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Volume 141, Number 3 Thursday, March 4, 2021



Due to a series of misconducts as of Monday, Suzy Nelson temporarily suspended the pod program for students of Baker House, New Vassar, and Maseeh Hall.

# Pod programs suspended in Baker, Maseeh, NV residence halls due to policy violations

# Pods may be reinstated after further contact tracing

By Kristina Chen EDITOR IN CHIEF

The pod programs in Baker House, Maseeh Hall, and New Vassar (NV) have been temporarily paused due to "reports of unauthorized gatherings both on and off campus" that purportedly involved residents of the dorms, Vice President and Dean for Student Life Suzy Nelson and MIT Medical Director Cecilia Stuopis '90 announced in an email to MIT undergraduates on

Nelson and Stuopis wrote that "over 50 students" were involved in the gatherings or were pod mates of those involved in the gatherings. The pod programs have been paused to make time for contact tracing and to determine whether there has been any spread of COVID-19.

In the past seven days, MIT Medical has identified 24 positive tests out of 23,077 total tests, according to MIT's COVID-19 testing dashboard. Of the 24 positive cases, 14 are students. Additionally, 15 students are currently in isolation and 68 are in

The pod programs in the residence halls may be reinstated once contact tracing has been conducted. The pod program will be reinstated "if testing and contact tracing results show there's no impact on Maseeh," Maseeh Heads of House Suzanne Flynn and Jack Carroll wrote to Maseeh residents.

During the pod program suspension, all students in the affected residence halls are not permitted to gather with pod mates in pod lounges or each other's rooms, to remove their face coverings in the presence of pod mates, or to relax physical distancing guidelines. Students living in Baker, Maseeh, and NV may still attend in-person classes and access other MIT facilities, following MIT's COVID-19 policies.

Additionally, students who have information that can help MIT Medical's contact tracers better understand the weekend gatherings are advised to email covidteam@ med.mit.edu, Nelson and Stuopis

The Division of Student Life has implemented a COVID-19 Student Amnesty policy. Similar to MIT's Good Samaritan Amnesty policy, MIT "will also treat the violation" of COVID-19 policies "primarily as a health and safety matter," rather than as a disciplinary incident.

Pod Pause, Page 2

# Police secure arrest warrant for suspect involved in shooting Pan was named a person of interest

in murder of Yale student Kevin Jiang

By Caitlin Fukumoto

The New Haven Police Department secured an arrest warrant Feb. 27 charging Qinxuan Pan MNG '15, an MIT graduate, with murder for the death of Kevin Jiang, a Yale University graduate student.

Police found Jiang, 26, shot dead with multiple gunshot wounds in the East Rock neighborhood of New Haven, Connecticut, near Yale's campus Feb. 6. New Haven Police Chief Otoniel Reyes said police were dispatched after several 911 calls around 8:30 p.m. reporting gunfire and a person shot in a press conference on Feb. 8. Yale University President Peter Salovey identified Jiang as the victim in a message to the Yale community Feb. 7.

Salovey wrote that Jiang was graduate student at the Yale School of the Environment. Jiang was an Army veteran and member of the Army National Guard. He had been engaged to a recent MIT

Reyes said Jiang was operating a vehicle at the time he was shot and that there is "developed information" suggesting that he was targeted.

Police named Pan, 29, a person of interest in the murder Feb. 10, though he was not a suspect at the time. Pan was accused of stealing a

Suspect, Page 2

March 8 is a student holiday; no classes will be held. Monday classes will be held on Tuesday,

MIT affiliates should complete the COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility Form.

The deadline to submit nominations for the MIT Awards is March 26.

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

Send news and tips to news@tech.



Students attend a 2.00B lecture in 2-190 on Monday, the first day of in-person classes

# MIT will not compete in Spring varsity sports

Modified in-person training permitted

By Srinidhi Narayanan

NEWS EDITOR

Director of Athletics and Department of Athletics, Physical Education, and Recreation (DA-PER) Head G. Anthony Grant announced that MIT will not compete in varsity athletics during Spring 2021 on account of health and safety concerns relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, DAPER announced Feb. 11. All spring club

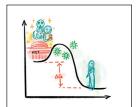
sports competition and travel will also be canceled.

The cancellation will impact "baseball, men's heavyweight crew, men's and women's lightweight crew, women's openweight crew, men's and women's lacrosse. sailing, softball, men's and women's tennis, men's and women's outdoor track and field and men's vollevball."

Varsity Sports, Page 2

### STUDENT VOICES IN **SUSTAINABILITY**

How you can contribute to MIT's climate action plan. OPINION, p. 4



### LE CHATELIER

Can enough energy reverse time? CAMPUS LIFE, p. 6



### **BENTO BOXES**

Leaking out. CAMPUS LIFE, p. 7

### **SECTIONS**

Fun Pages			. პ
Opinion			.4
Campus Life			.6

2 THE TECH
THURSDAY, MARCH 4, 2021

**WEATHER** 

# Wintry weekend

### By Shinjini Ghosh and Phoebe Lin

The bouts of snow have halted, but winter still wraps its cold throes around Boston. Brace on for a cold end to the week and colder weekend, albeit sunny. Northwest winds remain gusty in the city.

