thetech.com



WEATHER, p. 2 FRI: 71°F | 52°F Sunny. SAT: 73°F | 62°F Mostly sunny.

Volume 142, Number 18 Thursday, September 15, 2022

MIT GSU-UE heralds Sept. 19 bargaining meeting with rally Organizers and invited speakers discuss bargaining

goals, boost morale, and state student grievances

By Wenbo Wu EDITOR IN CHIEF

The MIT Graduate Student Union (MIT GSU-UE) held a rally on Hockfield Court Sept. 12 ahead of its Sept. 19 bargaining meeting for its first contract with the MIT

Sophie Coppieters 't Wallant G, an MIT GSU-UE organizer, Bargaining Committee (BC) member, and graduate student in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering, kickstarted the rally.

'We grad workers all came to MIT to do world-class research and to solve some of the world's most pressing issues," Coppieters 't Wallant began. "We all realized that in order to be able to do this work, we

need decent working and living

MIT facilities staff members under the Service Employees International Union, Local 32BJ branch were also present at the rally. Coppieters 't Wallant commented on their recent attempts at arriving at a contract with MIT: "In this year of 9% inflation, and with MIT's endowment growing by 55%," MIT is "refusing to offer our essential custodial staff more than a 1.5% pay increase. We all realize this is just a pay cut."

She also cited MIT's attempts to implement a "discriminatory drug testing policy" for facilities staff. "Shame on MIT, and we want MIT to know that we stand in firm solidarity with our custodians and their union in their contract fight."

Ruth Hanna G, a third-year graduate student in Biology and MIT GSU-UE organizer, commented on the work-life balance concerns that graduate students face, saying that "MIT's own data show that over half of grad workers often feel overwhelmed by what we have to do, and 38% of grad workers have felt so depressed that it was difficult to function."

"We deserve to not just survive at MIT, but thrive here," Hanna continued. "But we see the MIT administration consistently makes decisions that sacrifice our health and well-being," citing MIT's discontinuation of asymptomatic COVID-19 testing, the closing of

Union Rally, Page 2



MIT Students from all over campus celebrate the reopening of one of the student dorms, Burton Conner, Sat.

The Graduate Student Union (GSU) rallies together outside of the Stata Center, Mon.

IN SHORT

MIT Dance Party marking the end of Reif's presidency will be Sept. 17.

Career week begins Sept. 19 and ends Sept. 23.

Career fair will take place in per-

son Sept. 23, which is also a student

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Tea Do opens up as one of the Student Center's newest food options. Mon.

133 first years enter First-Year Residence Exchange process New House, New Vassar, and Burton Conner receive

most requests to FYRE into residence this fall semester

By Srinidhi Narayanan NEWS EDITOR

133 first-year students entered

the First-Year Residence Exchange (FYRE) process that facilitates residence hall switches this year. The FYRE process concluded after four days of Residence Exploration (REX) on Aug. 31. 74 first-year students successfully switched residence halls.

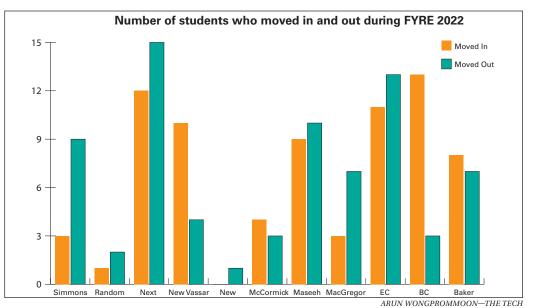
The number of first years opting to FYRE rose sharply from last year when 89 students attempted to FYRE and is comparable to 2019 when 121 students attempted to FYRE. First years had a 55% FYRE success rate this year, a decrease

from last year's 70% success rate but an increase from 2019 when 47% successfully FYREd.

Housing and Residential Services (HRS) Senior Communications Manager Zachary Tsetsos wrote in an email to The Tech that first-year residents "were most interested in moving to New House, New Vassar, and Burton Conner through the FYRE process." Among the 74 successful moves, the most popular destinations were Burton-Conner (13), Next House (12), and East Campus (11), while most students moved out of Next House (15), East Campus (12), and Maseeh Hall (10).

Due to the reopening of Burton-Conner, there was "a slight decline in the typical number of first-year residents assigned to each building" since the incoming class was spread across eleven, instead of ten, residence halls, according to Tsetsos.

The planned renovations of East Campus - scheduled to begin in Summer 2023 — also affected HRS's approach to building assignments: Tsetsos wrote that "in consultation with the East Campus house leadership and DormCon, only first-year students who selected East campus as one of their top-three building preferences were assigned to the community."



Next had the most number of students move out during FYRE 2022, while BC had the most move in.

OPEN BARGAINING COMMITTEES

The GSU-UE must allow for active participation from all members. OPINION, p. 4

SUPPORTING FACILITIES WORKERS

Graduate student workers stand behind MIT's facilities staff who are fighting for their rights. OPINION, p. 4

WORKING AS A UNION

Stop this one-side-versus-the-other mentality and work together toward an MIT-quality collective bargaining agreement. OPINION, p. 5

FEAR OF UNCERTAINTY

My cynicism towards love serves as a defense mechanism. CAMPUS LIFE, p. 6

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WEATHER

Sweater weather to make things better

By Phoebe Lin

A high pressure system will move eastwards over New England to bring some cold, dry weather to Cambridge this weekend. As the dewpoint drops, we can expect some clearer days and nights. If you're spending time outside, be prepared for chillier days with a jacket or sweater. Don't get caught off guard if a shower or two comes your way!

