

The New York Times

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October 1, 1981

M.I.T. FACULTY BACKS RESEARCH INSTITUTE OFFER

By FOX BUTTERFIELD, Special to the New York Times

CAMBRIDGE, Mass., Sept. 30— Faculty members generally agreed today that the Massachusetts Institute of Technology should accept an industrialist's offer of \$7.5 million, and with it a new \$120 million independent institute for biomedical research, whose scientists would become professors at M.I.T.

Faculty members and administrators here said they believed it was the first time a university had allowed an outside body to share in the appointment of its faculty. Professors and members of the administration have negotiated for months with the donor, Edwin C. Whitehead of Greenwich, Conn., to set up safeguards against financial imbalances and against erosion of the faculty's power to appoint its own members.

The faculty was given an opportunity to debate Mr. Whitehead's proposal at a two-hour meeting today. No vote was taken, but professors and administrators who attended said a majority of the professors had supported it, though with reservations. A final decision is up to the M.I.T. board of trustees, which holds its next meeting Friday and is expected to approve the plan eventually.

David Baltimore, a Nobel laureate in medicine who would be director of the institute, stressed in an interview today that the most important feature of Mr. Whitehead's gift is that it will help M.I.T. continue to grow at a time when Federal financing for education is decreasing and becoming less reliable.

"I think it's a very appropriate thing for universities to expand by establishing independent entities that can operate on their own bottom and don't put universities further and further at the jeopardy of the Government," said Dr. Baltimore, who is currently American

Cancer Society Professor of Microbiology at M.I.T. Some professors have expressed concern that the new organization, to be called the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research, would have too much authority over the selection of professors at M.I.T. They are also worried that the vast endowment of the institute, eventually to reach \$100 million, would create imbalances and jealousies in the university's biology department.

Mr. Whitehead's proposal has several parts. He would make an outright gift of \$7.5 million to M.I.T., which the university would add to funds for the biology department. In exchange, the university would allow the new institute to appoint 20 senior staff members to the M.I.T. faculty as professors in the biology department.

Mr. Whitehead would also donate \$20 million to buy land for and build the institute on a site next to the M.I.T. campus in Cambridge. In addition, Mr. Whitehead would set up a trust that would earn an income of \$5 million a year for the institute, to be converted into an endowment of \$100 million at his death.

Sheldon Penman, a professor in the biology department who is the most outspoken critic of Mr. Whitehead's offer, said in an interview today, "This plan threatens to change the nature of higher education. It promises to open the door to people coming in with a lot of money to throw around."

"We lose control over our faculty appointments, we lose control over our graduate students, we lose control over the direction of our research," Professor Penman asserted. "They will set up a twotiered faculty, with one group heavily endowed. In return, we in the biology department get nothing. I think some people are bedazzled by all that money."

Safeguards in the Proposal

But Dr. Baltimore said, "I do not believe there will be a conflict between the institute and the university." He noted that the institute would only appoint 20 professors, "not an overwhelming fraction" of the biology department, which now has 40 members.

He also asserted that, after 14 months of negotiations with Mr. Whitehead, there are now a number of safeguards in the proposal. For one thing, the director of the institute will always come from the M.I.T. faculty. For another, Dr. Baltimore said, he would begin by appointing several present members of the M.I.T. biology department to the institute "just to guarantee the role of the biology department and its traditions."

M.I.T. would also have a say in selecting seven of the institute's 14 trustees, who would include three of Mr. Whitehead's children but not Mr. Whitehead himself. The chairman of the board of trustees would be Dr. John C. Sawhill, the former chancellor of New York University who was picked by Mr. Whitehead. One of M.I.T.'s appointees would be Jerome B. Weisner, the former president of the university who was science adviser to President Kennedy.

Mr. Whitehead, a 62-year-old native of New York, last year sold a company he founded with his father in 1939, Technicon Inc., to Revlon Inc. for \$400 million in stock and cash. The sale made him Revlon's largest single shareholder.

Technicon is one of the leading manufacturers of scientific instruments for automatic analysis of blood, serum, food, drugs and water pollutants. Disclaimer on Connection

Mr. Whitehead currently runs Whitehead Associates, a concern in Greenwich that specializes in investing in new concerns in the bioengineering field.

He said in a telephone interview that "there won't be any connection at all" between the new institute and either Whitehead Associates or Revlon, which now earns a large proportion of its income from biomedical sales. "This is a purely philanthropic activity in every sense of the word," he added.

"Any profits the institute earns from its work go to the institute," Mr. Whitehead stated. According to a spokesman for M.I.T., the Whitehead Institute would be noncommercial and would follow the university's own policy on patents, licensing private businesses to use the results of its research on a nonexclusive basis.

Dr. Baltimore explained that the idea for affiliating the research institute to M.I.T. had originated with him rather than Mr. Whitehead.

"I believe very strongly that unless a research institute is tied very closely to a university, it won't be as good," Dr. Baltimore said.

Dr. Baltimore said that "good scientists like to teach, to have students to direct," and that there was "a greater stability of judgment" in universities than pure research institutes.

The Whitehead Institute would concentrate on research in molecular genetics, or developmental biology at the cell level, the most glamorous new field in science.

Illustrations: Photo of Edwin C. Whitehead (Page A23)

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