The Kresge lawn begins to show its greens as campus comes alive once again! Ducks can be seen swimming in the Charles River as we wonder, when will spring arrive?

### **Extended Forecast**

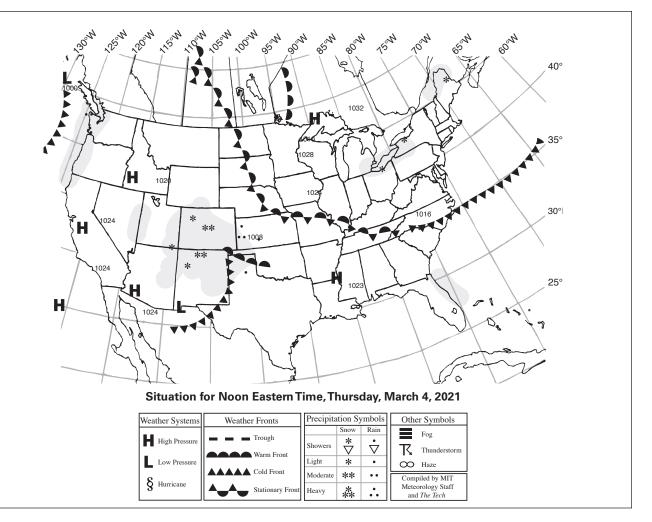
**Today**: Mostly sunny. High around 39°F (4°C). Northwest winds around 15-25 mph.

**Tonight**: Mostly clear. Low around 19°F (-7°C). Northwest winds around 10-20 mph.

Tomorrow: Partly cloudy. High around 32°F (0°C) and low around 18°F (-8 °C). Northwest winds around 10-20 mph.

Saturday: Sunny. High around 33°F (1°C) and low around 16°F (-9°C). Northwest winds around 5-15 mph.

Sunday: Sunny. High around 35°F (2°C) and low around 16°F (-9°C). Northwest winds around 5-10 mph.



# MIT implements COVID-19 amnesty policy

Pod Pause, from Page 1

Under the policy, if a student self-reports their own behavior violating MIT's COVID-19 policies to MIT Medical, the information will be protected by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and will not be shared with the Committee on Discipline for disciplinary action.

Students may, however, be required to comply with a "wellness

follow-up" possibly consisting of educational requirements, guidance by medical officials, quarantine, or self-isolation, according to the policy.

Nelson and Stuopis wrote in their email that they "want to make sure" MIT does not see an increase of COVID-19 cases as other college campuses have.

MIT concluded Quarantine Week (Q-Week) noon of Feb. 23 for undergraduates who recently moved on campus. Q-Week was extended due to various students not complying with testing requirements and reports of undergraduates violating MIT's COVID-19 policies. In-person classes and access to other MIT facilities began March 1.

In Fall 2020, when only seniors were invited to live on campus, the pod program at Simmons Hall was similarly paused for one week after reports of multiple pods intermingling.

# \$10,000 reward in exchange for information

Suspect, from Page 1

car from a car dealership in Mansfield, Massachusetts around 5:30 p.m., a few hours before the Feb. 6 shooting.

Pan remains at large, with the United States Marshals Service expanding the manhunt nationwide March 1 and offering a reward of up to \$10,000 for information that could lead to his arrest. Supervisory Deputy of the Agency Mat-

thew Duffy said Pan is believed to be staying in the Atlanta area in Georgia and should be considered "armed and dangerous."

There were two previous warrants for Pan, one for stealing a vehicle out of Massachusetts and one for the possession of a stolen vehicle in Connecticut, according to Reyes.

In a Feb. 10 email to the MIT community, President L. Rafael Reif announced that "MIT Police

are in close contact with the New Haven Police Department and U.S. Marshals service and, based on information from these officials, have no reason to believe that our campus or Greater Boston communities are at risk."

Pan completed his bachelor's degrees in Computer Science and Engineering and Mathematics in 2014 and received a Master of Engineering in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science in 2015.

# Club and intramural sports are to continue

Varsity Sports, from Page 1

The decision to cancel spring semester sports competition "was very difficult, but we made it after much deliberation, consideration of federal, state, local and MIT Medical guidelines, and discussion with other stakeholders," said Suzy Nelson, vice president and dean for student life. Student athletes' and the community's "health and well-being are our paramount concerns," Nelson said.

The department is "currently working with MIT Medical and other campus partners on a plan to allow teams to participate in modified inperson training and conditioning during the semester," consistent with National Collegiate Athletic Association health and safety guidelines, according to DAPER's announcement.

