

From the Office of Public Relations
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139
Telephone: (617) 864-6900, Ext. 2701

FOR RELEASE TO SUNDAY PAPERS
NOVEMBER 2, 1969

Twelve faculty members and students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have been appointed by President Howard W. Johnson to a commission which will make a comprehensive study of the Institute's educational goals and policies.

Designated as the M.I.T. Commission on Education, the group will spend more than a year in a detailed examination of the Institute and will make recommendations for continuing development. In significance and scope of its task, the commission can be compared to the "Lewis Commission," which completed a similar study in 1949 and issued a report that has served as a blueprint for extensive changes at M.I.T. during the past twenty years.

"The membership of the commission combines intellectual distinction and the perspective of youth," President Johnson said. "This is appropriate, for I believe the future of the Institute lies with the responsible young members of our community. I view the commission as the catalyst of an ongoing process to develop the programs and the means by which an M.I.T. education can continue to be responsive to the times and to the needs of our society while at the same time continuing an intimate contact with the generation of new knowledge."

Members of the commission are:

Chairman, Dr. Kenneth M. Hoffman, professor of mathematics, Lexington.

Dr. Samuel W. Bodman III, associate professor of chemical engineering, Wellesley.

Dr. Daniel S. Kemp, associate professor of chemistry, Boston.

O. William Lever, Jr., graduate student, chemistry, Columbia, South Carolina.

Charles E. Mann, sophomore, chemistry, Encino, Calif.

Dr. Erik L. Mollø-Christensen, professor of meteorology, Lexington.

Marvin A. Sirbu, graduate student, electrical engineering, North Hollywood, Calif.

Dr. Louis D. Smullin, head of the Department of Electrical Engineering, Watertown.

Dr. Arthur R. Steinberg, assistant professor of history and archaeology, Cambridge.

--more--

M.I.T. Commission--2

Laurence Storch, junior, civil engineering, Maplewood, N. J.

Dr. Lester C. Thurow, associate professor of economics and management and astronautics, Lexington.

Joel Orlen, Lexington, administrative officer in the School of Science, has been appointed staff director for the commission.

The commission is expected to organize a number of task forces and panels to make special studies and will hold open hearings, seminars and other meetings to encourage the broadest possible discussion of M.I.T.'s methods and policies by faculty members, students, alumni and others. It will publish a series of papers and surveys for consideration by the entire community.

Reports on some of the studies will be made by the spring of 1970. Most of the recommendations by the commission will be made by the spring of 1971, and the final report is due by September 1971.

This week the commission went to work on a forced-draft schedule, seeking to give all faculty members and students an opportunity to present their ideas and proposals. Open hearings are being held Monday and Tuesday afternoons and all day Thursdays. The commission meets for dinner Thursday nights and its members will attend dinners at all dormitories and fraternities to solicit opinions and exchange views.

Among those who have already appeared before the commission are Dr. James R. Killian, Jr., Chairman of the M.I.T. Corporation; Dr. Jerome B. Wiesner, provost; Dr. Gordon S. Brown, former dean of the School of Engineering; Stephen C. Ehrmann, member of the student government executive committee; Dr. Francis E. Low, professor of physics; Dr. Salvador E. Luria, professor of biology who has just won the Nobel Prize; Dr. Frank Press, head of the Department of Geology and Geophysics; and Dr. Benson R. Snyder, dean for Institute relations.

President Johnson announced last April that a commission would undertake the study of M.I.T. and in June he appointed a Planning Committee, made up of eleven members of the faculty and four students, to define and make other recommendations regarding its objectives and methods. This committee, which was headed by the chairman of the faculty, Professor W. Ted Martin, held open hearings and, after intensive consideration of the task, made its report in August.

--more--

M.I.T. Commission--3

"Universities in this country are under pressure from a number of directions," the Martin committee observed in its report. "Many people are concerned about the way in which the universities have been involved with the government. Some of these same people are urging their institutions to move toward a highly complex involvement with other areas of society. Others, including many faculty members, are concerned that the university which tries to attack society's ills will lose its strength in the basic academic disciplines.

"There is widespread concern that the running campus debate on so many complex issues threatens traditional research and scholarship by disturbing the serenity which many deem essential for creative thinking. A few insist that the problems of the moment are so pressing that most other activity should stop in order to attack these problems. . .

"The intellectual issues focus on the fact that universities train the people which society wants instead of educating the people which society needs. These are quite complex issues, and the fundamental question involved is extremely significant: Are the universities going to play a significant role in pointing the way for society, or are they merely going to follow? No one disputes that universities lead intellectually in certain disciplines and that in so doing they make a deep contribution to mankind, nor is it disputed that they educate in depth in certain areas. But they are being pressed to do more--to lead intellectually and to be models for society.

"This is the major challenge for the coming decade. In the face of it, some universities may retreat to a cloistered college atmosphere, while others move out to fuse with their surrounding local communities. Each institution must respond in its own way and be very clear about what its purposes are.

"The Institute has retained over the years a more unified sense of purpose than is found in most universities. Several factors have helped to make that possible: M.I.T. is largely a scientific and technical institution; it is relatively small; there has been a consistent effort at the Institute to respond to society's needs, giving a sense of relevance to the times. Here, then, are three basic questions for the new M.I.T. Commission as it tries to identify the Institute's role in society for the next decade.

"Should M.I.T. continue to be a science-centered institution?"

"What should our plans be for overall size?"

--more--

M.I.T. Commission--4

"Should the Institute attempt in the future to undertake 'social missions' directed at (what some see as) specific needs of society, and if so, who is going to decide which missions are undertaken?"

The Mart in committee listed five broad areas which it believed the commission should explore:

1. If M.I.T. undertakes social missions, what priorities should there be and what should be the relationship of its efforts to such matters as admissions, appointment policies and growth directions?
2. The full range of educational issues should be considered--curriculum, methods, the relationship of graduate to undergraduate programs, professionalism, etc.
3. Preservation of rights and opportunities for the individual.
4. Research--its scale, directions and relation to education.
5. Administration and governance--whether there should be decentralization of administrative responsibilities or other organizational changes involving the Corporation, faculty, students, etc.

The Lewis Commission, officially the Committee on Educational Survey, was so called because its chairman was Dr. Warren K. Lewis, for many years head of the Department of Chemical Engineering and one of the most influential educators in M.I.T.'s history. Perhaps most important among its many recommendations was its proposal that M.I.T.'s educational mission should be broadened and that a School of Humanities and Social Science be established.

The school was formally organized in 1951 and its faculty now is as large and distinguished as the entire faculty of some leading liberal arts colleges. It has departments of Humanities, Economics, Political Science and Psychology, all recognized for their excellence.