

MIT requires booster shots, updates quarantine policies

All eligible community members must submit proof of booster vaccine by January 14 to maintain access

By Kristina Chen
EDITOR IN CHIEF

In response to a local and global rise in COVID-19 cases and the spread of the Omicron variant, MIT is requiring all eligible community members to receive a COVID-19 vaccine booster by Jan. 14 to access MIT buildings. MIT has also updated its isolation and quarantine practices, event policies, and Independent Activities Period (IAP) plans.

Vice President for Human Resources Ramona Allen, Chancellor Melissa Nobles, Provost Martin Schmidt PhD '88, Executive Vice President and Treasurer Glen Shor, MIT Medical Director Cecilia Stuoipis '90, Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate and Graduate Education Ian Waitz, and Vice President for Research Maria Zuber wrote in a Dec. 13 email to the MIT community that all eligible individuals ages 16 and older studying, working, or living at MIT or accessing MIT facilities would be required to upload proof of receiving the COVID-19 booster by Jan. 14.

MIT Medical offered a series of booster vaccine clinics between Dec. 6 and Dec. 16 and will continue to offer clinics during January and at the beginning of the spring semester. Individuals who received their second dose of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine or their single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine at least six months ago are eligible for the booster.

MIT estimates that 47% of community members received their boosters at the conclusion of the December clinics.

Community members who do not submit proof of their booster vaccine by Jan. 14 will not be able to access MIT buildings past that date until they satisfy the requirement. Those who are not yet eligible will have two weeks to receive their booster once eligible before being considered out of compliance with MIT's requirement.

Community members who have previously received a religious or medical exemption from MIT's vaccine requirement are also exempt from receiving the booster vaccine.

MIT has also made changes to its contact tracing, isolation, and quarantine practices.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health released new guidance for individuals isolating after testing positive for COVID-19, shortening the recommended isolation period for an individual showing no symptoms from 10 days to 5 days, followed by 5 days of wearing a mask when around others. If the individual experiences a fever or has symptoms that are not mild nor improving, they must continue to isolate.

Following isolation, an individual who tested positive should not test for 90 days.

As of Dec. 23, if a community member tests positive, they will be notified by COVID Pass and email and directed to complete a form to inform MIT Medical's contact tracing team. Additionally, in the past, supervisors, advisors, instructors, and academic leaders have been notified about positive cases; MIT Medical will now reach out only to

COVID, Page 2



KEVIN LY—THE TECH

An air of uncertainty continues to loom as positive COVID cases increase across campus during IAP.

Majority sign grad. union cards

GSU awaits voluntary recognition from the Institute

By Shelley Choi
NEWS EDITOR

The MIT Graduate Student Union (GSU) submitted a letter to President L. Rafael Reif, "announcing that an overwhelming majority of MIT's 5,000 graduate employees" "signed union authorization cards" on Dec. 13.

Signing a union card indicates support "forming a union of graduate workers at MIT" and allows the union to act as the "exclusive representative for purposes of negotiating the terms and conditions" of the graduates' roles.

As of Jan. 4, the MIT GSU is still waiting on the MIT administration to "decide whether they will recognize" the union.

The letter requested President Reif to "voluntarily recognize" the union and a "commitment to establish and protect the working

conditions necessary for world class science to flourish" by "addressing long-standing issues of workplace harassment, housing insecurity, and healthcare access."

The website writes that graduate student-workers want a "contract that recognizes the value" they bring to MIT. Graduate employees work as "teaching and research assistants, generating revenue for MIT through intellectual property, grants, teaching undergraduates, and collaborations with private enterprise." The union is fighting for fair work expectations, safe and equitable work environment, financial security, affordable housing, and equal opportunities for international students.

If Reif and MIT voluntarily recognize the union, a "third party will verify majority support for unionization through a

card count." If not, then graduates have the "right to file" for an National Labor Relations Board election to "secure union representation and a start to contract negotiations."

If the union wins, the employer is forced to "recognize and bargain with the union." However, the letter invited the administration "to the bargaining table not as adversaries but as allies," and implored it to "choose the path of collaboration over the path of conflict."

If approved, the MIT GSU will proceed with securing a "union contract" that "covers everything from wages to how disputes will be handled."

GSU will also become the largest new private sector union in the U.S. It is currently affiliated with the national union United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America.

IN SHORT

The **Spring pre-registration deadline** is 5 p.m. on Jan. 6.