The COVID-19 considerations for intercollegiate sports on the

MIT Athletics website include testing and attestation consistent with campus expectations; voluntary participation, staggered start times for practices, physical distance of six feet minimum, hand washing, face coverings, no provided water, and minimized use of shared equipment for in-person team activity sessions, strength and conditioning sessions, and Equipment Room access; remote team meetings; and suspension of locker room and laundry services.

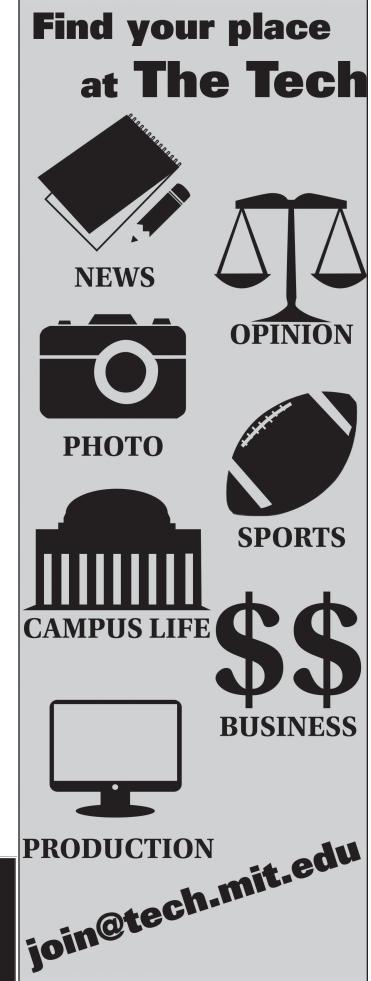
The Sports Medicine Center will require appointments for routine care, virtual appointments where appropriate, and on-site temperature checks where appropriate.

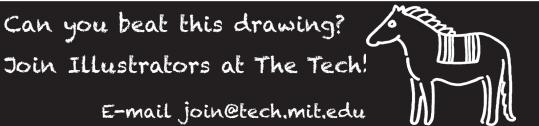
For club and intramural sports, on-campus offerings will continue, consistent with state, local, and institutional guidelines while being subject to review. Club sports will employ physically-distant skill

drills and introductory activities for new members. An in-person intramural weekly league has been introduced for "cornhole, tennis, badminton, Kan Jam, soccer volley and a three-point shooting contest."

DAPER "will have competitive leagues on imleagues.com, as well as a casual drop-in every night from Monday-Friday" on the Intramural Discord server for students who want to play esports, the DAPER website writes.

DAPER is "committed to providing a meaningful athletic experience for our student-athletes while adhering to the most up-to-date health and safety guidelines," Grant wrote in the announcement. "We are very much looking forward to the time when all of our student-athletes are back on campus striving for excellence in the classroom, in the community and in competition."





# NEUNFUNFUNFUN **FUN**FUNFUNFUNFUNFUNFUNFUNFUNFUN UNFUNFUNFUNFUNFU

### Goose

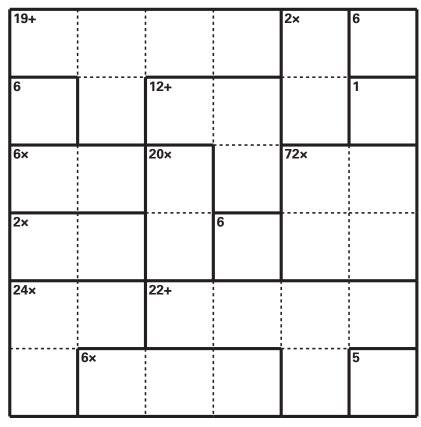
Solution, page 8

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

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.

# HONK

Solution, page 8



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.

15

# In A Spin by Brad Wilber

Solution, page 8

### **ACROSS**

- 1 Meat-and-potatoes dinner
- 5 Farmland measure
- 9 Puts on display
- 14 Volcanic flow
- 15 Chicken \_\_ mein (Chinese food)
- 16 Book of fiction
- 17 Beasts of burden in a yoke
- 18 Ceramic floor piece 19 Musical work with
- sopranos 20 Power sources with
- outdoor spinning blades
- 22 Flat French hat
- 23 Garden of Eden woman
- 24 TV network with an eye logo
- 25 Money back on a purchase
- 29 Every once in a while
- 34 Metal-bearing rocks
- 35 Convertibles and coupes
- 36 Once \_\_ blue moon (rarely)
- 37 Spinning laundry appliances
- 41 Compass point opposite WNW

- 42 Voicemail signals
- 43 Tug-of-war cord
- 44 Secondhand tires 46 Lavish meals
- 48 Toward the rear of a boat
- 49 Holder of peas
- 50 Cheer at a concert
- 53 Spinning rides with carved horses
- 59 Inland waterway
- 60 Army no-show, for short
- 61 End of a kite
- 62 Make amends
- 63 Rant and \_\_ (show anger)
- 64 Creme-filled cookie
- 65 Feeling antsy
- 66 Changed the color of
- 67 Attention-getting whisper

