



MIT schools launch diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives

MIT to release final version of first DEI plan February or March 2021

By Daisy Wang and Kerri Lu
STAFF REPORTERS

MIT is drafting its first diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) plan and intends to release a final version by February or March 2021, Institute Community and Equity Officer John Dozier said in an interview with *The Tech*.

Dozier said that MIT has had a long history with keeping DEI in mind at all levels of decision making.

The plan, in effect for the next five years, focuses on many aspects of DEI, including research into the various identities of students, staff, postdocs, and faculty; addressing challenges of equity and disparities in outcome; and engagement with the wider community to help everyone understand each other's differences, Dozier said. Community feedback can be submitted through the plan's website.

Melissa Nobles, dean of the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (SHASS), wrote in an

email to *The Tech* that DEI "has always been a priority for the School, both with internal decisions and efforts to share expertise." Each academic unit is asked to ensure that diversity plays a key role in its overall strategy.

MIT is "fortunate" to have faculty who are "some of the leading scholars on these subjects," Nobles wrote, adding that these faculty members guide students by teaching and contributing to public discourse through their research and writing.

Nobles wrote that "given recent events," several SHASS departments have "initiated both critical examinations of current curriculum and explorations of new research projects in order to broaden and deepen the study of these subjects."

Lori LoTurco, director of communications for the School of Engineering (SoE), wrote in an email to *The Tech* that an SoE DEI Committee, formed in September and

DEI, Page 2



NATHAN LIANG — THE TECH

Fall foliage lands on the grass surrounding the student center as Thanksgiving vacation nears.

IAP grading to be A, B, C, D/NE, F/NE, without PE/NE option

Sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students will receive A, B, C, D/NE, and F/NE grades on Independent Activities Period (IAP) subjects. Unlike in the fall term, students will not be able to have a subject graded on PE/NE.

Rick Danheiser, chair of the faculty and the Academic Policy and Regulations Team, wrote in an email to the MIT community Nov. 16 that the fall term PE/NE option was "introduced to address stress during the fall semester when students are registering for a full complement of classes" but "is not necessary in

IAP when students are limited to 12 units of subjects for credit."

However, juniors, seniors, and graduate students will be able to use the regular junior, senior, and graduate P/D/F grading options during IAP. First years will receive P/NR grades in IAP, as in previous years.

All IAP classes will be conducted remotely.

As in the fall, grades of NE will not appear on students' external transcripts, but students assigned a D grade may choose to accept the grade to fulfill a graduation requirement.

— Kerri Lu

IN SHORT

Building placements for Spring 2021 will be shared with undergraduates Nov. 20. **The building switch lottery application** will be open Nov. 20–Dec. 10.

Students currently living on campus are expected to move out by Nov. 22 at 12:00 p.m. unless they have been granted a pre-approved extension.

Thanksgiving vacation will take place from Nov. 21–Nov. 29.

The last day to drop a half-term subject offered in the second half of the term is Nov. 30.

Pre-registration for the spring and IAP begins Dec. 1.

Undergraduate **registration for IAP physical education** classes opens Dec. 2.

Interested in **joining *The Tech***? Email join@tech.mit.edu.

Send news and tips to news@tech.mit.edu.

Students returning to their Spring 2020 dorms given lottery priority

Former Burton Conner or fraternity, sorority, or independent living group residents to be given second priority in housing assignments; all assignments to be released by Nov. 20

By Nicole Chan

Housing and Residential Services (HRS) will prioritize spring dorm placements for students who prefer to return to the dorm they lived in during Spring 2020. Students who lived in Burton Conner or a fraternity, sorority, or independent living group (FSILG) in Spring 2020 will have second priority. Housing assignments will be released by the end of November.

All students living on campus next semester, including first-year students, were allowed to choose "staple groups" of up to eight students in their dorm assignment preferences. Staple groups differ from pods, which are groups of up to six students living in the same dorm who may interact with each other without social distancing.

Director of House Operations Rich Hilton wrote in a Nov. 6 email to undergraduates that staple groups are "guaranteed placement in the same building together" and "may be formed regardless of class year."

