

## MEMORANDUM

July 7, 1977

13p

TO: AA/TA, Curtis Farrar

FROM: TA/II, Anthony Schwarzwald

SUBJECT: Your meeting with Dr. Eugene B. Skolnikoff <sup>last</sup> ~~Frank~~  
Regarding AID's 211(d) Grant to M.I.T.

Problem: Dr. Eugene B. Skolnikoff, Director, Center for International Studies and Professor of Political Science at M.I.T. wants to discuss AID intention to terminate our 211(d) grant.

Background: On July 11, 1974 the Agency's only 211(d) grant in the field of nutrition was signed with M.I.T. to support its program in International Nutrition Planning (I.N.P.). The grant was to run for five years. Formal Agency review of MIT's progress in implementing the grant included negotiation in early 1976 of a workplan for Years III and IV and two site visits by Mr. Rudel in February and May of 1977. (See Tabs A through D). As a result of the site visits, termination was recommended and MIT was advised of our belief that "... the goals envisioned when the Grant was executed will not be achieved" (Tab E.) A memorandum from Mr. Barker highlights some points which he feels might not have been given full consideration (Tab F).

Discussion: I believe the following points summarize our concern about the progress of the Grant (now more than three years old) and the main reasons which led to the recommendation to formally consider termination. You may wish to use them during your discussion with Dr. Skolnikoff.

- Lack of leadership. The INP has not had a Director for more than a year. Dr. Scribshaw has acted in that capacity but, as an internationally noted nutritionist, the demands upon his time have been too great to permit him to give much attention to the INP program.
- Lack of commitment to an applied policy orientation. Students and advanced study fellows feel adrift, lacking in guidance and out of touch with practitioners in the field. Many of the staff members who could ease the situation have left.

- lack of broad institutional support. The INP most depend upon the active involvement of faculty from a number of departments. Apparently, this has not been the case and, in the case of the Department of Nutrition and Food Science, negativism and skepticism about the INP program has been registered.
- lack of additional funding. To our knowledge, the program has generated no new funds in the past 18 months. This would appear to reflect both inadequate MIT initiatives and a credibility problem with potential donors such as FAO and the World Bank. It also calls into question the possibility that the INP could be a self sustaining operation at the end of the grant period (less than two years from now).
- lack of progress in meeting specific objectives outlined in the original 211(d) grant agreement and the Work Plan for Years III and IV. Tab d contains a review of progress to date in meeting what we have considered to be the most important provisions of these documents. Should Dr. Skolnikoff wish to discuss the grant in detail, you may wish to draw upon this list.

In summary, the apparent conclusion of those who have had close association with the program is that MIT's actions to date have reflected a general lack of commitment to the concepts which we feel are important. Recent examples of this include: (a) a decision not to admit new students into the program during the coming year, (b) serious discussion of returning the existing students to their respective departments and limiting the program to research only, (c) failure to establish an agreed upon Masters program in Nutrition Planning and (d) the inability to attract and retain staff whose central concerns are with issues of nutrition policy and its application.

TA/H:ASchwarzwalder:ses:7/7/77

Clearance:AA/TA, C. Barker (draft)

Review of Progress of MIT's INP Program in Meeting Targets  
Specified in Original Grant Agreement and Work Plan for  
Years III and IV

Original Grant Agreement

I. Development of an adaptive research capacity (page 8)

Two research needs were given highest priority:

-- Studies of Malnutrition Causality. Research in this area was pursued until mid-1975 using 211(d) funds. The Work-plan indicated that this research would be continued and completed. To our knowledge, no work has been done in this area since mid-1975.

-- Cost effectiveness studies of alternative nutrition interventions. MIT was involved in a project in 1973 to design a research project in this area; however, they did not respond to an INP for the project itself which was issued in 1976. We are not aware of other research being done in this area.

Five other priority areas were identified:

-- Practical means of determining nutritional status. Some research has been undertaken at MIT in micro methods of assaying serum vitamin A in the blood but it was not related to the INP program. INP program involvement in this area has been minimal.

-- Empirical determination of nutrition program benefits. We are aware of no INP research in this area.

-- Determining the nutritional effects of income and price change. Research has been pursued in this area in connection with the INP-Pakistan project.

