. It is in this role that we call upon the MIT administration to respond to the issues raised by Professor Ruina and echoed by many of our colleagues. In addition, we encourage faculty response to these concerns through the venue of the *Newsletter*.

Issues of retirement and pension plans will eventually affect us all. Elimination of the mandatory retirement age, the complexity and diversity of the financial market, and the administration's need for a mechanism to ensure the vitality of the Institute by continual infusion of

young faculty members, offer new challenges both to the Institute and to the individuals contemplating retirement. We intend to continue focusing on these issues as long as they are of concern to the faculty. We invite the faculty and the administration to use these pages to ensure that all viewpoints are represented in an effort to make sure that the pension funds are being invested wisely, managed well, and distributed in such a way as to maximize their benefit to the fund owners, the faculty.



Auditing the Seminar

In the editorial above, we explicitly call for faculty participation in a discussion of MIT's pension plan and its management. Some Editorial Committee members think there is a possibility that this issue will draw more contributions than other such requests have in the past. After all, they argue, this is a money issue, and this time it's *our* money. Others think this call will bring the same response as in the past; essentially none.

Statistics is on the side of the pessimists. The number of unsolicited contributions to the *Newsletter* has been remarkably low. This came as somewhat of a surprise because MIT faculty are not usually known for their reticence. Our colleagues certainly have enough to say in the halls. The only constraint we can imagine is that the FNL is the ultimate peer-reviewed journal. Most of the articles that you see are the result of arm-twisting by the Editorial Board and the Managing Editor. The problem is that we are growing weary of arm-twisting.

The next issue of the FNL will include an invitation to join the Editorial Board. Board membership entails, as we explain with each invitation, a commitment of possibly six to ten hours for service on the Editorial Committee for a single issue. That is, a commitment of six to ten hours *per year* at a time chosen by the member. If history is a guide, we will get no (i.e., zero) responses. Essentially, the same few people that produced the *Newsletter* last year and the year before that will be faced with the choice of doing it again or letting the *Newsletter* disappear. And yet, we are told that the *Newsletter* is serving the role that we hoped it would when we inaugurated it. It is serving as a forum for discussion and a conduit for information. Our colleagues say that they enjoy reading the *Newsletter*.

When the invitation to join the Board appears in the next issue, please ask yourself:

- a) whether your research is obviously so much more important than that of your colleagues that they should be happy to publish a newsletter for you, or
- b) whether your time is so limited that you can't spare eight hours per year to contribute to the common good, or
- c) whether you really don't care if the *Newsletter* ever appears again.

By the way, if your answer is d) "I never read the *Newsletter*," what are you doing reading this far into the second editorial?

The *Faculty Newsletter* was intended to be a seminar, not a lecture course. The problem is that everyone is auditing the seminar and no one has signed on for credit. If all of the seminar attendees are listening and no one is talking, the seminar dies.

Editorial Committee

From The Faculty Chair

Faculty Concerns Include Reengineering, Retirement, and Grievance Procedures

Robert L. Jaffe

I would like to thank the Editorial Board for asking me to contribute on a regular basis to the *Faculty Newsletter*. During these days of increased stress and decreased budgets, the *Newsletter* provides an especially important mechanism for the faculty to reflect upon important issues and to act and react as a community. I intend to use this space to keep the faculty informed of the activities of its officers and its standing committees. The editors are always looking for thoughtful and timely contributions from faculty. I hope you will read it, write for it, and support it.

First let me welcome our new faculty and invite you to participate in the process of faculty governance by serving on faculty and other Institute committees and by coming to the faculty meetings which are held on the third Wednesday of each month during the academic year. Provost Mark Wrighton and I host a reception for all faculty at the conclusion of each meeting. Please watch for the monthly announcements of the meetings and plan to attend. This year promises to be an active one: the faculty will have to act on many matters which affect our day-to-day life, a few of which I have outlined below.

Although it is difficult to predict many of the issues which will engage the faculty in any year, this year we can get a glimpse of what's coming by reviewing what happened last year. One of my tasks as faculty chairman is to prepare a summary of my activities and those of the Faculty Policy Committee (FPC) for the annual *Report to the President*. I thought that this report might provide interesting reading for those of you who follow faculty issues closely or who wonder what goes on in FPC meetings.

The Editorial Board agreed, and a substantial excerpt from the *Report to the President* appears elsewhere in this issue [see page 6].

Of the many issues the faculty will face this year, three in particular stand out: reengineering, faculty retirement, and faculty grievance procedures. I have addressed them briefly here, but we can expect to hear more about them in subsequent *Newsletters*.

faculty morale. Student financial aid, UROP and new academic initiatives have suffered and will suffer further if new resources cannot be found. In this context, the prospect of major savings through streamlining administrative processes is very attractive indeed.

Faculty involvement can make a major difference. Although reengineering will focus mainly on administrative processes, the improvement process must

In recent years we have all felt the impact of this deficit: average salary increases have been small; across-the-board reductions in academic budgets have taken a noticeable toll on faculty morale. Student financial aid, UROP and new academic initiatives have suffered and will suffer further if new resources cannot be found.

Reengineering

MIT has launched a major effort to redesign and streamline the administrative processes that support our core missions of teaching and research. Anyone who has observed the life of a department or lab administrative officer, or followed the paper trail generated by a student attempting to register, knows that there is much room for improvement in these processes. The administration believes that by taking a fresh look at how we do things, MIT can not only do a better job in providing support services, but can achieve significant savings – enough to make a major dent in the existing structural deficit. In recent years we have all felt the impact of this deficit: average salary increases have been small; across-the-board reductions in academic budgets have taken a noticeable toll on

take into account MIT's primary missions, which are best understood and articulated by faculty. Up to this point, faculty participation in re-engineering has been minimal, but as the real work gets underway this fall, faculty will have the opportunity, and I believe, the responsibility to become involved. Many of you may be asked to provide guidance and feedback on redesign proposals either individually or in small groups. I hope you will respond positively to the requests.

Responding to the End of Mandatory Retirement

Intellectual renewal at a university has been compared to a three-legged stool resting on tenure, mandatory retirement and pension: tenure to foster strong mutual commitment; mandatory

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Faculty Concerns

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retirement to provide a place for new generations; and pension to make retirement feasible. The end of mandatory retirement on January 1 of this year initiated a period of instability that will require us to find a new equilibrium and new ways to promote renewal.

Last year, the Committee on Faculty-Administration (CFA) considered the impact of the end of mandatory faculty retirement. They focused particularly on the relationship between the provisions of the MIT pension plan and faculty retirement because these issues are time-sensitive. A brief summary of their recommendations can be found in the excerpt from the *Report to the President*. At this writing, these recommendations are awaiting action by the president and the Executive Committee of the MIT Corporation.

This year the CFA will turn its attention to another important aspect of this issue: the evolving terms of employment for older faculty at MIT. The law that ended mandatory retirement reflects a greater appreciation of the abilities and potential contributions of our most senior colleagues. In the future, abrupt separation from the Institute through retirement may be replaced by a gradual or periodic redefinition of faculty-Institute commitments. The CFA will try to determine the present practices in MIT's five schools and what formal or informal arrangements seem to be most important to older faculty in shaping a meaningful connection to the Institute. They will look at such questions as whether there should be normative expectations of support and responsibility and whether it would be useful to define a new faculty rank embodying these expectations. I was very grateful to the CFA for its work last year and look forward to its continued help this coming year.

A Set of Grievance Issues

Events of the past year have left the faculty with considerable unfinished business on questions relating to grievance processes at the Institute.

- The faculty asked FPC to review MIT's faculty grievance procedures this year. The motion focused on procedures for faculty members who wish to file a grievance against the MIT administration and asked FPC to consider establishing a standing faculty committee to handle such complaints. FPC will begin its review this fall.

Clarence Williams to refine the suggestions and propose ways to implement them. Early this fall the group will present its report to FPC, which will then pass on recommendations to Academic Council.

- Over the past few years significant progress has been made at the Institute in appropriately preventing and dealing with grievances. Nonetheless, our system can be improved further. To that end, President Vest and I have asked a small committee to look carefully at the way the Institute handles complaints

The law that ended mandatory retirement reflects a greater appreciation of the abilities and potential contributions of our most senior colleagues. In the future, abrupt separation from the Institute through retirement may be replaced by a gradual or periodic redefinition of faculty-Institute commitments.

- The report of the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on the Closing of CMRAE made several suggestions for improving the process for making decisions which might result in the closing of research centers or similar units. FPC will explore these suggestions further with members of the Ad Hoc Committee and attempt to formulate precise recommendations.

- Last spring the Graduate Student Council (GSC) presented a Proposal for Improvements to MIT's System for Dealing with Harassment to FPC. Among the areas where they suggested improvements, were 1) refinement of the definition of harassment; 2) central record keeping; 3) facilitators; and 4) education and awareness. This summer a small FPC subcommittee worked with students and Institute ombudspersons Mary Rowe and

whose severity or circumstances require a more formal approach. Our objective is to find ways to provide for more prompt resolution of unusually difficult or complex complaints, avoid real or perceived conflict of interest in resolving such complaints, and develop a larger group of Institute citizens who have expertise in investigating complaints. Suggestions along these lines have been made by many groups and individuals in recent months. The committee will be chaired by Jake Jacoby and will report back early in 1995.

