

MIT's Oldest and  
Largest Newspaper

thetech.com



WEATHER, p. 2

THU: 56°F | 40°F  
Sunny

FRI: 62°F | 50°F  
Mostly sunny

SAT: 77°F | 55°F  
Mostly cloudy

Volume 145, Number 6

Thursday, April 17, 2025

# Nine with MIT ties have visas revoked, Kornbluth says

## The nine include students, recent grads, and postdocs

By Vivian Hir, Sabine Chu,  
Geoffrey Enwere, Vi Trinh,  
and Alex Tang

EDITORS

On April 14 at 4:43 p.m., MIT President Sally Kornbluth sent an email to the MIT community stating that, since April 4, nine MIT community members, including current students, recent graduates, and postdoctoral fellows, have had their visas and immigration status “unexpectedly revoked.”

One of the affected individuals has filed a suit against the federal govern-

ment, with an independent counsel representing the student. Kornbluth noted that in this case, “there appears to have been no notice or explanation from the government for the revocation.”

Kornbluth wrote, “MIT is an American university, proudly so – but we would be gravely diminished without the students and scholars who join us from other nations. The threat of unexpected visa revocations will make it less likely that top talent from around the world will come to the US – and that will damage Ameri-

can competitiveness and scientific leadership for years to come.”

Last week on April 7 at 6:56 p.m., international students at MIT received an email stating that the visas of three members of the MIT community had been revoked. Signed by David Darmofal PhD '93, Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate and Graduate Education, and Suzy Nelson, Vice Chancellor for Student Life, the immigration statuses of these individuals were found to be terminated in



VIVIAN HIR—THE TECH

Visas, Page 3

A photo of 77 Mass Ave taken on April 8, 2025.

# Iconic Physics Lecturer Mohamed to leave MIT

## Mohamed to return to UChicago in Fall '25

By Sabine Chu

ASSOCIATE NEWS EDITOR

On April 8, Physics lecturer Mohamed Abdelhafez announced through Instagram that he will leave the Institute at the end of the 2024-25 school year. Mohamed, who requested to be referred to by his first name in this article, has worked at MIT's Physics department for almost six years. He teaches the General Institute Requirement (GIR) subjects 8.01 (Physics I) and 8.02 (Physics II), which a majority of freshmen take every year; according to the student subject evaluations, 611 students took 8.01 in Fall 2024, and 718 took 8.02 in Spring 2024.

In 2021, the Office of Open Learning recognized his contributions to the Institute by granting him the student-nominated Teaching With Digital Technology award. The next year, he won the 2022 James N. Murphy Award for contribution to community life and the 2022 Irwin Sizer Award for the Most Significant Improvement to MIT Education.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY MOHAMED ABDELHAFEZ  
**Mohamed Abdelhafez shows his 2022 James Murphy and Irwin Sizer Awards** for contributions to community life and improvements to education, respectively.

In an interview with *The Tech*, Mohamed emphasized his deep love for teaching. After emigrating from Egypt in 2014 to attend the University of Chicago for graduate school in quantum physics, he joined MIT as a postdoctoral fellow in 2019. Although Mohamed originally planned to focus on research, it became “very obvious” during graduate school that he was more passionate about teaching. He believes that as a teacher, one can “directly affect people” compared to research, which can be “detached from reality.” As advice for his students, Mohamed said that one ought to focus on the big picture, instead of looking at “pieces of information in isolation.”

Mohamed will return to the University of Chicago as an associate professor in physics. He believes that 8.01 and 8.02 are much more rigorous than classes at many other American

# In memoriam: Kareenna Groff '22 and James Santoro '23

## Dr. G. Anthony Grant: “This is a devastating loss”

By Alex Tang

EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Kareenna Groff '22 MEng '23 and James Santoro '23 passed away in a private plane accident on April 12. Four others on board also passed, including Groff's parents, Dr. Michael Groff and Dr. Joy Saini; her brother Jared and his partner, Alexia Couyutas Duarte.

Groff majored in Course 20 (Biological Engineering) and earned her MEng from the same department. She played varsity soccer and basketball, and won the 2022 NCAA Woman of the Year award. At the time of her passing, Groff was a second-year medical student at New York University's Grossman School of Medicine in New York City.

In an email to the Biological Engineering community, Department Head and Professor Christopher Voigt wrote that Groff was “a beloved

member of our community, participating widely in Camp Kesem, UROPs, MIT Emergency Services, amongst many other activities.” He added that she “will be missed by many.”

Santoro majored in Course 15-3 (Finance). He was a varsity lacrosse athlete. At the time of his passing, Santoro worked as an investment associate for Silver Point, a hedge fund based in Greenwich, Conn.

MIT Athletics released a statement on the passing of Groff and Santoro.

Martin Desmarais, Head Coach of Women's Soccer, wrote that “Kareenna was the face of MIT Women's Soccer during her time at MIT and in many ways is still the best example of a true MIT student-athlete — successful on the field, successful in the classroom, and a beloved teammate.” He added that Groff's parents were active in hosting pre-season activities

and helping out the program, writing that “their presence meant a lot to the team.”

Tyler O'Keefe, Head Coach of Men's Lacrosse, wrote, “I am deeply saddened by the sudden passing of James, a former member of our lacrosse program. I share my deepest condolences to the Santoro and Groff families, friends and all those affected by this loss, including the MIT men's lacrosse community and the MIT women's soccer community.”

Dr. G. Anthony Grant, Director of Athletics and DAPER Department Head, wrote, “Both Kareenna and James were tremendous contributors to their sport teams, the institution, and their local communities.” Grant concluded in writing, “This is a devastating loss for our athletics department and for the MIT community. We offer our sincere condolences and grieve with the Groff and Santoro families as well as their loved ones.”

# MIT joins suit against Dept of Energy cuts

## Kornbluth hints at further litigation; lawsuit parallels that of NIH cuts

By Alex Tang

EDITOR-AT-LARGE

On April 14, MIT President Sally Kornbluth wrote in an email to the MIT community that the Institute had joined several peer schools and higher education associations in a lawsuit to stop indirect cost cuts to grants provided via the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE).

The plaintiffs filed suit in response to the DOE's April 11 announcement that it would no longer cover indirect costs at previous rates for grants and would cancel grants that did not meet a blanket 15% rate. According to Kornbluth, funding from the DOE supports the work of nearly 1,000 members of

the MIT community. Kornbluth wrote, “For many years, each university has negotiated with the granting agency a reimbursement rate that reflects factors like the regional cost of living.”

Kornbluth wrote that this action was not the sole legal means that MIT has taken in countering federal action in the recent months and weeks. On March 4, Kornbluth said in a video sent to the MIT community that she is in communication with legislators on the national and state level. “When appropriate...we are going to court,” she said. However, the announcement did not mention any specific instances of MIT's involvement in litigation.

In early February, MIT, along with several other peer universi-

ties, filed a lawsuit against the Department of Health and Human Services and National Institutes of Health (NIH). Kornbluth wrote that the court granted a permanent injunction, which remains in force while the government seeks to appeal.

In that same communication in March, Kornbluth stated that the Institute had implemented a hiring freeze on non-critical staff positions and was exploring options to cut five to ten percent of the academic and administrative unit.

The latest updates on MIT's response to government activity can be found on MIT's response to government activity page.

## IN SHORT

**Campus Preview Weekend (CPW)** starts on Thursday, April 17, and ends on Sunday, April 20.

**Patriots Day is on Monday, April 21.** No classes will be held that day.

**Drop date for full-term subjects** is on Tuesday, April 22.

**Choice of Major Forms for the Class of 2028** are due on Tuesday, April 22.

**Room assignments will be sent** to students on Wednesday, April 23

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for Simmons Hall and Random Hall specifically; students dissent. **NEWS**, p. 3

## ANDREI TROFIMOV, POLITICAL PRISONER

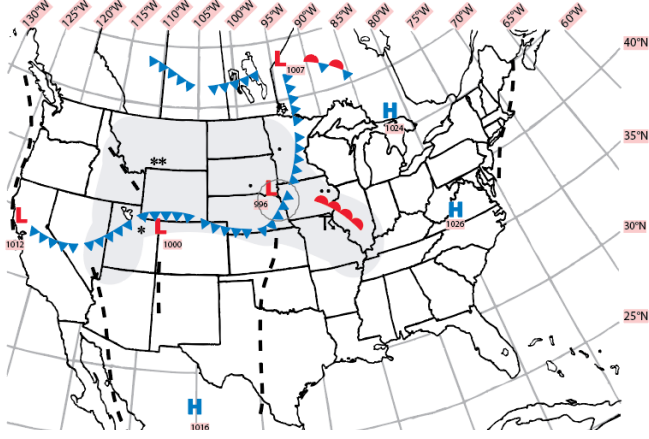
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WEATHER FORECAST



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

Variable weather for Campus Preview Weekend

By Lou Lahn

CHIEF METEOROLOGIST

The weather has been pretty variable in temperature and precipitation the last few days, and we see this continue into the weekend. It looks to be especially warm on Saturday, but with a chance of rain into the early afternoon and gustier winds, it might not be all pleasant. For prospective students making their way to campus for this weekend, it may be useful to bring some clothes for the varying temperatures and precipitation we see forecasted for the weekend.

APRIL 17

SITUATION FOR NOON (ET)

Extended Forecast

Today:

Sunny. High around 56°F (13°C). West wind around 15 mph.

Friday:

Mostly sunny. High around 62°F (17°C). Southwest wind 6-14 mph.

Saturday:

Mostly cloudy, slight chance of showers. High around 77°F (25°C). Low around 55°F (13°C). Southwest wind 18 mph, with gusts as high as 31 mph.

Sunday:

Mostly sunny. High around 65°F (18°C). Low around 44°F (7°C). North-west wind 16 mph.

# Mohamed looks back on his six years at MIT

Mohamed, from Page 1

universities. At UChicago, he hopes to adapt his style to create a more general, accessible way of teaching physics. Mohamed shared that in some ways, the University of Chicago feels like his “home university.” When applying to graduate school, he was rejected during multiple cycles from other institutions, including MIT, but UChicago “took a chance” on him. He hopes graduate students know that if they ever feel like they want to quit their PhD, they are “not alone” and that it’s “worth pushing through.”

Despite his upcoming departure, Mohamed hopes to return to MIT in some capacity, given its status as his “dream school,” his “home,” and a place where he has a “strong legacy.” He notes that his current position as lecturer focuses on teaching rather than research, which means that faculty standing is likely inaccessible for him at MIT. In contrast, the University of Chicago has a track for teaching faculty.

When asked to share his favorite moment at MIT, Mohamed recalled an experience from his first semester of teaching. Although he was a postdoctoral fellow, he served as the graduate teaching assistant (TA) for 8.01 after asking Senior Lecturer Dr. Peter Dourmashkin to put him “somewhere in the classroom.” As a graduate TA, part of his job was to lead review sessions. At first, he experienced imposter syndrome and was unsure if he could help his students. “I didn’t know if I belonged,” he stated.

At his second review session, however, Mohamed found that the classroom was packed

with students sitting on the floor to attend. He recalled that, at that moment, he found it “crazy to me that this was really happening, so I stopped to take a video [of the classroom].” In that review session, he realized, “Wow, I’m really having an impact.” At the end of the Fall 2019 semester, 8.01 students wrote a petition to the Physics Department asking them to give Mohamed his own section for 8.02.

Jordan Wilke ’23 was an 8.01 student in Fall 2019. In an email to *The Tech*, he wrote that Mohamed’s kindness and compassion were “unrivaled.” Wilke said, “I got to his review for the final exam 30 minutes early just to make sure I could have a seat.” He remembers that in the Spring 2020 semester, when students had to leave campus and transition to Zoom, Mohamed shared messages of encouragement and support. Wilke added, “Even though his lecture and office hours were at 6 a.m. for me, they were well worth the early mornings.”

Elsa Deshmukh ’28 affirmed that Mohamed’s devotion to his students continued through his years at MIT. In a statement to *The Tech*, Deshmukh wrote, “One morning, I came in late for Mohamed’s 8.02 preview, and he stopped what he was saying, said hi to me, explained everything they had done so far to make sure I understood, and then continued to lecture. I was so surprised and touched. His patience and encouragement made everyone feel welcome.”

Even more broadly, Kanna Pichappan ’26 was deeply inspired by Mohamed’s “sincere dedication to the communities around him, without the slightest trace of ego.” Pichappan



PHOTO PROVIDED BY MOHAMED ABDELHAFEZ  
**Mohamed Abdelhafez poses with enthusiastic students** on November 5, 2019. Abdelhafez is set to leave MIT at the end of the 2024-2025 school year.

wrote to *The Tech*, “Not only does he teach physics with utmost clarity, thoroughness, and ease (so much so that even the most physics-averse student ends the semester with a newfound appreciation for its beauty), he also stands as a role model for the kind of person I aspire to be.” Pichappan described Mohamed as “upholding only humility, selflessness, service, and kindness.”

For Mohamed, another favorite moment came towards the end of his MIT teaching ca-

reer. Earlier this spring, the Class of 2027 held their Ring Premiere ceremony to reveal the design of the Brass Rat, MIT’s nickname for the class ring. The 2027 Ring Committee asked Mohamed to put his handwriting on the ring and invited him to the ceremony to introduce the design. The entire class burst into applause. Mohamed said, “I am often shocked by the impact. I don’t think I have really internalized what I’ve done here.”

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# Visas revoked for three as of April 7

Visas, from Page 1

the federal Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). The email did not identify any of the students who had their visas revoked.

Darmofal and Nelson clarified that the cases of these three individuals “do not appear to be related to campus activism.” They added that MIT “is in touch directly with these individuals.” Darmofal and Nelson noted that terminated immigration status in SEVIS could stem from several other causes, including arrest records and traffic violations.

*The Tech* was able to contact one of the individuals with a terminated visa. Speaking on the condition of anonymity, the student said they received an email from the State Department on the morning of April 8, stating that their F-1 visa has been revoked and that they must leave the country.

The individual stated that they did not participate in any pro-Palestinian protests. However, they had a prior arrest, but the case was dismissed and charges were not filed.

*The Tech* spoke to a representative of the MIT International Students Office (ISO), who stated that for confidentiality and privacy, ISO could not provide identifying details of the three individuals with terminated immigration status.

According to the ISO website, one of ISO’s missions is to advise international students on immigration regulations and help with the “maintenance of legal status.” According to 2024-2025 student enrollment numbers, MIT has 3,430 international students, who make up 11.6% of the undergraduate population and 40% of the graduate population.

