



Graduate Advising Update

Objective:

- 1) To have departments significantly improve their graduate student advising.
- 2) To have Visiting Committees hold departments accountable for these improvements.

Background:

In 2001, the Graduate Student Council (GSC) and CJAC prepared a series of recommendations regarding improving graduate student advising at MIT. This was derived from a survey based on responses of graduate administrators and GSC student representatives. In 2004-2005, a formal survey of all graduate students was conducted by the GSC and Institutional Research Office. This culminated in the most detailed analysis of data to date regarding graduate advising at MIT and a series of recommendations were put forth by the GSC. These results were presented and discussed in several forums:

- 1) February 22, 2005: Town Hall presentation (campus-wide)
- 2) March 16, 2005: Faculty Meeting presentation
- 3) May 2, 2005: Department Heads luncheon

At the faculty meeting (03/16/2005), then Provost Robert Brown praised the initiative. He asked departments to follow up with the recommendations and use them to improve advising. Data specific to individual departments were made available to each department through the Institutional Research Office. An article by then GSC President Barun Singh was published in the March/April 2005 Faculty Newsletter summarizing the findings. Additional supporting material is available on the GSC website.

What departments are supposed to do:

- 1) Review their department-specific data with students to address short term concerns
- 2) Devise a long-term plan to improve advising

What we want to see:

We would like Visiting Committees (VC) to find out what departments have already done regarding advising improvement. Furthermore, the VCs should be required to set up a feedback mechanism holding the departments accountable for the recommendations. (The Visiting Committee for Sponsored Research Programs discussed advising with students in November 2005 and was sent the town hall presentation of 02/22/2005 after their meeting.)

Action items:

- 1) Educate each VC and its chair with advising presentation and summary material
- 2) VCs need to ask both department chair and students what has already been accomplished
- 3) VCs need to formulate an action plan with the department which includes a timeline
- 4) VCs should report back to the Corporation, Provost, and Chair of the Faculty after visit
- 5) Department chair should report back on subsequent progress to the Provost and Chair of the Faculty within six months of VC visit