### **DOWN**

- 1 Leisurely, as a speed
- 2 Cabbie's vehicle
- 3 \_\_ so (nevertheless) 4 Wizard's magic stick
- 5 On the go
- 6 Long-and-narrow South American nation

- 7 Dice toss
- 8 Lambs' mamas 9 Snooty
- 10 "Fingers crossed" 11 Higher than
- 12 "Wish you \_\_ here"
- 13 Narrow plank
- 21 Encountered
- 24 Gator cousin 25 Person using oars
- 26 Wipe from a blackboard
- 27 Attack from all sides
- 28 Campfire residue
- 29 Tire-filling machines
- 30 When flights are due in:
- 31 Prehistoric lizards, for short
- 32 With no skill
- 33 Assignments for detectives
- 35 Matured, as wine
- 38 Spelling rule that ends "except after C"
- 39 Clean and orderly
- 40 Nest-egg acronym
- 45 Black birds
- 46 Pulled a trick on
- 17 18 19 20 22 24 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 34 36 38 | 39 41 42 43 45 46 47 55 | 56 | 57 | 58 50 51 52 53 54 59 60

63

66

- 47 College Web-address ender
- 49 Establish as a fact

62

65

- 50 Troublemaking child
- 51 Any formal ceremony
- 52 The Bard of \_ (Shakespeare)
- 53 Ace of hearts, for instance

64

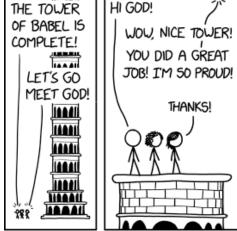
67

16

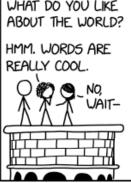
- 54 Out of town
- 55 Call a halt to 56 Servings of corn
- 57 Isn't truthful
- 58 Mail-drop opening

# A WEBCOMIC OF ROMANCE, SARCASM. MATH. AND LANGUAGE by Randall Munroe

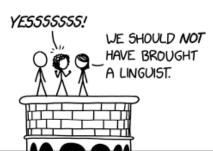
# [2421] Tower of Babel







GREAT! I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU LOTS OF LANGUAGES TO STUDY, EACH WITH ITS OWN PHONOLOGY, WORD ORDERING MORPHOSYNTACTIC ALIGNMENT...



people have been to Russia than I have," and speech will become unintelligible. Soon, linguists will be wandering around everywhere, saying things like "colorless green ideas sleep furiously" and "more



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### **GUEST COLUMN**

# Climate Action Plan: Why you need to care and the importance of student voices SSC students present proposals to Dr. Zuber; UA Council considers

consensus decision; UA and GSC to host student focus groups

By: Student Sustainability Coalition

### What is the CAP and why you should care?

If someone asked you about sustainability at MIT, what would you think of? Maybe a class that touched on climate change or how much energy all your lab machines use up. If you had to tell someone who does climaterelated research at MIT, would you know where to look to find your answer? Perhaps you've pondered whether MIT still works with fossil fuel companies. All of these topics, and more, link to a document hidden on the new MIT Climate Portal — the MIT Climate Action Plan.

In 2015, MIT released its first five-year Plan for Action on Climate Change, or Climate Action Plan (CAP) for short. The 2015 CAP was a result of several previous campus efforts surrounding climate and was most notably MIT's response to a petition to divest  $from\,student\text{-led}\,group\,Fossil\,Free\,MIT.\,It\,has$ now become the go-to for MIT to describe what actions it is taking to combat climate change. The original document outlines a "plan for the MIT community to address the escalating disruption of our global climate" and states that "given MIT's mission, history and capabilities, MIT has a particular responsibility to lead; and that the moment is now." The 2015 plan has five different sections, broadly organized as research efforts to increase understanding, low-carbon technology development, education, sharing knowledge, and using the community as a test bed (including greenhouse gas emission reductions).

Five years have passed, which means the time is now for MIT to review its previous plan and set its new goals. As climate disasters from wildfires to ice storms impact the lives of millions, including members of the MIT community, the urgency to take action grows with each year. Every term of five years is more pressing than the last. According to the "climate clock" activists installed during the United Nations General Assembly in September, we have just under seven years to prevent an irreversible climate catastrophe. By the time the next CAP comes out, we'll have just 18 months to prevent this irreversible climate catastrophe.

In December 2020, the Undergraduate Association Committee on Sustainability (UA Sustain) asked the undergraduate student body: how has MIT done in reaching its previous CAP goals? As seen in the accompanying graph, there are many areas in which MIT can make more progress (using the campus as a test bed, partnering with industry and government to accelerate action on climate, and reducing its energy related carbon emissions).

A datapoint that wasn't measured but that is equally as important is this: how much does the MIT community actually know about the Climate Action Plan? Do students understand the potential of the CAP to change the campus they live on and the communities they partake in?

Take a moment to recognize that as a member of the MIT community, you possess the power to push for ambitious climate goals to influential MIT leaders and scientists. If you haven't had the chance to, look at the 2015 plan, and be your own judge on whether MIT set ambitious enough goals and whether we met them.