The issues facing the faculty this year are complex and important. The *Faculty Newsletter* provides a forum for discussion which can help us make policy decisions with a clearer understanding of faculty opinions and priorities. I hope you will participate in the process by reading and contributing to the *Newsletter*.♣

Excerpt from the *Reports to the President*

Chair of the Faculty

This year the Faculty Policy Committee (FPC) continued to oversee those aspects of educational and academic policy that are specific responsibilities of the faculty and to provide faculty input into policy development at the Institute. This year, as in recent years, MIT has undergone budgetary and structural shifts in response to external and internal forces. In particular, changes in MIT's relations with the federal government and the need to curb escalating operating costs have raised difficult questions, and at times the Institute has come up with some controversial answers. In 1993-4, the FPC tried to prioritize faculty concerns in the budget discussion and also provide a clear and reasoned faculty voice during animated debate on issues that run the gamut from faculty retirement to snow closings.

The President and the Chair of the Faculty appointed faculty committees to review two major administrative decisions, with each committee reporting to the President and FPC before making a full report to the Faculty:

1) A committee reviewed the process behind the decision to move the Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences (BCS) from the Whitaker College of Health Sciences and Technology to the School of Science. While the decision to move BCS was uncontroversial, the decision-making process marked the first time the Institute carried through the newly developed procedures governing the reorganization of an academic unit. The guidelines were developed in the late 1980s by the Widnall Committee in response to the closing of the Department of Applied Biological Sciences.

In accordance with Section 1.32 of *Policies and Procedures*, the President

and the Chair of the Faculty at the time, J. Kim Vandiver, appointed an ad hoc faculty committee to review the process leading up to and following the BCS decision. At the October 1993 Faculty Meeting, committee chairman Professor Paul Penfield outlined a number of flaws in the process, none of which the committee considered serious. The FPC

aside until the Diamond Committee reported to the Faculty.

The Diamond Committee reported to the President and the Chair of the Faculty and presented its report to the Faculty at its May meeting. The report identified a number of significant flaws in the decision-making processes and the way in which the decision was communicated

The Diamond Committee was unequivocal, however, in its finding that the Provost's decision to close the Center [CMRAE] was made with full knowledge of the many divergent views about the possible future of the Center. It did not recommend reversing the decision.

praised the Penfield Committee for its work, noting that the review process set forth by the Widnall Committee had worked as intended. The Penfield Committee's report will be preserved as a resource for future committees conducting similar reviews.

2) The Provost's decision to close the Center for Materials Research in Archaeology and Ethnology (CMRAE) and the subsequent distribution of a pamphlet, *An Institute in Ruins*, by the Center's director, Professor Heather N. Lechtman, generated considerable concern among the faculty. Many faculty were concerned about the appropriateness of closing the Center as well as the process by which that decision was reached. The President and the Chair of the Faculty appointed an ad hoc faculty committee chaired by Professor Peter A. Diamond to examine the process followed in arriving at the decision to close the CMRAE. At the March meeting of the Faculty, it was resolved that the decision to close the CMRAE be set

to the affected parties. These flaws affected processes used by the Provost's Office and by those associated with the original review of the CMRAE in March 1993, which was conducted by a committee appointed by the Provost and chaired by Professor Peter Perdue. The Perdue Committee included faculty inside and outside of MIT. This committee's report did not fully represent the members' range of views about the future of CMRAE, which may have been due, in part, to confusion about the purpose of the review. The process was further tainted by residual bitterness from an earlier disagreement between the Center and the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and insufficient communication between the Provost's Office and other members of the consortium of which the CMRAE is part.

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Reports to the President*Continued from preceding page*

was made with full knowledge of the many divergent views about the possible future of the Center. It did not recommend reversing the decision.

The Diamond Committee noted that past decisions to close a center or laboratory have not been subject to the same faculty oversight as the reorganization of an academic unit. It concluded that establishing a new set of procedures for laboratories and centers would be too constraining, given their diverse nature at MIT. The Committee made a number of recommendations focused on providing a better mechanism for administration consultation with faculty and students who would be affected by the closure of centers or laboratories. These recommendations will be considered by the FPC this fall.

When the FPC met to review the Diamond Committee report, two concerns were raised: 1) other interdisciplinary centers would be particularly vulnerable to budget cuts, and 2) faculty members who are asked to take on reviews such as this should receive adequate guidance and instruction beforehand. Overall, the FPC concurred with the Diamond report's conclusions and praised the committee for its fine work.

MIT's relations with the federal government continued to dominate Institute business, and the FPC's agenda often reflected these issues.

- President Charles M. Vest visited the FPC twice to discuss the goals he set for himself in last year's President's Report and to discuss a broad spectrum of issues. Both times the discussion turned to budget and federal relations issues. The breakdown of the strong partnership between research universities and the federal government created educational and financial crises as

funding for many areas of research has been reduced. MIT's budget imbalance correlates strongly with the loss of federal support, and consequently the Institute has had to increase its reliance on tuition, gifts, and endowment income. FPC members were particularly interested in MIT's evolving industrial and corporate relations and encouraged the President to pursue these opportunities. At the same time members of the FPC raised concerns that MIT not lose sight of its traditional goals of providing students with the best analytical education and pursuing world-class, curiosity-driven research. The FPC expects to have frequent contact with the President next year as the Institute grapples with budget issues through reengineering.

- The FPC met with Provost Mark S. Wrighton to discuss the progress of MIT's continuing struggle to restructure its budget in response to rising costs and fragile federal support. The Provost underscored the seriousness of the budget situation, noting that a further reduction in the size of the MIT faculty is possible. The FPC noted the connection between downsizing the faculty and faculty retirement patterns in response to the end of mandatory retirement on January 1, 1994.

The government's decision to apply overhead and benefits charges to the UROP funds was particularly troubling. The new charges will cut in half the funds available for UROP students. At the suggestion of the FPC, the Provost assembled a working group of faculty and students to help him persuade officials in Washington to reverse their decision. This group achieved some initial success, convincing MIT's cognizant agency to reduce the employee benefits rate on UROP salaries to a nominal level. Further actions will be taken in 1995.

FPC also heard from and coordinated the work of several other committees:

- At the request of the Chair of the Faculty, the Committee on Faculty-Administration (CFA) undertook an in-depth review of the questions facing the Institute regarding faculty retirement. This review is part of a larger effort by the MIT administration to respond to the expiration of mandatory retirement for tenured faculty on January 1, 1994. Some are concerned that the end of mandatory retirement will cause many faculty to stay on beyond age 70, which may result in the loss of resources normally used to hire young faculty.

The CFA made three recommendations to the FPC regarding retirement policy: 1) implement only those changes in the Retirement Plan that are not disincentives for retirement; 2) provide as much flexibility as possible in the use of Plan assets for individuals who retire; and 3) create novel work options which allow seniors to continue to serve while obtaining flexible plan benefits. FPC concurred with these recommendations and passed them on to the Steering Committee on the Strategic Review of Benefits (SRB). Both the CFA and FPC will continue to work on aspects of this issue next year.

- The Committee on the Undergraduate Program (CUP) discussed with FPC its recommendations about proposed changes to the Humanities and Social Sciences Distribution Requirement (HASS-D). A review of HASS-D by CUP was mandated by the Faculty in its 1987 restructuring of the undergraduate Humanities Requirement. A review committee was appointed in the Schools of Architecture and Planning and Humanities and Social Sciences and reported its conclusions to CUP.

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Reports to the President*Continued from preceding page*

Although the CUP and the HASS-D review committee disagreed about the revised configuration of the required HASS-D subjects, deliberations continue between the two committees so that a final proposal will be ready for presentation to the Faculty next year.

The FPC reviewed several changes in academic policy and general procedures, some of which were forwarded to the Faculty for approval:

- The Sloan School of Management, with the approval of the Committee on Graduate School Policy (CGSP), restructured its primary degree program. As approved by the Faculty, the new degree will be titled Master of Business Administration (MBA). The restructured degree replaces the traditional 24-unit thesis with additional course work including significant research projects. The Master of Science in Management degree would still be awarded to students who complete a 24-unit thesis. The introduction of a graduate degree without a required thesis caused some concern among FPC members who worried that this reflects a larger trend toward de-emphasizing significant research experience as a degree requirement. Sloan School faculty, however, argued that this change reflects the professional nature of the Sloan degree, which is often listed as an MBA by graduates on their résumés. They also emphasized the extensive research experience already embedded in the regular curriculum. Other Sloan programs, such as Leaders for Manufacturing, will continue to require a thesis. The Faculty approved the restructured degree and title at its February meeting.