Hilton wrote in an email to *The Tech* that dorm assignment priority

will be given to individuals or staple groups in which over 50% of group members are seeking to return to the dorm they lived in during Spring 2020.

Dormitory Council (DormCon) Housing Chair Emily Caragay '22 wrote in an email to *The Tech* that second priority will be given to Burton Conner and FSILG residents, and third priority will be given to students who lived off-campus as of March 2020.

"First years whose groups do not fall into the above categories will be placed last in this priority order, reflective of a standard semester," Caragay wrote. "Additionally, a portion of each dorm will be set aside for first-years, to guarantee every dorm receives some first-years."

Hilton wrote that HRS is working to "balance the density and distribution of residents, including first years, across all ten houses (including New Vassar)."

DormCon President Sarah Edwards '21 wrote in an email to *The Tech* that DormCon advocated for first years to have staple groups after hearing from "a number of

first years" that stapling with other students was "really important to them."

DormCon has been "working closely with MIT Housing to ensure that the housing application, timeline, and assignment process is as tailored to student needs as possible," Edwards wrote. This collaboration spans over topics such as "the building assignment system, the switch lottery, pods, opening safe indoor spaces, and accommodations for SHARP students."

Edwards wrote that the staple group system "was adapted from the previous system used during FYRE [First Year Residence Exchange] and the fall/spring dorm transfer lotteries, where 4 students could staple together." This fall, "it was expanded to 8 with the understanding that it was very important this year in particular for students to live in the same building as their close friends."

MIT community members wishing to learn more about information or policies regarding the spring semester may visit the Division of Student Life Spring 2021 FAQs.

PLANETARY HEALTH

Human survival depends on the environment.