This past September has brought calmer weather than August, but active weather is continuing elsewhere in the world with Tropical Depression Seven developing in the Atlantic and heatwaves scorching the American West.

Extended Forecast

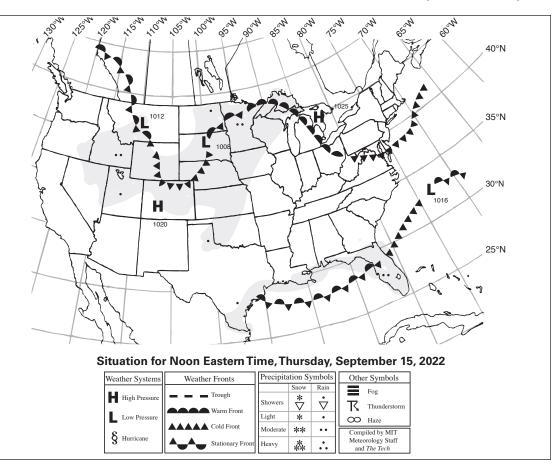
Today: Today: Sunny. High around 70°F (21°C). Northwest winds 12-17 mph.

Tonight: Clear. Low around 53°F (12°C). Northwest winds 12-15 mph.

Tomorrow: Sunny. High around 71°F (22°C) and low around 52°F (11°C). North winds 10-12 mph.

Saturday: Mostly sunny. High around 73°F (23°C) and low around 62°F (17°C). Southwest winds 7-10 mph.

Sunday: Mostly sunny. High around 80°F (27°C) and low around 63°F (17°C). Southwest winds 10-12 mph.



Li: 'MIT is the biggest landowner in Cambridge,' can control housing market

Union Rally, from Page 1

specialty divisions at MIT Medical and the MIT Pharmacy, the lack of dental insurance, and MIT's "cruel" policy of discontinuing health insurance coverage when graduate students go on medical leave.

"MIT admin need to know that when they are sitting down at the bargaining table next week, they are not just bargaining with the 24 members" of the BC, but with "thousands" of graduate students, Hanna said.

Hanna added that two ways graduate students can "join [the MIT GSU-UE] in this fight" include signing a union card and joining the Contract Action Team.

Coppieters 't Wallant then invited Vice President of the Boston Teachers Union Erik Berg to speak. Berg said that he was present to "bring solidarity from the Boston Teachers Union," commenting on how graduate students and education workers have "a lot in common."

Sihan Chen G, a third-year graduate student in Brain and Cognitive Sciences, member of the BC, and international student from China, spoke next. As an international student, Chen said that he faces "obstacles and challenges in order to do research, teach, and to develop our career" in the U.S. In particular, these issues stem from having one's "visa status hanging over their heads."

Chen applauded MIT and Harvard's 2020 efforts in suing the Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement due to the Trump

Administration's "racist and xenophobic [international] student ban." However, "just a few months later" MIT issued a notice "that they will essentially cancel all remote appointments while the pandemic was still raging in the U.S.," forcing "over 600 grad workers to come back to the country within a month, or lose their job and likely their visa."

Regarding the process of being able to stay and work in the country, Chen said that it was unfair that "to be an international grad worker," one had to be "rich, or lucky, or both." Chen added that the "nationality and economic background" of graduate students "should not be an obstacle standing in the way" of "mak[ing] contributions to human knowledge."

While Chen acknowledged that certain policies are out of MIT's control, he said the students want to work with the Institute "to mitigate the disparity between domestic and international grad workers as much as possible."

Coppieters 't Wallant then invited Evan MacKay, a rank-andfile organizer and member of the Harvard Graduate Student Union (HGSU) bargaining committee, to the stage. "Our membership supports [the MIT GSU-UE] from the bottom up and we're eager to continue" this support, MacKay said, adding that MIT and Harvard graduate students have a "shared struggle." In addition to issues cited by the previous speakers, MacKay also acknowledged the struggles faced by those affected by Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and those seeking

childcare.

MacKay highlighted that "the power inside the bargaining room" does not arise from "getting the right, smart people" on the bargaining committee but rather comes from "outside the bargaining room" through an "engaged membership."

"Organizing is something all of us do together," not "something that just happens from people with titles or special positions within the union," MacKay said. Organizing and working together helps individuals petition for a list of demands and "react to intimidation alongside one another," MacKay said.

MacKay also shared insights based on the HGSU's past, saying "I wish that [the HGSU] had done a better job" in the beginning "openly disagreeing and asking questions about" what "these disagreements meant."

Belinda Li G, a second-year graduate student in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) and representative for the BC, spoke after MacKay. As a resident of Site 4 with a monthly rent of "60% of your stipend," Li said that "the only reason" she "managed to scrape by" was because she had "savings from previous jobs," something that "the vast majority of grad students do not."