The ISO advises international students to regularly check the

email associated with their visa application, notify the ISO of any communication from government agencies regarding immigration or visa statuses, and contact their visa sponsor or immigration attorney if they do not have an MIT-sponsored F or J student visa.

On April 8 at 3:57 p.m., Ellen Reid, undergraduate program manager for the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS), emailed the EECS undergraduate and MEng community about the recent visa revocations, linking the Office of the Chancellor’s email. In the email, Reid provided resources for international students, including the ISO and EECS undergraduate office.

Visa revocations have taken place across the country. MIT is among at least 210 colleges and universities where students have been affected. On April 6, Harvard announced that visas had been revoked for three current students and two recent graduates after a “routine” records review. The highly publicized detentions of Mahmoud Khalil, Rumeysa Ozturk, and others have highlighted the federal government’s crackdown on those involved in the pro-Palestinian movement. However, visas have also been revoked for traffic violations or similarly minor infractions. In other cases, they have been revoked seemingly without reason, as with Dartmouth doctoral student Xiaotian Liu.

Chancellor Melissa Nobles hosted an informative webinar on April 11 at 1:30 p.m. with an immigration attorney about various topics pertaining to the international community, including travel and visa status. Questions can be submitted in advance by emailing [immigration-questions@mit.edu](mailto:immigration-questions@mit.edu).

# UROP Spring 2025 direct funding

## *UROP Office budgeted \$2 M, received over \$3.4 M in requests*

By Vivian Hir  
NEWS EDITOR

Requests for direct funding from the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) Office exceeded the office’s available budget by over \$1.4 million for the Spring 2025 semester. According to Michael Bergren, Associate Dean and Director of UROP, the UROP Office budgeted \$2 million for the spring while receiving around \$3.4 million in direct funding requests.

“The UROP Office always receives more requests than its direct funding budget can accommodate,” Bergren wrote in an email to *The Tech*. In Spring 2024, requests for direct funding exceeded the budget by \$1.36 million, similar to this semester’s number. In previous years, however, excess demand was less than \$1 million due to “lower application numbers, hourly rates, and maximum request amounts.” According to the 2024 UROP Impact Report, 80% of UROP projects were paid in the 2023-2024 academic year. Budget constraints prevented funding for approximately 15% of students who requested UROP funding that year.

Bergren clarified that changes to federal funding did not have a direct impact on UROP direct funding allocations. The overall annual budget for the 2024-2025 academic year has not decreased; in the 2023-2024 academic year, the UROP Office allocated around \$765 million in direct funding, and they plan to allocate about the same amount for this academic year.

The UROP office administers direct funding and does not have oversight over sponsored funding, as

departmental faculty members decide how to allocate their funds. \$8.15 million of UROP funding came from faculty and departments in the 2023-2024 academic year, making the total around \$15.8 million.

Although the number of direct funding applications for the spring semester decreased slightly from 1,563 in 2024 to 1,487 in 2025, Bergren stated that “overall demand for UROP direct funding has steadily increased over the past few years” across fall, spring, and summer terms. The dollar amounts requested were higher, which was partly due to the increase in the minimum hourly rate from \$15.50 per hour in 2024 to \$16.00 per hour in 2025.

As of time of publication, the UROP Office approved about 58% of Spring 2025 direct funding requests. 26% of requests became sponsored funding, and another 5% became credit UROPs. Of the remaining 11% of requests, 10% cancelled or did not take on the requested UROP, while 1% undertook another UROP. The UROP Office bases their direct funding decisions on various factors that include the “quality and timeliness” of the proposals and the guarantee that students who receive MIT Scholarships from Student Financial Services will receive at least one term of funding. Furthermore, the UROP Office works with principal investigators to “support as many students in as many departments, labs, and centers across the Institute as possible.” “We work hard to fund as many MIT students as possible, given growing demand,” Bergren wrote. “We want students to know that the UROP office is your chief resource for all UROP-related questions and concerns.”



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# HRS announces roof access restrictions

## *Restrictions will affect Random Hall’s roofdeck and Simmons Hall’s terraces*

By Boheng Cao  
CO-COPY CHIEF

*This article contains mentions of suicide and self-harm.*

On March 14, Libby and Michael Hsu, Heads of House at Random Hall, emailed residents of the dorm informing them of policy changes enacted by Housing and Residential Services (HRS). HRS intended to restrict entrance to Random’s roof deck between midnight and 6 a.m. by installing tap scanners over spring break.

The email, along with an HRS statement obtained by *The Tech*, revealed that in June 2024, an assessment examined “tragic incidents involving roofs at MIT” and found “inconsistencies in access controls.” The assessment, along with “feedback from internal stakeholders,” had not been disclosed to students or the Heads of House until this year.

The announcement from the Heads of House also noted that MIT has been collaborating with the Jed Foundation and has committed to minimize “opportunities for suicide.” Founded to promote emotional health among adolescents, the Jed Foundation’s Jed Campus program provides “guidance” and “technical assistance” for campus administrators, and recently released new campus guidelines. In their conversations with HRS and Student Mental Health & Counseling, the Heads of House learned that they could not “change the current decision and timeline,” although HRS was reportedly receptive to feedback for future changes.

The Heads of Houses noted that events could still be scheduled on the roof deck during restricted hours and access could be granted, although they had not decided on a system to do so.

Less than three weeks later, on April 1, an email was sent to all residents of Simmons Hall, informing them that “card readers will be installed on the doors leading to the rooftop terrace” in order to “improve security infrastructure.” The two Simmons terraces are located on the seventh and eighth floors and are only accessible through adjacent towers. The message warned residents that loud construction noise was to occur from April 2 to 4 during the installation. Unlike Random Hall, no immediate access changes were to occur, with “future adjustments” informed by “further consultation with house leadership.”

HRS also noted that rooftop door repairs, signage updates, and tap scanner installations were underway for “restricted roofs” to discourage “unauthorized access.” It is unclear whether these roofs also include those of non-dormitory buildings across MIT’s main campus.

HRS’s decision to restrict roof access was controversial among both Random and Simmons residents. A few defended HRS’s steps toward upholding safety, but many criticized the decision for limiting student movement and autonomy. “On both the Simmons and Random roof decks, my friends and I in Spinning Arts would spin glow props, since there’s no other large open space within a 10-minute walk where we can swing a rope dart,” Anika Huang ’26 said. “I have seen people hang out, do homework, belt songs from Hamilton, cry, and look at the stars up there.”

Even though no access changes for Simmons’s terrace have been announced as of the time of publication, some students saw the tap scanner installation as a first step toward an eventual nighttime curfew. Ian Frankel ’28, a Simmons Hall resident, said

that they went to roof spaces after midnight to “decompress” and “relax after a long and late night of stressful studying.” Frankel added, “It is quite frustrating that they are taking a step that will hurt the mental health of many students, in the name of safety.”

Other students shared the concern that closing off roof spaces would remove outdoor spaces and possibly exacerbate the very risk of suicide that the restrictions were intended to address. Sovannjet Lim ’27, a Random Hall resident, said that the roof deck was a space for catharsis and a breath of fresh air: “I was in the kitchen at 2 a.m. and the lack of going outside the past two days and the kitchen lights were really getting to me, so I went to the roof deck. I looked at the stars and contemplated space and also cried a bit, and then returned, and it helped a lot.”

According to Eugenie Cha ’28 and Jackson Hamilton ’28, co-presidents of Simmons Hall, many residents believe that MIT should “focus more on addressing the root cause of the student safety concerns” and “improv[e] how they support student mental health” rather than focusing on the more overt symptoms of the mental health crisis.

Huang also critiqued the administration for overlooking student needs: “The fact that MIT is still choosing to impose this policy that is actively damaging to the daily life of the majority of students goes to show that admin doesn’t actually care about our mental health.” She believes the restrictions primarily serve to deflect legal liability, rather than to ensure student safety.

The Heads of House for Random Hall noted that the dorm would be especially vulnerable to these changes, since its roof deck is its only outdoor space. Random Hall residents have often expressed safety concerns



BOHENG CAO—THE TECH

**The 8A terrace at Simmons Hall**, one of the locations where Housing and Residential Services initially planned to install tap scanners to restrict access.

about venturing outside onto Massachusetts Ave. or the neighboring Sunoco gas station at night, the only alternative outside spaces during roof closures.

During a DormCon meeting on April 3, Ella Sheffield ’27, co-president of Random Hall, reported that she had received feedback on the roof changes from “about half the dorm,” of which “every single one” said that “it would negatively impact their life.” She mentioned, however, that she had been in contact with HRS to negotiate, and that HRS had already promised to not install cameras on the roof deck.

Simmons co-presidents reported that HRS “might be willing to be flexible on hours” for roof restrictions, but it is unlikely that closures would start after 1 a.m. They mentioned the idea of a “buddy system,” in which the terraces would remain open but require

card taps from two different people past midnight. The proposal, however, only attracted backlash among students who preferred to enjoy the cold air and Boston skyline without waking up their friends.

DormCon representatives also raised the possibility that McCormick Hall would close its penthouse and balcony to students after renovations. The renovation, originally scheduled for the upcoming 2025-2026 school year, was postponed to the summer of 2026. Speculation also abounded about roof restrictions for Baker House and the graduate dorms.

Despite the original spring break timeline for tap scanner installation, the restrictions for Random have yet to be implemented, nor have tap scanners been installed on Simmons terraces. *The Tech* could not ascertain to what extent this resulted from student feedback.



# Barnhart reflects upon her role as provost

## Barnhart: “Being in a leadership role under those conditions is empowering”



PHOTO COURTESY OF GRETCHEN ERTL

**Provost Cynthia Barnhart** served as chancellor from 2014 to 2021 and provost from 2022 to 2025.

**By Vivian Hir**  
NEWS EDITOR

On Feb. 19, President Sally Kornbluth announced that Provost Cynthia Barnhart SM '86, PhD '88 will step down effective July 1 after serving as provost for three years, starting in 2022. After stepping down, Barnhart will be on sabbatical and then return to the faculty; she is a faculty member of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and the Sloan School of Management. Before serving as provost, Barnhart was chancellor from 2014 to 2021.

The Tech spoke with Barnhart to reflect on her role as provost. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

**The Tech: What are you most proud of accomplishing as provost?**

Cynthia Barnhart: One is the team that we have built and reinforced. The second is that I brought

a systems optimization mentality to the job, and I think that it has permeated into the minds of the team. When working with the team on what we should do or how to solve a problem, I try to always bring us to a level of questioning: “How does this impact the Institute?”

So many people come with problems. They might be a dean, they might be a department head, they might oversee some unit, and so they naturally have a mindset of, “How do I help my unit?” That is, of course, an important question, but I think that it is critical for the Institute that we think about these questions of how to solve problems at a local level. How can you create a solution that would not only help to address the problem at that local level, but also be optimal for MIT?

There are a couple reasons why I think it's important. One, it means that as we make decisions, we are always trying to keep in mind the

impact on the whole; it also changes how people interact with each other. So, for example, we meet very frequently with all the deans of the schools and the [College of Computing], and one thing I'm proud of is that that group interacts really well with each other. They learn from each other, they help each other, and they elevate their problem solving to the level of the Institute.

So one of the things that I've done as provost is really work to have people connect with each other so they can understand one another's perspectives.

**TT: What are some particular challenges you faced as provost?**

Barnhart: Well, there are certainly lots of challenges, but I can start by saying that to be provost of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology is an incredible privilege. We have such talent, resources, and community here. While there certainly are challenges, I can't imagine a place that could be more interesting and fun than here.

In the last few years, there have been challenges associated with the protests and since January, the challenges associated with what's coming out of Washington. Two different kinds of challenges that have different impacts, I would say, on the community. The protest challenges were very hard because our community was torn apart by them as opposed to coming together.

When I was chancellor, I was very involved in responding to COVID. Our community came together as problem solvers, and working to problem solve in that environment when the community is coming together was actually very rewarding.

Working with the community through the protests was so difficult because members of the community were pulling in very different directions and had expectations

of the administration to go in the same direction that they were going. But of course, they're all going in different directions, which meant that the administration was just pulled in ways that were impossible to resolve the problem to the satisfaction of our broader community; that was really tough.

The problems we're now facing with Washington are, in a sense, more like what we experienced with COVID. Our community is coming together to try to envision solutions in this environment that's incredibly uncertain, and I would even say scary.

Maybe it's my personality, but being in a provost role when you're facing these problems is something I like for the following reasons: There are things that need to be done, and there is agreement among community members that we need to come together and solve the problem. Being in a leadership role under those conditions is empowering, and you feel like you're doing something that matters.

**TT: What similarities or differences did you find between the provost and chancellor role? Did the chancellor role help you as a provost, or was there still a learning gap?**

Barnhart: In both roles, you have oversight or responsibility for a large group within the MIT community. The chancellor helps students, and the provost is the chief academic officer and academic budget officer, which is related to faculty.

A common goal in both of those jobs is to track talent and to retain that talent. It is trying to create the conditions where these talented students or faculty can do their best work.

As chancellor, you're part of the senior team, which includes the president, provost, vice president for research, et cetera. I got to know

these people, and you get to see a very broad view of the Institute, which is really important. In that way, it was very helpful.

Having said that, when I stepped into the provost role, I thought I knew the job better than I did. Part of the provost role, in addition to being chief academic officer, is to be the chief budget officer. There are lots of people who are interested in getting money from the provost, and so that was part of the job that I hadn't been exposed to as chancellor.

**TT: Do you have any advice for the next provost?**

Barnhart: As provost, it's really important that you tap into the faculty, student, and staff as you are thinking about strategic directions and problem solving. It is through the multiple perspectives of your community members that you can be informed and formulate a broader vision of where to go and how to solve problems. Also, make sure you engage, connect, and work with people; I really believe in the power of teams.

The other thing is that the next provost will be in an environment that is extremely challenging. We're in it now. At MIT, we have to figure out how, in this challenging time, we can advance our mission, stay true to our values, and do it in a way that is financially sustainable.

The provost has to play a very active role together with the executive vice president and treasurer, the vice president for finance, the deans of the schools, and the vice president for research. They have to really work hard to think about how we can deploy our many resources that include our faculty, our grants, et cetera, to create the maximum impact that can benefit MIT and the world, because that's what MIT is about.

# FIRE discusses first amendment rights at MIT

## Harris: “It's not about the idea or the content of the speech, but the right to free speech itself”

**By Vivian Hir**  
NEWS EDITOR

On April 7, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) hosted a two-part series about free speech and civil discourse at MIT. Founded in 1999, FIRE is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that protects freedom of speech and expression on college campuses. FIRE's programming includes litigation, campus outreach, advocacy, and education campaigns.

