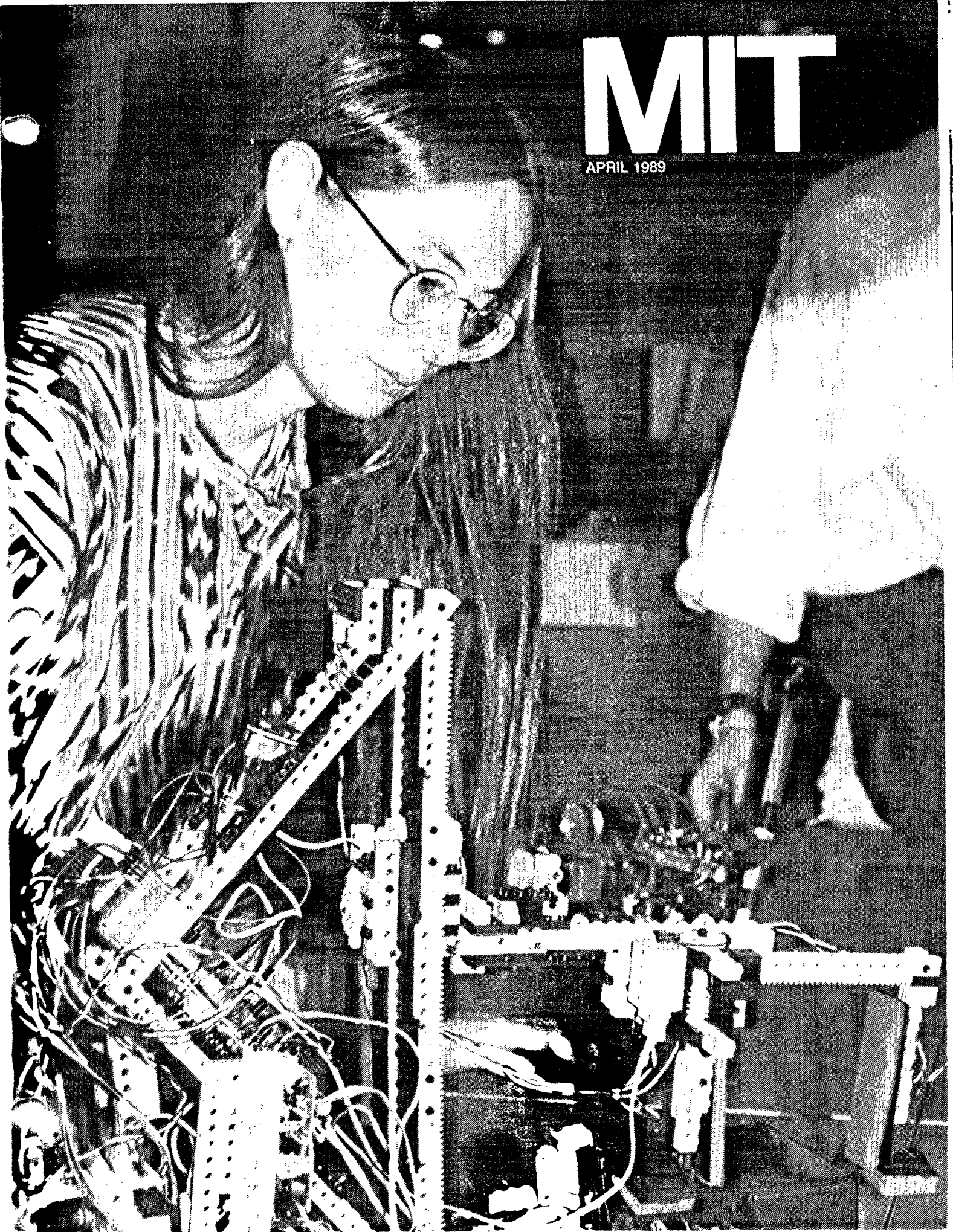


# MIT

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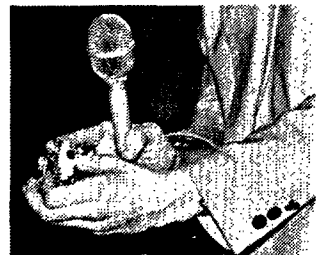
Sewell P. Bronstein  
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Left: Michael Travers, '86, a graduate student at the Media Lab, holds "horton," the robot he built with Ian Horswill, SM '88, a grad student at the AI Lab. Horton walks around the room looking for somebody to listen to it. When it finds someone, it does a little dance and waits for applause.

Below: The AI Lab's "Robot Talent Show" organizer Anita Flynn, '83, holds her 1.2 cubic inch entry. The robot includes a microprocessor, power supply, light sensor, and a microspeaker. It will (among other things) search out light sources and chirp; when the light is turned off, the robot runs away.



portant to understand exactly what, if anything, is happening to student performance.

So the latest of a long history of studies of admissions policy is being carried out under the aegis of the Committee on Undergraduate Admissions and Financial Aid (CUAFA), chaired by Associate Professor of Civil Engineering Keith Stolzenbach, '66. One of the first things that Stolzenbach did was to extend French's report back to 1962. Although there has been a decline since the 1967-68 (post-Sputnik) high-water mark in average scores on standardized admissions

tests in math and physics, Stolzenbach found that the average freshman in 1987 did better on standardized tests than his or her 1962 counterpart.

Since last summer, CUAFA has conducted an exhaustive survey of faculty information on student performance, tapped the knowledge of present and former admissions directors, looked at all the steps in creating admissions policy and applying it to the evaluation of individual applicants, and scoured all the sources of relevant data—going as far back as the 1950s.

At the same time, CUAFA is encouraging faculty to be

come more involved in admissions. To help the faculty understand the process, the admissions staff invited them to attend a simulation of an admissions decision session. "If I had my way," says Stolzenbach, "every faculty member would come to one of these sessions." At the same time, admissions staff are attending regular MIT classes to gain firsthand understanding of what it is that they are admitting students to.

What's more, Stolzenbach reports, CUAFA wrote to every academic department asking for the names of their "best" students of the past five years and some information on

why those students are considered the best. The committee then studied the admissions applications of those students, looking for relationships that can be identified in an application and the qualities later found to be outstanding.

This impressively thorough effort will be summarized and reported to the faculty sometime this spring.

"Admissions policy is one way that MIT defines itself," Stolzenbach says, "yet there is almost no community-wide discussion of admissions issues." His committee hopes that this report will change all that.—Susan Lewis □