- Several issues involving student academic dishonesty came before the FPC. The Committee worked with Dean

Affairs Arthur C. Smith and the Committee on Discipline (COD) to establish new procedures for reporting to the Faculty on student disciplinary proceedings. A model was developed that presents considerable information on allegations and sanctions but protects the privacy rights of individuals. With the approval of the Committee on Privacy, information regarding disciplinary proceedings for 1992-3 was presented at the February Faculty Meeting.

A working group consisting of the chairs of the COD, Committee on Academic Policy (CAP), and CUP together with representatives of the Office of the Dean for Undergraduate Education and Student Affairs' (ODUESA) office and student representatives was asked to review the report on academic dishonesty titled *Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty at MIT: Results of a Study of Undergraduates, Faculty and Graduate Teaching Assistants*, which was distributed in November 1993. The group was asked to recommend changes in announcements of expectations of academic honesty, Institute policy regarding "bibles," and procedures for handling incidents of academic dishonesty. A report is expected this fall.

The FPC also discussed several issues and events with a broader impact on MIT:

- Several issues involving grievance procedures at the Institute were discussed by the FPC. [They are summarized in this month's [From The Faculty Chair](#) column.]

- The FPC noted that the Institute Pornography Policy expired in February 1993. Established in February 1990, the policy contained a three-year sunset clause. After considerable discussion of

the wisdom of having an explicit policy on pornography, the FPC agreed with the judgment of the Academic Council that problems which might arise could be effectively handled under the Institute's existing policies on harassment.

- The FPC devoted considerable time to discussing issues of cultural and racial diversity at the Institute. The committee recognized the need for greater understanding of these issues among faculty members and explored a number of ways to encourage faculty to interact on a personal level with students of varied backgrounds. FPC also supported establishing an Institute committee on race relations which would provide funding and leadership for activities that promote diversity and cultural understanding.

- Dean Arthur Smith approached FPC to ask for increased faculty input on improving and restoring the Institute's classroom space. With the Committee's help, he formed an advisory committee to work with the administration on improving the maintenance, renovation, and creation of classroom space.

Finally, no account of the activities of the FPC would be complete without mentioning the loss of Constantine Simonides in April. Constantine's humor and wisdom graced the meetings of the FPC since its formation in the 1980s and those of its predecessor, the Committee on Educational Policy. Constantine played a key role in keeping the MIT faculty in touch with the administration, serving as liaison and confidant to many faculty chairs. His valuable advice and unending good humor will be greatly missed. His many contributions to the Faculty and the Institute at large were recognized through a formal resolution at the May Faculty meeting.♣

A Visit to the MIT Retirement Plan

Ruina, from Page 1

defensive, all considered my concerns legitimate and warranting careful analysis and review. Yet, little has been done. Meanwhile, many of us continue to be deprived of important benefits that could be effected in short order and with little, if any, dollar cost to the Institute.

Since the MIT plan is complex and was changed in 1989, I cannot be complete in this short piece. Most of what I have to say here applies to the Fixed Fund of the plan.

Virtually all older faculty members have most of their pension accumulation in the Fixed Fund while younger faculty members may or may not have a large fraction of their pension accumulation in the fixed fund when they retire.

Distribution of Pension Earnings

Currently, the combination of Institute policy and federal law provides a time window of a few years ending at age 70-1/2 when a participant, whether retiring or not, may annuitize his pension accumulations. At that point, the individual's accumulation in the Fixed Fund is shifted to a so-called Benefits Fund, which has a different investment portfolio. The annuity he or she gets is determined by the amount accumulated, the specific annuity option chosen, and the earnings of the individual's payout account which are *assigned* at the time of annuitization.

At MIT, the annual earnings in an individual's account in the Variable Fund are determined by the Fund's earnings in the market, whereas his or her *assigned* earnings are determined at the time of annuitization at a level equal to the average interest of 10-year Treasury notes over the year prior to the annuitization, with a cap on the change in assigned interest earnings limited to 1/4% per quarter or 1% per year. Once an annuity is purchased, the assigned interest earning rate *remains fixed for the duration of*

the individual's annuity regardless of variations in T note interest rates or what the plan earnings actually may be. In contrast, the other major university retirement plan, TIAA, guarantees a relatively small interest to which a dividend is added annually that reflects the true total earnings experience of the plan.

retirement overlap in time and who each annuitized at exactly the same age and with identical sums in the fixed plan with one annuitizing in July, 1991 and the other in July, 1994, are likely to have annuities differing in total value by more than \$100,000, only because of the Institute's peculiar formula for distribution of the Benefit Fund's earnings.

In dollar terms, for a senior faculty member with long-term service at the Institute and with, let's say \$800,000 pension accumulation in the Fixed Fund, a 1% difference in interest earnings may amount to \$50,000 or more in total annuity value. Two long-term faculty members whose careers and retirement overlap in time and who each annuitized at exactly the same age and with identical sums in the fixed plan with one annuitizing in July, 1991 and the other in July, 1994, are likely to have annuities differing in total value by more than \$100,000, only because of the Institute's peculiar formula for distribution of the Benefit Fund's earnings.

Since 1985, MIT's assigned interest for annuities has dropped from over 11-1/2% to 5.8% (a factor of 2), but is now rising (see figure, page 10). It is important to be aware that each 1% change in interest results in about 6% or more in the total value of an annuity, or in annual annuity payments depending on age at annuitization and the annuity option chosen. In dollar terms, for a senior faculty member with long-term service at the Institute and with, let's say \$800,000 pension accumulation in the Fixed Fund, a 1% difference in interest earnings may amount to \$50,000 or more in total annuity value. Two long-term faculty members whose careers and

Any faculty member considering retirement now would be wise to postpone annuitization (and, therefore, perhaps retirement) in the knowledge that the assigned interest earnings in his fixed annuity will rise in the near future and are then expected to remain at a substantially higher level than now. This certainly discourages early retirement at this time.

In other words, there is an unfair and inequitable annuity distribution from the Benefits Fund, and some of us are getting a much larger share of the Benefits Fund's distributions than others. This would not be so if all annuitants received a

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proportionate share of the Fund's earnings each year, as is the case in TIAA. Incidentally, TIAA is paying about 8% this year on annuity earnings compared to MIT's fixing the earnings at 6.08% for those annuitizing in the quarter starting July 1, 1994.

Surely, MIT's formula for interest earnings can be changed to be more equitable. This might necessitate some measures to meet government regulations and might take some time to implement, but the process could be initiated immediately. In the meantime, however, correcting the inequity of the particularly low interest earnings of those unlucky individuals who have recently annuitized their accumulation or are soon to do so, could probably be handled

promptly and simply. One way would be to add an annual dividend based on the plan's real earnings for those individuals to bring them up to some reasonable level (say 8% now). There seem to be adequate funds available for this purpose. The latest *Report of the Treasurer* (page 32) indicates that the pension plan's assets exceed its projected benefit obligation by about one hundred million dollars.