FIRE partnered with the MIT Open Discourse Society (MODS) to organize the event. In an email sent to *The Tech*, MODS President Spencer Sindhusen '27 said that the purpose of inviting FIRE to present at MIT was to address questions, correct misconceptions about free speech rights, and encourage civil dialogue when discussing controversial issues.

“In today's age, it's critically important to bridge the widening gap between people of different worldviews and afford them equal opportunity to express those worldviews under appropriate, legal circumstances,” Sindhusen wrote.

According to FIRE's 2025 College Free Speech Rankings list, MIT is ranked 164th out of 251 universities for free speech. The selection represented different types of U.S. institutions, from Ivy League schools to large public universities. In the report, 45% of 275 MIT students sampled reported having self-censored at least once or twice a month, and 73% said that shouting down a speaker to stop them from speaking is at least rarely acceptable. Harvard and Columbia received the worst ranking for free speech on the list. The rankings were determined by

a composite score of 14 factors, including openness and self-censorship. Over 58,000 undergraduates from 258 universities took part in the 2025 survey.

The first part of FIRE's event was a presentation conducted by Senior Program Counsel Haley Gluhanich about First Amendment rights on campus, followed by a workshop on how to foster and facilitate productive discussions about controversial topics. In the event, attendees had the opportunity to ask FIRE staff members about free speech on campus and other legal topics related to free speech.

In the presentation, Gluhanich went into detail about students' First Amendment rights, highlighting the differences between protected and unprotected speech. She stated that, under the First Amendment, hate and offensive speech is protected speech because the definitions for hate speech vary from person to person and time to time.

“It's really hard to define what hate speech is when every single person in this room would define it differently, so it's really hard to come to a consensus,” Gluhanich said. “What may be deemed hateful now won't be hateful in a few years, or what is hateful now wasn't back then.”

Gluhanich clarified that, although hate speech is generally protected under the First Amendment, certain forms, such as true threats, incitement, fighting words, and discriminatory harassment, are not. A true threat is when a speaker expresses serious intent to commit an act of violence to an individual. Although colleges have policies banning such threats, Gluhanich argued that the issue is that these colleges have punished students for

speech that doesn't contain actual threats. “Sometimes, we see people who aren't actually fearful, but they know that the school has to take the report seriously, so students will get in trouble for what's not really a threat,” Gluhanich stated.

Gluhanich later discussed incitement, a form of unprotected speech that directly causes imminent lawless action. She underscored the importance of imminence in defining incitement, as speech that suggests lawless action but at a later, unspecified time would not be considered incitement. Similarly, speech that advocates for violence, but does not directly cause imminent lawless action, is not incitement, as in the Supreme Court case *Brandenburg v. Ohio* (1969).

Afterwards, Gluhanich outlined the definitions of discriminatory harassment, basing them on the rulings in *Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education*, a 1999 Supreme Court case where the court found a school liable under Title IX for a student's sexual harassment because the school acted with “deliberate indifference.”

In the context of education, discriminatory harassment is targeted, unwelcome speech that not only discriminates based on a protected class but also is “so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive” that it has a significantly negative impact on the victim's educational experience and denies the victim “equal access to the institutions's resources and opportunities.”

Gluhanich emphasized that discriminatory harassment requires being severe and pervasive, as well as having a demonstrated negative effect on the individual. Examples of negative impact include a drop in



VIVIAN HIR—THE TECH

**FIRE Program Associate William Harris** hosts a civil discourse discussion at MIT on April 7.

academic performance, having to switch schools, or declining mental health. On the other hand, feelings of discomfort or a one-time incident are not sufficient claims for discriminatory harassment.

Although students have the right to protest, Gluhanich stated that protests should not involve illegal activity, such as vandalism, occupying buildings, blocking entrances, or assaulting people. Gluhanich also stressed that protests must adhere to the institution's time, place, and manner restrictions — viewpoint-neutral limitations on protest methods.

Using the 2024 pro-Palestinian encampments on college campuses as an example, Gluhanich said that a number of the encampments violated the time, place, manner restrictions because their universities did not allow overnight structures

without further approval. If the university did not have a policy regarding overnight structures, however, Gluhanich said that it would not have the right to immediately update the policy on the day of prohibiting further encampments.

Gluhanich responded with mixed feelings toward policies that require prior approval. “If you know that the demonstration is going to have 300 people, prior approval makes sense,” she said. “But in most cases, you can't necessarily control how things end up.” Protesters can spread information to others, causing the estimated number of attendees to be larger than expected.

Gluhanich also highlighted rules where a university requires protests to be submitted in advance. “But there's also a whole bunch of nu-



# FIRE facilitates civil discourse discussion

**FIRE Presentation**, from Page 4

ances with that, like how many days in advance can they require this to be more advanced?” she asked. Finally, Gluhanich raised the problem of policies in which administrators had the final say over the approval of a protest. “It gives the administrator too much authority to say, ‘I just don’t approve it,’” Gluhanich said. FIRE believes that universities should not enforce content-based restrictions based on the views expressed in the protest.

Gluhanich concluded her presentation by discussing what can constitute academic freedom. Although academic freedom is distinct from freedom of speech, these ideas overlap. Academic freedom provides professors the right to determine how they want to teach course material in their class, which extends to controversial or offensive material related to class content. Professors can also speak about matters of public concern as individuals. For instance, a professor can express their political opinions on social media, so long as they are not speaking on behalf of their university.

Following the presentation, FIRE Program Associate William Harris facilitated a civil discourse discussion called “Let’s Talk.” Harris began the event with a quote from French philosopher Voltaire: “I disapprove of what you say, but I

will defend to the death your right to say it.” Harris continued, “When we say we defend free speech, we’re nonpartisan. It’s not about the idea or the content of the speech, but the right to free speech itself.”

To facilitate conversations despite individual differences, Harris encouraged the audience to focus not on winning the argument, but on gaining mutual understanding and listening to one another. Harris shared that his experience working at FIRE with colleagues across the political spectrum has inspired him to “presume good will” instead of “finding a gotcha moment” when discussing politics. “We find that kind of intellectual diversity exciting, and we try to practice curiosity rather than shying away from it,” he said.

The civil discourse activity comprised four “heat levels” from 0 to 3; each level reflected an increase in difficulty and sensitivity. Groups of three to four people were formed, and each cohort was given five minutes to discuss each question, which started with identifying commonalities in the group (Level 0) and ended with whether racial jokes are acceptable in comedy (Level 3).

After its conclusion, attendees reflected on the civil discourse activity. One attendee shared that she found the conversations to be productive and interesting, in particular the level one discussion about whether the government should institute a carbon tax to reduce emissions. *The*

*Tech* did not obtain the name of the attendee. She appreciated how the conversation highlighted points of agreement regarding the benefits of a carbon tax, while also identifying potential drawbacks.

Before the event ended, the FIRE speakers held a brief Q&A session. An attendee asked Gluhanich and Harris about their attitudes toward the future of freedom of speech in the country and on college campuses, given the recent deportations of international students like Rümeyşa Öztürk. Gluhanich admitted that she was concerned about the current political climate, but was hopeful that FIRE’s work in educating people would help address these recent issues.

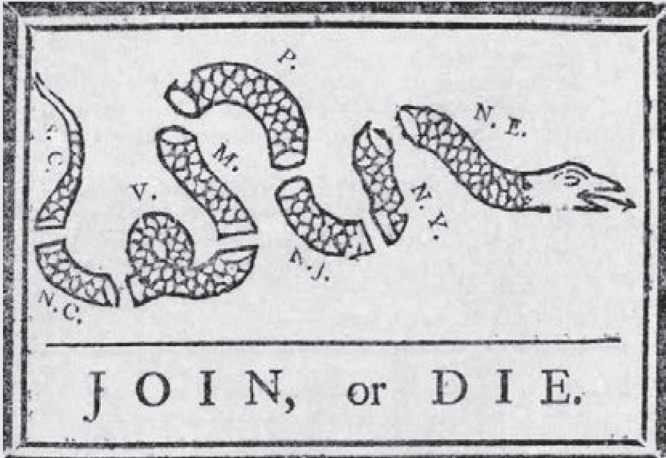
Regarding universities, Gluhanich conveyed optimism about protecting free speech. “A lot of schools have been working with us and our policy reform team to make their policies more protective of free speech,” she said. “We’ve established a lot of good relationships with general counsels, school presidents, and administrators.”

Harris added that FIRE is prepared to fight for protecting freedom of speech through public outreach efforts, litigation, and policy reform. “I feel optimistic because of the people I work with—it’s definitely a critical moment,” he said.

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# Protesters march at Boston’s “Hands Off!” rally

*Protesters rallied under one common theme: the perceived erosion of democratic norms*

**By Sabine Chu**

ASSOCIATE NEWS EDITOR

On Saturday, April 5 at 11 a.m., thousands of protesters gathered at the Parkman Bandstand in the Boston Common to protest the actions of the second Trump administration. This event was one of 1,300 “Hands Off!” protests across the country. National progressive advocacy organizations such as Indivisible and MoveOn, as well as labor unions and civil rights groups, were among the coalition that organized the event. The Boston Police Department estimated that between 25,000 and 30,000 people came to the three-hour protest, while CBS News reported nearly 100,000 attendees were present.

A marching band set the tune before the protest’s official start. At 11:08 a.m., Reverend Mariama White-Hammond and Reggi Alkiewicz, the rally’s emcees, spoke to the crowd. White-Hammond and Alkiewicz called for unity, emphasized the power of “love” over “fear,” and asked participants to introduce themselves to each other. They also highlighted their favorite signs in the crowd. Posters included references to federal funding cuts or changes to foreign policy, as well as more humorous jabs at President Donald Trump, Elon Musk, and Vice President JD Vance. One sign read, “Neuter DOGE,” a reference to the Department of Government Efficiency, while a nearby poster told Musk to “go steal data on Mars.”

Around 11:19 a.m., Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll came onto the stage to highlight the Bay State’s diversity and progressive policies. Citing Massachusetts’s role in the “invention” of “democracy,” Driscoll emphasized the importance of immigrants, labor, and women to the state. After Driscoll’s speech, the protesters marched to Boston’s Government Center along Tremont Street. At 12:30 p.m., speakers including Senator Ed Markey, Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley, and Mayor Michelle Wu addressed the crowd. According to Boston.com, Wu stated, “This is our city and you will never break us.”

*The Tech* spoke with several participants during the first hour of the protest. Their concerns ranged from

the environment to Social Security to education to Ukraine, but one theme came up repeatedly: the perceived erosion of democratic norms. Several participants cited the recent arrests by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) of pro-Palestinian legal immigrants, including Tufts University doctoral student Rümeyşa Öztürk. (Tufts, which is located in Medford, has declared support for Öztürk.) Other protesters highlighted the administration’s crackdown on law firms. Responses have been edited slightly for clarity.

Gretchen Bowder ’87 said, “The things that Trump and his cabinet of goons are doing to this country are frankly un-American.” Bowder, who heard about “Hands Off!” from word-of-mouth and email lists, believes that the Trump administration is “stripping everything that I believed to be good and true about the United States away.”

“Our enemies used to be authoritarian,” Dan Osterman said. “Now the United States’ friends are authoritarian because we have an authoritarian man in the White House.” Referencing the Enabling Act of 1933 that played a key role in Adolf Hitler’s rise to power, Bill Ivey stated, “I think we’re long past it.” He continued, “We better stop enabling.”

When asked what kind of world she hoped her one-year-old and four-year-old children would grow up in, Alex Reiter answered, “[A world where] we have a functioning government that has working checks and balances, where Congress works, and where climate change is something that everybody believes in and is actively working to fight.” Andrew Reiter chimed in, “We hope they grow up in a world.”

Unlike the Reiters, Denise Robinson opted to bring her two elementary school-age daughters to “Hands Off!”. Holding several signs in a child’s handwriting, she told *The Tech* that she hoped they would grow up to “see a world where we don’t all have to be the same, and where social progress can continue to move forward instead of backwards.”

“Hands Off!” was Azariah Price’s first protest. She shared, “If I’m living in fantasyland, everything will stop immediately.” Noting that this outcome seemed unlikely, Price said, “Hopefully everyone in these build-

ings is going to see this, and just think, damn, maybe I can do something to make my country better.” On the other hand, Jessica Nichols has been attending rallies since her childhood in Washington D.C. during the 1960s. Nichols, who felt a “sense of buoyant, positive energy” at the protest, said, “Being active also means putting our bodies in space in real time.” She wore a smock reading, “Unbought and unbosserd,” quoting former U.S. Representative Shirley Chisholm.

Several participants expressed frustration with their elected officials. Christian Ortiz told *The Tech* that he believed “people in Washington” were “scared for their jobs, so they’d rather stand with someone telling lies than stand up for what is right.” Sarah Thornington was more hopeful, but still thought that Democratic politicians “just don’t really know” what to do.

More broadly, many protesters felt that “Hands Off!” was meant to increase awareness across the country. When *The Tech* asked Chris Lee-Rodriguez what he hoped would occur after the protest, his answer was interrupted by a cry of “This is what democracy looks like!” He gestured and said, “That.” A teacher who has attended several protests for federal workers in recent months, Lee-Rodriguez believes that “the point is to make noise and let people know what how people feel.”

Isabelle Perks and Cassidy Thurston are students at Brookline High School. Perks shared, “If every single person says, ‘one person’s not going to do anything,’ then nobody shows up, and then it doesn’t do anything. But the more people that show up, the bigger the movement.” On attending high school during the Trump presidency, Perks said, “It’s such a scary time,” but she also believes that it is the right time to “develop your views and your opinions and where you fall.”

Tabitha Temple attended “Hands Off!” with her son, Ray Temple. While Tabitha shared that they feel that the administration is having direct effects on their lives, especially because Ray is transgender, she also said, “We care about everything that indirectly affects us or doesn’t affect us at all.” Ray hopes that the protest will empower “average” people to increase advocacy efforts, sharing, “I would tell any-



SABINE CHU—THE TECH

**Protesters gather on the Boston Common** before official start of rally, Saturday, April 5.



SABINE CHU—THE TECH

**Protesters hold signs and flags** at the “Hands Off!” rally on Saturday, April 5.

one at my middle school that if they know a queer or trans kid, or a kid from an immigrant background, they should make sure that they’re safe, at school and at home, and to stick up for them.”

Although Hugh Heisler doubts that “any of these demonstrations are going to change Trump’s efforts

to undermine our democracy,” he hopes that “people coming out and expressing their opposition to what’s happening may have the effect of changing the minds of people who are still open.” Heisler said, “Looking around and seeing all these people is the first time I’ve been optimistic in the past three months.”