OPINION, p. 4

HAPPY THANKSGIVING

Enjoy some corn. **CAMPUS LIFE**, p. 8



MACBETH

A welcome auditory experience. **ARTS**, p. 5

SAWAYAMA

A masterful pop debut. **ARTS**, p. 6

SECTIONS

Opinion4
Arts5
Fun Pages7
Campus Life8

WEATHER

A mild Thanksgiving

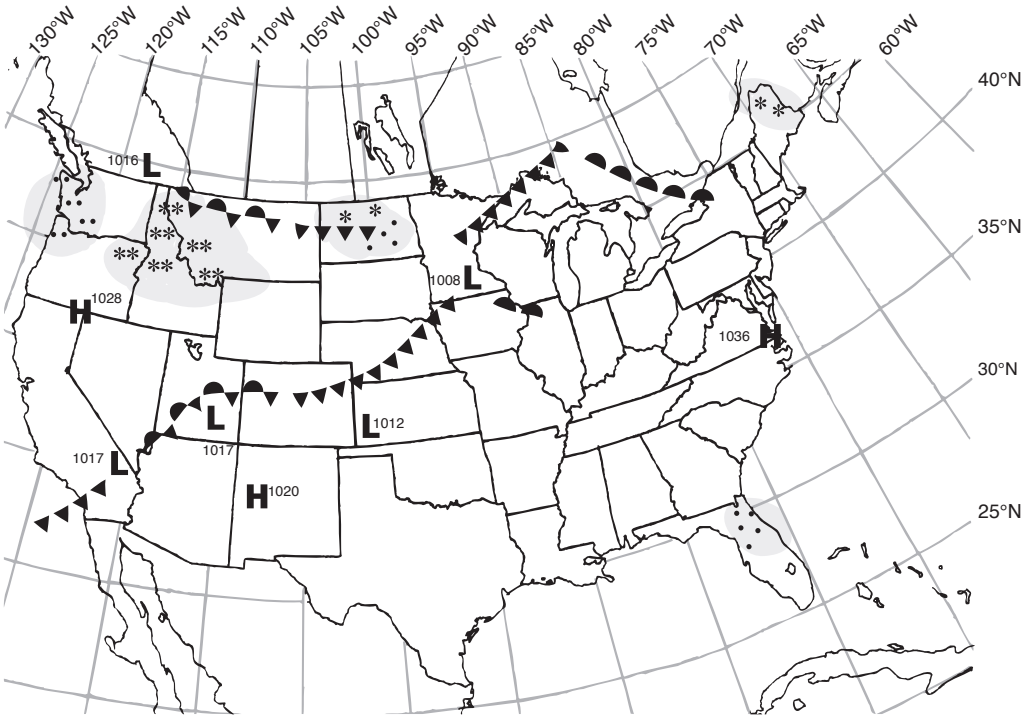
By Renbin Liu and Masha Geogdzhayeva

As seniors get ready to bid farewell to the MIT campus, they will be facing relatively calm weather for the rest of the week. With cold weather leaving us behind, we will see some moderately above-average temperature in Boston for the rest of this week. While you may be busy packing, take some time and appreciate the nice weather in the coming days. For those of you who will be going home, note that most of the South and the Midwest will

see above-average temperature during the Thanksgiving break. A bit of weather trivia for your Thanksgiving table talk: Hurricane Iota, which hit Nicaragua this week, is the latest category five hurricane to ever be recorded. The only other November Cat-5 ever seen occurred back in 1932. This November is also the first on record to experience two Cat-3+ storms. Overall, this Atlantic hurricane season has been a record setter, with the most named storms ever (30 so far), and the second-most hurricanes (13). Here's to hoping Iota will be the last this year.

Extended Forecast

Today: Sunny. High of around 42°F (6°C). Southwest winds of up to 15 mph.
Tonight: Partly cloudy. Warming to around 45°F (7°C). Breezy with winds up to 20 mph.
Tomorrow: Mostly sunny. High of around 56°F (13°C). Southwest winds of up to 17 mph.
Saturday: Mostly sunny. High of around 51°F (11°C). West winds up to 10 mph.
Sunday: Mostly cloudy. High of around 48°F (9°C). East to south-east winds of up to 8 mph.



Situation for Noon Eastern Time, Thursday, November 19, 2020

Weather Systems	Weather Fronts	Precipitation Symbols		Other Symbols
		Snow	Rain	
H High Pressure	- - - Trough	⬇	⬇	☁ Fog
L Low Pressure	⬆ Warm Front	⬆	⬆	⚡ Thunderstorm
§ Hurricane	⬆ Cold Front	⬆	⬆	☁ Haze
	⬆ Stationary Front	⬆	⬆	

Compiled by MIT Meteorology Staff and The Tech

Spicer: admin do not listen to student feedback but treat it as ‘a checkbox’

DEI, from Page 1

led by Professor Dan Hastings PhD '80, “will report out annually to the Engineering Council and will work closely with Departmental DEI officers” to ensure continued progress on a welcoming environment at all levels of the SoE. The School has also collaborated with the Institute Community and Equity Office (ICEO) to expand access to unconscious bias training. Several departments across MIT have launched DEI initiatives over the summer and fall. Many of these departments have created DEI committees and plan to hire a diversity and equity officer. The Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) department created a DEI committee, chaired by the newly-appointed faculty equity officers Fredo Durand and Leslie Kolodziejski. Durand and Kolodziejski wrote in an email to *The Tech* that EECS is hiring a full-time diversity officer, reforming the department’s faculty search “to include known best prac-

tices (focusing in particular on rubric scoring),” sponsoring students to “attend conferences that promote diversity in EECS,” and running “optional in-person training programs” for faculty and students. Additionally, MIT Tools for Honing Resilience and Inspiring Voices of Empowerment’s Graduate Application Assistance Program pairs graduate school applicants from underrepresented groups with current EECS graduate students. The mechanical engineering department and EECS departments both participate in existing DEI initiatives such as the Rising Stars workshop for women graduate students and the Women’s Technology Program for high school students. MechE created a DEI task force this summer and is hiring a departmental Community and Equity Officer. Biological engineering (BE) department head Angela Belcher wrote in a department-wide email Oct. 16 that BE created a DEI task force, is hiring a diversity and equity officer, and is “working with IDHR and MindHandHeart to create resources and trainings.”