Finally, think about what you want to see in the next Climate Action Plan, and whether you want to be a part of this year's plan. Whatever the plan ends up being, it won't just shape the way the Institute acts and the way campus looks for years to come; it will shape your education, research, and career far beyond MIT.

### **Student Proposals**

Those of us in the Student Sustainability Coalition (SSC) have been thinking about the 2021 Climate Action Plan for some time now, and working on what we want to see in the plans as members of the sustainability community at MIT. On Monday, February 22, a number of SSC students presented their recommendations across six key themes to the Climate Action Advisory Committee (CAAC), chaired by Vice President for Research Dr. Maria Zuber, CAAC is charged with sourcing and providing recommendations for MIT's Climate Action Plan, and as such hosted the Student Voice forum/webinar, which was open to the entire MIT community. Following the presentations, Dr. Zuber led a discussion amongst students and CAAC members, beginning to delve into the nuances of the recommendations. Here, we provide an overview of the student proposals across the six themes:

### **Proposal for Structure and Process**

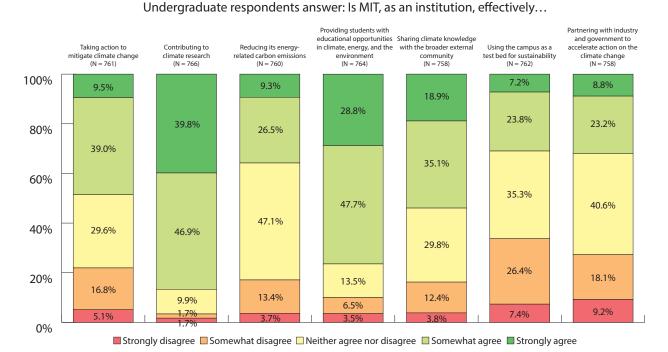
- 1. Create the MIT Climate Council, a governing body with diverse community representation that can set and implement ambitious goals for MIT's role in sustainability and climate action.
- Implement an iterative drafting process for the Climate Action Plan creation, which should include at least monthly publications of drafts and solicitation of community feedback.
- Treat the Climate Action Plan as a living plan, which can be frequently updated and revised. Updates to the plan's goals should be readily available on the Cli-

### **Proposal for Public Sector Engagement**

MIT individuals and programs have informed climate policy at the city, state, federal, and global levels. However, these fragmented initiatives reveal the missed opportunity for a coordinated and much more powerful effort to link policymakers to MIT researchers. We thus suggest MIT:

1. Create a position in the MIT Washington office or in a politically-connected center (such as the Climate Pathways Project) focused on sourcing opportu-

CAP, Page 5



Undergraduate respondents indicate whether MIT has made progress on its climate action plan goals.

### OPINION POLICY

**Editorials** are the official opinion of *The Tech*. They are written by the Editorial Board, which consists of Publisher Joanna Lin, Editor in Chief Kristina Chen, Managing Editor Chloe Mc-Creery, Executive Editor Wenbo Wu, and the opinion editor, a position that is currently vacant.

**Dissents** are the signed opinions of editorial board members choosing to publish their disagreement with the editorial.

Letters to the editor, columns, and editorial cartoons are written by individuals and represent the opinion of the author. not necessarily that of the newspaper. Electronic submissions are encouraged and should be sent to letters@tech.mit.edu. Hard copy submissions should be addressed to The Tech. P.O. Box 397029. Cambridge, Mass. 02139-7029, or sent by interdepartmental mail to Room W20-483. All submissions are due by noon four (4) calendar days before the date of publication.

Letters, columns, and cartoons must bear the authors' signatures, addresses, and phone numbers. Unsigned letters will not be accepted. The Tech reserves the right to edit or condense letters; shorter letters will be given higher priority.

Once submitted, all letters become property of The Tech, and will not be returned. Letters, columns, and cartoons may also be posted on *The Tech*'s Web site and/or printed or published in any other format or medium now known or later that becomes known. The Tech makes no commitment to publish all the letters received.

**Guest columns** are opinion articles submitted by members of the MIT or local community.

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THURSDAY, MARCH 4, 2021 THE TECH 5

# Biz pays the bills

Join the Business Department of The Tech and earn \$12/hr! Email join@tech.mit.edu





32. Take a stroll through Little Italy in the North End

Join the Arts department at The Tech and write restaurant reviews.

(And get reimbursed for your meal!)

# **Developing the Climate Action** Plan should be a rigorous and iterative process, like research

CAP, from Page 4

nities for MIT researchers to inform climate policy, liaising with congressional committees and White House offices for instance to do so.

Create an MIT climate policy center or a staff position purely focused on matching these opportunities to MIT researchers and convening these researchers to cross-pollinate. Responsibilities could include planning an annual climate policy conference.