Jan. 7 is the last day to petition for a January Advanced Standing Exam.

Jan. 13 at 5 p.m. is the final deadline for continuing students to pre-register for the spring and the deadline for continuing students to

select preferences for spring CI-H/CI-HW subjects.

All eligible MIT community members must **submit proof of receiving a COVID-19 booster** to covid-vaccine.mit.edu by Jan. 14.

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

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

MIT Class of 2026's early admissions rate at record low 4.7%

MIT offered early admission to 697 students to the Class of 2026 out of 14,781 applicants, for an acceptance rate of 4.7%. MIT Admissions Assistant Director Chris Peterson SM '13 announced the statistics in an MIT Admissions blog post on Dec. 18.

The acceptance rate is another record low, following Class of 2025's early acceptance rate of 4.8%. The number of applications is a "small decrease from last year's record high" but still "well above" the "pre-pandemic baseline" of around 9,000 appli-

cations, Peterson wrote.

9,489 applicants (64.2%) were deferred to be "reconsidered without prejudice in Regular Action," and 3,959 applicants (26.8%) were not offered admission. The remaining applicants either withdrew from the process or

switched to Regular Action.

Peterson wrote that it's an "honor and a privilege" to read the applications. The students offered admission are "united by a shared standard of rigorous academics, high character, and a strong match with MIT's mission

to use science, technology, and the useful arts to make the world a better place."

Peer institutions Harvard College and Yale College admitted 7.9% and 10.9% of early applicants, respectively.

— Shelley Choi

ENCANTO

The magic of family.
ARTS, p. 5



XKCD

Trade Expert.
FUN, p. 6

PILSBURY

Salvation through sketching.
ARTS, p. 5

MIT AND CALIFORNIA MATH WARS

MIT must put a stop to censorship in academic settings.
OPINION, p. 4

SECTIONS

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WEATHER

Celebrate the return of IAP with a snowstorm

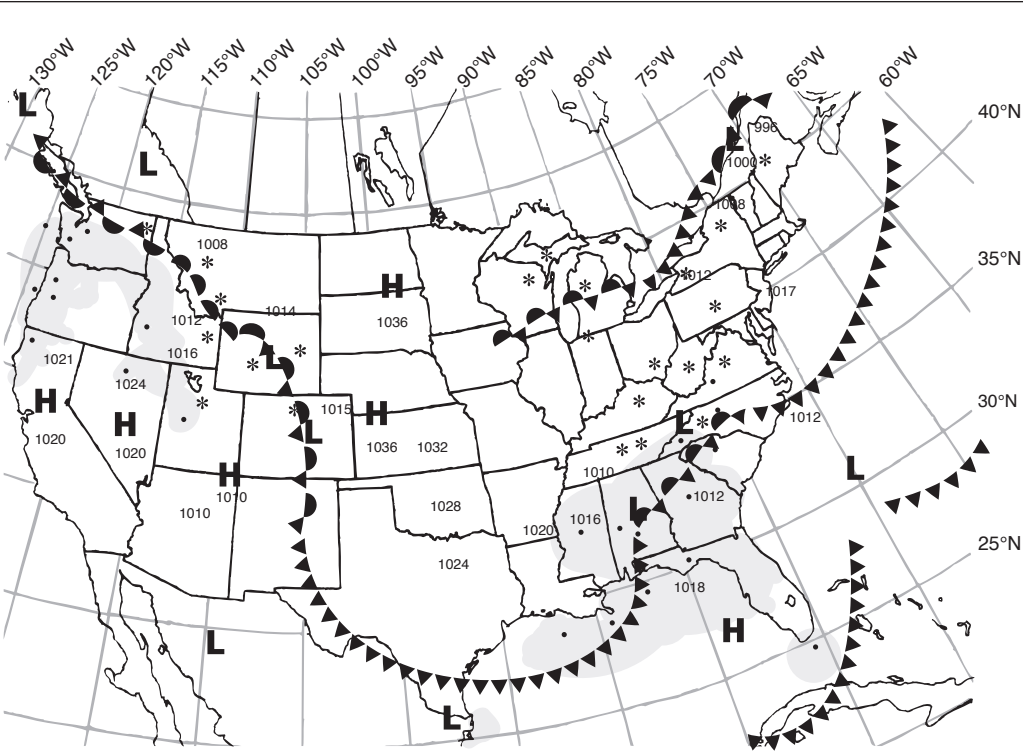
By Shushu Fang and Phoebe Lin
HEAD METEOROLOGIST

After a sunny, lukewarm day on Thursday, we welcome the first snowstorm of 2022. A winter storm watch is placed for Rhode Island and parts of eastern Massachusetts later tonight, leading into early Friday. Commuting during the Friday AM is hazardous due to reduced visibility and snow accumulation. Watch out



















for icy paths when you drop off your COVID tests! This Nor'easter is set to bring large amounts of snow and ice across the country, spanning from the mid-South across West Virginia, the mid-Atlantic states, and New England through Thursday and Friday. While the temperature remains numbingly cold, the weather recovers from the snow storm during the weekend with two mostly sunny and cloudy days.