The BE, chemical engineering, and materials science and engineering departments launched a DEI speaker series this fall, with activist and scholar Angela Davis as the inaugural speaker. Over 2,000 members of the MIT community attended the Oct. 21 webcast Q&A with Davis. The School of Science’s DEI webpage includes links to the community value statements for each department in the school. The page also promotes departmental affinity groups, including Biology Diversity Community, Women in Chemistry, Chemistry Alliance for Diversity and Inclusion, Women in Course 12, EAPS Diversity Council, Women in Math, African American Mathematicians, and Women in Physics. In June, the math department faced criticisms for its perceived lack of diversity and inclusion. The department has since launched a website for students to find problem set partners in math classes, as well as a student-led math Discord server, as efforts to promote inclusivity. David Spicer '23, chair of the Undergraduate Association (UA)

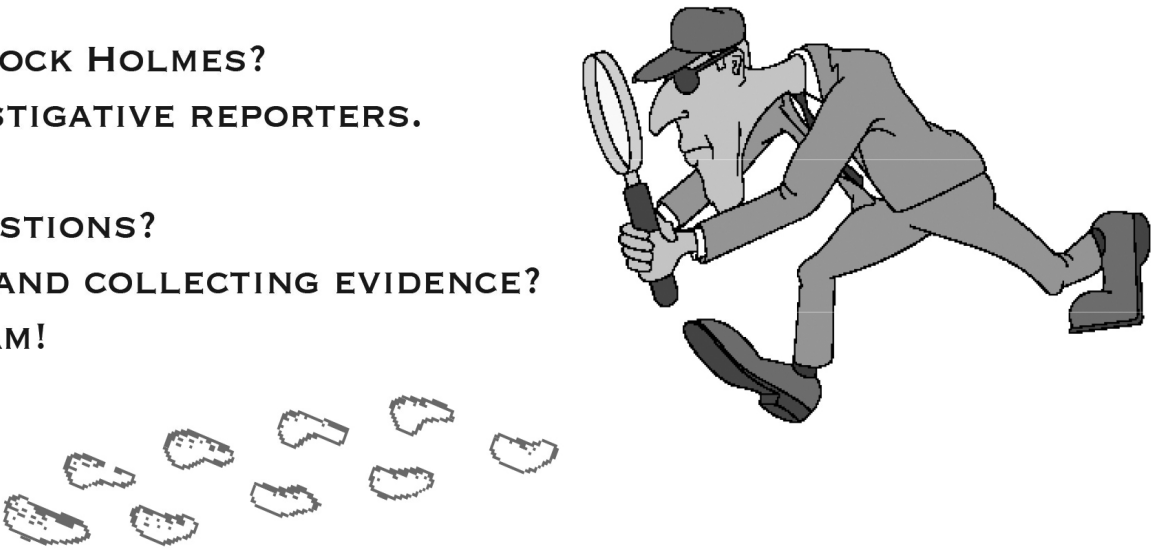
Community and Diversity group, said in an interview with *The Tech* that over the summer, many departments put forth diversity statements and assigned teams for specific DEI initiatives. He said that while these actions are a step in the right direction, he “would like to see [departments] use the current events-oriented approach to guide the discussion toward more structural change. The UA Community and Diversity group is currently focusing on expanding the idea of diversity: “When one talks about diversity, the biggest two are ethnicity and race. But there are so many more areas to cover. Diversity is a very broad term and includes a lot of communities,” Spicer said. Spicer’s work, specifically, focuses on the intersection of students with disabilities and race; he hopes that prioritizing an intersectional viewpoint puts “all the layers of one’s identity together to really advocate on their behalf.” Spicer said that the work for MIT is far from over. He gives credit to the Institute for recognizing issues, but is hesitant to give credit to MIT

for actually addressing the issues. He said that “it’s not so much that [administrators] listened to students, and more that it’s a checkbox for them. I would like to see more accountability when it comes to listening to student input and taking action. Admin should give more credit to students in general.” Moving forward, Dozier said that he wants the community to be more engaged. MIT community members need to “continue to challenge ourselves in both the formal and informal ways we’re interacting. Who is sitting around our lunch tables, and who is not? We need to ask ourselves the critical questions. Are we doing good work if we aren’t listening to the voices we need to be listening to?” Dozier said that “we want to make sure we are honoring our commitments and that relies on transparency.” He adds that students should “continue to help us as an administration on how to best serve MIT. The work that we’ve been doing needs to continue to be done. These are important issues that require all of our attention constantly.”