**Proposal for Investments** 

Although joining Climate Action 100+ and establishing the MIT Climate and Sustainability Consortium are first steps in improving high-emissions industries, MIT must lead by example. MIT's own research encourages climate financial disclosure, Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) criteria, and annual reporting from companies. Thus, we recommend that:

- 1. The MIT Corporation develop and practice socially responsible investing principles: Transparency and Public Commitments, Climate and ESG-Oriented Portfolios, and a Framework for Accountability and Community
- MIT takes specific actions aligned with the majority student opinion and divest from the fossil fuel industry.

**Proposal for Private Sector Engagement** In order to do our part in tackling the climate crisis that threatens everyone on this planet, MIT must hold itself to certain principles when engaging with the actors driving that very crisis forward. Even if we use the principles produced by the Committee on Outside Engagements, we see that MIT is falling short by engaging with these actors. We thus recommend that:

- 1. MIT apply standards when choosing whether to engage with private sector actors, specifically advising the adoption of MIT Divest's proposed standards.
- The standards MIT adopts be created through a transparent community-engagement process and that the success of the engagement be determined by a third party and be regularly updated to the Climate Portal.

### **Proposal for Education**

Universities have always been producers of knowledge, but more recently their role has become also to inform action for the most urgent sustainability challenges. We urge MIT to:

- 1. Incorporate sustainability electives in at least the four most common majors and weave sustainable design into the capstone projects.
- Classify classes based on whether they are sustainability focused/related and/ or link to the Sustainable Development
- 3. Encourage community members to behave sustainably, for example by offering trainings about on-campus sustainability initiatives and teaching staff green building practices.

**Proposal for On-Campus Sustainability** Although MIT's mission of being "a test bed for change" has successfully motivated students and faculty alike to tackle ome on-campus sustainability challeng es, we must take bolder action on our very own campus to be a local and national role model for emissions, waste, and water reducing interventions. We believe MIT can realize this new vision by:

- 1. Setting ambitious, quantitative goals for reduction in campus gas emissions, waste generation, and water usage
- 2. Establishing a diverse, Institute-wide committee to determine, implement, and monitor steps towards these goals

3. Improve the availability of sustainability-related data and of MIT's consideration/analysis on improving our footprint. By sharing waste data to water data to cost-benefit analyses, MIT will support the community in solving an incredibly challenging problem together.

### **Steps Forward**

Overall, SSC would love to keep the conversation going in the coming months as the 2021 Climate Action Plan is written and refined. To do this, we ask that Dr. Zuber and her office publish a version of the student proposals with comments. We hope she will highlight or list the recommendations that can and will be included in the plan, as well as those that are "maybes" and those that are infeasible. For the latter two groups, we hope for context on the obstacles MIT faces in committing to the recommendations to be included. This way, the MIT community, from faculty with deep expertise on the themes of our recommendations to students who can learn from applying their knowledge to this real-world problem, will understand the current challenges and be much better equipped to find creative and feasible solutions for these barriers. By developing the Climate Action Plan through this rigorous and iterative process, as we would with our research, MIT sets itself up for success in solving one of the most pressing global challenges.

A number of steps are being taken by student leaders to advance the conversation and consideration of the student proposals, as well as to educate and consider the broader student body. The UA Council, UA Sustain, the Graduate Student Council Committee on Sustainability (GSC Sustain), and UA Involvement are all working in conjunction to further address student interest in the CAP.

On Tuesday, March 2, the UA Council convened to discuss the CAP student proposals, setting aside the vast majority of their allotted meeting time to discuss the matter. The councilors considered passing a consensus decision on the matter, but agreed to spend more time engaging constituents and fine-tuning the policy platform written for them to vote on. Councilors also held more in-depth discussion on the topics of private sector standards of engagement, carbon neutrality goals, education, and the role of the proposed Climate Council committees.

The UA Sustain Undergraduate Sustainability Survey in December found that 60% of respondents wanted to help inform the CAP. In response to the significant interest for input from the student body, UA Sustain, in collaboration with GSC Sustain and UA Involvement, is planning on hosting focus groups to hear feedback from students on the CAP and proposals. Focus groups will be held throughout March and will include open discussion; the ongoings of the focus groups will be reported back to relevant administrators including Dr. Zuber and CAAC.

All MIT students, both undergraduate and graduate, are invited and encouraged to attend the Climate Action Plan focus

The authors of the article are members of the Student Sustainability Coalition:

Kelly Wu '22 is co-chair of the UA Committee on Sustainability.

Carolina Gutierrez '23 is co-chair of the UA Committee on Sustainability.

Megan Xu '22 is the advisory chair of the UA Committee on Sustainability.

Kiara Wahnshaft '21 is a member of Environmental Solutions Initiative Rapid Response Group and the UA Chief of Staff.

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# Is anything truly irreversible?

Arthritis, the college years, and the lasting social effects of COVID-19

By Joanna Lin PUBLISHER

In the past few weeks, I've walked through the cold to my UROP, my in-person lab class, and the grocery store. Californians in Boston are generally divided into two categories: the ones who are terrified of the cold and wear excessively puffy jackets, and the ones who are wholly unprepared and continue existing in t-shirts and shorts.