# Current students respond to questions from the Class of 2029

Katherine McEwan '27: "IHTFP. The ambiguity is intentional"

By Sabine Chu  
ASSOCIATE NEWS EDITOR

On April 7, *The Tech* asked students admitted to the MIT Class of 2029 to share any questions they had for the Institute's current students. After receiving over 30 questions, the student body was invited over email to answer any question they saw fit. A few inquiries — such as "Will I have to solve a math problem to get into an MIT frat?" or "Are there any ghosts at MIT?" — remained unanswered, but many received thoughtful responses.

Some prospective students were worried about day-to-day life. When asked how to "survive the Boston cold," both Paige Yeung '25 and Daina Neithardt '25 emphasized the importance of buying the right clothes, including a winter coat, waterproof jacket, rain boots, scarves, a hat, and gloves. To stay healthy during the winter, Yeung stated that students could consider taking vitamin D supplements and prioritize going outside on a regular basis. "You should always check the weather here before going out," she added.

On the subject of navigating the MBTA, Katherine McEwan '27 wrote, "The trains aren't the most frequent or fastest, but they cover most of the city." McEwan, who finds the T to be a "pretty intuitive system," noted that BlueBikes are another good option, and that students can take advantage of tap payments in MBTA stations. Yeung added that physical MIT IDs can also function as Charlie Cards, and that students should be aware of relevant routes like the Red Line, the Commuter Rail, and the public transit system to and from Logan Airport.

In response to a query about "staple stores nearby for food, health, clothes, and stationary," Rita Zambrano '26 described the grocery situation as "pretty dismal." Although Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, Target, H Mart, and pharmacies such as CVS and Walgreens are within walking distance from campus, Zambrano finds these options to be quite expensive. She shared that students can travel to farther but cheaper locations like Star Market or Stop & Shop or order from these stores online.

When more specific questions arose, responses often came down to "it depends." In response to the question of how often students venture into Cambridge and Boston, Yeung wrote that the answer "varies a lot from person to person." However, she emphasized the area's walkability and the

wide range of public events that students can attend.

In the context of off-campus events, Vivian Hir '25 highlighted certain arts opportunities in response to a question about MIT-exclusive perks. "Students can subscribe to the MIT Arts Scholars mailing list to get free or discounted tickets for plays, concerts, ballets, and so on," Hir wrote. She also mentioned the \$10 Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) college card and free admission to the Museum of Fine Arts and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

Current students discussed MIT's social life through the Institute's wide range of communities, highlighting their experiences in clubs such as Shakespeare Ensemble, the Musical Theater Guild (MTG), Next Act, Asymptones A Cappella, Science Club for Girls, DynaMIT, Arcturus, Next Sing, and Sport Taekwondo. To those worried about not joining Greek life, Benson Lin '27 said, "You can definitely define your own social circle and friend groups without Greek life."

Others emphasized the importance of their living group in their MIT experience. Some cited specific reasons for choosing a dorm, such as the option to cook for themselves, or the high prevalence of singles. Room quality and social life vary between and within dorms, though Yeung wrote that rodents are "everywhere." In response to one student who asked about "sneaking in cooking appliances," McEwan said that policies differ between cook-for-yourself and dining hall dorms.

As for other places to find food on campus, Hir brought up options in the Student Center, Hayden Courtyard, and Stata Café. In terms of best study spots on campus, she recommended the Hayden stacks, Barker Library, and the Terrascope lounge. Both Hir and Zambrano wrote positively about their experiences with MISTI in Taiwan/Italy/Germany and Spain, respectively.

To a prospective student worried about being "excluded socially" for "standing by" their political views, Liliana Arias '25 wrote, "MIT students have a large and diverse range of political views, so chances are you'll find people who share similar views and also encounter some new perspectives along the way."

Possibly in reference to MIT's quirky, prank-centric reputation, another student asked, "Is the counterculture of MIT dying?" McEwan answered, "While the administration has been working particularly hard lately to crack down on countercul-

ture classics like hacking, the 'east side' dorms (Random and East Campus) are very dedicated to preserving themselves as a safe space for people outside of the norm."

On the subject of living outside the norm, the answer to the question "are sandals shoes at MIT" appeared to be a resounding "yes." Arias quipped, "If you ain't crocin', you ain't rockin'." Vinu-Srivatsan added, "Your professor cannot see your feet from the front of 26-100. Wear whatever you want, but avoid frostbite."

To the student asking "how unicyclable" MIT's campus is, Michelle Mo '26 shared, "Riding around on wheels all the time is definitely functional, but some surfaces are unideal." Lin highlighted MIT's Juggling and Spinning Arts Clubs in his answers to the questions "How high are the dorm ceilings (for juggling purposes)?" and "Does MIT have a circus?"

A few prospective students asked for favorite classes. Responses included 6.2050 (Digital Systems Laboratory), 8.044 (Statistical Mechanics), 8.20 (Introduction to Special Relativity), 21L.024 (Literature and Existentialism), 21L.601 (Introduction to Old English), 21M.426 (MIT Wind Ensemble), 21W.762 (Poetry Workshop), 21W.764J (Computational and Experimental Writing Workshop), CMS.306 (Making Comics and Sequential Art), STS.041 (Exercise is Medicine), and the Concourse program. Caroline Chea '25 recommended Harvard's ENGLISH 184cf (City Fictions).

Several answers may reassure prospective students worried about changing their path or exploring different options. Zambrano, who switched from Course 18 to Course 1 during her junior year, described enjoying applied math and optimization classes, but then discovered that Course 1 provided an opportunity to explore optimization and to "do something with my career that would directly help others." Neithardt wrote, "I've found a lot of time to take classes in physics and classics and genetics that don't count toward my major or HASS concentration, without ever taking more than 57 units, and normally less." (The Office of the First Year advises students to take 48-54 units per semester.)

Other prospective students were interested in gaining research or professional experience on campus. Sarah Schmitt '28 works as both a research assistant and a Student Art Guide at the List Visual Arts Center. She was able to obtain her research

position with "absolutely no wet lab experience at all." McEwan wrote that "In my experience, the majority of students have a job on campus to make extra money, usually working between 5 and 15 hours per week." They shared that students can serve as desk workers, library assistants, tour guides, or ushers: "If you want a job, it's not too hard to find one."

When asked how to best prepare for MIT over the summer before freshman year, Arias recommended applying to Interphase EDGE, which she felt "really helped to bridge the gap between what my high school offered and the difficulty of classes at MIT." Hir also stated that the MIT OpenCourseWare (OCW) websites are a good resource for those studying for Advanced Standing Exams (ASEs). On the other hand, Vinu-Srivatsan wrote, "Enjoy your free summer! You will constantly be preparing and studying for the next four years."

Schmitt advised students to continue taking care of their well-being during their MIT careers, warning, "You will need more sleep than you think." She mentioned that her strategies for staying well-rested include not doing work on Saturdays and varying her study locations on Sundays. Lin recommended that students "have plans in place," such as fixing "a time to gym with friends, or to go out for a night time walk, or game in the lounge." Chea told a student who asked about imposter syndrome that "I've found that it helps to talk to people, particularly friends and professional counselors," such as the Student Support Services (S3) deans.

One prospective student asked, "Which year are you? Do you HTFP or do you think you HTFP?" In response, McEwan wrote, "As a sophomore, IHTFP. The ambiguity is intentional." McEwan pointed out how common imposter syndrome is at the Institute: "It's all part of the experience — if someone says they've never felt like they don't belong here, they're lying to you. But for most people, the good times outweigh the bad, and if they don't, there's a lot of great resources to help you."

Similarly, Zambrano shared that in the past three years, she's ranged from sitting "curled up on the floor of my bedroom" to finding "paradise in my friends." She wrote that at MIT, she has found a love for learning and research, as well as a true community. Zambrano concluded, "IHTFP is a mantra here for a reason. Embrace it."



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MOVIE REVIEW

# Black Bag: A short thriller that underwhelms despite Soderbergh’s big-name leads

Steven Soderbergh’s newest movie suffers familiar issues, but is not his worst

★★★★☆☆

Black Bag

Directed by Steven Soderbergh

Screenplay by David Koepp

Starring Michael Fassbender, Cate Blanchett, Pierce Brosnan, and Marisa Abela

Rated R, Now playing.

By Cameron Davis  
ARTS STAFF WRITER

Steven Soderbergh has long been praised by critics and peers alike for making “avant-garde” films within the Hollywood big-budget system. He employs major stars, but puts them in small-scale dramas often revolving around crime or unsavory situations; just look at how he has Channing Tatum return to his male-stripper roots in *Magic Mike* (2013), or Daniel Craig drop his 007 suaveness for *Logan Lucky*

(2017). Despite his indie-darling persona and a few great films, including those two romps, Soderbergh misses as often as he hits. Outings like *No Sudden Move* (2021) pull in fun ensemble casts but squander the big-name actors with poor pacing, headache-inducing camera effects, and unearned twists. His newest movie, *Black Bag*, suffers these same pacing, filming, and storyline issues. But it’s not his worst, and is enjoyable enough — as most British-accented spy fare tends to be.

The thriller opens with British intelligence agent George Woodhouse learning that his wife, Kathryn, is one of only five suspects in a top-secret investigation into the breach of a software called Severus. Although Kathryn is a fellow spy, the two enjoy an unshakable marriage thanks to their crystal-clear boundaries, sealing confidential information in the metaphorical “black bag” and completely trusting in each other. So when Kathryn is implicated in potential wrongdoing, George is unnerved.

He plays it cool, though, inviting the four other suspects and Kathryn (all colleagues) to a dinner party. Fueled by plenty of wine — and a healthy dose of truth serum — tensions rise. Infidelity, jealousy, kinks, and other dirty secrets are exposed, and the party comes quickly to an end when surveillance specialist Clarissa stabs her cheating boyfriend Freddie in the hand with a steak knife. George silently watches the events unfold, clearly weighing the guilt of all the suspects.

After such a high-stakes first scene, the rest of the film follows familiar spy genre pat-

terns: someone is double-crossed, someone is collaborating with the Russians (and the Ukraine war is explicitly invoked, as it was in the latest season of *White Lotus*), someone orders a drone strike, someone spies on someone’s spouse, and someone uses a forged Swiss bank account. Later, we match the same adrenaline of the first dinner in a climactic lie detector scene, but mostly the conversations are dry and low-stakes.

Much of that is the fault of the leads, whom Soderbergh fails to use to their full potential. As George, Michael Fassbender offers a much less intense, intimidating, and ultimately interesting version of the same tactical operative he portrayed in David Fincher’s *The Killer* (2023). Cate Blanchett is a steely Kathryn who musters neither the smarts nor the sex appeal to convince us of her potential masterminding. Furthermore, Pierce Brosnan appears as the hard-nosed agency boss, but the casting is too on-the-nose and never delivers on the James Bond promise he invokes. In a scene meant to pack a punch, Brosnan mostly looks bewildered, as if wondering — just like us — why he is in the movie.

The supporting cast, too, is middling at best. Naomi Harris plays Zoe Vaughn, the agency’s therapist, whose dialogue is rooted in a flat-footed relationship with her boyfriend James (Regé-Jean Page). Tom Burke’s Freddie is too bumbling to sell his managing agent potential. Only Marisa Abela, who plays Clarissa, has real panache, imbuing her role with plenty of quirk and charm but standing

her ground against the bigger personalities in the room with her. It’s no coincidence that her character is the one that does the dinner-table stabbing.

Aside from the mediocre performances, Soderbergh still includes some of his defining, satisfying stylistic choices, such as the playful 20th-century spy music (scored by the director’s long standing collaborator David Holmes) and quick cuts between characters that deliberately undermine their believability in the aforementioned lie detector scene. Some other choices, however, are half-baked. For example, the film opens with “LONDON,” announcing the location in big letters (as is customary in spy fare), but never uses a city nameplate again. Plus, every character we meet is British — and walks around London — so the exposition is pretty clear.

Other choices are downright distracting, such as some camera lens (or After Effects filter?) that adds gaudy auras to lights in every scene. LEDs in an office, TV screens during a surveillance mission, street lamps in Zurich, cabs in London; all are ringed with ugly, blurry light. Especially when the cinematographer is Soderbergh himself (as his moniker Peter Andrews), one wonders why he made the choice.

Ultimately, though, it’s hard to regret watching *Black Bag*. Coming in at 94 minutes, its tight runtime prevents the plot from getting too deep, but also makes for a snappy thriller perfect for a weeknight watch. Just don’t expect a payoff like *Ocean’s Eleven*.

MOVIE REVIEW

# Soundtrack to a Coup d’Etat: Belgian director Johan Grimonprez’s uneven narratives of 20th century geopolitics set to astonishingly good jazz

Running 150 minutes and covering decades of exceedingly complex history, the film struggles to connect its musical and geopolitical elements

★★★★☆☆

Soundtrack to a Coup d’Etat

Directed by Johan Grimonprez

Screenplay by Johan Grimonprez

Not Rated. Now playing in select theaters. (Screening reviewed at Harvard Law School)

By Cameron Davis  
ARTS STAFF WRITER

Oscar-nominated historical documentary *Soundtrack to a Coup d’Etat* belies its two primary interests in the title: music and geopolitics. At times, their connection in the 20th century was exceptionally clear. For example, the United States’ “jazz ambassador” program sponsored musical legends such as Louis Armstrong in the 1950s and 1960s to promote American values and cultural soft power by traveling to places like Africa. But Belgian director Johan Grimonprez’s film, which runs 150 minutes and covers the exceedingly complex history of the Congo Cri-

sis, struggles to connect these musical and geopolitical elements.

The Congo was under colonial rule by King Leopold II of Belgium in the 1800s, who implemented systems of ruthless violence to extract huge amounts of natural resources and impose strict racial segregation for nearly a hundred years. (Belgium has since officially apologized to some degree for colonization and related wrongdoings.) But Grimonprez’s art-film background, formed at a Belgian art school, the School of Visual Arts in New York, and the Whitney Museum, prevents him from telling a coherent narrative about the complicated histories of European involvement in Africa, American global affairs and espionage, and Soviet inroads into Africa and other Non-Aligned Movement member states.

Gimonprez’s art education formulated a perspective informed by a meta-critique of film itself. His own website opens onto a 1994 essay titled “Against Documentary” that serves as a send-up of the very movies he makes, mocking the director for putting money toward “yet another film on political strife.” This academic perspective is well-suited for film essays, gallery videos, and art history analysis, but is less appropriate for a traditional documentary format on music and politics.