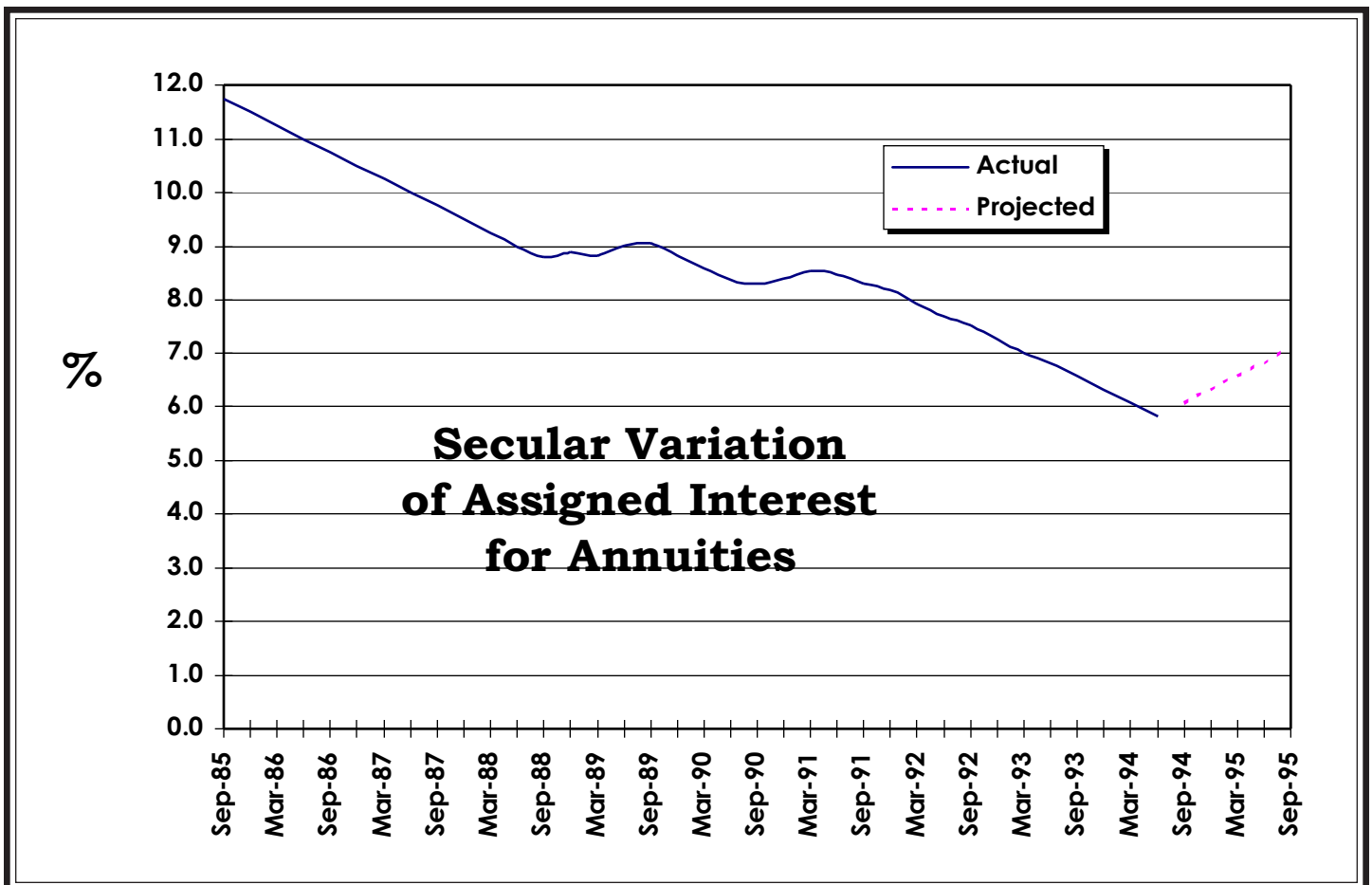
Annuity Options

The Institute offers a standard list of annuity options but with unusual and rigid constraints. And one important option for receiving one's pension accumulation, the minimum distribution option (MDO), widely available in other retirement plans, is not even offered at MIT.

In my own case, when I realized that what I received over time would depend so much on the precise value of 10-year Treasuries at the time of annuitizing, I wanted to hedge by spreading the annuity purchase over time to minimize the effect of a temporary dip in assigned interest earnings, as in fact occurred. Also, I wanted to partition my earnings into two retirement options to satisfy certain of my own needs. To my dismay, I soon learned that MIT did not permit multiple options, as does TIAA.

Thus, I would have had to annuitize my pension funds at one time – and with only one annuity option. After raising the issue of this arbitrary limitation with several senior Institute officers, in

(Continued on next page)



A Visit to the MIT Retirement Plan

Ruina, from preceding page

desperation, I addressed my complaints directly to the Executive Committee of the MIT Corporation. Consequently, the rule was modified so that I was permitted to purchase two different annuities but still had to do it at one time. I was informed that the option of partial annuitization at different times within the defined time window for annuitization is being reserved as a possible incentive reward for early retirees, though permitting this for everyone would cost the Institute essentially nothing.

Regarding the minimum distribution option (MDO), this is permitted by federal legislation and available at most research universities. The MDO permits withdrawal of a government defined minimum amount from one's pension accumulation, thereby leaving the maximum amount tax deferred as long as possible. This option can provide some substantial dollar savings and flexibility for those in a position to take advantage of it. Though it would be essentially cost-neutral to MIT, it too is being withheld so that it can be offered only to early retirees as an incentive.

It is quite understandable that the Institute, facing the dilemma posed by the end of mandatory retirement for faculty members simultaneous with an ever more difficult financial situation, focuses on disincentives for faculty to remain rather than on provision of real and proper incentives for early retirement which may be costly. But to me, it seems fundamentally wrong to impose arbitrary and unusual restrictions on pension options for everyone only so that their removal can be presented as a reward for early retirement.

Governance

Management and administration of the pension plan is rather diffuse, but the

ultimate responsibility for policy formulation resides with the Executive Committee of the Corporation that, in turn, gets its input from the Institute's senior administrative officers. The plan management structure includes: (1) an Administrative Committee which oversees operations, and (2) Trustees who manage the plan's assets.

has been responsible for the slow grinding of wheels in the decision process." This contrasts with how the Institute relates to faculty on academic matters.

To my mind, there should be an identified, administratively senior person whose major, if not sole, responsibility is to review plan operations, consult

It is quite understandable that the Institute, facing the dilemma posed by the end of mandatory retirement for faculty members simultaneous with an ever more difficult financial situation, focuses on disincentives for faculty to remain rather than on provision of real and proper incentives for early retirement which may be costly. But to me, it seems fundamentally wrong to impose arbitrary and unusual restrictions on pension options for everyone only so that their removal can be presented as a reward for early retirement.

Advisory roles are played by a Steering Committee for the Strategic Review of Benefits, essentially an arm of the Academic Council and, from time to time, by the Faculty Policy Committee and the Faculty/Administration Committee.

However, despite this array of committees, the channel by which participants as a body can communicate with the plan managers is narrow indeed. The way the plan Trustees and Administrative Committee as well as the Corporation Executive Committee handle pension plan responsibilities does not invite easy discussion and debate about policy issues by participants prior to implementation. One senior officer in a recent letter admitted to me that "the premium on senior officer and staff time

with plan participants, be familiar with relevant legal issues as well as with retirement plans at other institutions, and who can raise major issues directly with the Executive Committee in a timely manner.

The plan has more than 17,000 members and assets closing in on two billion dollars. For many of us, our Institute pension is our major financial asset. There is too much at stake here to have these responsibilities borne by people who are burdened with many other duties. It may seem unreasonable to add to the current burdens of the Institute senior administration, but benign neglect of the pension plan cannot and should not continue. Faculty pressure can surely help bring about much needed change. ❖

God or Mammon: Housing at MIT

Bill Porter

As housemasters we find ourselves discussing problems that seem unresolvable. Dining is disappearing in even those dormitories where it has held out for so long. Crowding drives out the spaces that might offer solace to some and opportunities for interaction and mutual learning to others. The poor condition of some dormitories seems to degrade the quality of life and erode the spirit. Changes seem driven by notions of efficiency that are distant from MIT's educational role and mission.

We also find that the practice of education at MIT seems to frustrate our efforts. Some subjects have assignments that seem unnecessarily long. Schedules seem not to be coordinated with unfortunate consequences for student workloads, especially in the first two years. But perhaps more important, at MIT education seems limited to the classroom rather than expanding to include the whole life space of the student, with the inevitable consequence that quality of life is conceptually segregated from the quality of the learning experience. Education to a specific purpose is segregated from the education of the whole person. The 1973 Committee on Student Environment report stated: "that the potential of the residential system for playing a significant role in the overall education of MIT undergraduates is hampered by the overall character of both the formal and the hidden curriculum, and such features as the emphasis on competitiveness, grades, and the accumulation of credits."

I was surprised (and disappointed) to discover that the same 1973 committee reaffirmed the principle of the 1963

Committee on Student Environment that "such programs as the Housemaster-Tutor system should be more concerned with complementing, rather than reinforcing, the values of the formal curriculum." To "complement" apparently meant to do something different from education, for example: create a sense of

develop? How better than to separate the two in order to promote civic blindness, and professional irresponsibility?

To caricature the roles that the housing system might play I shall label them "us," "us versus them," and "other." "Us" is an Institute-managed system by those responsible for the

But perhaps more important, at MIT education seems limited to the classroom rather than expanding to include the whole life space of the student, with the inevitable consequence that quality of life is conceptually segregated from the quality of the learning experience. Education to a specific purpose is segregated from the education of the whole person.

community; improve the students' quality of life; provide activities that fill out the students' experience and develop his or her interpersonal skills. "Reinforce," on the other hand, meant to contribute directly to the educational program by having classes in the dorms, or to offer lectures and other activities that grew out of and built upon the subjects of instruction, occupied the same intellectual space, and dealt with the same ethical issues. Thus, if this distinction between "reinforce" and "complement" meant anything at all it meant that the educational programs and the residential system were to be segregated, just as the person-as-professional and the person-as-citizen were to be segregated. Is not the relation of the person to his or her actions an important part of how a sense of professional ethics can

educational program, namely, the faculty – those who have the faith, those who do not question the underlying educational tenets of the Institute. (The housemasters tend toward this position.) The second position, "us versus them," is an Institute-managed system in which housing is treated separately from education, institutionalizing the distance between them. The third position: "other," managed perhaps in part by the Institute and in part by city landlords, is only managed as part of the housing resource of the region and is subject to market forces. The present system seems to oscillate among these three, from some dormitories on the one extreme, through graduate off-campus apartments and some fraternities, to the external housing
(Continued on next page)

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market at the other extreme. Given the recent changes in dining, the crowding and poor upkeep of some dormitories, the trend would appear to be away from the first ("us") and toward the third ("other"). This is cause for great concern among us housemasters and, I suspect, among all faculty who are close enough to the housing system to see what is going on.