Even with these savings, Li said that she was "still under significant financial stress to the point where [she] felt the need to ration food." Li cited how in a 2019 MIT survey on graduate student life, "over 75% of grad workers are stressed about rent." The "average MIT grad worker pays over 50% of their stipend" in rent, which Li stated that under

"federal standards," MIT graduate students are "severely rent burdened." In addition to rent, Li noted poor housing conditions, delayed repairs, and having "no real" CO-VID-19 protocol "two years into a pandemic."

Li added that the MIT administration "can argue that... housing is not a mandatory subject of bargaining," but this is because "employers are usually not landlords for their employees." In cases where "employment is so intimately tied with housing, it is completely reasonable to negotiate on housing."

Li said that the MIT administration "will also argue that they are simply accounting for the housing market." However, given that "MIT is the biggest landowner in Cambridge," the Institute has "significant control over the housing market." "When MIT built Site 4, they tore down the older, more affordable Eastgate dorm and replaced it with a bunch of commercial offices and labs," which she said did not "sound like an act of simple survival in the face of rising housing costs."

The next speaker was Carl Rosen, the General President of United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (of which the MIT GSU-UE is to become a local chapter). Rosen said that he has worked with the BC "all summer," to put together a "great set of contract demands" based on MIT GSU-UE member input and "surveying the best of what's elsewhere in the country."

"I have not seen such a well-organized group — again, a self-organizing group of workers — in recent

Center, Mon.

memory, and that is tremendously exciting," Rosen said. The work of "thousands of graduate workers" over the "last couple of years" ensures that "go[ing] into the [bargaining] table,... the administration has to hear you."

"What I've seen here today" and "over the last period convinces me that you've got what it takes to win that fight," Rosen concluded.

Coppieters 't Wallant then introduced Jonathan Tagoe G, a Masters student in Mechanical Engineering and BC member. As an MIT undergraduate of the Class of 2021, Tagoe said that "MIT admin kinda does what it wants. Either they blindside us with policy that affects us" or "they may ask us for feedback" but not take it into account.

"If MIT wants to negotiate fairly in good faith, let's do it," Tagoe said. "But we gotta be real with ourselves here.... This is going to be a contract fight, and it's not going to be easy.... But we gotta stick together." "Each of us" must "put in the work" to "do what we can," Tagoe said.

Tagoe added that "it's going to take clear, consistent communication about what's happening at the bargaining table and quickly building up pressure to make MIT budge when we need them to."

"We need folks engaged, ready to participate, and most importantly, just being good members of the MIT community and sticking by each other," Tagoe said. While the MIT GSU-UE has "support," "no one else can fight this fight for us."

Joshua Talbot G, a graduate student in EECS and MIT GSU-UE organizer, closed out the rally with live music.

"I know that the English intelligentsia have plenty of reason for their timidity and dishonesty, indeed I know by heart the arguments by which they justify themselves. But at least let us have no more nonsense about defending liberty against Fascism. If liberty means anything at all it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.

Free Speech Alliance

- George Orwell

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A new MIT logo sign being set up in front of the Student

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Thursday, September 15, 2022

the human # energy company**

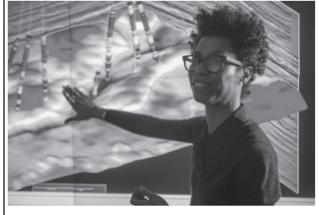
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GUEST COLUMN

Our facilities workers deserve a fair contract now, not a pay cut

The MIT community is organizing to demand that MIT invest in its people and mission

Many of us know our facilities workers as the friendly faces who brighten our day whenever we see them in our halls, labs, offices, and residences. Our 600 facilities workers — who won their union with SEIU 32BJ 75 years ago — keep MIT safe, open, and running, working tirelessly at all hours of the day to clean, maintain, and repair our labs, offices, homes, and campus. This university, and all of its groundbreaking research and teaching, would grind to a halt without their efforts and contributions. They also kept MIT safe and open throughout the pandemic as essential workers who put their lives and those of their families on the line to allow COVID-19 research to continue on campus.

Now, facilities workers are simply asking for a fair union contract that meets the rising cost of living. But, unfortunately, MIT is dragging its feet.

MIT's administration seems to think that our facilities workers deserve what amounts to a pay cut. During the same pandemic year that facilities workers put their and their families' health at risk, MIT's endowment skyrocketed by 49% to over \$27 billion. With inflation exceeding 9% earlier this summer, facilities workers came to the negotiating table proposing what they have always won from MIT: a fair raise that justly accounts for the rising cost of living, as well as facilities workers' critically important contributions to the growing university. MIT has responded with a pittance, initially

offering a paltry 1% raise before budging to 2.25% after the facilities workers organized demonstrations on campus. That amounts to a roughly 6-7% pay cut when inflation is taken into account.

And that's not all. The MIT administration is insisting on a drug and alcohol testing policy, which would basically enable MIT to test any worker at any time. Not only is this policy an arbitrary and demeaning invasion of privacy, but it would also open the door for MIT to abuse this testing to discriminate against workers. For example, a supervisor would be able to abuse their position of power to punish a worker who stands up for themselves by forcing them to take a drug test, bullying the worker by threatening their job and livelihood. Where is the respect for our essential workers now?