Indeed, *Soundtrack to a Coup d’Etat* flips between its two subjects and rarely settles on a timeline or relational theory of events. Clips of African political campaigns are interspersed with African-American thought leaders like Malcolm X; brassy jazz solos in

New York nightclubs are cut with dealings at the United Nations Security Council; bold typographic choices are handsome, but fill the screen for frustrating amounts of time. Throughout the documentary, it’s hard not to marvel at the quality of the archival footage or the remarkable beauty of the jazz pieces, but it all comes in barrages of *content*.

Some vignettes are told well. When Nikita Khrushchev and Che Guevara visit American soil for a United Nations event, spending time cavorting together in Harlem and making media appearances on the sidewalk outside the historical Hotel Theresa, the energy is infectious (and could be a movie unto itself). Plus, the hip, jiving score matches the moment. Similarly, protestors’ storming of the UN General Assembly is powerful, especially paired with a song featuring a primal scream. The pent-up anger towards Western imperialism erupts through both the physical rioting and the musical cacophony.

Other choices are less harmonious. Grimonprez is infatuated with the United Nations; he credits Khrushchev’s shoe-banging incident in the General Assembly as inspiration for the documentary. But the movie’s coverage of the UN is one-note and repetitive. We see, over and over, a bloc of Asian and African countries voting for a motion, just for the US to stand against it, and the Soviet Union responding with the same tired stump speeches. All this posturing is familiar to any student who did Model UN in high school and doesn’t merit its share of the film.

*Soundtrack* misses elsewhere, too. For instance, a few of its interviews are especially

haunting in their cavalier attitude towards cruelty exhibited to the Congolese people. In one, CIA Director Allen Dulles jokes about how the Agency interfered with local elections; in others, several mercenaries describe, tongue in cheek, the indiscriminate killing of Congolese people for money. One German gun-for-hire even flashes his Nazi Iron Cross.

These moments show the craven underside of the Congo Crisis on full display. However, Grimonprez refuses to linger on some of these overwhelming or vile parts of history, which does the film a disservice. Instead of letting the audience sit with a particularly shocking piece of information, *Soundtrack* repeatedly turns to an upbeat jazzy number or yet another UN hearing. Although the dissonance could work in a museum setting, it becomes exhausting for several hours in a theater.

The same is true for multiple fourth-wall-breaking cuts to modern advertisements for Apple and Tesla. While the ads overtly connect modern technological products to the minerals made possible by Congolese mining, it’s done in a way so painfully obvious that some audience members giggled. Connecting the past to our present could have been accomplished in a more thoughtful way; for example, a clip showing the modern forced evacuation of a Congolese family is far more effective as a tie-in to the 21st century.

Grimonprez’s efforts to comb through mountains of historic footage, first-person accounts, and jazz pieces were no doubt heroic. If only his findings were crafted into a tighter, clearer narrative.

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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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# MIT Club Frisbee: Grim Beavers and Munchers Compete at Sectionals

Over the weekend, both MIT Men’s Club Frisbee teams competed in their respective conference tournaments for the 2024-2025 season



MATTHEW BARNETT — THE TECH

**Will Vu '26** winds up to throw deep while **Karthik Vedula '27** cuts upfield during an ultimate frisbee match against the University of Massachusetts Amherst B team.

By **Matthew Barnett**  
SPORTS EDITOR

Over the weekend, both MIT Men’s Club Frisbee teams competed in their respective conference tournaments for the 2024-2025 season. The Grim Beavers (A Team) hosted the Metro Boston D-I Men’s Tournament on Briggs Field, while the Woodmunchers (B Team) traveled to UMass Amherst to play in the New England Developmental Tournament.

**Grim Beavers Results**

The Grim Beavers struggled to open the weekend, getting shut out by Northeastern A 0-15 and falling to Boston University 6-15 on Saturday. The team continued their skid into Sunday, dropping a third game to Boston College 1-15 before finally finding their rhythm against UMass Lowell, securing a decisive 15-7 victory that set the stage for a high-stakes showdown against Harvard A.

Despite a rocky start, MIT remained in contention for the last bid to the New England D-I Regional Tournament — their game against Harvard was a true win-or-go-home scenario, and the players rose to the occasion.

The Grim Beavers got out to an early 4-2 lead, further extended to 7-4 behind a string of deep throws by Kyle Roke '26.

MIT’s offensive momentum was stifled by adjustments made in Harvard’s zone defense; although Grim made many promising drives, diving catches, and audacious throws, Harvard forced and capitalized upon many timely turnovers to take the lead going into halftime, 7-8. This defensive momentum continued into the second half, with Harvard scoring three more points to increase MIT’s deficit, 7-11.

Requiring five scores to take the lead and having only 20 minutes left in the game, MIT continued to fight on. After converting a long 10-minute point, Grim

quickly punched in a second score within a minute to cut their deficit to two with six minutes to go. Needing a miracle, Coach Axis Sivitz put two freshmen into the game, Zach Perry '28 and Ethan Phan '28, and called out “BU Zone,” a new alignment that the team had been practicing for the past three weeks.

This last-effort change stifled Harvard’s rolling offense, allowing Grim to force turnovers and even the game 11-11 with pivotal plays from Phan and Rich Wang '27.

Having reached a tie, MIT v. Harvard went into sudden-death overtime, often called the universe point, with the next score winning the game. Despite Harvard receiving the disc first, Vincent Fan G seized the moment on defense, laying out a fully horizontal diving block that caused Andrew Okyere '25 to force a crucial turnover. This converted into a game-winning score to Roke that secured MIT’s win in dramatic fashion. With the win, Grim improved to 3-0 vs. Harvard this season and successfully punched their ticket to Regionals in three weeks.

**Woodmunchers Results**

The Woodmunchers’ trip to Amherst was marked by poor weather; early morning snowfall blanketed the fields and delayed the start of the tournament for 90 minutes due to travel difficulties. When all was said and done, the games began at 11 a.m.

In their first game on the frosty fields, Munch struggled against Northeastern C, losing 2-12 as they sought to find their groove. Their next game didn’t afford them much help — due to a double-booked field, Munch was forced onto wet, marshy grass to face UMass Amherst B in the mud. Despite dropping the game 2-15, their spirits were high for their two scores against the would-be tournament runner-ups.

Returning from the grass with muddied jerseys, the Munchers beat Tufts C 9-5, led

by a pair of scores by both Charley Cheng '27 and graduate student Dongqi Wang.

Munch dropped their next game against Tufts B 4-10, but the game was not without controversy. Around the middle of the match, a Tufts B player hucked the disk toward the end zone from about midfield, but caught Karthik Vedula '27 on his follow-through. As Vedula was treated for a massive knot on his temple, the Tufts B player argued that Vedula fouled him with his head before he threw the frisbee, even though the disc landed 50 yards away out the back of the endzone. The game continued from then, and MIT closed the day with a 1-3 record.

Sunday proved to be a challenging outing for Munch. Five of their 14 players returned to campus to tend to other business, leaving a squad of nine to finish off what the team had started.

The team was tested right away, facing Brown B in the 4th place quarterfinals. Making adjustments to compensate for their lower-manned squad, MIT employed a “wall” zone defense that helped limit big plays as the wind picked up. Joaquin Perkins '26 scored a callahan against Brown, intercepting their tipped swing pass in the endzone to put MIT up a point. In the end, however, Munch dropped the game, losing 3-9.

Just like Grim, Munch played the last game of their tournament against Harvard, taking on Harvard’s B Team for 7th place in the tournament. Down to seven people due to injuries, Munch powered through and kept the game close against their rivals from down Mass Ave. They employed their adjusted wall defense and used the wind to their benefit to supplement their lack of substitutions. The game was broken open by a massive upwind pass from Cheng to Ellery Stahler '25, which was converted with a pass back to Cheng to score. Munch won the game 8-6 to conclude the tournament on a high note, returning home having beat Harvard.

## Varsity Sports Review

*Wins and losses cloud the spring season thus far*

By **Matthew Barnett**  
SPORTS EDITOR

Spring sports are well underway — in fact, they’re almost over! Before May approaches, check out how our varsity athletes have been faring as the weather warms up.

**Baseball** - The Engineers started their season with a six-game losing streak and currently sit at 10-12 (5-2 in conference). Their offense has been powered by outfielder John Spivey '28, who currently leads the team in home runs and runs batted in (RBIs). He is one of six Engineers batting above .300 this season. The team’s pitching has been held down by Mason Estrada '27 and Cole Foster '26, both of whom have struck out more than 25 batters this season.

The Engineers have 11 games remaining in their season. They will visit the U.S. Coast Guard Academy on Saturday for a double-header matchup.

**Softball** - MIT Softball is off to a strong start, currently sitting at 14-6 (5-3 in conference). Outfielder Delanie Benevides '28 leads the offense with a .433 batting average, while Ava Ladd '26 tops the team

in RBIs with 20. On the mound, Caroline Langmeyer '26 anchors the pitching staff with an 8-1 record, 40 strikeouts, and a 2.91 earned run average (ERA).

Softball is slated to take on Salve Regina University in a double-header on Briggs Field this Friday.

**Men’s Lacrosse** - Men’s Lacrosse sits at 5-6 (3-2 in conference), putting them at 4th in the NEWMAC. They recently ended a 0-4 stretch with two straight wins, bringing them to their current record. They have two games remaining on their schedule before the NEWMAC Tournament.

Men’s Lacrosse hosts Wheaton College this Saturday on Roberts Field at 1 p.m.

**Women’s Lacrosse** - Women’s Lacrosse currently sports a 7-7 record (6-1 in conference), sitting at 3rd in the NEWMAC behind Springfield College and Babson College. They’ve struggled against out-of-conference teams and have notably gone winless against ranked competition (0-4 against teams ranked by the Intercollegiate Women’s Lacrosse Coaches Association). They have two games remaining before the NEWMAC Tournament, and are primed to make a push for higher seeding.

Their next game is at Smith College this Saturday at 1 p.m.

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	6	×21	1	3	7	5	+15	2	4
×35	1	+10	5	2	3	7	4	+14	6
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+15	1	2		4	3	5			
	5	4	3	+12	1	2			

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# Menstruation science moonshot: MIT’s bold quest to revolutionize women’s health

Linda Griffith: “We want to create an international movement that helps us bring a lot of great science and engineering into the study of menstruation”

By **Veronika Moroz and Kosha Upadhyay**

When Professor of Biological Engineering Linda Griffith began working at MIT in 1991, organizational miscommunication left her looking for lab space — only to end up with a room too small for her team.

“There was a ladies room with a huge lounge with sofas in it next to that lab space. And I went to the provost and said, ‘Can I have this lounge?’” Griffith recalls. “And the provost said, ‘no-no-no-no-no. Women need to lie down every month. We can’t give up those lounge spaces ‘cause women need to lie down.’”

Now the director for the MIT Center of Gynecopathology, Griffith remembers smiling and responding, “Women need to lie down? They should go to the doctor and get treated so that they don’t need to lie down.”

It’s been 24 years since then, but treatments for menstruation pain remain unavailable for many. Griffith’s estimates reveal that, at MIT, about 20 to 25% of people who menstruate miss school or work every month because of menstrual problems.

This problem is the motivation behind menstruation science, a field launched by Griffith and other leading minds in reproductive biology. On Wednesday, April 9, the Center of Gynecopathology held a symposium titled “Menstruation Science: Unlocking the Secrets of the Hormone-Immunity Nexus” to gather together people innovating for menstruation health.

**An extremely prevalent problem**  
A quarter of the global population menstruates, yet many lack proper access to menstrual health resources.

“It’s quite shocking that one-fourth of the world’s population of women and adolescent girls of reproductive age — that’s nearly 500 million — say they do not have everything they need to manage their menstruation,” said Dr. Hilary Critchley, a professor of Reproductive Medicine at the University of Edinburgh and the keynote speaker for the event. “And this evidence comes not just from low- and middle-resource countries, but also from high-resource countries such as where we are today.”

Due to the stigma around menstruation, many don’t feel empowered to speak about their experiences and seek help, leading to late diagnosis and inadequate care. This results in a perpetual cycle of medical neglect where individuals’ needs go unmet until it is too late.

“Why is it that, when a young girl seeks health care for pain and bleeding, she’s told to go away, told, often by her family and friends, that this is normal?” Critchley questioned.

Menstrual conditions such as endometriosis and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) often go misdiagnosed and underdiagnosed. Menstrual pain may be ignored because people don’t know how much pain is a sign of pathology, causing them to suffer for years before they receive a diagnosis.

Critchley’s talk outlined the health risks faced by people who menstruate around the world. These included abnormal uterine bleeding, which affects one in three women of reproductive age, and anemia, which impacts a third of non-pregnant women.

“When you menstruate, and particularly if your periods are heavy, you lose iron from the body,” Critchley explained. “And what is appallingly under-recognized is that not only are women anemic, but they are also iron deficient.” Studies from Critchley’s lab have found that iron deficiency due to abnormal uterine bleeding can be as debilitating as chronic depression, congestive heart failure, or kidney failure.

Anemia and iron deficiency can also impact pregnancy outcomes by increasing risk of death from postpartum haemorrhage and even impacting the neurodevelopment of the infant.

**Growing the field**  
Thanks to the work of people like Lisa Halvorson, the first chief of the Gynecologic Health and Disease Branch Chief of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD), menstruation research is receiving more attention and funding.

Halvorson, now the Chief of Service of the Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility branch of the NHCD, assumed this role with

the creation of the Gynecologic Health and Disease Branch in 2012. At that time, “there were essentially no NIH funding grants in the last ten plus years” that had gone to gynecology research, Halvorson recalls. The only exception was one or two grants for studying implantation biology.

Part of the issue is that menstrual health has historically been difficult to study, due to the “complex tissue” and “heterogenous presentations” of disorders, Halvorson said.

But that’s also part of the reason menstruation science is so important to study. The endometrium is an “excellent model system,” Halvorson said. Every month, it sheds lining and regenerates, earning it its reputation as the “classic example of scarless healing.” An implanted fetus, which contains foreign material from the biological father, should be rejected, but isn’t. The reason might be the key to understanding immune tolerance for transplants — menstrual blood might even be used as a “tissue source” for doing biopsies or diagnosing diseases.

One of the things that makes menstruation particularly hard to study is the lack of model organisms: mice, a common model organism, are quite unhelpful since they have two uteruses and don’t menstruate naturally. Working on this problem has forced scientists to develop better computational models for studying humans.

“Now, what we’re headed towards is building a core facility at MIT for these in vitro models,” Griffith explained. “We use mathematical modeling to design these in vitro models and iterate on cycles to really humanize all biomedical models, but starting with gynecology.”

**Researching solutions**  
Although menstrual research has long been overlooked, some of the world’s leading researchers are helping to close the gap.