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Solution to Staple
from page 7

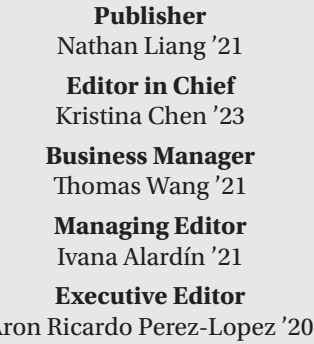
9	3	2	5	4	7	1	8	6
6	7	1	3	9	8	2	5	4
4	5	8	1	6	2	9	3	7
7	1	6	4	8	3	5	2	9
2	8	4	9	7	5	3	6	1
3	9	5	2	1	6	7	4	8
1	6	3	7	5	4	8	9	2
8	2	9	6	3	1	4	7	5
5	4	7	8	2	9	6	1	3

Solution to Paper Clip
from page 7

6	5	1	2	4	3
4	3	5	6	2	1
5	4	6	1	3	2
3	2	4	5	1	6
2	1	3	4	6	5
1	6	2	3	5	4

Solution to Pasta
from page 7

RAMP	SPAT	CATCH
ISEE	LURE	ACHOO
BASE	ERIE	STEPS
PARME	SANCHEE	SE
	EVE	LED
STAPLE	PAID	BSA
HELLO	RAIN	TOUR
ONIONS	SAND	GARLIC
RSVP	TIES	LATTE
TEE	SELL	LAPSED
	EPA	SUM
FRESH	MUSHROOMS	
LEASE	SOAK	WEAR
INTER	EAVE	LEGO
POSSE	SPED	STEW



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It's time to connect ourselves with our planet

By Melissa Stok
and Melody Wu

If there's anything the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us among the other disasters of 2020, it's that we are deeply connected as a society and depend on each other for our own survival. We'd like to highlight another connection that runs deep beyond our human one: our well-being and its connection with nature, the environment, and our planet.

Planetary health focuses on understanding the human health implications of the rapid transformation of our earth's ecosystems due to anthropogenic changes in our environment. This emerging, trans-disciplinary field illustrates the reliance of human well-being on that of the planet, exploring climate change, environmental degradation, and the prevalence of human health issues through a new lens.

Understanding the connections between these two very related areas of study can aid in the development of targeted solutions that will prioritize not only the health of humans but also that of the environment. It can also help us better understand the urgency of our current climate situation and the present impacts it has had on us already. As evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are inadequately equipped to mitigate the effects of climate change on our health, proving that we have two options: act now to limit future impacts on our population, or succumb to the consequences of our actions.

Let's take a look at some prime examples of the way MIT students and the community are already using a planetary health lens. Taking note of both research and social action circles within the categories of sustainability and health-focused work, we see substantial overlap between the environment and human health, particularly for student organizations.

Cutting-edge technologies in the fields and groups presented above can be applied



Environment and sustainability and biological and health-focused research intersect through planetary health efforts.

not only for increasing accessibility and effectiveness of medical therapeutics and diagnostics, but also as potential solutions for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and plastic waste. Examining food systems and security, we see the intersection of globally increasing access to nutritious foods and decreasing our consumption of foods requiring large amounts of land and pollution credits.

Let's take a closer look at one particular group: Terrascope. A bustling community at MIT with a focus on thinking about complex (often global) environmental challenges, Terrascope involves projects within planetary health domains. From Preparing the World for Climate Change to Water Security in the Navajo Nation to Resilience and Recovery: Preparing for Major Storms in Puerto Rico to this year's The Birds and the Bees: The Everyday Biodiversity Crisis — each year's focus really considers the intersection of environmental challenges and their respective social contexts, revealing complexities beyond just the technical.