At a time of historic endowment growth, the MIT administration is doubling down on cutting costs at every turn to the detriment of our university and community. For example, MIT is shifting to contracting out graduate housing. The new West Campus Graduate Residence under construction has been leased to and will be fully operated by American Campus Communities, a Texasbased, for-profit real-estate developer. This change will not only exacerbate MIT's pattern of luxury apartment prices, but could also exclude our unionized facilities workers from working in the new MIT residence, in favor of subcontracted labor. Subcontracting with non-union labor cuts costs by driving down wages, eliminating benefits, and ultimately offering less accountability for MIT. This is at the same time that MIT closed down our pharmacy and asymptomatic CO-VID-19 testing.

The pattern is clear. MIT's administration continues to chase profits rather than devoting its immense resources to supporting the well-being of the people that keep MIT functioning.

But the workers who make this campus run — including our facilities workers, dining workers, librarians, and graduate workers — are fighting back by organizing together through our unions. This fight is not just to improve our working and living conditions, but to build an MIT that truly invests in its people and lives up to its mission. On Wednesday, Sept. 7, our facilities workers held a speakout and march, where undergrads, graduate workers, post-docs, and staff came out in solidarity. The MIT community stands firmly in solidarity with our facilities workers, and we will continue to stand with them until they win the contract they deserve - and beyond.

Sign onto the MIT Student Worker Alliance — We Support Our Facilities Workers! petition here (tinyurl.com/MIT-Supports-32BJ).

Thejas Wesley is a sixth-year Ph.D. candidate in chemical engineering, a member and bargaining committee representative of the MIT Graduate Student Union, and a member of the MIT Student Worker Alliance.

GUEST COLUMN

Do members run this union?

Lack of deliberation over open bargaining is a symptom of deeper issues

In an infographic circulated by the MIT Graduate Student Union (GSU) in Fall 2021, the union contrasts its "grassroots union organizing" approach with "admin-dictated advocacy" to demonstrate why the former is superior for empowering graduate studentworkers. While admin-dictated advocacy is private and unaccountable, grassroots union organizing is transparent, public and democratic. In order to drive home the point, the graphic states that "[o]ur union, as part of UE [United Electrical Workers], will be committed to open bargaining to keep the admin accountable to grad workers and to keep the broader grad worker population informed and engaged" (emphasis added). Open negotiations are contract negotiations where all workers covered by the collective bargaining agreement can attend.

Fast forward to today, just days before contract negotiations are set to begin between the GSU and MIT's administration, and the union has recently announced internally that bargaining will, in fact, be closed to all graduate students, save for members of the Bargaining Committee (BC) and a handful of graduate students who may be invited to discuss specialized bargaining topics. This seeming reversal in policy was decided behind closed doors by the BC and was not even subject to debate among the

union's own central decision-making body, the Department Organizing Committee, let alone among the grad student population at-large. The BC's stated reasons for rejecting open bargaining were roughly threefold: 1) low attendance would signal weakness to the administration; 2) a vocal minority of grad students could sabotage negotiations; and 3) the bargaining guidelines discourage impromptu comments, and therefore grad students would not get much out of it.

The first point — that dwindling attendance would suggest a weakened position is certainly of concern but is exceedingly pessimistic and defeatist coming from union organizers. The very role of an organizer is to galvanize workers to become active participants in their workplace, and this includes getting them to show up to bargaining sessions. Union organizers are right to be concerned about dwindling support. However, the solution is to redouble efforts to increase participation, not to close off avenues to participation. A more optimistic perspective would be to recognize that high attendance by the rank and file will empower and en ergize the BC to stand up to the administration and fight for the most favorable contract

The second point — that a vocal minority could sabotage bargaining — could also be

interpreted as pessimistic, insofar as it suggests that the rank and file cannot be trusted to behave with civility in the negotiating room. While the BC has provided no examples of negotiations that were sabotaged by unruly workers under open bargaining, there are a plethora of examples of successful open bargaining at other workplaces. In a recent white paper by veteran labor organizer Jane McAlevey entitled Turning the Tables: Participation and Power in Negotiations, McAlevey, while extolling the virtues of open bargaining, recounts first-hand experiences with it across a number of diverse workplaces, where ground rules are set to ensure that negotiations proceed in an efficient and civil manner. Workers are typically required to agree to four ground rules before entering the room: 1) maintain a "poker face," as in show no emotion or other response, unless pre-planned; 2) no one speaks except the designated negotiators, unless pre-planned; 3) workers send notes on index cards to the negotiators whenever they want to speak, relay information, or take a break; and 4) no nictures, recordings or cell phone use, McA levey claims: "In 20 years of big and open negotiations, I've never seen a worker violate

As to the BC's final point — that grad students won't get much out of attending open

OPINION POLICY

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bargaining sessions — McAlevey has much to say to the contrary. Attendance by the rankand-file builds trust between them and the BC. Transmitting information to the members about bargaining becomes much easier when they are able to witness the proceedings for themselves. Workers gain a greater sense of agency and belonging in the union when they are able to participate, even if only by sitting and observing, and gain a greater understanding of and appreciation for the inner workings of their union. And, finally, open bargaining gives workers first-hand experience of the nature of labor relations, where they can monitor the behavior and disposition of their employer and oftentimes observe the condescension and bad faith they exhibit towards their workers.