One example is Alix Wagner, a first-year Harvard-MIT Health Sciences and Technology (HST) Medical Engineering and Medical Physics (MEMPH) PhD student in the Roche Lab.

“My view on menstruation science is very much tied to going to the gynecologist for your annual exam,” Wagner said.

Tools used in modern gynecology today, such as the speculum and the tenaculum, have barely changed since they were invented in the late 1800s. During routine procedures, the speculum holds open the patient’s vaginal canal, while the tenaculum grabs into the cervical tissue to stabilize the person’s uterus.

“Because the cervix is the locus of three different nerves,” Wagner explained, “when you are piercing into that tissue and retracting, you are stimulating those nerves and it’s incredibly painful.” Through her project, Wagner hopes to make gynecology feel more accessible by introducing less painful technologies.

“If we can come up with tools that are designed by women for people with a uterus that are much more comfortable, much less emotionally scary, and much more physically comfortable, you’ll be much more comfortable going to talk about your menstrual problems and getting an exam to really figure out the root of the issue,” Wagner said.

Researchers are turning their attention to some of the most persistent mysteries in menstrual health, such as endometriosis, an extremely painful inflammatory condition in which the uterine lining, also called the endometrium, starts growing outside the uterus. Endometriosis is fairly common, but often goes undiagnosed for seven to eight years, according to Critchley’s research. Not much is known about its biological root cause.

Sarah Pertsemliadis at the DALLab is working to change that. Her work investigates a cellular process called decidualization, where uterine cells prepare for pregnancy. The team crafted fluorescent genetic reporters and barcoded tracking systems to monitor multiple signaling pathways simultaneously in live cells. By collecting time-lapse data and applying a machine learning algorithm, Pertsemliadis is uncovering how different hormones affect pathway activity and can even predict hormone output linked to successful decidualization.

Her research is no small feat, and neither is her journey into menstruation science.

“When I was applying to PhD programs, I was like, ‘Oh, I totally want to do [synthetic biology] and reproductive health.’ But by the time I got there, they were like, ‘We unfortu-



PHOTO PROVIDED BY JAKE BELCHER

**Professor Linda Griffith**, Director of the Center for Gynecopathology Research at MIT, explains MIT’s launch of a moonshot for menstruation science.

nately don’t do reproductive health anymore, so you have to do this other program now,” Pertsemliadis recalled. “I tried to work on it. But it wasn’t my passion. I just knew that this was always going to be a lingering idea for me.”

Pertsemliadis described the alienation she felt at MIT in pursuing a career path in menstruation science. “Being at MIT, I felt it was more challenging being a bioengineer because whenever someone in MechE or CS talked about their stuff, everyone just understood that language. I always felt like if I was going to talk about my project, I needed to first give a cell biology lecture for someone to even understand or care,” she said.

Although Pertsemliadis once experienced a cultural sameness at MIT, she now appreciates the institute’s evolving educational landscapes.

“I talked to CS and MechE students and I thought, ‘Wow, these people are actually so excited because they’re inspired by reproductive health,’” Pertsemliadis said.

**Fighting the taboo**  
From ‘Aunt Flow’ to ‘Shark Week’ to ‘Surfing the Crimson Tide,’ the taboo around periods has led to a lot of euphemisms. But it’s also led to a lack of accessibility of accurate, factual information about menstruation.

Pia Wahi-Singh, a medical student at the University of Edinburgh mentored by Dr. Critchley, is focused on taking the pulse on this information landscape.

“When we’re talking about intervening and educating people about menstruation, it’s important to reach people where they’re at already,” Wahi-Singh told *The Tech*. That’s why Wahi-Singh’s project focuses on surveying students at her university to “understand their experiences and perceptions about menstruation.”

Through this survey, Wahi-Singh seeks to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on her classmates’ experiences with menstruation. “How many people in our demographic actually have abnormal bleeding?” she wondered. “I suspect it will be a lot. What’s the impact on their quality of life? What are things that affect them day-to-day as a student? Also, what are their treatment preferences, and where do they get the knowledge from?”

**The industry potential**  
The event also included a panel on how menstruation science can bring more money to the women’s health industry. The panel included individuals working in the health industry such as Dr. Pearl Huang ’80, CEO of Dunad Therapeutics; Dr. Steve Palmer, CSO of CelMatix; Susan Whitehead of the MIT Corporation; Dr. Megan Greenfield, a partner at McKinsey & Co.; Divya Mathur PhD ’08 of Third Rock Ventures; Dr. Hugo Arellano-Santoyo of RA Ventures; and Luba Greenwood, J.D., the CEO of Gallop Oncology.

“A lot of these conditions, like endometriosis, are healthspan conditions, not lifespan conditions,” Greensfield said. “Historically, we have focused on things that kill you versus things that make you miserable. And I think that’s a really big difference.”

Greenfield likens the potential industry boom of an endometriosis treatment to today’s market for weight-loss drugs such as Ozempic. “Not too long ago, we didn’t think obesity was a condition. We thought it was a moral failure. There’s not a specialized person that actually treats obesity, right? So if you looked at a market, you’d think treating it would be a bad idea,” Greensfield summa-

rized. “And it’s not even one of the biggest successes we’ve had.”

One in ten women have endometriosis, Greenfield pointed out. However, “there isn’t a non-invasive diagnostic. There is no good therapeutic.” The potential market is huge — for anyone who can figure out how to develop a drug that taps into it.

From an employer side, treating endometriosis also boosts employee productivity. With more and more women working, Greenfield added, we need to “support them so they can fully participate in the workforce.”

**Fostering collaboration**  
Elizabeth LaCroix, a Chemistry PhD student at MIT who is co-advised by Griffith and Dr. Jeremiah Johnson, says that helping people with menstrual pain is “one of [her] life’s purposes,” which is why she’s working in multiple labs to study menstrual science. LaCroix got her first period when she was 13. “I spent the majority of my teen years, just every month, in an extreme amount of pain,” LaCroix recalled. “I just wanted to know if my pain was normal or not.”

Despite the stigma around menstruation, “people are so much more receptive than I ever thought they would be,” LaCroix exclaimed. “My advisor, Jeremiah, is a really good example of that. When I first told him that I wanted to do menstrual health work, he was really excited about that, saying, ‘I don’t know how we’ll do that, but I want to support you.’ I think a lot of PIs at MIT are like that.”

Despite being a first-year PhD student, she’s already launched a student group for menstruation science research through the Center for Gynecopathology Research at MIT.

The work of people such as LaCroix paves the way for future scientists and engineers passionate about menstruation science to craft new technologies to better menstrual health. For example, high school students from Milton Academy traveled to MIT to attend the event, representing their student-run organization *Free Period Talk*. Through *Free Period Talk*, the founders aim to advocate for menstrual equality by discussing menstruation at a larger level and providing products for those in need.

“Knowing that more people think the same as us motivates us as a team to know that we can do these challenging things and actually make a difference,” said Rhia Patel, a co-founder of *Free Period Talk*.

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# Midway

Solution, page 8

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

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.

# TIM

Solution, page 8

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

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.

# Greek Carnival

Solution, page 8

+17	+13			x60		
		+11			7	
	x42			x105		
6	x21				+15	
x35	+10					+14
		+6		3	6	
x36				+9		

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.

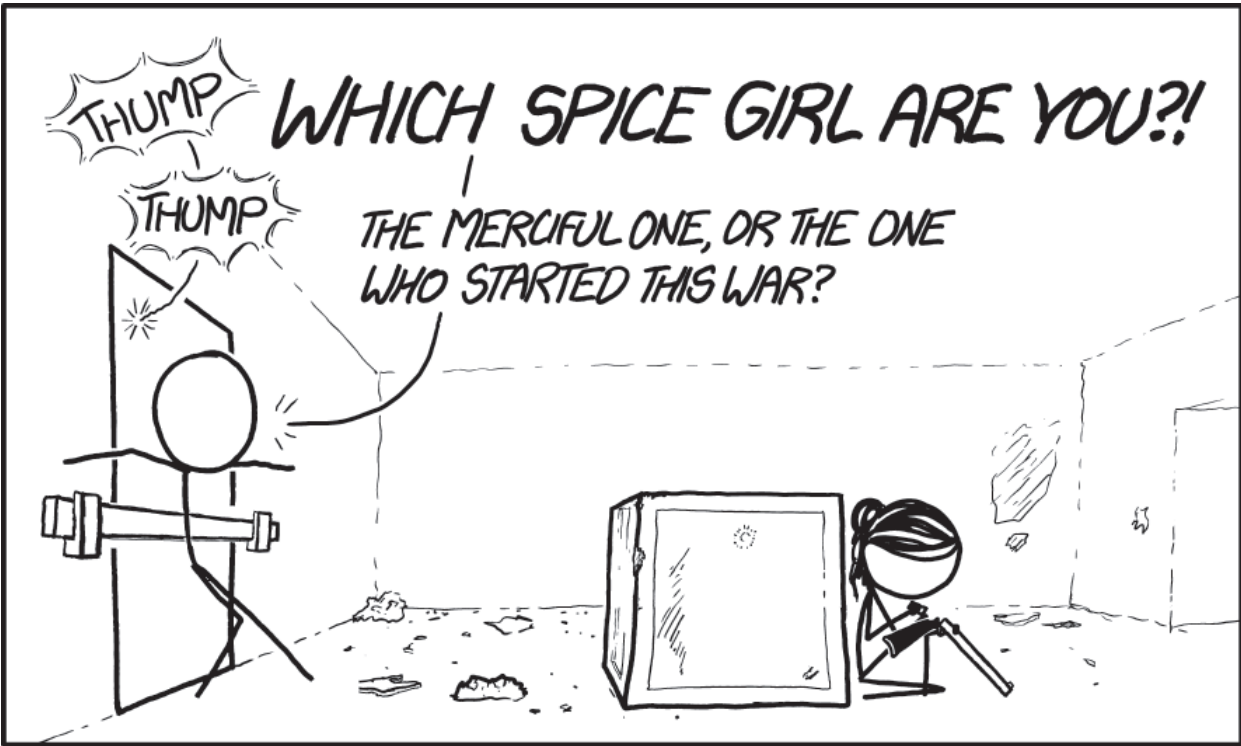
# TeaDo

Solution, page 8

x120		+6		+4
			2	
	+18			
+15			3	
			+12	

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.

## [1511] Spice Girl



WHEN I SEE THOSE QUIZ TITLES, I LIKE TO IMAGINE THEY'RE BEING SHOUTED THROUGH A DOOR IN A POSTAPOCALYPTIC DYSTOPIA.

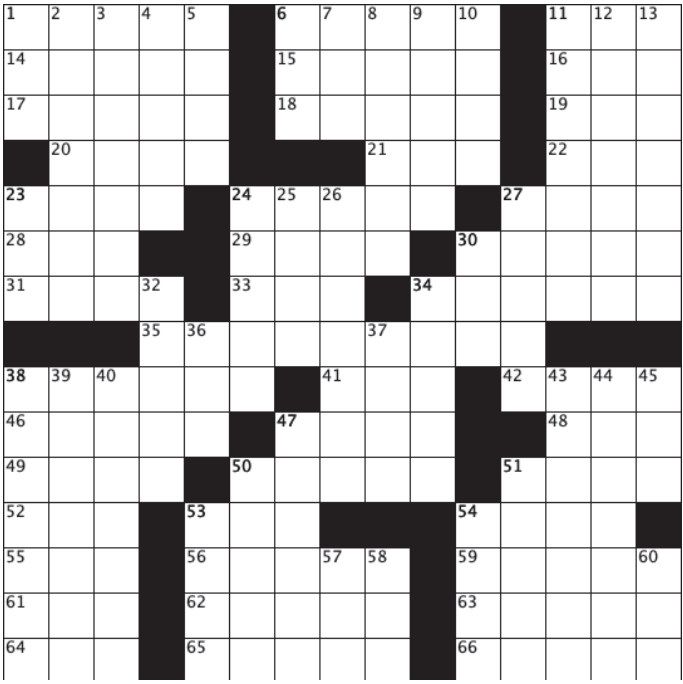


# Crawl Space

by Lily Yeazell

Solution, page 13

- Across**  
1 Bloated  
6 In a few words  
11 an unwelcome sight in the stud, for short  
14 Playground retort  
15 Quaint lodging, informally  
16 "Parks and \_\_\_\_"  
17 Suffragist Susan B.  
18 "Ready, \_\_\_\_!"  
19 Buckeyes' sch.  
20 Sales promotion acronym  
21 One-eighty  
22 Minor criticism  
23 Wrinkly-faced dogs  
24 Church chorus?  
27 Related word  
28 Vein contents  
29 First, second, third or home  
30 Thin porridge  
31 Driving need  
33 Picks from a lineup  
34 Liquor made by distilling wine  
35 Every 6.009 (6.101) student's nightmare or a hint to 7 squares in this puzzle
- 38 Job fair necessity  
41 Tishby of "The Island"  
42 Laptop decoration  
46 Rust, e.g.  
47 Reykjavik's home, abbr.  
48 Conclude  
49 Mimics  
50 Namesake for the law describing how light bends in a prism  
51 Norms: Abbr.  
52 Fall from grace  
53 Actress Ryan  
54 \_\_\_\_ facto  
55 \_\_\_\_ kwon do  
56 Toward the back  
59 Part of TNT  
61 Borscht ingredients  
62 Sporty Mazda  
63 Smash  
64 Service charge  
65 Nurturing  
66 Spa wear
- Down**  
1 Top-of-the-beanstalk resident  
2 Baseball Hall of Famer  
3 Moe, Larry and Curly  
4 Playlist makeup  
5 Toy on a string  
6 Air rifle ammo  
7 Issa of "Barbie"  
8 On key  
9 Borders  
10 Pilot, slangily  
11 I, for one  
12 appointed  
13 shrewdly  
23 Miranda rights reciters  
24 Tolerate  
25 Anti-DUI org.  
26 Gist  
27 Rugged rocks  
30 "Despicable Me" supervillain  
32 Israel's Barak and Olmert  
34 Hoops  
36 The Beatles' "\_\_\_\_ Mine"  
37 Christmas carol  
38 Sandwich filler  
39 Make amends for  
40 Some Tuscans  
43 Concert memento  
44 Back



- 45 Aves., sts., etc.  
47 Ready to roll  
50 Something watched on la televisiÃ³n  
51 Veep between Hubert and Gerald
- 53 Animal found in the La Brea Tar Pits  
54 Rise: Abbr.  
57 Georgia airport code  
58 Sunbeam  
60 Sounds of surprise

## [2772] Commemorative Plaque

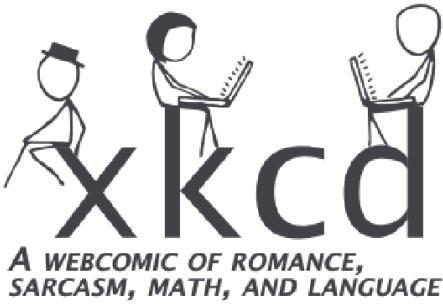


[Below] On this site on May 12th, 2023, I finally learned how to use the masonry bit for my drill.