My mom falls into the first category, while I fall into the second. So, even as I wear the incredibly bulky jacket she forced me to bring to Boston, I feel the wind blow straight into my knee joints, given that I'm only wearing leggings. It's slightly uncomfortable, but not so much that I'd put on the ski pants I was also required to bring. What's more uncomfortable is the nagging voice in my head that I am "irreversibly damaging my joints." My hands turn red and cracked, but not enough for me to put on the gloves

sitting on my desk. Often, I can physically hear my mom telling me I'll get arthritis at 30, I'll catch a cold, or I'll get migraines when I get older if I go to bed with wet hair.

Sometimes I'm inclined to believe her but how would I know? How is 60-yearold me going to come back in time and tell me that, indeed, I would have migraines and arthritis?

In chemistry, we learn that every reaction is reversible, as long as enough energy is supplied to push the reaction towards favorability. And I think that's how I used to think about things: Brute force and energy are all I need to make anything happen. Gibbs and Le Chatelier said so. That's certainly how I pushed myself to exhaustion and beyond, with the guarantee that I could make up my sleep debt "sometime in the future."

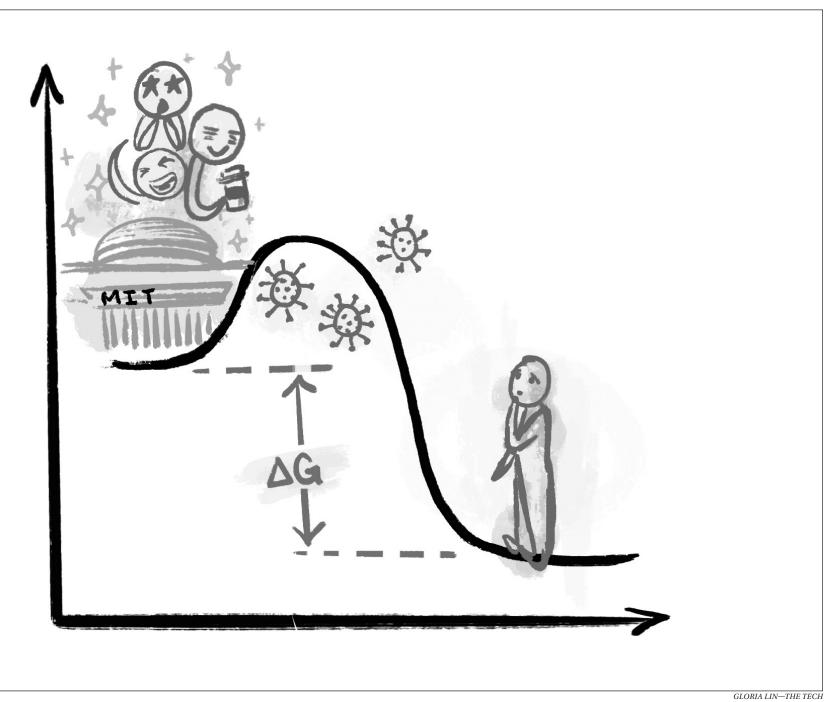
But now, as an old and weary upperclassman, I've begun to consider the other lesson learned in chemistry classes: relevant time frames. There are reactions that can be considered "to completion," meaning you can assume that all the reactants are converted to products and proceed to the next step. Though the reverse reaction might happen, it probably won't in the few minutes it takes to add the next reagent.

This is especially important in biology and psychology. The purpose of enzymes is to speed up spontaneous, yet incredibly slow, processes to a rate where life can function. Similarly, no matter how much energy is expended into learning a language now, I'll probably always be better at the two I learned as a child, because the window of opportunity closes at a certain age.

In the span of a lifetime, will I ever find the time to turn back? Even if I do, will it be possible to reverse anything solely with effort? Sometimes delta G is a mountain I don't want to climb, even if I could. The number of conversations I've had with friends that end with "I'll get a job, I'll work, and then I'll die" make the future seem bleak.

That brings me to the thought that instigated this week's article: Are we losing something in these college years, because of the pandemic, that we won't ever be able to get back, regardless of how much energy we pour into it? Not only the carefree pseudo-adult life, but also the bonds, the traditions (having to explain the pumpkin and piano drop to frosh hurts my soul), and the quirks that make MIT, MIT, Will it be forever impossible to catch up to those

Granted, many people are already worried about young children who won't learn how to socialize or play and share with others because of remote learning. I'm not sure if "the college years" are something to cry over, but they certainly are something special. The past year has been bizarre, and lonesome, given that socialization is a near necessity for humans. But we're the generation that grew up on the internet, and I believe we can survive what we've lost.



Five semesters later, 5.111 does in fact influence my life.



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### **CURSED THOUGHTS**

# A letter

### To someone I reconnected with recently

### By Ana Reyes Sánchez

EDITOR

Okay. Before I (officially) begin: I love you.