But open bargaining is not just enacted successfully by the Philadelphia nurses or New Jersey teachers from McAlevey's case studies; it is also used by our peers at other universities. Organizers for the Graduate Student Organizing Committee at New York University (NYU), the oldest private university grad student union in the country, have stated that open bargaining sessions have been "instrumental in bringing people in" and "the experience of witnessing, even on Zoom, the dismissal and condescension that we face at the bargaining table is radicalizing and mobilizing." Similarly, organizers from Student Workers of Columbia describe how the pandemic led to a flourishing of "rank-and-file participation and radicalization," such as making their already-open bargaining sessions more accessible to the average member. This included moving sessions to more accessible locations and times, as well as offering remote attendance options. The histories of the unions at NYU and Columbia, as well as at the University of California system, are particularly instructive, where reform caucuses called Academic Workers for a Democratic Union have been formed to promote more open, democratic structures in response to the closed, top-down structures of their union leadership.

Regardless of one's position on open bargaining, we all ought to be troubled by the lack of democratic control over important strategic decisions within our union. Compare the lack of meaningful deliberation by the GSU on open bargaining with the GSU's deliberation and decision-making on another consequential issue, the decision over which national union to affiliate with in Fall 2019. In the weeks leading up to that decision, the issue was researched extensively by a dedicated committee, of which I was a member. This committee then wrote a detailed report that weighed each option and was circulated to the membership, a town hall meeting was held that was open to all members to discuss the importance of the affiliation decision and the merits of each national union we were considering, and a secure online vote was conducted that was open to all members (since we weren't public at the time, this generally included any graduate student who was supportive of the union). While this process was by no means perfect, it remains the closest instance of participatory democracy in the brief history of the union. There is no reason why a similar decision-making process could not be replicated, in part or in total, for deciding other important issues like the structure of our first negotiations with the administration.

Unfortunately, the GSU has since rejected holding town hall meetings that are open to

all graduate students for the purpose of discussing important issues, instead preferring to communicate almost exclusively through one-on-one conversations between union organizers and graduate students, such as in the lead up to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election last Spring, and through departmental-level meetings. The arguments given against providing open town halls were similar to those arrayed against open bargaining: that they would provide a platform for a vocal minority of bad faith actors. Unfortunately, in my experience in the union, there is often a conflation of anti-union sentiment, on the one hand, and criticism and dissent by concerned members on the other.

This philosophy of restricting discussion about the union to small, interpersonal exchanges between organizers and members within individual departments dictates the strategy for keeping members informed on bargaining: a Contract Action Team is charged with providing updates to constituents about what is going on during negotiations behind closed doors. While this kind of relational organizing is critical, and much lauded by experts like McAlevey, it should be coupled with efforts to provide open forums where members can access union leadership directly, and provide input, and obtain answers to questions, on important strategic topics. The benefits of open forums are many-fold: they allow the cross-pollination of ideas and the building of solidarity between like-minded individuals and departments, and they provide an outlet for constructive criticism of our union and an opportunity to hold leadership accountable. The importance of such meetings is laid out explicitly in a pamphlet from our national union partner, the UE, called Them and Us Unionism: "High levels of membership participation are encouraged and made possible by the structure of our local unions. Regular membership meetings are held where the rank and file acts on all matters affecting the operation of the local." Indeed, the GSU's Affiliation Committee recommended affiliating with UE in large part for this emphasis on rank-and-file unionism in which, as the UE motto states, members run the union.

In understanding what Union Democracy means, we can do no better than the description given in this same UE pamphlet: "Democracy is more than just holding votes — it is an active commitment to make sure that as many members as possible are informed and participating in their union. High levels of membership participation, and the willingness of UE members to stand up for a union that they control, is what allows us to keep our organization independent of the bosses." In voting "yes" in the NLRB election and voting for union representatives, student-workers were not agreeing to give up their democratic rights and sit on the sidelines until they are needed to ratify a contract or authorize a strike. Democracy is not best realized through elected representatives who act on our behalf, but rather through the active participation of all of us. A top-down, undemocratic union that views its relationship with the rank-andfile transactionally, where promises can be made to garner support and votes in the short-term and then rescinded unilaterally and non-transparently, only hurts the workers that it professes to represent.

Patrick Moran is a seventh-year graduate student-worker pursuing a PhD in Physics. He is also a member of, and a former organizer with, the MIT GSU.

GUEST COLUMN

An MIT-quality labor agreement

A union contract that benefits all

Collective bargaining between MIT's graduate student workers and administration is about to officially begin. Unfortunately, both sides are already off to a disappointing start. The administration and union organizers have been too focused on rhetoric and not enough on honesty. The best thing for MIT is to stop this one-side-versus-the-other mentality and instead work together to make an MIT-quality collective bargaining agreement.

In a recent email, Chancellor Melissa Nobles and Provost Cynthia Barnhart made a promise of good-faith negotiations. The same email also included misleading facts and statements meant to intimidate student workers. When unfair academic policies facilitate discrimination and wrongful terminations, they are absolutely on the bargaining table. The days of unilateral policy making are com-

ing to an end. Shame on Chancellor Nobles, Provost Barnhart, and anyone else that tries to oppress student workers using deception or threats.