Although MIT does not yet have any groups dedicated specifically to “planetary health” research or work, we can see how many of these group’s missions fall within the principles of planetary health work. We recognize that these are only a few ways we have seen planetary health in our own sphere of MIT, but there are many

more ways in which planetary health can be integrated in many communities here at MIT. The lists and figures above are by no means exhaustive; many other groups combat issues that fall under the planetary health realm, from racial justice to gender equity. We hope that this conveys the **growing connection** between (1) human well-being and (2) the environment as it relates to the work conducted here at MIT. As a result, we *must* think more about planetary health here at MIT, and develop technologies within a planetary health mindset.

How can you incorporate planetary health into your MIT experience?

You can find several resources in a supplementary MIT Climate Portal article, including:

- A second figure outlining planetary health topics and their respective MIT groups
- A list of classes related to planetary health
- The Planetary Health Alliance, a growing consortium of over 200 universities, NGOs, research institutes, and governmental entities around the world looking to address global environmental change and its health impacts

Melissa Stok '23 studies materials science and engineering. Melody Wu '22 studies biological engineering and is a Planetary Health Alliance Campus Ambassador.

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SAWAYAMA spins past woes into pop gold

With the exception of a few lackluster tracks, SAWAYAMA is sublime. What others might perceive as derivative and dissonant is, in fact, deliberateness and intention. Each track feels curated with care, their intros and outros rightfully setting the tone of her story and leaving the listener hungry for more. Her lyricism is playfully serious and intensely vulnerable, its visions brought to life by a perfectly executing range of shining vocals. Ultimately, Sawayama's genre-bending debut is artistically intelligent, doing her story justice with all its glitter and grit.

JOIN, or DIE.

Staple

Solution, page 3

	3	2	5		7			6
		1			8	2	5	
4							3	
7		6	4					
			9		5			
					6	7		8
	6							2
	2	9	6			4		
5			8		9	6	1	

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column, row, and 3 by 3 grid contains exactly one of each of the digits 1 through 9.

Paper Clip

Solution, page 3

360×		14+			4+
20×		120×		6×	
					8+
12×			30×		
	8+				9+
	1−			5	

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column and row contains exactly one of each of the numbers 1–6. Follow the mathematical operations for each box.

Pasta Toppings

Solution, page 3

ACROSS

- 1 Expressway exit
5 Minor quarrel
9 Grab, as a fly ball
14 “That makes sense”
15 Angler’s enticement device
16 Sound of a sneeze
17 Bottom of a pedestal
18 One of the Great Lakes
19 Parts of a stairway
20 Sprinkled-on white dairy product
23 Day before a holiday
24 Was in first place
25 Paper fastener
29 Settled, as a bill
31 Merit badge org.
34 Phone call starter
35 Showery forecast
36 “Guided” vacation
37 Slices of two zesty bulbs
40 “Please reply” letters
41 Neckwear with knots
42 Foamy espresso beverage
43 Golfer’s peg
44 Offer at retail

- 45 Ran out, as a subscription
46 Air quality org.
47 Total of numbers added
48 Sliced, uncooked fungi
56 Tenant’s contract
57 Relax in the tub
58 Be dressed in
60 “Between” prefix for national or view
61 Roof overhang
62 Toy building-block brand
63 Old West search party
64 Went quickly
65 Beef meal in a slow cooker

DOWN

- 1 “Baby back” barbecue bit
2 “Without delay,” in a memo
3 Flat-topped Southwestern hill
4 Jury member
5 Shirt’s arm
6 Handbag
7 Opera solo
8 Adolescent
9 Redeemed, as a paycheck