In keeping with the current Institute commitment to reexamine its activities in the light of its objectives, we believe that a high level committee composed of and led by faculty, and including administrators and students, be charged to examine housing policy within a frame of reference broad enough to encompass the sorts of issues we raise here. Its recommendations should not be restricted to the currently defined and institutionalized domains that comprise MIT housing today; and they should cover how the housing system should be administered as well as the policies that should guide it, for the two are integrally related. The committee should have the strongest backing from the highest places; and it should be charged to address such issues as: What is the relation between academic and residential life at MIT? How does housing affect the academic programs; how do the academic programs affect residential life? What relations are implied between one's personal life, beliefs and values and one's job-related life, beliefs and values? What lasting values are implied by the current situation and what behaviors engendered?

What role might a housing system be expected to play? Is it to create a harmony of community that results from a rich and varied community life?

Is it to induce attractive and lasting behavior that will positively shape each student and aid them in making the transition to young responsible adulthood? Is it to help shape an outlook, an attitude of curiosity, humility and respect for ideas, and cultivate a pattern of behavior that leads to a life of continuous learning? Or

programs? Given current teaching patterns and faculty preferences for teaching style, is there really any potential for changes in the academic programs related to these considerations?

If a committee is established, the preconditions for its establishment should include a serious commitment

In keeping with the current Institute commitment to reexamine its activities in the light of its objectives, we believe that a high level committee composed of and led by faculty, and including administrators and students, be charged to examine housing policy within a frame of reference broad enough to encompass the sorts of issues we raise here.

have we crossed the line now, and is this the role of the academic program? Can we really separate them?

Is our residential system to aid us in competing for students who are weighing the choice between us and other prestige institutions? How do we compare in this respect with our competitors? Do residential and life style issues figure in students' decisions not to attend MIT? To what extent are life style and residential systems associated?

Given the current set of facilities, is there any flexibility for rethinking how housing might be on this campus? Given the presence and the need for fraternities as part of the housing system, and given the present character of the dormitories, is there any potential for transformation into a new and more effective relationship to the educational

by the faculty to reexamine, if necessary, both the demands of the educational program on the students, but also, if relevant, its content. During the operation of the committee other groups in the MIT community also should be readied for the possibility of change.

Can the housing system become more supportive of MIT's educational mission rather than becoming more narrowly defined as an arena in which to minimize costs? As housemasters we are not pessimistic, but we believe that clarified goals, policies, and procedures are needed that result from a thoughtful, legitimized, and supported process. ♣

[This essay approximates remarks made on behalf of the Housemasters' Council at the dinner held by President Vest for the Housemasters and the Office of the Dean for Student Affairs, April 13, 1994.]

Should Student Alcohol Use Be An Institute Concern?

Eve Sullivan

As the academic year begins, I want to pose some questions about undergraduate life: Just what kind of community are we and what kind of welcome do we give new students? Specifically, I want to examine the role of alcohol and other drugs — as problem-solver and as problem — in students' efforts to cope with pressure at MIT.

The Institute recognizes the stress created by heavy coursework and strong competition in a college inevitably overshadowed in some measure by graduate school and research activities. Support for students includes long-established and successful programs such as Concourse, Integrated Studies Program, and Experimental Study Group, and these have been joined more recently by initiatives such as Charm School, City Year, Mediation, MedLinks, MOYA, and TeamWorks.

Yet is MIT a supportive community? Is it a "human place," as Dean Robert Birgeneau characterized the Institute in his letter to prospective women students (*The Tech*, 8/25/94). In some respects, and for some students, it is. But the programs and activities named above have limited scope and appeal. Some very capable MIT students, who tend to isolate themselves or become isolated — for whatever reason — can end up feeling extremely lonely and quite lost. The grinding pace of work and the lack of Institute-wide places and activities that promote development of cooperative, nurturing relationships take a terrible toll. The MIT administration knows this.

President Vest (*The Tech*, 8/26/94) challenges incoming freshmen to be "weavers of scientific, technological, social and artistic fabrics" and urges them to balance individual and group experiences. At the same time he admits,

"Frankly, as an institution, we are struggling with how best to help you create this balance."

What happens when people's lives become unbalanced? Unfortunately, they can often seek relief by the easiest, most socially accepted route: drinking. Of course alcohol overuse — or misuse, or whatever one calls it — is only one indicator of stress. Others, less evident, include eating disorders, violence in relationships (including verbal and physical harassment), sleep disorders, and sexual dysfunction. (Dare I mention work addiction, an MIT favorite?) As a community we have been, I believe, unwilling to discuss alcohol abuse. Lack of information about its seriousness here hinders both our response to it and to related problems.

Binge drinking is up on campuses nationwide (*The Boston Globe*, June 8, 1994) and it is naive to assume that MIT is singularly different. "Thousands of our best and brightest are being lost here," reported Joseph A. Califano Jr., president of the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, in comments on a study commissioned by that center. "While there has been a decline in drinking across the U.S. and in the 18- to 22-year olds in the work force," he said, "this [decline] is not reflected on college campuses."

Califano's study reports that 54 percent of male students said they had had five or more drinks at a time in the previous two weeks and that this rate has been stable since the mid-1970's. However, the percentage of women students who say they drink solely to get drunk has risen from 10 percent in 1977 to 35 percent today, and as MIT accepts more women students, our campus may well see an increase in alcohol-related

problems. Equally disturbing, the Columbia University study found that 90 percent of all reported campus rapes occur when alcohol is being used by either the assailant, the victim, or both.

How serious a problem is drinking at MIT? Statistics are notoriously difficult to obtain, in part because the topic does not lend itself to candid discussion. While the short answer is that we do not know the extent of alcohol problems at MIT, there are indications that a problem exists.

The most recent MIT Health Education survey, November 1993, asked "How often do you worry about...?" listing eight items to be ranked. Respondents named exercise, eating, weight or body image, and general health or illness as numbers one to four. Concern about **someone else's use** of alcohol or other drugs was number five, followed by concerns about HIV and other STDs. Respondents' concern about their **own use** of alcohol was number eight, dead last, a pattern consistent for MIT undergraduates, graduate students, and adult MIT Health Plan members.

Student concern for improving standards related to alcohol and reducing its misuse was expressed last winter (1993-94) at Random Hall. Residents raised the issue of spending house tax money on alcohol and after heated debate, vote and re-vote, succeeded in establishing a new practice: two of the four parties each term will be alcohol-free.

Faculty are obviously concerned as well. Housemaster William Watson commented, with some frustration, on how hard it is to control underage drinking. "Tutors and I are in a very difficult situation because our helping role — and students' willingness to confide in us — is seriously compromised

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if we take on law enforcement duties, checking IDs, and so on.” Professor Watson served on an alcohol policy committee two years ago that recommended increased training for servers, but he said these recommendations have not been fully implemented. Watson agrees that the Institute can and should do more to increase students’ level of awareness about alcoholism.

Director of Social Work Ron Fleming, when asked about the severity of alcohol and other drug problems among MIT students, said that the latest report of the Committee on Discipline has some data, however he emphasized that the issue is not statistics. The energy for creating MIT’s Employee Assistance Plan, an intervention and referral service for staff who have alcohol problems, he said, came not from statistics but from senior administrators sharing some real life experiences. “All they wanted,” Fleming said, “was for people who needed help to get help.” The idea of addressing addictions and treatment issues has been “harder to sell,” Fleming continued, although “the problem is definitely here. We have alcohol, cocaine [and other drug] problems and they have resulted in students withdrawing or being expelled.”

MIT’s official response to alcohol-related problems, Fleming asserted, seems to be mainly social control aimed at keeping students out of physical danger and reducing the Institute’s liability. (The regulation of alcohol consumption is dealt with by The Alcohol Initiative.) This article seeks, in Fleming’s phrase, to make the “harder sell” and address wider social and medical issues.

Student health educator Tracy Desovich sees her primary goal to be improved social norms. “It is possible,” she said, “to run short-term programs on

alcohol and other drug issues, but these do not change social norms.” With MedLinks, (a network of students she has organized and trained in health issues and referral) “we have the foundation in place but we need policy and staff to develop an effective, long-range effort.” The absence of a health education director — the position has been vacant for months and may be part-time when and if it is filled — obviously handicaps her efforts.

The argument here is that the piecemeal approach the Institute has made to these community-wide problems is simply inadequate. We need to support existing programs involved with quality of undergraduate life, such as those addressing racism and harassment. We need to encourage living group initiatives in support of sobriety, such as that of Random Hall. We need to foster strong education programs for students and the larger community in the area of alcohol abuse prevention. We need to improve intervention and referral resources. All of these activities could be effectively grouped together and, in concert, would have a much greater chance of success than any one program alone or than an increase in regulations.

The point is not how big or small a problem drinking is at the Institute, although we do need to find that out; nor is it whether MIT’s problem is greater or less than on any other campus. The fact is, it is a problem and we must coordinate, publicize — even “market” — the resources for help, and increase awareness at all levels of the early warning signs of addictive problems. If early signs of abuse are recognized, problems can be treated with measures short of hospitalization or expulsion.

Not enough is done at MIT to track substance abuse or to address it with comprehensive prevention programs.

National statistics on alcohol and other drug use, risk-taking, and violent behavior among 18- to 22-year olds, particularly on college campuses, are terrifying. This critical situation needs to be faced in a straightforward manner, and it can be. As the recent *Technology Review* article on violence as a public health concern stated, we cannot wait for positive proof of prevention’s effectiveness, we must “Just Do It.”