-- Operational relationships among nutrition, population, MCH and sanitation. To our knowledge, no INP research has been undertaken.

-- Study of food policies of food exporting nations. Work in this area has been carried out under a grant from the National Science Foundation which is now being concluded. MIT has expressed

interest in an AID-funded study of subsidized consumption and submitted a proposal for such a project.

Other objectives identified under I were as follows:

-- Multidisciplinary Planning Studies (page 9). Studies in connection with the Pakistan project have involved the first of the three steps identified on page 10 only.

-- Development of a data base (page 11). Data has been collected on Pakistan and, to a more limited degree, on Latin America. However, there has not been a systematic effort to develop a broad data base or an information collection system oriented toward determination of effective approaches.

-- Publications (page 11). Since commencement of the grant, there have been no further publications of the Cornell-MIT International Nutrition Policy Series, although some reportedly are in progress.

In summary, there is only limited evidence that objective I has been met or could be expected to be met within the period of the grant.

## II. Development of educational and training capacities (page 13)

The success in program planning and implementation was recognized to depend in part on the existence of personnel with training and experience relevant to malnutrition problem solving in LDCs. Three areas of concern were identified:

-- Graduate Study. MIT has continued to pursue the approach outlined in the Grant Agreement which does emphasize strong disciplinary grounding in malnutrition. However, only limited course work in the core nutrition planning has been provided. In the spring of 1976 T/II indicated its concern about this; however the number of core nutrition planning courses decreased in the 1976-77 academic year. Other recent developments of concern to us have been: (a) the loss of faculty and staff capable of teaching the core course, (b) a decline in the number of students associated with the IIP, (c) the small number of LDC graduate students in the program, (d) reported student concern about the quality of the teaching, the lack of practical relevance and the lack of guidance from faculty, (e) the decision not to admit new students this coming year and (f) to our knowledge, no exchange of personnel with other institutions has taken place as envisioned in page 14.

Advanced Study Program. There has been serious discontent with this program. Advanced Study Fellows during the past year have complained about lack of attention, guidance or any serious effort to tailor make programs for their needs. One Regional Bureau has gone on record as having serious reservations about sending any more representatives from their countries to the program.

Short Term Workshops (page 16). The INP program held a major series of nutrition planning workshops for AID until the spring of 1976. The INP program is involved in an MIT nutrition workshop this summer and will be involved in training as part of its Pakistan project. Apparently, we have experienced some difficulty in involving MIT in overseas workshops during 1977 although Dr. Scribshaw had expressed interest in a 1978 workshop in Indonesia.

In summary, experience with objective II has been generally unsatisfactory and to a great extent due to institutional problems which cannot be rapidly overcome.

### III. Development of an Advisory Capacity (page 17)

The record on implementation of this objective has been as follows:

-- Pakistan. The MIT contract in Pakistan has been well received; however the large majority of project inputs (the full time advisor and most of the short term consultants) was provided by people who were not full time members of the MIT staff.

-- Other countries. MIT has not bid on other AID overseas contracts in nutrition planning during the past two years (there have been two in Bolivia, one in Morocco and one in Zaire). Thus, only limited progress has been made toward implementation of Objective III and only limited evidence shown of interest in this area.

### IV. Establishment of a Network of Linkages (page 18)

Contracts to date have included:

- Preliminary discussions with Meharry Medical.
- Two joint research projects with Harvard.

In summary, we are not aware of any real efforts which have been made to establish a network along the lines described in the Grant. There have been no institutional linkages with LDC institutions directly involving the INP program.

Workplan for Years III and IV

The major addition contained in this workplan was an agreement reached at the 18 month review to establish a Masters program. Page 11 of the workplan indicates MIT's willingness to:

- place greater emphasis on programs leading to a Masters degree.
- modify the existing Masters degree in Human Nutrition to adapt it more closely to IHP needs.
- develop a comparable program in the Political Science Department for the 1977-78 academic year.
- explore the possibility of a non-department or inter-departmental Masters program in nutrition planning during the summer of 1976 and offer such a program by September 1978.

Other objectives specified in the workplan were:

- two short term advisory service activities a year.
- bringing together senior personnel of various institutions in January 1977.
- completing the study of malnutrition causality. To date, as far as we know, these targets have not been met.