Some student union organizers are also attempting to deceive to get what they want. I've received carefully worded emails that were technically true but also misleading. I've been to organizing events that conveniently left out a few facts. I've spoken with organizers that wanted to win the election more than they wanted every student worker to vote. Shame on any union organizer that made a misleading claim or viewed a fellow graduate student worker as the opposition.

A fair collective bargaining agreement will benefit everyone at MIT, but we are off to a pathetic start in achieving this goal. It's time to forget about the student workers' issues and the administration's issues. We all need to work together to solve MIT's issues. That is the best and fastest way for everyone to shift focus back to research.

When our community works together, people around the world take notice. The institution that goes after problems like climate change and nuclear fusion had better be able to negotiate a fair union contract. Being honest, open to dialogue, and willing to compromise can soon result in a fair labor agreement. Using only methods we can be proud of, let's quickly sign a contract that will be the model for other universities to use. Now is the time for MIT to develop the world's best student union contract.

Joe Smolsky is a sixth-year PhD candidate in physics.

Solution to 3C

from page 7

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Solution to 11

from page 7

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Solution to Work Stoppages

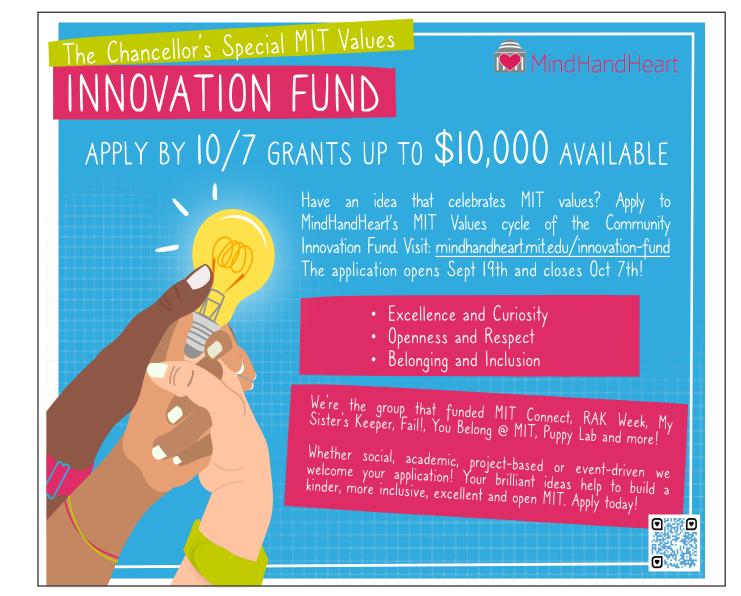
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Being cynical about love

I don't want to hurt again

By Vivian Hir

In August, I attended my lab's summit meeting at the MIT Endicott House, a fancy conference center in Dedham. Besides talking about their research, every attendee had a slide with a fun fact about themselves. One slide that stood out to me had many pictures of local Boston eats. The postdoc said that when she was doing her PhD, she was in a long-distance relationship and flew to Boston every so often to visit her boyfriend. During each visit, they ate at a different place to complete their food bucket list of places to eat in Boston. Before she continued, I immediately thought that her sentence would end awkwardly with "we broke up but are still friends." Instead, she said that the boyfriend she stayed with for five years ended up being her husband.

Since I kept these thoughts to myself — nothing humiliating happened — but I was still embarrassed. As I listened to others present their projects, I kept getting distracted by my negative assumption. I was appalled that I made fun of the idea of maintaining a long-distance relationship that required flying two hours one way to see each other. I didn't understand why I jumped to the conclusion that a long-distance relationship wouldn't work out, thinking that distance would ultimately kill the relationship. The more I reflected upon these thoughts, the more troubled I became about how cynical I had become.

After the presentations ended, there was a nice dinner. But once the day was over, my mind came back to the troubling feelings of cynicism. I started to become concerned about how detrimental my self-hatred for having romantic thoughts could be. I found it ironic how I was the complete opposite a year ago, letting myself daydream about imaginary conversations and hypothetical dates with my crush. It's as if I'm back to square one. As I write this, I don't have the conviction to stop being a love cynic. Yet there is a quiet voice in the back of my head telling me that I can no longer ignore the potential consequences that arise from my pessimistic attitude.

Over the past few months, I have repeated and internalized the idea that no one will ever be interested in me and love is something beyond my reach. Sure, I see couples basking in the sun at the local park or drinking wine at a fancy restaurant, but while romantic love is a reality for them, it's not for me; the concept is a pipe dream.

I don't know how to stop finding faults in myself as a way to suggest that I am not compatible with anyone. When thinking about romantic relationships, I consider any possible sources of conflict that may arise because of me, such as the fact that I like exploring places alone or how my lifestyle doesn't align with theirs. I then think of how I will annoy the other person because I am not a touchy-feely type. In other

words, I can only think of reasons why a relationship with someone would fail.

I am aware that failure is not a bad thing. I try to see failure in a positive light in my academic and everyday life. While failures aren't ideal, I see them as opportunities to learn from my mistakes and become a better version of myself next time. When it comes to relationships, however, I don't want to fail, which means I don't want to take any risks. The whole scenario feels like a paradox. I believe that taking risks is beneficial because it makes life more enriching, be it scuba diving for the first time or signing up for a 10k. But I can't think of anything to reassure me and persuade me to view relationships the same way.