This approach can be both proactive and reactive, enhancing students’ learning as it helps them avoid personal and interpersonal problems. A respondent to the Senior Survey (*The Tech*, 4/29/94) wrote, “Though academically I have been challenged, I do not feel MIT provides for an equivalent emotional and social maturity. It is important to train the great potential here for future leadership roles.”

The bottom line is that we need to begin discussing the difficult issue of alcohol abuse, raise awareness, and consider creating an Intervention Coalition: a coordinated effort of all the helping individuals and support entities in our community. This coalition can link alcohol problems with other personal problems such as eating disorders, as well as interpersonal problems such as harassment. Further, it can link programs for students with those for employees, staff, and faculty. I hope to address this issue and explain the intervention coalition concept in future issues of the *Newsletter*.

The Institute must make a serious effort to improve the undergraduate experience. The need for change is urgent and, most important, work toward change is not something that can be delegated or hired out. Faculty members, only you can exert the leadership necessary for MIT to undertake this important initiative. ❖

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exercise their rights without conflict. The conflict arises, in part, because personal computers in a public cluster are an oxymoron – the user doesn't know whether to treat them as shared or private. When different users answer the question differently, conflict ensues.

One approach to problems of this sort, typical of college and university disciplinary mechanisms, involves judgment-and-sanctions approach takes a long time, entails standards of evidence, and requires answers to difficult questions. Most people I have told about Judy Hamilton say that she should win, that her rights outweigh the male student's because the incident involved public facilities and her goal was learning whereas his was titillation. But what, for example, if the display had been on a more personal computer, say a laptop? What if the context had been a cafeteria, rather than an academic facility? What if the image had been a swastika, rather than a sexual image? What if the screen had displayed an anti-Semitic quotation from the published writings of Harvard's President Lowell (once an MIT faculty member) in large type? In small type? What if it had been a Rubens painting? What if it had been a fraternity's name? What if there were other workstations available, from which the male student's display could not be seen?

A judgment-and-sanctions approach revisits the problem for each variation. It creates a stream of acrimonious, difficult-to-decide cases, consigning policy evolution, social learning, and ethical progress to the indefinite future. And it leaves administrators without an efficient, commonsensical response to complaints like Judy's.

A different approach to problems of this sort frames the issues not in terms of competing rights, but rather in terms of

balancing interests. Judy and the male student both have an interest in continuing availability of public facilities, whose existence depends on a social contract to respect each other as citizens sharing limited common resources. Each has a right to do things that might offend others. Yet it is in each of their interests not to exercise that right at all times, lest their competition jeopardizes their common interests by causing administrators to restrict or eliminate public facilities.

From an interests perspective this problem requires an approach that helps each citizen to consider the interests of others. A judgment-and-sanctions approach might serve this end, especially if it involved the equivalent of public hangings. But we believe there are more efficient approaches focused on averting and changing inappropriate behavior rather than punishing it. I will return to this point, but only after another case.

My concern is about one M Zareny, who is using his computer account to post UseNet articles in rec.arts.books and to send messages with extremely derogatory claims about gay men. Normally I would be most solidly against censorship, but if similar remarks about the immorality of Jews or Blacks were made, they would probably be illegal. I have tried at great length to reason with MZ, but his prejudices seem to be beyond reason. He was previously using an account elsewhere before he moved to MIT. As an alumnus, I am disappointed to see Zareny's trash emanating from alma mater. I also think that if the hate laws covered gender orientation, he would be in violation of the law.

Could you please respond to my plea? As I said, I am very uncomfortable with censorship of any form, but MZ has been going on for more than three years now, and his views are quite beyond rational

comment. I have suggested that we take the debate to philosophical journals instead of the Internet (he suggested the same thing, but shows no signs of doing so, despite my having published papers on issues underlying the topic), since there are some established standards there. He has made unsubstantiated remarks about my character and relations with my students, that if I were in the US I might consider taking legal action over.

An easy one, it seemed: find Mr. Zareny (again, not his real name), let him know that continuing to post offensive messages after being asked to desist might constitute harassment, and warn him that legal action could result.

But do public postings of this sort constitute harassment, and are they legally actionable? The second question is murky, and I will duck it for the moment, but the first depends on an institution's harassment policy. MIT's policy reads as follows:

Harassment is any conduct, verbal or physical, on or off campus, which has the intent or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's or group's educational or work performance at MIT or which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive educational, work or living environment.

In practice we apply three tests to determine whether given behavior constitutes harassment. We post these questions for all to see on large posters in all computer clusters:

Is it harassment? Ask yourself these three questions:

- *Did the incident cause stress that affected your ability, or the ability of others, to work or study?*
- *Was it unwelcome behavior?*
- *Would a reasonable person of your gender/race/religion subjected to this behavior find it unacceptable?*

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Is Mr. Zareny's behavior harassment? On its face, no—at least based on the data in the complaint. It may satisfy the third test, depending how closely one defines the reference community. But the alumnus did not contend that his ability to work was being affected. Moreover, if Zareny's postings are typical of those in this UseNet group (and a quick review of rec.arts.books suggests they are), the

As we pursued this point the case grew interesting: there was no "M Zareny" at MIT, and none of the usernames in the postings was registered centrally with us. We discovered that Zareny's postings had come from a private (although MIT-owned) workstation with a private user list, and that the workstation's previous user had given Mr. Zareny, apparently a friend, a local account and remote access

newsgroup from an MIT computer by an individual with an MIT electronic-mail address but who apparently is enrolled at another university. The comments are offensive to the recipient, but typical of the comments in the newsgroup—in which participation is fully voluntary. Who has standing to complain to whom, and who has standing to take action? Whose definition of harassment and/or improper use should govern—that of MIT, or the other perpetrator's university? The victim or the newsgroup? US or Australian law? Whose standard of evidence applies? Of course we shut off Mr. Zareny's unofficial account—we are perfectly comfortable doing this without any warning or process whatsoever, since it was unauthorized—but should we do more?

The cases have some common threads: traditional judicial approaches are either infeasible or inefficient, framing the issue in terms of rights leads to conflict, jurisdiction can be messy, and therefore the central need is for members of electronic communities to appreciate their common interests in rules for behavior and use.

Within the academic-computing and Athena side of Information Systems we first approached computer and network misbehavior idiosyncratically. Students cleaned screens for some offenses, lost their computer privileges for others, and underwent disciplinary proceedings for others. As academic computing became more central to education at MIT, these *ad hoc* and local approaches became too diffuse and unmanageable. Moreover, they often triggered acrimonious exchanges with perpetrators rather than productive behavior changes. And we became increasingly uncomfortable with our confounded roles as rulemakers, detectives, prosecutors, judges, and corrections officers.

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Within the academic-computing and Athena side of Information Systems we first approached computer and network misbehavior idiosyncratically. Students cleaned screens for some offenses, lost their computer privileges for others, and underwent disciplinary proceedings for others. As academic computing became more central to education at MIT, these *ad hoc* and local approaches became too diffuse and unmanageable.

alumnus might in effect have invited exposure to the postings by participating in the newsgroup. The policy basis for telling Mr. Zareny to stop is tenuous, and the legal threat even more so.

As Nero Wolfe might say, this is unsatisfactory: Mr. Zareny's behavior clearly is unproductive. It falls short of the standard we would like MIT students to reach. So we should communicate with him, and let him know that flaming postings are unlikely to win him friends. A problem arises: how do we know that Mr. Zareny is in fact making these postings, and not someone forging his name? Signatures on UseNet postings are among the most forgeable items on the Internet, and so the phrasing of admonitions requires some care.

to the machine so he could connect to it by telephone. So the postings were coming from an unknown individual outside the MIT community, but through an unofficial account granted some time in the past on a "private" but MIT-owned workstation by someone since departed. By an extraordinary coincidence (finding his thesis in an online catalog), I discovered that Mr. Zareny was in fact a graduate student at a neighboring university.

The Zareny case, apparently about harassment, thus turns out to be as much about venue and responsibility. The Internet's accessibility, lack of authentication standards, and context-bound rules of discourse produce a jurisdictional and evidentiary morass: an alumnus in Australia complains to us about comments posted in a worldwide

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We discussed this problem among ourselves, and with individuals from the offices of the provost, the dean for student affairs, and the ombudsman. Out of these discussions grew a recognition that averting and stopping antisocial and unethical behavior was sometimes more important than punishing offenders. And out of this recognition grew a simple set of mechanisms designed to stop harassment and improper use quickly, while keeping options for more traditional sanctions open.

The stopit mechanisms, as they came to be known, were based on a simple proposition:

Most offenders, given the opportunity to stop uncivil behavior without having to admit guilt, will do so.

The stopit mechanisms thus were designed to do two things: to discover computer misbehavior rapidly, and to communicate effectively with its perpetrators. The overarching goal is just what the name suggests: to stop it.