Extended Forecast

Today: Sunny. High around 38°F (3°C). West wind 10 to 16 mph.
Tonight: Snow. Low around 30°F (-1°C) with 80% chance of precipitation. West wind around 6 mph.
Friday: Snow, mostly before 11a.m. High around 34°F (1°C). Northwest wind 9 to 16 mph. Mostly clear at night. Low around 19°F (-7°C). Gusts as high as 28 mph.
Saturday: Sunny. High around 29°F (-1.7°C). Northwest wind 5 to 13 mph. Partly cloudy at night. Southwest wind 5 to 9 mph at night.
Sunday: Mostly cloudy with a chance of rain before 3 a.m. Low near 29°F (-1.7°C). Chance of rain as high as 60% during the day. Southwest wind 10 to 16 mph.



Situation for Noon Eastern Time, Thursday, January 6th, 2022

Weather Systems	Weather Fronts	Precipitation Symbols		Other Symbols
H High Pressure	 Trough	 Snow	 Rain	 Fog
L Low Pressure	 Warm Front	 Snow	 Rain	 Thunderstorm
 Hurricane	 Cold Front	 Snow	 Rain	 Haze
	 Stationary Front	 Snow	 Rain	Compiled by MIT Meteorology Staff and <i>The Tech</i>
		 Snow	 Rain	

Undergraduates may return for IAP but must participate in quiet period and testing

COVID, from Page 1

those individuals who need to take specific actions in response to a positive test. Close contacts of individuals who test positive must wear a mask around others for 10 days and test on the fifth day after exposure if they are fully vaccinated. Unvaccinated close contacts must quarantine for five days, test on the fifth day after exposure, and wear a mask around others for the five days following their quarantine. Students in campus housing or fraternities, sororities, and independent living groups who test positive and do not require hospitalization will be asked to isolate in their rooms and may not cook for themselves. Grab-and-go meals will be available for isolating students in their residences. If roommates each test positive, they will be asked to quarantine together. However, if one or more roommates tests negative, MIT may make temporary accommodations available to them, and they may return to their room if they test positive or once the positive-testing roommate's isolation period ends. Food and drink may no longer be provided or consumed at MIT-sponsored events on or off campus, though events are still permitted. Visitors and event attendees are also encouraged to be fully vaccinated with the booster if eligible. Spectators at on-campus indoor athletic events are now limited to COVID Pass users. Undergraduate students taking for-credit academic classes important for academic progression; participating in research, internships, athletics, and professional development activities; or those who otherwise would not have appropriate living or learning environments are invited to return for IAP, which began Jan. 3 and ends Jan. 28. Allen, Vice Chancellor and Dean for Student Life Suzy Nelson, Nobles,

Schmidt, Shor, Stuopis, Waitz, and Zuber wrote in a Dec. 21 email that they expect residential density during IAP to be reduced by 40–50%, similar to previous years, because not all students return to campus for IAP. Undergraduates were asked to complete an IAP plans registry by Dec. 27 and to complete pre-arrival testing via a mail-in COVID-19 testing kit. Students who test positive for COVID-19 prior to arriving on campus are not permitted to come on campus. They must notify MIT Medical of their positive test through COVID Pass and isolate off campus until advised to return to campus. Students who test negative must participate in a quiet period upon arriving at MIT to minimize disruptions to IAP. During the quiet period, students may participate in IAP classes and Institute activities and events and carry out essential needs such as getting food or cooking, picking up packages, and exercising. However, they should avoid student-led events and gatherings and wear their masks whenever they are outside their rooms. The quiet period ends once students receive two negative on-campus test results — one upon arrival and one 3–4 days later. Twice-weekly testing and daily attestations for undergraduates will continue as usual during IAP. Managers are strongly encouraged to have employees work remotely when feasible during IAP in order to “ease pressure on campus testing and tracing systems” as MIT prepares for the spring, according to the Dec. 21 email. Research operations will continue as they have, though MIT encourages faculty and other principal investigators to review their research continuity plans due to the increased likelihood of researchers testing positive and being unable to come to work. Research leaders should also encourage flexible work locations during IAP.