MEMORANDUM

May 19, 1977

TO: FILES

FROM: LUDWIG RUDEL

SUBJECT: TRIP TO M.I.T. TO REVIEW 211D GRANT (MAY 4-5, 1977)

My visit to the International Nutrition Planning Program at M.I.T. had, as its purpose, a follow-up to my visit in February, 1977 (see my field report dated February 15, 1977) and to determine whether any action had been taken by M.I.T. with respect to the recommendations made during the earlier visit. The Office of Nutrition had received reports during that intervening period, indicating that things had not improved in any material manner, that the students in the program felt leaderless and that both faculty and students were experiencing a degree of uncertainty, with respect to the program's future. Specific complaints had reached us from two Moroccan students enrolled in the Advance Studies Program concerning the lack of guidance provided them with respect to program selection and course selection and with respect to the cancellation of courses which had been offered in the original program description. We had also experienced difficulties in getting M.I.T. to involve itself in work which was supportive to the practitioners in nutrition planning, such as a development of a workshop in the Philippines.

This marks the end of the third year of a five year 211d grant. It became clear during the discussions that M.I.T. was reluctant to recruit the needed faculty for the nutrition planning program because of the limited funds available to finance the program for the remaining two years. After some discussion, I urged them to increase their expenditure rate in the hope that this would permit them to develop their capabilities by the end of the fourth year whereas, continuation of the program at its present level would assure that its institutional capabilities would not be developed adequately at the end of the fifth year.

My conversation with other students in the special Advance Studies Program confirmed the statements by the Moroccans. A student from Colombia who had spent three years in Colombia working in nutrition planning, complained bitterly that he could have been better utilized by M.I.T. for seminars, but was left to his own devices to find programs and courses among those offered at M.I.T. and Harvard.

I had previously raised our concern that M.I.T.'s work at the International Nutrition Planning Program did not appear to be related and supportive of the research and training requirements of the practitioners. For example, INP had committed itself to initiate an inter-disciplinary masters program next year. Research undertaken by graduates, in most instances, did not appear to be closely related to the research needs of the operating agencies. There were indications that there had been a change in M.I.T.'s intention to develop an institution in accordance with the guidelines described in the A.I.D. Grant Agreement.

During the two day visit, I met with many of the students and had individual conversations with Professors Scrimshaw, Skolnikoff, Eekaus, Taylor, Milner and Desmond McCarthy, I also spent a half hour with the Provost, Dr. Rosenblith and casually explained by concepts to him. These concerns dealt with (a) the permanence of the institution in terms of its staff, course offerings and linkages with other institutions; (b) the absence of commitment to an inter-disciplinary approach to nutrition problem solving; (c) the inadequacy of guidance to foreign students enrolled in the Advance Studies Program; (d) the limited number of foreign students enrolled in the program; (e) the lack of participation in such activities as multi-sectoral nutrition planning workshops.

I suggested that funding shortages are leading the INP Program to resist taking those actions that are needed to develop an institutional capability and ask whether M.I.T. would be willing to make available additional funding of, let us say, \$100,000 to permit INP to fulfill its commitment under the 211d grant.

I also suggested that it would help M.I.T. if its graduate students were encouraged to be placed in summer internship programs with the World Bank, FAO, the World Food Council and A.I.D., so that they can get themselves involved in the operational programs of these agencies and feedback to M.I.T. information concerning the areas of interest and opportunities for further involvement by M.I.T.

Dr. Scrimshaw indicated that he was seriously considering offering a faculty position to either Claudio Schuftan or Giorgio Salimano. I strongly encouraged him to do this.

It is my assessment that the continuation of the INP Program in its fourth year, as it has proceeded its third year, will lead to its disbandment. I urged M.I.T. to take such actions within the next three months, as is necessary, to revitalize the program. Dr. Skolnikoff explained that it was his view that the INP Program should be modified and made into a Research Center. Out of the Research Center's work, material would be developed which would eventually form the basis for study and training opportunities. I asked what

the immediate implications would be for such a shift and whether this would reduce the INP's capability in the area of training. The response was that the INP Program was not offering any specific courses on its own in any case, and that students enrolled in the program were simply focused on nutrition planning while the courses taken by them were offered by specific departments. I asked for a full explanation of this approach in writing after he had an opportunity to develop it and discuss it with the Advisory Committee.