The first stopit mechanism is the poster I described above (see figure). The poster is displayed prominently in all Athena clusters. Facsimiles appear in printed and online documents. The primary goals of the poster are two: to encourage victims who feel they are in danger to call Campus Police immediately, and to provide a clear "if you can't figure out what to do" path to us.

The second stopit mechanism is that path: the <stopit@mit.edu> mailing address. Messages sent to <stopit@mit.edu> go to the senior directors in MIT Information Systems involved with academic computing, who then make sure that users receive responses and that appropriate actions ensue. Responses to stopit messages are generally very quick, especially when the offense is great, since the stopits (as

the director-respondents are known) frequently check their mail.

In many cases the response to a stopit complaint is a standard response from a

As stopit precedents have accumulated, so have standard responses to typical offenses. Moreover, field staff have become better attuned to standard

Don't Ignore Harassment



Harassment of any kind is unacceptable at MIT and in conflict with the interests and policies of the Institute. This is MIT Policy. See MIT Policies & Procedures, Section 3.16.

Stop It!

Is it harassment? Ask yourself these three questions:

- Did the incident cause stress that affected your ability, or the ability of others, to work or study?
- Was it unwelcome behavior?
- Would a reasonable person of your gender/race/religion subjected to this behavior find it unacceptable?

If you answer yes to these questions, please don't ignore the situation.

Here's What To Do

- If you are in danger or want to register a complaint, call Campus Police 3-1212 (24 hours)
- To talk to someone off the record during the academic year, call Nightline 3-8800 (7pm-7am)
- To talk to someone off the record Monday thru Friday, all year, call a Counselling Dean (for students only) 3-4861 (9am-5pm) or an Ombudsperson 3-5921 (8:30am-5pm) 3-5446 (9am-5:30pm)
- To file a complaint with Office of the Dean for Student Affairs (ODSA), Monday-Friday, call 3-4051 (9am-5pm)
- If you want help from IS/Athena, send e-mail to <stopit@mit.edu> (Responses sent Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm)

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specific office: for example, chain-letter and forged-mail complaints go directly to the network Postmaster, who takes standard actions (which range from admonitions to personal meetings depending on the incident). The advantage is, users need not worry about who should receive their complaints. They simply write to <stopit@mit.edu>.

responses, and often are able to handle complaints completely on the spot. This was very difficult before stopit gathered enough data to develop, test, and implement response policies. Standard responses and field-staff skills gradually have reduced the senior administrative overhead associated with stopit.

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Promoting Network Civility at MIT

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The third stopit mechanism is a carefully-structured standard note to alleged perpetrators of harassment, improper use, or other uncivil behavior. "Someone using your account," the note begins, "did [whatever the offense is]." The u.y.a. note (as this mechanism is known, for its introductory words) then explains why this behavior or action is offensive, or violates MIT harassment policy, or Rules of Use, or whatever. "Account holders are responsible for the use of their accounts. If you were unaware that your account was being used in this way," the note continues, "it may have been compromised. User Accounts can help you change your password and re-secure your account." Detailed directions to User Accounts follow. The note concludes with a short sentence: "If you were aware that your account was being used to [whatever it was], then please make sure that this does not happen again."

Two interesting outcomes ensue. First, many recipients of u.y.a. notes go to User Accounts, say their accounts have been compromised, and change their passwords – even when we know, from eyewitnesses or other evidence, that they personally were the offenders. Second, and most important, u.y.a. recipients virtually never repeat the offending behavior.

This is important: even though recipients concede no guilt, and receive no punishment, they stop. If we had to choose one lesson from our experience with misbehavior on the MIT network, it is how effective and efficient u.y.a. letters are. They have drastically reduced the number of confrontational debates between us and perpetrators, while at the same time reducing the recurrence of misbehavior. When we accuse perpetrators directly, they often assert that their misbehavior was within their rights (which may well be true). They

then repeat the misbehavior to make their point and challenge our authority. When we let them save face by pretending (if only to themselves) that they did not do what they did, they tend to become more responsible citizens with their pride intact. We lose the satisfaction of seeing perpetrators punished, but we reduce misbehavior and gain educational effectiveness.

Sometimes, especially where certain kinds of improper use such as reconfiguring machines or using restricted facilities are involved (there have been virtually no harassment recidivists), perpetrators perpetrate again. Or they respond to the u.y.a. letter by contesting the policy in question. In these cases the fourth stopit mechanism comes into play: the individual is invited to discuss the matter with a senior Information Systems administrator. If the individual declines this invitation, it becomes more forceful: in some cases the user's account is temporarily frozen until he or she appears (but this only happens with a director's approval).

In extreme cases, or if discussion fails to deter future misbehavior, the fifth stopit mechanism comes into play: the Institute's regular disciplinary procedures. In contrast to our earlier practice, MIT Information Systems neither takes private action nor imposes internal punishments (such as denying accounts, or having offenders clean screens) outside of regular procedures. Instead, Information Systems files complaints on behalf of itself or of victims (with their consent), and then lets the MIT Committee on Discipline (or whatever organization is responsible) judge the case and impose penalties.

Crime & Punishment, or the Golden Rule?

Our answer is simple: the Golden Rule. Attempting to reduce uncivil behavior

on the academic network by defining "crimes" and punishing "criminals" solves only part of the problem, at the same time prompting enough debate, backtalk, and defiance of authority to wipe out any gains. Attempting to reduce uncivil behavior by promoting respect for others sharing resources, and especially by permitting community members to change their behavior without admitting guilt, seems to achieve our central goal: maximizing educational efficiency by reducing the social and ethical costs of intensive academic networking.

But attaining our goal requires one further step, which we have yet to take effectively at MIT. Rather than educate students about civil use of shared academic-computing facilities only when they misbehave, we must find ways to educate students at the outset. Currently we provide materials on proper use when students open accounts, and our introductory training sessions emphasize the theme, but neither of these traditional approaches seems to have much effect. Occasionally we work more intensively with specific groups, such as our own user consultants-in-training, and here we have found that discussion of real cases works very well. Fundamentally, what we need is two things: for students to understand their basic social and ethical obligations as members of a community, and for them to understand the implications of these obligations when they use computers and networks.

Promoting civility on the academic network requires moving our goal beyond adjudication to behavioral change and our tactics beyond accusation to redirection. Having achieved these two transitions, we need to move from remedial to preventive strategies if we are to realize the full potential of networked academic communities.♣

Athena Training Opportunities For Your Students

Jeanne Cavanaugh

The Athena Computing Environment has become an integral part of the MIT educational experience. One quarter of the MIT community is currently using Athena on a daily basis. During the last academic year, 97% of the undergraduate students and 81% of the graduate students had Athena accounts.

Electronic mail, NEOS (the Networked Educational Online System) for electronic submission, exchange, annotation, grading and return of assignments and course handouts, and OLTA (On-Line Teaching Assistant) are proven ways faculty members have successfully used Athena to work more closely with their students. Many classes also make use of MIT-developed or third-party educational software as part of their curriculum.

Two Electronic Classrooms, with Athena workstations at each desk and a projector for the faculty workstations, as well as a cluster of Macintosh computers and projector can be reserved for lectures and labs.

An additional Athena classroom is being planned. (Some Institute classrooms are also equipped with an Athena workstation and projector; these rooms are reserved through the registrar's office like any other classroom.) New software is added regularly to Athena software suites. If you wish to learn more about how Athena can be used in courses, please contact the Academic Computing Services Faculty Liaison Office, E40-357/359/360, x3-0115, <f_1@mit.edu>.

In order for MIT students to successfully use Athena, Information Systems offers a comprehensive series of short courses (called minicourses) on a variety of Athena-related topics. These courses are offered frequently throughout the academic year.

During R/O week, incoming freshman, graduate, and transfer students had the opportunity to attend five basic courses: Intro to Athena, Working on Athena, Basic Word Processing and Electronic Mail, Advanced Word Processing with LaTeX, and Advanced Word Processing with EZ. These courses are offered before classes start, so new MIT students can become familiar with the system before they receive their first problem sets and paper assignments.

During the coming year, IS is offering new and revised minicourses for all levels of users. Minicourses are held the first five or six weeks of each semester, the week after Thanksgiving and spring break, and the first three weeks of IAP. The courses are offered Monday through Thursday at noon, 7pm, and 8pm in Room 3-343. No registration is necessary, and they are free.

We would like to encourage you to remind your students to take advantage of this excellent opportunity to learn more about the computer system that will be part of their MIT experience.

Below is a listing and brief description of the courses offered. [See the side bar for the Fall 94 schedule.]

Advanced Word Processing: EZ (EZ) Pre-requisites: Basic WP Introduction to EZ, a combination text editor and formatter, with text-editing commands that are similar to Emacs. As a formatter, it is menu-driven and easy to learn, in the popular style of the "What You See Is (pretty much) What You Get" packages.

Advanced Word Processing: LATEX (Latex) Pre-requisites: Basic WP An introduction to Latex, a widely-used text formatter, used for converting a text file into an attractive, professional-looking document. It is a powerful and flexible program, with the capability to

typeset many foreign characters and very complex mathematical text.