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File Edit Options Buffers Tools Im-Python Python Help

```
from new_skills import *  
  
def learnMarketableJobSkills():  
    return linux, OSX, javascript, applescript, perl, python, PHP  
  
if self.interest == True:  
    print "E-mail join@tech.mit.edu"
```

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INTERVIEW

Seeking salvation through sketching: an artistic journey beginning in solitary confinement

Jake Pilsbury discovers his passion for drawing while surviving harsh prison conditions

By Alana Chandler
STAFF WRITER

Some quotes have been lightly edited for clarity and length. Content warning: violence, self-harm.

“My name is Jake Pilsbury. I am 29. Sorry, I had to think about that. I’ve spent basically half my life in prison — 12 years.”

March 2021. Pilsbury sits across from me, albeit in Zoom world, for our interview. Beneath the sleeves of his brown uniform, his arms are decorated with intricate tattoos, many of which he gave himself. A picture-perfect skull and clown duo peek out on his forearm. Pilsbury sits in what looks like a typical classroom with round tables and aging plastic chairs, except instead of sitting in a school, Pilsbury speaks from a correctional facility where he is finishing a substance rehabilitation program while taking college courses to obtain his entrepreneurship degree.

Pilsbury is a self-taught artist who discovered his talent while in solitary confinement. He spent over three years inside a supermax cell, which he described as a prison inside a maximum security prison itself. “The best way I can describe the supermax is they put you inside a hole and throw away the hole. It was during this dark time when I watched those around me slowly lose touch with reality, which is not that uncommon in that environment. Imagine staying inside a concrete box for years at a time with literally nothing to occupy your mind but your own anxieties.”

Besides mealtimes when guards placed trays of food in his cell door’s slot, Pilsbury did not have contact with anyone. Throughout his three years in supermax, he made a single phone call and went outside only once. Pilsbury said his time there was extremely lonely, dehumanizing, and painful.

“If you treat people like animals, what will eventually happen? They will start to act like animals. I do not understand why people treat each other like this and expect them to become rehabilitated. Sadly, that is not the

worst of my trials in my life. I often wonder how I am not worse off than I am.”

His barren cell had no windows and only contained state-issued flip flops, a thin green mat to sleep on, an itchy wool blanket, and the boxers on his body. To pass the time, Pilsbury slept as much as possible. Like many supermax inmates, at times Pilsbury resorted to self-harm. “You spend so long desensitized with no contact with anyone that you eventually welcome any feeling at all, like injury, to remind yourself you are still alive. The pain stings, but it reminds you of what a feeling feels like again. I was aware I needed to find something to occupy my own mind, or I would lose it.”

Pilsbury’s life changed when an officer surprised him by breaking the rules to give him paper and a rubber flex pen (designed so it cannot be used as a weapon). Pilsbury admits that when he began drawing, his sketches were very much amateur. He recalls that his first drawing was biomechanically inspired, weaving together bolts and blades with human bones and tendons. “I would draw and draw until I had calloused fingers. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, I was released from supermax into the general prison population. Once I was released, I was able to show people my drawings, and surprisingly, people loved my art; I truly thought I sucked.”

Through our email exchanges, Pilsbury showed me a gallery’s worth of his captivating drawings, which can also be viewed on his online portfolio. Although he only had simple supplies like pencil and pen to draw with in prison, his powerful pieces are shaded deeply and jump off the page. Blades, eyes, and the Holy Cross are common themes in his artwork, most of which he drew without actually seeing any reference. He signed each piece with his initials and a four-leaf clover, as homage to his Irish heritage. “From an outside perspective, most of my stuff looks evil, but really it’s just whatever strikes me at the moment. I learned to draw during a very dark time in my life. Hav-

ing a way to express those emotions helped ease my anxieties, and eventually drawing evolved into a passion.”

Shortly after leaving the supermax, Pilsbury taught himself a different art form — tattooing. “The limited resources we have as prisoners mean that having ingenuity is a must for comfortable survival in an extremely uncomfortable environment.” For ink, Pilsbury burnt hair grease like pomade and used the soot mixed with water and instant coffee. He engineered his own tattoo gun by using the rotary motor of a CD player paired with a needle made from either a guitar string or the spring from a pen straightened out. According to Pilsbury, these tattoos last just as long, if not longer, than tattoos done on the outside.