There is some evidence that my visit has generated some attention and action on the part of M.I.T. During the past three days: (a) I have received a letter from Max Milner asking us to work out a summer internship program for one of their students to work in the Africa Bureau or with the Office of Nutrition; (b) Dr. Desmond McCarthy visited A.I.D. to discuss the possibility of his participation in the work being commissioned by us with ODC on consumption effects on agricultural policies; (c) we have received a letter from Dr. Scrimshaw proposing that M.I.T., in collaboration with Harvard, begin work now to organize a multi-sectoral nutrition planning workshop in Indonesia in January, 1978, and to begin work on several other workshops in other countries to be held subsequent to the Indonesia workshop.

Of the several possible courses of action available to us (termination of the grant; re-direction of the grant; provision of additional financing to sustain the operation), I vote in favor of continuation of the grant and our sympathetic consideration of sensible proposals made by M.I.T. which would be supportive of the initial objectives of the grant. I believe any effort to re-direct the focus of the program or to terminate the program would have unfortunate consequences. Such a suggestion would add to the sense of uncertainty among students and faculty alike and would doubtless be resisted strongly by M.I.T. Indeed, it might be used as a pretext by M.I.T. to throw in the sponge, blaming A.I.D. for precipitating such an action.

I would like to give M.I.T. an opportunity during the next six months to resolve the problems presented to them during my past two visits. We should encourage them to do so by acting favorably, where we can, to additional proposals made by them such as those cited above. We should also schedule another review for January, 1978.

MEMORANDUM

February 15, 1977

TO: FILES (M.I.T.)

FROM: LUDWIG RUDEL

SUBJECT: CONSULTATIONS AT M.I.T. CONCERNING 211(d) GRANT FOR  
INTERNATIONAL NUTRITION PLANNING PROGRAM

I visited the M.I.T. campus on February 8th and 9th in my capacity as monitor of the 211(d) grant. During that two day period I met with Professors Scrimshaw and Skolnikoff, Chairman of the Advisory Board of the INP program. I had lengthy discussions with Max Hilner and Lance Taylor as well as with the following Ph.D. candidates: Anita Bromley, Mitchell Malerstein, Richard Lockwood, Mitchell Gersovitz, Bill Hetsel and David Pyle.

I also met with John Field and additionally I attended a meeting of the full INP Advisory Board. (A list of the Board members is attached to this memorandum. All members except Prof. Richard Eckhaus attended the meeting.

The five year grant is now midway in its third year. It was established to address specifically the critical problems of malnutrition in low income countries through effective multidisciplinary planning. A more comprehensive description of the program is contained in Attachment A (Program Description for AID 211(d) Review Meeting, December 15-16, 1975).

AID reviewed the INP program in early 1976. Subsequent to that review, Dr. F. James Levinson, the director of the program, resigned. A search for a replacement did not yield a candidate that was acceptable and willing to take the position. Consequently Prof. Nevin Scrimshaw has taken responsibility for leadership.

AID's interest in the conduct of the 211(d) grant is to insure that the institutional development which was contemplated when the grant was approved will, in fact, take place and that upon completion of the five year period and the exhaustion of the funding there will be established a center of excellence which will be recognized as having a capability to contribute to the problem solving in the field of international nutrition planning. At worst, if at the end of the period of the grant the institution has not taken root and has secured funding for its

continuation from other sources, it is likely that the program will be abandoned and there will be little, if anything, to show for the five year effort except for the training which will have been provided in the course of the five year period to graduate students at M.I.T.

In every discussion held during my visit there was a clear recognition of an obligation to create an international nutrition planning institute which would continue successfully to meet its mandate after the grant funding by AID was completed. M.I.T.'s goal is to gain recognition for itself among the nutrition community as an authoritative problem solver who could be called on by the practitioners to perform research which would answer questions which the practitioners need to have answered, to perform assessments of problems concerning malnutrition and to offer advice and assistance in resolving those problems. While M.I.T.'s faculty recognizes that they have not achieved such recognition as yet, they also indicate that there is no other institution in the United States at this time that enjoys a better standing than they do.