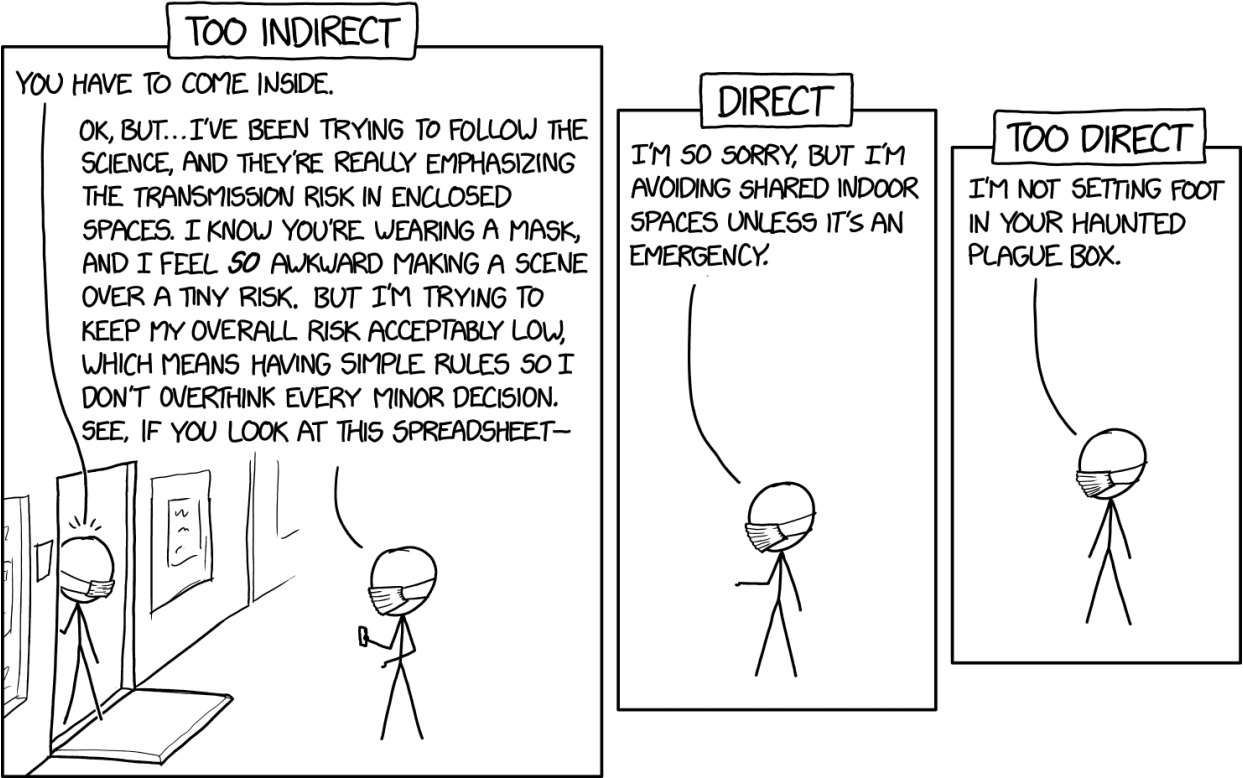
- 10 Performed in a film
11 “My country, tis of _ . . .”
12 Police officers, informally
13 Fire hydrant attachment
21 Honeydew or cantaloupe
22 Stick (to), as wet paper to glass
25 Brief in duration
26 Feeling nervous
27 Full of energy
28 Raindrop sound
29 Group of experts
30 Lends a hand
31 Flashes of lightning
32 Multi-room hotel offering
33 Shaped like a rainbow
35 Stairway’s banister
36 Ensnare
38 Vapor from a teakettle
39 San Antonio attraction to “remember”
44 Globe’s shape
45 Waited in hiding
46 Three letters in “discuss”
47 Remove one’s beard
48 Do a somersault

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	13
14					15					16				
17					18					19				
	20				21					22				
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60						61					62			
63						64					65			

- 49 Nevada gambling city
50 Has breakfast or dinner
51 Takes advantage of
52 Cake to wash with
53 Birds that hoot
54 Be introduced to
55 Wise person
59 Propel a canoe

[2346] COVID Risk Comfort Zone

WAYS TO SAY NO WHEN SOMEONE TELLS YOU TO DO SOMETHING OUTSIDE YOUR COVID RISK COMFORT ZONE:



I'm like a vampire, except I'm not crossing that threshold even if you invite me.