It's the same kind of love that I have for my

You're my mentor, my friend — can I call you my friend?

Aaaaah.

It's fine. It's fine.

It's fine.

I saw you today.

You looked like you used to in high school. I look at you and see my past - but isn't that how it always is?

I kept sneaking glances at you as I talked, and I would sometimes see you smiling. Was that at me, or something else? It was so familiar, and so strangely foreign.

We argued about libraries.

Is it possible to remember that you miss

Did I mention that I was nervous earlier?

I told a lot of this to my friend, you know, the one I kept bringing up. I told her that there were two possibilities.

### Either:

- We are different people, and I'm forced to try to untangle whether I changed, you changed, or both of us changed.
- I'm forced to reckon with the passage of time and experience my worst fear — that things are going to be Different. That Ana (personite) isn't actually a part of Ana (person) and that my formative years are going to come from MIT (terrifying).

- We have somehow remained similar enough people that we can fall back into the roles we had in high school.
- I'm forced to reckon with the passage of time and know that - no matter how many things pass, and how much distance I get — I will still be that high school girl that felt so much Hunger and Ache that it was impossible to progress.

Sorry, I forgot. I can't remember what happened with you and what happened around

Did I tell you about Ana (person) and Ana (personite)?

Did I tell you about Hunger? Did I tell you about Ache?

Also, it was the second possibility, but it's softened since high school.

It's been a while since we talked, hasn't it? I'm

I kept getting caught up on the little things: that bookshelf, the podium, the chair.

There's this story I read once — a love story, like all good ones are.

The two main characters move in together at the end, and they mix their books on one bookshelf. It was a profound moment for them. Sometimes, I'll text a friend, "THE BOOKS" or "THE BOOKSHELF," and we'll share a moment of understanding.

I sent her "the bookshelf" the other day, but I was referring to you.

You have the power to recontextualize things

Please be careful with that.

It hit me all at once.

I didn't realize you could forget you loved someone until I was sitting across from you again. My friend says I didn't really forget, I just haven't thought about it in a little while. Like picking up a journal you haven't read in



FARIN TAVACOLI—THE TECH

You always seemed so huge to me in high school.

I told my friend that you had always been too large for the bento box I tried to put you in

think I

You always seemed so huge to me in high

I told my friend that you had always been too large for the bento box I tried to put you in.

Sorry, did I tell you about bento boxes?

They're how I store things in my head. I put things into different boxes to try to organize the way that I think. You've always been in a box, in a box, in a box.

In high school, you would leak out of it.

My friend suggested that I make you another - one for then, one for now. But it was never about the box, was it?

Maybe it wasn't even really about you. Maybe it was more about isolation and sadness and comfort and trying, desperately, to find a place for myself.

That was what you were for a long, long time — a safe place.

It's been a while since we've seen each other. You seem like a person to me, now.

It was weird to discover you aren't any bigger than I am.

I still let you leak out of that bento box.

What I always forgot in high school is that relationships are a choice. I worried for some time whether you loved me too because I didn't realize we were both choosing that in-

Sorry, did I tell you about intricate rituals?

I have a lot of rituals with different people. Ours is one of many that I've collected over the years. Cursed thought? is also one of them.

It's because we're trying to communicate something that I can't say, usually.

You said something ridiculous about libraries. I said something more ridiculous. You pointed it out. I refused to budge — despite knowing at the outset that I would be wrong.

I told you, "I haven't done that in such a long

I wonder if you understood that I meant, "No one has taken your place."

I wore the same white sweater that I used to in high school. I've kept it all these years as an extension of myself and who I used to be.

You recognized it. You asked me about it.

God, it's so intimate to remember someone.

It's like, you know how some things belong to people? Not just objects, but places, thoughts,

There's this poem that I read at MIT, have you read it?

you won't need pills get so scared because I'm greedy -I want to hold onto everything, the world wants to take it away. What the fuck. The number of hours we have together is actually not so large Please linger near the door uncomfortably instead of just leaving. Please forget your scarf in my life and come back later for

Mikko Harvey

It was weird to see you because you still had the things I left. You kept them for me. We could share them for the hour.

I'll leave them with you again and come back later for them.

I can't explain to you how many times I wrote, in pages covered with neat circles,

I wonder if he remembers me the way I remember him. Nov. 2, 2018

He smiled awkwardly. Was that at me of something else?

I want him to love me.

Maybe these feelings don't have any thing to do with him at all. Maybe it's all just from myself.

I don't want him to forget me.

But why would he? Do I really think that I'm forgettable? March 20, 2019

It took me a while to believe it, but thank you for loving me.

And I know I said we had fallen into the same roles as high school, but it's never entirely that simple, is it? I've changed, you've changed. I'm going to keep changing.

But I'm happy. I promise you, I'm happy.

Love and wishes,

Ana (Paola) Reyes Sánchez Your friend, I hope.

8 THE TECH
THURSDAY, MARCH 4, 2021

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