## [2417] 1/1,000th Scale World

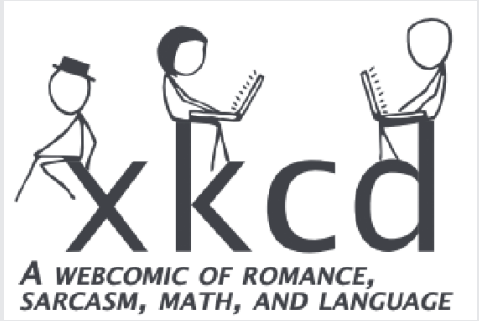


We're worried that a regular whale will get into a 30-foot-deep ocean trench section and filter-feed on all the tiny whales.



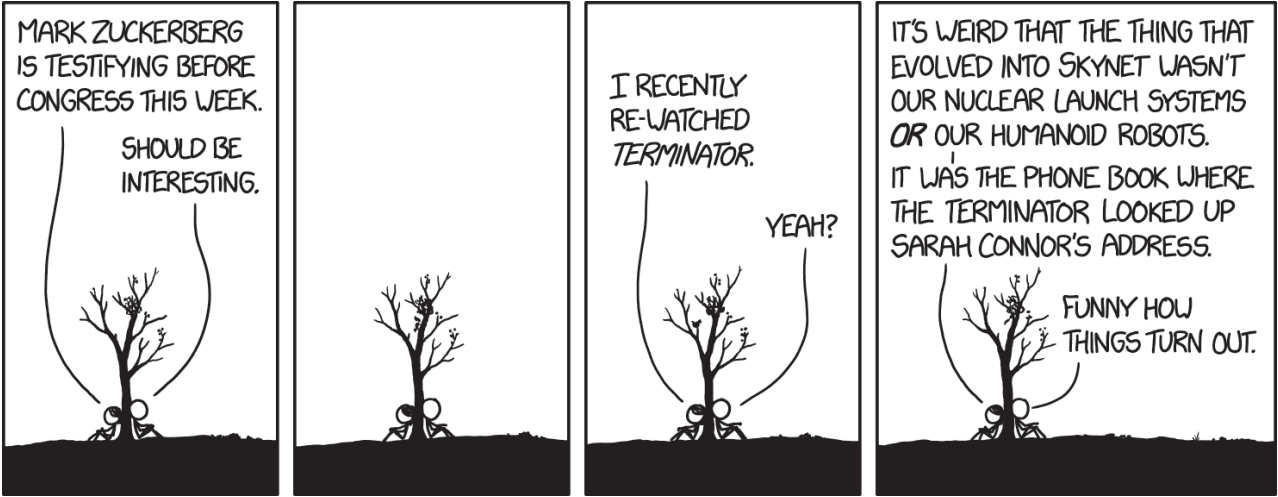
by Randall Munroe





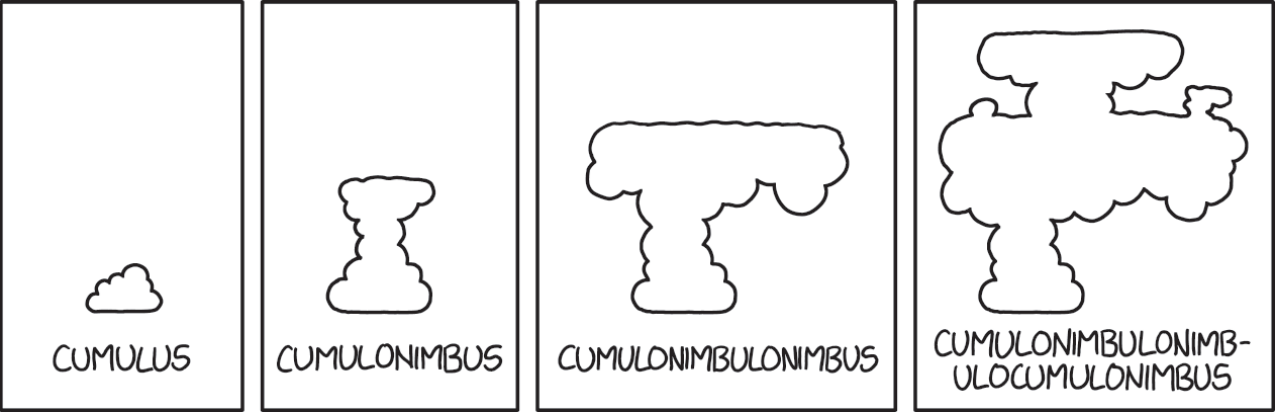
by Randall Munroe

[1978] Congressional Testimony



James Cameron's Terminator 3 was the REALLY prophetic one. That's why Skynet sent a robot back to the 1990s to prevent him from ever making it, ultimately handing the franchise over to other directors.

[2185] Cumulonimbus



The rarest of all clouds is the altocumulentoculostriatusincubulonimbus, caused by an interaction between warm moist air, cool dry air, cold slippery air, cursed air, and a cloud of nanobots.

[394] Kilobyte

THERE'S BEEN A LOT OF CONFUSION OVER 1024 vs 1000, KBYTE vs KBIT, AND THE CAPITALIZATION FOR EACH. HERE, AT LAST, IS A SINGLE, DEFINITIVE STANDARD:

SYMBOL	NAME	SIZE	NOTES
kB	KILOBYTE	1024 BYTES or 1000 BYTES	1000 BYTES DURING LEAP YEARS, 1024 OTHERWISE
KB	KELLY-BOTTLE STANDARD UNIT	1012 BYTES	COMPROMISE BETWEEN 1000 AND 1024 BYTES
KiB	IMAGINARY KILOBYTE	1024 √2 BYTES	USED IN QUANTUM COMPUTING
kb	INTEL KILOBYTE	1023.937528 BYTES	CALCULATED ON PENTIUM FPU.
Kb	DRIVEMAKER'S KILOBYTE	CURRENTLY 908 BYTES	SHRINKS BY 4 BYTES EACH YEAR FOR MARKETING REASONS
KBa	BAKER'S KILOBYTE	1152 BYTES	9 BITS TO THE BYTE SINCE YOU'RE SUCH A GOOD CUSTOMER

I would take 'kibibyte' more seriously if it didn't sound so much like 'kibbles N Bits'.

[662] iPhone or Droid



It may be a fundamentally empty experience, but holy crap the Droid's 265 dpi screen is amazing.



# From Moscow to Massachusetts: the chilling echoes of autocracy

*The slippery slope: what the arrest of a Tufts student reveals about America’s drift toward censorship*

By Revekka Gershovich

On March 25, Tufts PhD student Rümeyssa Öztürk, was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) outside her apartment in Somerville. No incriminating information has been revealed about her. We only know that she wrote an op-ed in the Tufts student newspaper criticizing Tufts’ stance on Palestine. As a Russian immigrant, this arrest gives me flashbacks to Russia’s descent into autocracy. As a Jew who has experienced antisemitism in the past, I am confident that this is not a defense against antisemitism, but an offense against human rights.

One of the most consistent facets of modern autocratic regimes is the censorship of free speech. This is not a distant concern for me — it is a lived memory. In 2021, in Russia, four student journalists, some of them my high school friends from the prestigious Higher School of Economics in Moscow, were criminally charged and placed under house arrest for expressing their critical stance toward the Russian government in the student-run online magazine DOXA. A year later, Russia invaded Ukraine, and since then, there have been over a million casualties in the war.

Without a doubt, Öztürk’s detention vividly reminds me of the arrests of the DOXA editors. Whether you agree with Öztürk’s opinion or not, I firmly believe that she should be allowed to express her opinion just like anyone else. Her detention is an absolute disgrace to the U.S. and a violation of free speech. It sets a dangerous precedent — one that places the United States on a slippery slope toward autocracy. As someone who has witnessed firsthand the

consequences of an authoritarian regime in a major military power with imperial ambitions, I find this prospect genuinely harrowing. We — all of us who do not support human rights violations — must stand up against Öztürk’s detention and further violations of free expression.

Another consistent facet of modern autocracies is the weaponization of fundamentally good and widely shared values. In Russia, the vast majority of people remember the horrors of Nazism and the Holocaust with deep revulsion. The government has exploited this collective memory, framing its war against Ukraine as a fight against Nazis and Nazi collaborators. Trump is making the same political stance with antisemitism.

I have experienced antisemitism in Russia: occasional slurs were thrown at me, and I left my middle school because my Stalin-loving teacher had falsified my grades. My parents had it worse — in the USSR, they had to sneak into university past the admissions quotas that limited how many Jews could attend higher education schools, and they were physically beaten just for being Jewish. The whole of my granddad’s family, over fifteen people, were shot by Nazis. Thus, Trump’s rhetoric of protecting Jews from antisemitism appeals to many on a fundamental, emotional level. However, I do not believe that his political posing is for the protection of Jews’ safety. I find it profoundly cynical and dangerous to see Jewish suffering used to justify political repression.

Trump has repeatedly associated with and refused to disavow white supremacist figures and groups, some of which have been connected to acts of antisemitic violence. I have a hard time believing that

somebody who is associated with white supremacists and Holocaust deniers like Nick Fuentes and Kanye West takes antisemitism seriously. I can, however, believe that Trump sees antisemitism, or rather a war against it, as a convenient tool to weaponize against his real enemies — universities and immigrants.

Trump has a documented history of attacking universities because their demographics typically do not support his politics. During the COVID-19 pandemic, his administration attempted to expel all international students on F1-visa if they were taking classes online. This policy would have made it impossible for universities to continue their academic activities. Nowadays, he is curtailing federal research grants while casting higher education as an enemy of free thought. The detentions of Rümeyssa Öztürk, Mahmoud Khalil, and Badar Khan Suri do not aim to protect a Jewish community, but rather to attack universities and immigrants.

Universities depend on their international student body. Almost half, or 40.1%, of enrolled PhD students at MIT are international. These students enter into agreements with MIT — visa sponsorship codified in Form I-20, enrollment contracts, housing guarantees, and funding commitments. When the government forcibly violates this agreement through no misdeed of either the student or the university, this encroaches on the university’s freedom. It compromises the university’s ability to seek and attract talent overseas, as well as its ability to maintain a diverse student body. It renders previous commitments between students and universities less binding, creating insecurity for all affected groups.

All the students detained have no evidence of being involved in violent protests or harassment. There have been plenty of people who were. Why detain the ones who were not, especially if you are ostensibly trying to protect Jews?

I see an obvious explanation: if the detained students had committed any crimes, it would have been easy for innocent immigrant scholars to feel safe. In contrast, any immigrant student can associate with another immigrant student who has done nothing but express their opinion. This creates an atmosphere of fear and makes immigrants, especially international scholars and ethnic minorities, want to hide, which is what Trump desires.

Knowing that ICE — Trump’s sidekicks — are prowling just a mere block away from my house in Medford, Mass., targeting visa and green card holders from top universities, is highly disconcerting. Trump wants us, immigrants or those who associate with immigrants, to be silent. I believe we should do precisely the opposite. Because, after all, isn’t detention and deportation more frightening than the alternative of living with human rights violations? I see no reason to fight to stay in Trumpsylvania. I would rather fight to not let the U.S. turn into a dystopia and fight to save the world from another deranged superpower.

*Revekka Gershovich is a predoctoral research assistant at MIT Sloan with research interests in political economy — particularly propaganda, censorship, social media, and news. She has previously worked with non-profits supporting refugees and political prisoners in Russia and Ukraine, including OVD-Info, the Center for Refugee Children, and the Global Disaster Relief Team.*

### Solution to Crawl Space

from page 11

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
G	A	S	S	Y		B	R	I	E		P	D	A
14	I	S	T	O	O		15	B	A	N	D	B	
17		H	O	N	Y		18	S	E	T	G	O	
	20	B	O	G	O					21	U	E	Y
23	P	U	G	S		24	A	M	E	N	S		27
28	O	R	E			29	B	A	S	E		30	
31		N	S	E		32	I	D	S		34	B	R
					35								
38	R	E	S	U	M	E		41	N	O	A		
46	O	X	I	D	E		47	I	C	E	L		
49	A	P	E	S		50	S	N	E	L	L		51
52	S	I	N			53	M	E	G			54	I
55	T	A	E			56	A	R	E	A	R		59
61		T	S			62	M	I	A	T	A		63
64	F	E	E			65						66	
							E	R	L	Y			R
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# MIT must stand up to McCarthyism

*MIT is not just a silent bystander to the new Red Scare. It is guilty. The road to the prison colony in El Salvador was paved in leafy Cambridge*

By Richard Solomon

MIT officials are shockingly quiet as the federal government embarks on a McCarthyite campaign of terror against students who oppose the ongoing genocide in Gaza. Palestinian American and recent Columbia graduate Mahmoud Khalil is the most high-profile target, disappeared in the night by ICE agents on March 8 on the orders of President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Trump announced proudly that this is “the first arrest of many to come.” Khalil is now being held illegally as a political prisoner in a detention facility in Louisiana. As his own letter reads, “While I await legal decisions that hold the futures of my wife and child in the balance, those who enabled my targeting remain comfortably at Columbia University.” The same could be said about us here. MIT officials have not uttered a word publicly against this crime, nor have they committed to defending rights to speech.

Khalil’s imprisonment is part of a broader wave of attacks on international students across America in the past weeks, even as Israel has breached the ceasefire and commenced what Haaretz columnist Hanin Majadli has called the “largest child massacre in its history.” Trump’s gestapo is now attempting to deport Yunseo Chung, a 21-year-old Korean American at Columbia, apparently for pro-Palestine views. The government argues that the mere presence of Chung, a permanent resident who has lived here since she was seven years old, poses “serious adverse foreign policy consequences.” It took a lawsuit and a court ruling to temporarily prevent Trump’s gestapo from detaining her in the night. As I write, ICE has arrested Rümeysa Öztürk, a doctoral student at Tufts, who attracted the ire of a Zionist doxxing group Canary Mission for co-authoring an op-ed in the student paper. Now, Mohsen Mahdawi, another Columbia student leader, has been taken away, this time at his citizenship interview.