The conflict between the conduct of unidisciplinary and esoteric research on the one hand, and operational involvement to provide technical advice and assistance in developing countries on the other, still manifests itself at this institution. While there is recognition by M.I.T. of the desirability to involve itself closely with the practitioners, there is the persistent reluctance to take on an operational role before the necessary research has been completed to guide them in that role. Priority is given to scholarship and the publication of technically sound research which all too often tends to be unidisciplinary, but it is my view that a gradual shift in this approach is likely to occur in the foreseeable future. There is already evidence that the student body, including M.D. candidates, consider problems of malnutrition in the developing countries to be multidisciplinary and recognize that the solution to these problems must also take on a multidisciplinary character. This outlook is less evident among the faculty although some indication of recognition is also manifested there. It is probably absent on the part of M.I.T.'s administration. The fact is that universities are organized along disciplinary lines. A new multidisciplinary field such as nutrition planning, has an uphill fight to establish itself within a university setting.

The M.I.T. administrations' orientation towards unidisciplinary lines affects the selection of faculty and the orientation of the courses. A continued effort should be made by AID to encourage M.I.T. to depart from the traditional pattern of faculty selection and course orientation in favor of a multidisciplinary approach. While there is no question

that the Ph.D. candidate should continue to major in one of the traditional disciplines and minor in international nutrition planning, this requirement does not seem appropriate for the M.A. candidate and M.I.T. should be encouraged to establish a special M.A. program in international nutrition planning. This program was agreed to by M.I.T. during the review with AID that took place in January 1976.

The 211(d) grant funding will probably not finance the needed effort for the full five year period through June 1979. For this reason the director, Kevin Scrimshaw, is making every effort to secure additional financing to supplement the 211(d) grant to meet the requirements for the last two and one half years of the grant. If successful, this will reduce dependence of the institute on AID financing.

Discussions with the students indicated that the recent change of leadership caused something of a hiatus since the departure of Jim Levinson and has impeded the momentum of their work. Dr. Scrimshaw has many claims on his time because of his prominence and involvement in many other international programs. The leadership role for the IHP program is so demanding that it is unreasonable to expect him to meet these obligations, given the other demands made on him. His inaccessibility and his many prolonged absences were called to my attention by the students in virtually every discussion I had.

The students also indicated a concern for the absence of clearly defined goals to indicate precisely what is expected of them and what sort of job opportunities would be available to them upon completion of their work. They felt somewhat adrift and terribly uncertain concerning an understanding of what is really required of them. They also felt somewhat at odds from the world of the practitioners. They wanted some means of tying together with the work of AID, the World Bank, FAO and other institutions engaged in applied research and practical application of nutrition planning in the developing countries so that they would better understand the way the world of nutrition is moving.

During my discussions it became clear that I had not devoted sufficient attention during the past 6 months to M.I.T.'s problems. A proposal by M.I.T. to undertake a study of subsidized consumption systems in LDC's was deferred by me pending some programming decisions affecting TA/II. This created some resentment at M.I.T. I assured them that we would now involve them in the proposed research programs dealing with consumption effects of agricultural policies although decisions with respect to work assignments will rest with the Overseas Development Council.

On the basis of my consultations at M.I.T. I would hope that the following actions would be taken:

1. That the INP program become more operationally involved with the practitioners by participating in country specific technical assistance programs and by undertaking research, consistent with or responsive to the research needs as identified by the operating agencies. They should also make an effort to place their graduate students into summer internship programs at AID, the World Bank, FAO, etc.
2. That M.I.T. continue to see a full time director for the INP program since it is questionable whether Dr. Scrimshaw can be expected to provide the necessary inputs to make the program succeed, given his other responsibilities.
3. That they recruit additional staff for the faculty of the INP program and that such recruitment depart from the rigidities of the traditional disciplinary requirements. I specifically suggested that Dr. Claudio Schuftan might be an excellent addition to their faculty.
4. That they establish the special Master Degree program in international nutrition planning on a multidisciplinary basis.
5. That the research undertaken by the faculty and students of the INP program be operationally oriented to meet the current day's needs.
6. It may also be desirable for the advisory board to be expanded to include outside representatives from the nutrition community in order to facilitate a more multidisciplinary orientation for the program.
7. Efforts should be made to place M.I.T. graduate students in short term internship assignments with AID, the World Bank, FAO and other institutions engaged in operational nutrition programs.