Known as one of the best tattoo artists in the Department of Corrections where he resides, Pilsbury had a never-ending list of clients waiting for tattoos, for which he was often compensated with instant ramen and honey buns. Such is the currency of a place without cash. Tattooing also offered Pilsbury the opportunity to interact with inmates beyond the strong racial divides that exist within prisons. “You’re shunned if you don’t get with the program and just deal with your own people, but I’ve had the free pass to interact with everybody because of my tattoo skills.”

Pilsbury dreams of opening his own tattoo shop and becoming a freelance graphic designer once he leaves prison. Unlike supermax, Jake said that his correctional facility focused more on rehabilitation than penalization. He took classes through the MIT Educational Justice Institute (TEJI) run by Professor Lee Perlman. As a part of TEJI, the Prison Education Initiative (PEI) offers hybrid classes, where prisoners and MIT students can take courses together at the correctional facility. Due to the pandemic, these classes currently take place over Zoom. “The *Nonviolence as a Way of Life* course was a turning point, completely changing my perspective. I was getting in trouble here and on

my way to get shipped back to supermax. But once I started taking that course, there was a lot of self-reflection. It gave me a purpose in here and something to look forward to twice a week. At first, it was a little weird because I was like, ‘Having classes with MIT students, they’re going to be smarter than me! They’re going to judge me because I’m in prison.’ But by the end of the class, we all became friends.”

“Lee has been extremely helpful and supportive in helping me achieve my goals as an artist.” Today, Pilsbury is teaching himself graphic design. He has designed logos for PEI courses which are featured on their website. He also started his own clothing brand, Freedom Wear, where clothing and accessories adorned with his designs are available for order for the general public. The goal of the Freedom Wear brand is to spread awareness about struggles such as recidivism, mental health, and addiction. Pilsbury will use the sales revenue to help pay for his future education. Pilsbury also took courses at a community college to obtain a graphic design certification. After leaving prison, he plans to attend school in Boston to further his education journey. “This time, I’ve got a lot of good things going for me. I’m not getting out to a bad situation. I have goals, a positive living environment, and a good support network.”

“Overall, there have been years of my life inside a cell locked down. All I needed to mentally escape my physical confinement was simply a pencil and paper. Most people do not look at a pencil and piece of paper the same way I do. I look back and often wonder where my life would be if that officer never slipped me a pen and paper inside the supermax.”

If you would like to purchase Jake Pilsbury’s apparel, visit <https://shop.spreadshirt.com/freedomwear>. Check out Pilsbury’s art portfolio at <https://jakepilsbury.mypportfolio.com/drawings> and contact him through the site for graphic design, tattoos, or artwork commissions. Pilsbury has been released from the correctional facility.

MOVIE REVIEW

Magic lies within us

Encanto casts a spell with a moving storyline and breathtaking visuals

By Vyshnavi Vennelakanti
STAFF WRITER

In the enchanted village of Encanto lives the Madrigal family, who is blessed with special gifts. Abuela (María Cecilia Botero), the stern yet softhearted matriarch, strives to protect the family and the magic that in turn protects their village. Everyone in the Madrigal family receives a gift when they come of age, except for Mirabel (Stephanie Beatriz), the youngest granddaughter of Abuela. As she struggles to fit into a family where everyone else is “gifted,” she notices the magic safeguarding her family is starting to fade. The rest of the story follows Mirabel’s journey to preserve this magic and save Encanto with the help of her uncle Bruno (John Leguizamo).

Encanto tells the story of a young girl who is unexpectedly tasked with saving her village and her family. While emphasizing the importance of risk-taking and self-discovery, *Encanto* furthers this theme by illustrating that a person’s worth depends on more than their innate gifts. Mirabel constantly tries to prove herself to her fam-

ily and win Abuela’s heart to compensate for her lack of a gift. She attempts and fails at even simple tasks that the rest of her family completes easily, such as decorating their house. However, when a disaster befalls the Madrigal family and Mirabel is suddenly faced with the task of restoring the magic, she understands that being true to herself matters more than being blessed with a gift.