Latex Thesis (Thesis) Pre-requisites: Latex, some Latex experience Using the Latextextformatter to produce a fully-featured thesis that meets all MIT format requirements.

Information Resources on Athena (Info) Pre-requisites: Basic WP A survey of the communications, help, and other resources available on Athena.

Math Software Overview (MSO) Pre-requisites: Basic WP A survey of major mathematics and graphing packages available on Athena.

Matlab (Matlab) Pre-requisites: Basic WP An interactive program for scientific and engineering numeric calculation. Applications include: matrix manipulation, digital signal processing, and 3-dimensional graphics.

Xess (Xess) Pre-requisites: Basic WP A powerful and easy-to-learn spreadsheet, with a full range of mathematical, statistical, matrix, and string functions. It will be useful for scientific and engineering computations, as well as for general and financial uses.

Maple (Maple) Pre-requisites: Basic WP A mathematics program that can perform numerical and symbolic calculations, including formal and numerical integration, solving algebraic or transcendental systems and differential equations, and series expansion and matrix manipulation. It also has extensive graphics capabilities.

FrameMaker for Reports (Frame) Pre-requisites: Intro, Basic WP Framemaker is a powerful word-processing and document preparation package now available on Athena. It is introduced here as a tool for preparing academic reports and articles. [NOTE: Minicourse not available until November 1994.]

(Continued on next page)

Athena Training Opportunities For Your Students

Cavanaugh, from preceding page

Serious Emacs (Ser. Emacs) Pre-requisites: Basic WP, some Emacs experience The text editor introduced in Basic Word Processing has many useful features not covered in that course. This course is a must for anyone who uses Emacs more than an hour or two each week.

Customization on Athena (Dotfiles) Pre-requisites: Serious Emacs, some Athena experience Intended for the intermediate-level Athena user, this course will discuss the Athena login sequence and the user-configuration files (dotfiles)

that affect it, as well as changes the user can make to those and other files to customize their working environment.

Athena(R) is a registered trademark of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.✦



Athena Minicourses

Fall Term 1994

[All Minicourses are taught in Room 3-343.
No pre-registration or reservations are needed.
Just show up for the class!]

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu
12 noon	12 Sep	13 Sep	14 Sep	15 Sep
7 p.m.				
8 p.m.				
12 noon	19 Sep	20 Sep	21 Sep	22 Sep
7 p.m.				
8 p.m.				
12 noon	26 Sep	27 Sep	28 Sep	29 Sep
7 p.m.				
8 p.m.				
12 noon	3 Oct	4 Oct	5 Oct	6 Oct
7 p.m.				
8 p.m.				
12 noon	10 Oct	11 Oct	12 Oct	13 Oct
7 p.m.				
8 p.m.				

Letters

To The Faculty Newsletter:

In a bold initiative to resolve a major financial crisis, the administration has increased its number of vice presidents. The action reminds me of the man who suffering from a severe cold one winter consults his physician. The doctor's advice is for him to return home, bathe and then sit, dripping wet, in front of an open window. "But I'll catch pneumonia," the patient protests. "Aha!" exclaims the physician, "That we can cure."

The administration's master plan to deal with the deficit is apparently based on the same strategy, likely to be applied without restraint. In the spirit of faculty cooperation, of the understanding and especially of the sacrifice so recently and so urgently requested by the President, I offer the administration a few suggestions to help achieve their goal of fiscal climax.

More Vice Presidents must be appointed immediately— each to have a royal retinue of at least one Associate Vice President, at least one Assistant Vice President, several Assistants to the

Vice President, and several more Assistant Vice Presidents in Training. With computer control of organizational charts, compound titles are practicable such as Associate Assistant Vice President, Assistant Associate Vice President, and Vice Vice President. But even this will not be sufficient, and so the administration must be enlarged to include Vice Presidents Without Portfolio (with requisite associates, assistants, etc.) and Vice Presidents in Waiting. Indeed, why can't there be an entire shadow administration prepared to take over in dire emergency? Having a Shadow President, likewise down the complete line of command, would certainly be a comfort, much appreciated by everyone.

The office of Chancellor should be restored and augmented with one or more Vice Chancellors and so forth. Elimination of a position must have been a traumatic event in administrative history; the mistake can now be corrected and a vital part of the master plan effected.

Next, the search for new titles must be given a high priority. Is it only an oversight that MIT doesn't have a

Rector? (Or do we?) There might be other venerable titles to be appropriated. A search of administrative designations in use throughout the world will pay off. Certainly, the end of the cold war should permit free borrowing from the arsenal of bureaucracy. How about Commissar of whatever? (Hero Administrator is also commended if a way can be found to avoid confusion with a deli sandwich.)

Undoubtedly, many of these simple and obvious suggestions have already been discussed in administrative councils and it wouldn't come as a surprise if one or more were announced before this letter is published. However, the good faith effort of the administration to hasten financial crisis, collapse if doable, deserves recognition by all and general support from the entire community. So rally to the cause and let our glorious motto be "All for them, and they for themselves." To this end, a voluntary cut in salaries and insistence on a negative growth rate for the faculty and staff are not unreasonable contributions on our part.

H. P. Greenspan
Professor of Mathematics

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Immediate Placement of Graduate Degree Students (1991-92)		
	<u>Master's</u>	<u>Doctoral</u>
Industry or Business	45%	25%
Postdoctoral Appointments	---	26%
Further Study	22%	---
Teaching	---	15%
Foreign Student Returning Home	9%	10%
Academic Research	2%	3%
Government	2%	3%
Other	2%	6%
Armed Services	5%	1%
Undecided	13%	11%

Source: *MIT Facts 1994*

[The following letter was forwarded by the author to the Faculty Newsletter for publication.]

Arthur C. Smith
 Dean for Undergraduate Education and Student Affairs

Dear Dean Smith,

I write in response to your memo dated August 25, 1994, announcing the official reception for "Lesbigay" students. I wish to express my deep concern that the MIT administration and you as its representative have chosen to sponsor a specific event to promote homosexuality.

Despite the strident polemics of the activists, and their support by the politically correct, I, like many people, remain persuaded of the traditional view that homosexual activities are immoral and detrimental to the well-being of individuals and society. I nevertheless respect individuals' right to privacy and I have no wish to prevent the orderly functioning of any extramural groups that contribute to the life of the Institute.

However, for the Dean's Office explicitly to sponsor and apparently advocate homosexual activities goes far beyond its relationship to the other religious and interest groups on campus. This sponsorship puts the administration in the position of promoting activities which many people on campus, from a wide variety of backgrounds, consider offensive, injurious and improper. The right to privacy is one thing. Public sponsorship and advocacy is quite another.

What will be next? Shall we have a host of official receptions for the heterosexually promiscuous, or the celibate, or other groupings with respect to sexual choice? Or why limit it to sexuality? Why not have official receptions for the overweight, or vegetarians, or NRA members, or smokers?

I object most strongly to the MIT administration's favoring of a particular vocal pressure group, representing, by

modern estimates, only a few percent of the population. It is particularly galling for the administration to be cutting significantly into the academic budget and reducing faculty numbers, while at the same time, administrative resources are being improperly devoted to ever-increasing numbers of special-interest initiatives, having (to put it charitably) dubious social merit.

I urge you to terminate this ill-judged initiative and to focus the administration's attentions on the academic strength of the Institute. This will be the surest way to promote social harmony and avoid offense to the majority of the Institute's members, who do not belong to self-proclaimed "victim" groups, but wish to live and work in an atmosphere of consideration and courtesy, without having the practices of a militant minority forever thrust upon them.

Ian H. Hutchinson
Professor of Nuclear Engineering

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MIT Sponsored Research Fiscal 1993 (amount in thousands)		
U.S. Department of Defense	\$66,769	18.5%
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	\$64,882	18.0%
Industry	\$62,068	17.2%
U.S. Department of Energy	\$57,325	15.8%
National Science Foundation	\$38,008	10.5%
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	\$32,324	8.9%
Other Non-profit Organizations	\$25,593	7.1%
Other Federal	\$8,899	2.5%
Internal	\$4,575	1.3%
State, Local, and Foreign Governments	\$912	0.2%

Source: MIT Facts 1994

M.I.T. Numbers

Freshman Enrollment 1993 vs. 1994

	<u>1993</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>Change</u>
Freshman Applications	6410	7135	725
Freshman Accepted	2140	2165	25
Freshman Enrolled	1080	1098	18
Percentage Enrolled	50%	51%	1%
Male	712	665	-47
Female	368	433	65
Percentage Women in Class	34%	39%	5%
International	84	88	4
Underrepresented Minorities	154	166	12
African American	63	73	10
Mexican American	67	60	-7
Native American	6	10	4
Puerto Rican	18	23	5
Percentage of Underrepresented Minorities	14%	15%	1%
Asian American	325	314	-11
Percentage Asian American	30%	29%	-1%
Percentage of Those Ranked Who Were Valedictorians	30%	33%	3%
Percentage of Those Ranked Who Were in Top 5%	87%	84%	-3%

Source: Office of Admissions