"I am kind of scared of being in a relationship," I said to my new friend after confiding that I had never been in a relationship or on a date before.

"Why?'

"I don't want it to fail."

"Have you heard of the hedgehog's dilemma? I learned about this from an anime I watched. The dilemma is that two hedgehogs can choose to huddle together in the cold to stay warm, but their prickly spines will cause harm if they are too close. The same things happen with relationships. What would you do in that situation?"

"Honestly, I would still choose to be in the cold alone," I replied. I would rather stay alone in the cold than end up hurting someone I've grown close to. Or worse, letting them hurt me.

When I reflect upon this conversation, the reasons behind my fear of failure in a relationship are a lot more apparent to me. Not only do I see myself as someone unable to move on from a breakup gracefully, but I also believe that a breakup would be evidence that I am not capable of being in a long-term relationship. To make matters worse, I somehow view a breakup as an indication of a personal weakness that I have, even though the reasons for a breakup are often complex and not because of one

There's a movie I watched that taught me the value of a relationship that ends, but I feel like this lesson won't apply to my life. In the movie, the couple part ways due to their diverging goals and interests, but they still cherish the memories of moments and experiences they shared. At first, the movie reassured me that breakups weren't as horrible as I thought they would be, but then I reminded myself that what I saw was a movie. Unlike reality, movies have elaborate plots and perfect scripts with touching quotes. As nice as it is to picture a breakup that ends smoothly, I imagine mine to be a disaster. I feel so much shame and embarrassment when I think of people I've liked in the past that I can imagine cutting off contact and avoiding a future ex as much as possible. So no, I am not ready to embrace the uncertainty that comes with relationships.

My reluctance to accept uncertainty is only one of the many problems I have with romance. The bigger problem is that I despise the fact that I experience romantic feelings. I know that these emotions are normal, but that fact doesn't make me feel much better. What's frustrating is thinking about the infatuation that takes over my brain, causing me to have irrational thoughts.

Knowing that I hate myself so much for having a crush in the first place, I can't imagine what the level of self-hatred would be if I experienced a breakup. As said in the movie *Her*, love is "a form of socially acceptable insanity," yet I detest how I can't stop myself from obsessing. It's like knowing that I have an addiction, but continually finding a justification for my behavior. I want to be the exception, not part of the norm that enters this state of mind.

I disliked feeling disillusioned after I gradually lost interest in my crush. It was clear that my thought patterns at that time displayed the unmistakable signs of unrequited love, but I didn't want to reconcile with the truth until it was too late. I have felt like an idiot countless times, from making a careless arithmetic error to entering the wrong subway entrance, but this felt much

All the factors that I never considered, like differences in personality, were obvious, yet in the midst of my crush, I overlooked them and brushed them to the side. I am mad that serious questions such as whether we had conflicting beliefs were ones I didn't examine early on. Don't get me wrong; I enjoyed having conversations with him, even ones that challenged my views. But because I didn't know this person that well, I grew to like the image I had of him, which was different from reality.

My struggle to accept myself for having these feelings raises the question of how I could ever be in a relationship that doesn't work out in the end. All of this sounds contradictory. On the one hand, I am curious about romantic experiences, like going on a date. On the other hand, I think of possible reasons the date won't turn out well for me: the conversation stalls, the romantic gestures are contrived, and so on. The more I think about it, the more I wonder what the point of going on a date is when it's easier to make friends. The stakes are lower since there's no romance involved, and there's no need to worry about the million little things of what not to do on a date. I am conscious that this mindset is hurting me more, but I am stuck in this situation and don't know how to get out.

So far, I have mentioned my fear of love's unpredictability and my inner conflict with how I perceive my romantic thoughts, but I haven't quite explained why I am cynical

about love. I haven't done so because that means acknowledging a fact that I have avoided confronting: I don't want to hurt again. It is as simple as that. I originally thought that I wasn't bothered by the fact that my feelings weren't reciprocated, but in hindsight, my ego got bruised quite a bit. I know that many years down the road, I will probably not dwell upon this because time heals. At this moment, however, the past and the present aren't distinct – they are a continuum.

I don't want to repeat the experience of disappointment and frustration, even though they're inevitable if I want love to be part of my life. I refuse to undergo the pain that comes from unrequited love again, feeling insecure by thinking about traits my crush had that I didn't have. I am tired of letting unhealthy thoughts take a toll on my self-esteem, thinking about how awkward and nerdy I am compared to him. I am mindful of the fact that he is in no way, shape, or form, obligated to like me back. Despite all of this, I find it so difficult to not take things personally, to not let this incident make me doubt my self-worth.

I don't want to remind myself of how much mental effort I put into reaching out to him, whether it was carefully crafting my text messages or coming up with stupid, silly ideas of confessing my feelings. I am sick of wasting my time imagining something that was never bound to happen in the first place.

My cynicism towards love serves as a defense mechanism. But is avoiding romance altogether an effective solution? Is this even sustainable? The answer is probably no. I can't keep embodying this mindset by shutting down opportunities around me.