WENBO'S WALKS

I love you

You are sweet when you want to be

By Wenbo Wu
EDITOR

Dear corn,
I just wanted to say I love you. You're the best fruit a human can ever ask for, and the greatest abomination of a plant to be ever produced. You, you sustain me in my endeavors like no other. You inspire me to make bread, to make cornbread, the life, the spirit, and the best food one could ever produce.
I love cornbread. It goes well with most things, and it also goes well alone. It tastes good in any setting: on a platter, on a dinner table, on a floor. I mean, that is, on a platter which is on a dinner table which is on a floor, not that the cornbread is directly on the floor. When I said cornbread goes well with most things, floor particles are definitely not included in that particular category.
In fact, floor particles are one of the things that go well with no things, residing in a class of its own.
Teosinte, widely-regarded corn ancestor? Lame. With its closed kernels, one could've never quite foretold the image of its future. But then, on one fateful day, someone believed in you. Believed so deeply in you that they turned the most useless looking weed into the most succulent crop.
And the memories rush back to me, corn. You can be sweet when you want to

be, but also waxy at other times. No matter the form you take, you are irresistible. I remember biting into my first cob of waxy corn, and my future mapped before my eyes. I found my identity in you, in those delicious kernels of corn.
I still crave that waxy corn, but unfortunately as far as I am aware, it fails to exist in the confines of most, if not all, U.S. markets. It's rare that I drool over food, but boy do I drool over waxy corn.
I walk around the produce aisle of Target, and I admire the husk that surrounds you, the firm grip with which each kernel clings so confidently to the cob. Alas, this is perhaps your very downfall: your pride. You cling so tightly to your shell that you can't even grow out of it to reproduce without human help.
But despite your fundamental downfall, you have helped the human race immensely in not only your nutrition, but also your contributions to genetics. Who would've thought that admiring you could have led Barbara McClintock to the discovery of transposons, one of the most important discoveries in semi-modern genetics, not only useful in artificially engineered systems but also fascinating as a possible precursor to many viruses?
Additionally, dare I say that you help create one of the best substrates on which penicillin can grow? Wild.

You taste sweet. You taste like the wind on a hot and sunny Texan day. You taste like the tortilla of a crunchy taco, the crunch on a deep-fried stick of butter, and the buttery smoothness in that yummy, yummy high fructose corn syrup.
I roll around in trousers after returning from the grocery store. Sorry, to clarify: I'm in bed at this point. It's not like I just arrived home, dropped everything, and immediately started rolling around in my trousers. I mean, that's not out of the question for me, per se, but it is a bit absurd.
Sorry, back to you. This article is all about you, after all. I want to focus on you. I want to give you all my attention, if only for approximately 900 words.
Corn powers the economy, and it powers our cars. Biodegradable plastic polylactic acid? Also corn! Who knew that the decision of one to believe in a tiny weed many thousands of years ago would lead to a bustling economy? I certainly didn't.
Is there a moral to this story, a beautiful story about how belief will solve all our problems? Definitely not. Don't read too deeply into this. Some things cannot be fixed with all the belief in the world, and that's just the way things are.
But let me tell you why I decided to write about you, of all days. It's because today I thought about you while taking a stroll in the morning. As the frigid air blew

past my face despite my best efforts to shield it, I thought about all the cornfields I had trekked through when I was younger, and all the corn mazes I used to go into typically around this time, and how I have to wait at least until next year before I can do these things again. But with the new possible vaccine, I'm optimistic. Cautiously.
I also thought about you due to the upcoming Thanksgiving break, of course, but that was *definitely* not the primary reason.
I mean, this doesn't mean I don't have some qualms with you, though. For example, what in the world is baby corn? Why does it exist? It doesn't taste good, and it serves no culinary purpose, as far as I know. So why? Why? Why? Can't we just leave the unripe corn alone to let it become the magnificent being it was destined to be?
Love,
Wenbo

P.S. Thanksgiving or not, this year will be different for most of us. I hope you, dear reader, get to spend time with your loved ones. Despite the chaos of the past year, I hope that you are able to congregare in some form, socially distanced and virtually perhaps, around the table with some delicious food (and corn too, if you please).



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