"I would have assumed that contacting the admissions office would be nagging at best and an attempt at cheating at worst."

Alexandra Patz
Boston, MA

Marilee Jones, dean of admissions, responds: It is mid-May before we know if we need to go to the wait list and for how many students. We have six weeks before we must cancel the wait list by the rules of our professional organization. Waitlisted students who have sent their deposits to other schools become more bonded with those schools as each week goes by and are less likely to accept our late offer of admission. We've learned that we are more likely to enroll waitlisted students who have maintained contact with our office and are relentless in their desire to be admitted to MIT.

"Who gets in" was extremely interesting. I have been reading quite a bit recently about college admissions and financial-aid decisions, and I was intrigued to see how MIT's process compared with other schools.

Doesn't it seem odd to claim that "No one...is given preferential treatment in the selection process. Even...'legacies'...are judged purely on merit" and then mention that "Jones personally reviews every legacy file?" Surely that second look is preferential treatment. That second look is a chance for review that nonlegacy students don't get.

Aneel Nazareth '98
San Francisco, CA

Jones responds: I review the applications of all children/grandchildren of alumni who were initially denied by the admissions committee. I change very few decisions. Sometimes, however, I do make a change, just as I make changes as appropriate when we review all final decisions within the high-school contexts of all applicants and I find cases where we admitted someone less suited for MIT than another. This is the final step in the selection process and the alumni cases are folded in. I use the same standard for everyone, including legacies.

My brother-in-law, class of '85 from Bowdoin College, claims that he decided not to pursue his application to MIT because, after an otherwise lackluster interview, he was asked, "are any of your relatives affiliated with MIT?" The correct answer, which he gave, was, "Yes, my maternal grandfather is Herbert Beckwith," who was a well-known professor of Course IV.

I contend that he should have continued the process anyway, but his ethic/pride drove him to withdraw the application. He ended up going to the college his own father, uncles, and paternal grandfather attended. Odd how such things play out.

G. Del Merritt '82
Damariscotta, ME

DREAM GADGETS

Some of the items on Kevin Carroll's wish list (Alumni Letters, November 2003) are already commercially available. There are a number of voice-activated systems (the X-10 carrier-current system comes to mind) that allow the control of lights, radio, television, etc., with a simple voice command. With a little MIT ingenuity, I'm sure the system could be adapted to open a door or do other things.

Harry Wolf, SM '78
Winchester, MA