Typing all these repetitive, negative thoughts feels like splashing and smearing paint on the wall out of anger and spite. To be honest, I felt no closure from writing this until I passed by a hallmate's whiteboard with this quote by Yasmin Mogahed: "The more you let go, the higher you rise." Hating myself for the past and being cynical about love weren't going to change anything for the better; it would only perpetuate these mean thoughts. If I want to be at peace for once, then I have to start talking to myself as if I were talking to a friend. That means letting go and accepting who I am, a challenge that will require time.

I am still fearful of being rejected again, even if that rejection is indirect and subtle. But I am gradually realizing that unrequited love is bound to happen again, and I have no way to avoid it. All I can do is reframe my perspective of the past year as a learning experience, as cliché as that may sound. Yes, I will make mistakes when navigating the complexities found in love and relationships for the rest of my life, but under the right circumstances, I can mature emotionally and develop in other ways. I am a bit more optimistic that there's hope for me, at least for now.

Got a lot on your mind?

Share some thoughts with us!
Write for Campus Life. join@tech.mit.edu
Or join us for dinner, Sundays 6 p.m. (W20-483)

Solution, page 5

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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.

Solution, page 5

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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.

Work Stoppages by Winston Emmons

Solution, page 5

ACROSS

- 1 Crunchy sandwich, for short
- 4 Animals that oink
- 8 Confront boldly
- 14 Uncooked
- 15 Cowboy's suffix for buck
- 16 Locales for jury trials
- 17 Wrath
- 18 Midmorning time-out for a hot drink
- 20 Days before holidays
- 22 After dark, in ads
- 23 High-tech car keys 24 Handsome lad of myth
- 26 Hourly charge
- 29 Outdoor exercise at midday
- 34 British singer of "Skyfall"
- 36 __ mater
- 37 Director Spike or Ang
- 38 Lawn installed in rolls
- 39 Japanese electronics brand 41 Time delay
- 42 College URL ender
- 43 Group of outlaws
- 44 Levels of stadium seats 46 Day-off trip for the staff

- 50 Off-the-neck hairstyle 51 Loch monster, familiarly 53 Slightly open, as a gate
- 56 Front of a plane
- 58 Grains in Cheerios
- 60 Saturday-to-Monday time
- 64 Informal turndown
- 65 Inability with musical notes
- 66 Uttered
- 67 Espionage org.
- 68 Jittery 69 Mexican cheers
- 70 Shade tree

DOWN

- 1 Creamy French cheese
- 2 Insect's wormlike stage 3 One of the Wonderland
- twins
- 4 DC lobbying group
- 5 Amusingly unexpected
- 6 Kids' "Got any deuces?" card game
- 7 Squishy
- 8 __ in the hole (secret

weapon)

- 9 Corn-kernel holder
- 10 Teen's time to return home by
- 11 Three-layer sweet
- 12 Take a __ at (try)
- 13 Sounds of disapproval
- 19 In a spooky way
- 21 Nary a __ (no one)
- 25 SSW's opposite
- 27 Peas, for a pea shooter
- 28 Beverage brewed from bags
- 30 Dance from Argentina
- 31 What's pledged "to the flag"
- 32 Shakespearean king with three daughters
- 33 Barrels for beer
- 34 "Hold on __!'
- 35 Long-gone flightless bird
- 39 Hourglass contents
- 40 "May I have a volunteer?"
- 43 Empty space
- 44 "__ the season to be jolly
- 45 Not __ many words

15 17 18 20 26 27 28 29 32 33 34 | 35 38 42 43 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 65 67 66 68 69

- 47 Completely removed
- 48 Open, as an envelope
- 49 Itty-bitty
- 52 Web commerce
- 53 Soprano colleague
- 54 Enroll
- 55 Boleyn of British history 57 "And your point is . . ."

FUNFUNFUNFUNFUN **FUN**FUNFUNFUNFUNFUNFUNFUNFUNFUNFUNFU

JNFUNFUNFUNFU

- 59 Deceptive activity
- 61 Shake, as a tail 62 Poetic "before"
- 63 Tooth specialist's deg.

[1694] Phishing License





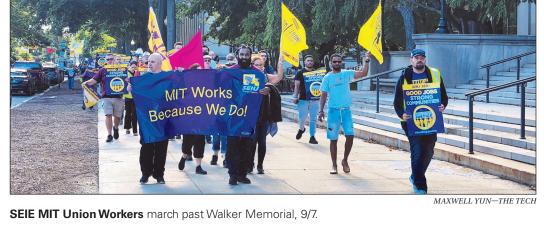
8 THE TECH THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2022



Participants of all skills levels learn the fun and vibrant partner



MIT faces against Salve Regina in a non-conference football game



Art exhibitions, studio visits, tours, food, and a dance party filled the night at Arts on the Radar, Fri.

• Wristband stations at Killian and Kresge open

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at 4:30 pm.

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Are you a tetris ninja?

at Roberts Field, Sat.

Use your powers for good!

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World of Music Pavilion | Kresge Oval Live music 8-11 pm; DJ 11 pm-midnight

Swing into Salsa Club | JAC Ice Rink

Live music 8 pm-midnight

Campus Night Club and Lounge | Killian Court

Mega DJ show from 9 pm-midnight