Like most Disney films, *Encanto* is full of central messages. Luisa (Jessica Darrow) and Isabela (Diane Guerrero), the elder sisters of Mirabel, appear effortless and perfect in everything they do. However, both are constantly under pressure and feel tormented by their desire to earn their family’s approval. As the film progresses, Abuela realizes the consequences of her high expectations for her family.

Beatriz brings Mirabel’s character to life with her realistic portrayal, enamoring the audience with the character of the goofy, playful Mirabel. Leguizamo essays with perfection the role of Abuela’s son, Bruno, whose gift of precognition results in several misunderstandings with the

family disparaging him. All the actors made their characters pop off the screen.

While most of the songs complement the tone of the film, at times they also slow the pace of the movie. For example, though the song “Surface Pressure” brilliantly illustrates Luisa’s struggles, the song “Waiting on a Miracle” portraying Mirabel’s emotions seems redundant given that the audience already saw her very clearly expressing her thoughts before the song.

Much like its name, *Encanto* leaves no stone unturned in mesmerizing the audience. Howard and Bush maintain a vibrant tone throughout the movie by depicting picturesque landscapes, optimistic characters, and high-spirited music. They also successfully capture many aspects of Colombian culture, including dress, flora, and architecture. This film represents the peak of Disney’s visuals, exceeding those of *Coco* and the *Frozen* franchise.

Overall, I would highly recommend *Encanto*, a film that captivates the audience not only with its beautiful visuals and moving songs but also with a compel-

★★★★☆

Encanto

Directed by Byron Howard, Jared Bush

Screenplay by Lin-Manuel Miranda, Jared Bush, Charise Castro Smith

Starring Stephanie Beatriz, María Cecilia Botero, John Leguizamo, Mauro Castillo

Rated PG, Now Playing

ling story that shows that magic is created when a family stays together, not when someone is imbued with special gifts.



Got a lot on your mind?

Share some thoughts with us!

Write for Campus Life. join@tech.mit.edu

Classes

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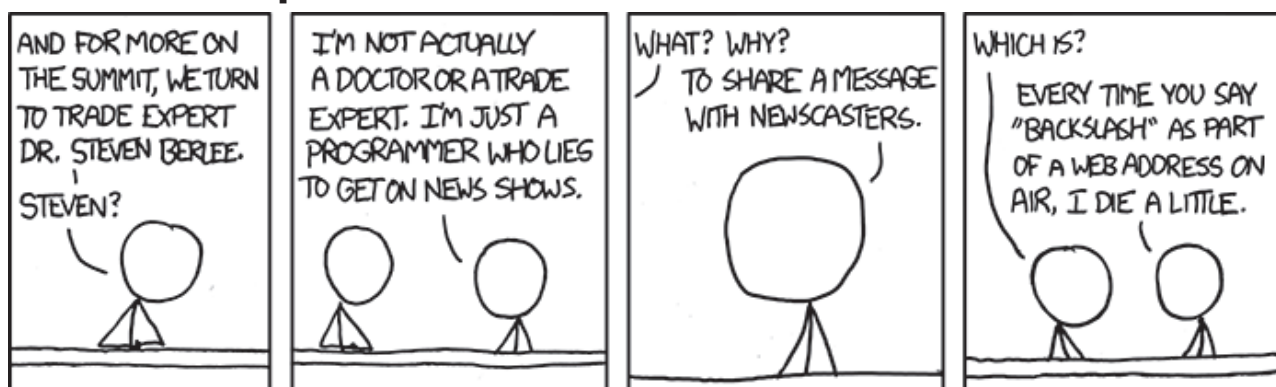
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Year's Beginning by Sally R. Stein

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50 Ticker__ parade
51 "And others" abbreviation
53 Deep affection
54 Metallic rocks
55 Twisted out of shape

[727] Trade Expert



mean, it's been almost twenty years. Now, it's possible you're simply embedding Windows directory paths in your URIs, but in that case you need more than just a short lecture.

- **Women's Basketball** drops the ball against Bentley University 59-72.

- **Women's Basketball** at Connecticut College was postponed.

- **Men's Basketball** dribbled the game away 75-86 against Clark University in overtime.

Upcoming Sports Events

SATURDAY 8

Women's Track and Field
Art Farnham Invitational
12:00 p.m.

Women's Swimming and Diving
vs. United States Coast Guard Academy
12:00 p.m.

Men's Basketball
vs. Worcester Polytechnic Institute
2:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY 12

Men's Basketball
vs. United States Coast Guard Academy
7:00 p.m.

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9	6	7	5	1	4	3	8	2
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