This campaign of repression and intimidation being waged by the secret police against my fellow students is a response to the Zionist campaign to eradicate Palestinian life in Gaza. Months ago, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch determined that Israel is committing a genocide in Gaza, while the death toll by direct traumatic injury has now reached an estimated 65,000+ including the latest attacks. I have written in this paper before about my former host brother in Gaza, Mohammed Masbah, who was killed along with his parents in August 2024 by Israeli airstrikes. On March 20, three of his own relatives in the Masbah family were killed in Israeli airstrikes on Absan al-Kabira, Gaza: an elderly man, a young man around my age, and a young child.

A few days ago, Israel killed the journalist Hossam Shabat with a direct airstrike. Shabat had prophetically warned this would happen as Israel laid the groundwork for his targeting through a campaign of disinformation. No U.S. red lines were drawn against his assassins, so Netanyahu’s government killed him with impunity. Shabat was one of the best eyes and ears bearing witness to the horrors committed by the Israeli army in the north. Many of us at MIT followed his updates closely. He was 23 years old, a college student, and chose to cover the genocide when his university was destroyed. In Shabat’s own words:

*If you’re reading this, it means I have been killed — most likely targeted — by the Israeli occupation forces. When this all began, I was only 21 years old — a college student with dreams like anyone else. For the past 18 months, I have dedicated every moment of my life to my people. I documented the horrors in northern Gaza minute by minute, determined to show the world the truth they tried to bury. I slept on pavements, in schools, in tents — anywhere I could. Each day was a battle for survival. I endured hunger for months, yet I never left my people’s side... I risked everything to report the truth, and now, I am finally at rest — something I haven’t known in the past 18 months. I did all this because I believe in the Palestinian cause.*

May he rest in power.

Soon after Hossam’s martyrdom, Zionist settlers stoned and assaulted Hamdan Ballal, co-director of the Oscar-winning film *No Other Land*. The film chronicles the steadfast resistance of Palestinian communities in the south Hebron hills against ongoing ethnic cleansing by settlers and the army. These settlers beat Ballal with impunity, inflicting bloody injuries to his head and stomach. Soldiers then raided the ambulance he called. According to co-director Yuval Abraham, Ballal was handcuffed all night and beaten in a settler-military base. It took a global outcry to free him. Sadly, the U.S. Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which awarded the directors an Oscar three weeks ago, declined to issue a public statement of solidarity. As Basel Adra, the star of the film, wrote: “They refused to support Hamdan just because he is Palestinian. Another sign that our lives don’t matter.” The Academy later issued an apology for not responding adequately.

In the United States, we know the worst is yet to come. On Friday, March 21, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State submitted their recommendations on a sweeping and prejudiced travel ban that will affect students and families of many backgrounds at MIT. Trump’s deportations, the attacks on the right to asylum under both Trump and Biden, and the abusive powers of ICE affect all of us and should alarm anyone committed to civil liberties. They are the authori-

tarian face of a dehumanizing and broken visa system that treats some human beings as worthy of rights and others as not.

Mahmoud Khalil was right in recognizing that our educational institutions are not simply silent bystanders to the new Red Scare. They are guilty. President Sally Kornbluth, MIT Corporation Chair Mark Gorenberg, and General Counsel Mark DiVincenzo share responsibility for Trump imprisoning students. Every official who moved to sic the cops on their students, every statement that legitimized a reactionary and dubious narrative of campus antisemitism, every colleague who told their peers to “keep your head down,” every board member who ignored the democratic calls to end MIT’s ties to the Israeli military and its weapon suppliers, laid the groundwork for the new Red Scare. The roads to the migrant detention camp in Guantánamo Bay and the prison colony in El Salvador were paved in leafy Cambridge.

Fortunately, MIT students have not followed MIT officials in their abandonment of students to the ICE gestapo. In a landmark and binding referendum, 88.5% of the undergraduates that voted in the UA elections called on the MIT administration to 1) formally condemn the illegal arrest of Mahmoud Khalil by federal agents; 2) publicly adopt a policy of non-collaboration with federal immigration enforcement agencies wherever legally possible; and 3) publicly affirm its support for freedom of political speech on campus.

This referendum hands MIT another public mandate. The majority has spoken, like we did on divesting MIT’s ties to the Israeli military last year. What will they do? A bolder position is surely possible. In 2020, MIT sued ICE and the Department of Homeland Security over their overreach. They can do it again. MIT could take a public position against ICE raids, preventively destroy disciplinary records that ICE authorities could subpoena, and agree to pay students’ legal fees or mobilize its lawyers to represent students in court.

I urge MIT officials to take immediate, public action to protect international students at MIT facing harassment and possible imprisonment in retaliation for exercising their inalienable rights to freedom of speech, expression, and association. I urge MIT to end its criminal ties to the Israeli government and its weapon suppliers. I say all this because there are people in our community living in mixed-status families. There are dreamers who came to this country undocumented when they were young. There are families simply trying to live and seek refuge from violence and persecution abroad.

There are those of us from Jewish backgrounds who have seen the same legal architecture used to deny entry to Jews and deport Jewish dissidents during the Cold

War now being deployed against Arabs and Muslims. These attacks cannot be successfully confronted without a united opposition. What they show us is that, no matter how aggressively a school punishes its students, it will never be enough for the pro-Israel lobby. Trump and his thugs cannot be appeased, and the best defense is an organized offense.

In fact, we will not be intimidated by Trump, any more than we were intimidated by the criminal Biden presidency. Zionism has lost the educated youth of our society. I am reminded of the Irish political prisoner Bobby Sands who said, “They tried to bury us but they didn’t know we were seeds,” and “Our revenge will be the laughter of our children.” I personally have great faith in the power of ordinary people to enact radical change, but this requires us to shake off the moral apathy and selfish careerism of our colleagues. It also requires MIT officials to quit pulling our institution away from the edge of courage.

For us as individuals, we must participate in an organized, collective struggle for justice, whether at MIT or elsewhere. If you haven’t already, it’s not too late for you. Get involved. Join an organization, a union, or a BDS campaign. Write. Speak out publicly. Protest. Give to mutual aid or charity. Support responsible journalism. Give your time to teach displaced students through MIT Small Private Online Courses (SPOCs) for Gaza. Radicalize your friend. Go on strike. Put your body in front of a police line. Organize yourselves to foment a crisis in the institution or arena you have the most leverage. We must do what needs to be done to prevent our society from descending further into the darkness of fascism. Our predecessors burned draft cards in the name of stopping murder, while direct actionists today sabotage arms factories. That courage is needed now.

Courage is needed now not because horrors lie around the corner, but because the horrors are already here. We must resist evil not because, in Martin Niemöller’s profound words, that if they first come for the socialists and we don’t speak out, they will come for us next. They have already come, and to be a passive spectator is to forfeit your soul. The crimes against Mahmoud Khalil, against Rümeysa Öztürk, and against the whole of Gaza are not haunting moral allegories. They are not canaries in the coal mine. They are crimes happening now that must be stopped. What Walter Benjamin understood as catastrophe is not an ever-present possibility. It is the present. Catastrophe, what is called in Hebrew the Shoah and in Arabic the Nakba, is now. History alone will not condemn us if we fail to act. What will also condemn us is the darkened light of our own conscience.

*Richard Solomon is a doctoral student in political science and a member of the MIT Coalition for Palestine.*

Don’t be stationery!  
Pick up a pen and write forThe Tech  
*join@tech.mit.edu*





# A letter to MIT students from Putin’s dungeons

Andrei Trofimov: “Today, we are seeing something surprising. In the 21st century, progress in science and technology is moving away from social progress”

By Kate Brown

Andrei Trofimov is a political prisoner in Russia. He was arrested in May 2022 and sentenced in Oct. 2023 to ten years for posting against the War in Ukraine on the Russian internet. He wrote this letter below to MIT students in May 2024, because in 1987 he had a fellowship to study at MIT. Before leaving Moscow for Boston, he delivered a petition in support of politician Boris Yeltsin, who was demanding that reforms be implemented with greater speed. After that, his fellowship was withdrawn and another student went in his place.

Until a few weeks ago, it was hard to imagine Americans or people living in the United States denied fellowships or going to prison because of words they spoke or wrote, but our country is quickly changing and that impossibility is now our reality. A few months ago, a Russian friend of mine, Nikolai Formozov (now taking refuge in Ireland) forwarded me a letter that Trofimov wrote to MIT students from prison.

Trofimov, now in his late fifties, has lived by his conscience for the past four decades. He is concerned about the direction science and technology is heading. He writes: “Today, we are seeing something surprising. In the 21st century, progress in science and technology is moving away from social progress. The two are moving in opposite directions.”

As we think about how we might respond to the attack on science, on knowledge, and on American universities, please find Andrei Trofimov’s letter, translated by Joanne Turnbull, to the MIT community.

*Hello colleagues!*  
*I am addressing you this way because I am also an engineer by training. In 1989, I graduated from Bauman Moscow State Technical University (called “Rocket College”). I was in the Spacecraft and Launch Vehicles department. I was 8 years old when my parents divorced and my father left Moscow. The next time we saw each other was when I turned 10. I will remember my father’s birthday present for the rest of my life: a postage stamp block issued in the USSR in honor of the Soyuz-Apollo flight in 1975, the first joint space project of our countries. I remember those stamps: the Soyuz crew, Leonov and Kubasov; the Apollo crew, Stafford, Slayton, and Brand. In those years, my stepfather smoked Soyuz-Apollo cigarettes and said they were the best cigarettes freely available in the USSR. But I didn’t smoke, I was a smart Soviet schoolboy, and I read books at home after school.*

*One of my favorites was the fat compendium I Want to Know Everything. In this compendium, there was a detailed article about the Apollo 11 flight. Neil Armstrong*

*and Edwin Aldrin were the first to reach the moon. They left behind not only your Stars and Stripes flag, but also a photograph of our Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space. These childhood impressions led me to Rocket College — to move humanity into space. All of humanity, not just my country. I was in my third year when the Challenger shuttle exploded during its launch into orbit, killing the entire crew. No one was happy in our university that day. These were the times of Gorbachev, and for us, you were colleagues, not enemies.*

*In 1987, I almost went on an internship to Boston, to MIT. Before Gorbachev, no one in the USSR could even have dreamed of a student internship in the USA. Then my internship fell through (I came out in support of the then disgraced Boris Yeltsin, which turned out to be too much for Gorbachev’s “semi-freedom.”) A guy from my year, also an excellent student, but one not involved in politics, came to MIT instead. I successfully completed my studies and even managed to get involved in practical astronautics. The Lavochkin firm was then working on a project for the Soviet Mars rover. (The English word “firm” was used in the USSR, but meant only “design bureau and defense plant.”) My piece of that work was the mechanism for opening the doors, which was supposed to verticalize the descent vehicle after its soft landing on the surface of Mars. My drawings (on paper without AutoCAD) never turned into metal: the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, and no one had time for space.*

*In present-day Russia, the overwhelming majority of the population is sure that Americans never went to the moon. People here consider the conspiratorial nonsense about Hollywood stagings of lunar videos to be true because our loss in the lunar race (like our loss in the Cold War) has never been absorbed and is rejected by people’s consciousness. The overwhelming majority of my fellow citizens hate and loudly curse Gorbachev because “he destroyed the Soviet Union.” They all want to go back to the USSR — even those who never lived there. Semi-freedom under Gorbachev and absolute freedom under Yeltsin brought no benefit to most Russians, only material deprivation, the loss of stability, and the loss of security. (For me, in the USSR that I saw, the main thing was the feeling of boredom; but I’m in the minority.)*

*Even the most optimistic (for liberals) sociological studies say that personal freedom and dignity are the main values for only 15% of present-day Russia’s adult population. (Sociologists call this group “Russian Europeans.”) The events of the last two years have shown that even that 15% is not ready to defend these universal human values in earnest. Yes, about a million people left Russia because of the war [in Ukraine] — all of them are “Russian Europeans.” They make up less than 1%*

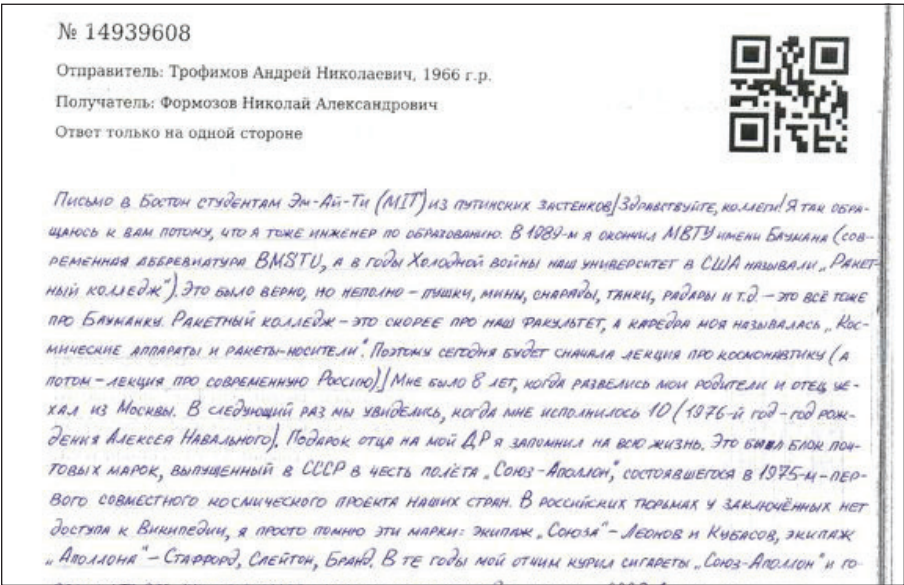


PHOTO PROVIDED BY KATE BROWN

Russian political prisoner Andrei Trofimov’s handwritten letter to MIT students.

of Russia’s population. Thousands stayed and chose the path of resistance. (I’m judging by the number of administrative fines for anti-war protests.) Roughly 1,000 people went all the way and went to prison. (Please don’t make me calculate what percentage we are of the overall population.)

**“If history bears out, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials will move from visa holders to green card holders, from green card holders to naturalized citizens. Then they will come for the native-born. No one is safe from such tyranny.”**

*The rest are HAPPY WITH EVERYTHING. If Putin alone was to blame for what is happening, this story would not have dragged on for two years. When Putin is gone, everything will be fine only for Ukraine; Ukraine will bury its dead and rebuild its cities. Meanwhile, in Russia, on 1/7 of the earth’s landmass, there will remain tens of millions of frustrated people who still don’t understand anything and hate the rest of the world. Before reaching the Beautiful Russia of the Future they will have to be led through the desert for 40 years, just as Moses led the Jews to the Promised Land. But who will be willing to do that, to take that task on?*

*Today, what we have is this: I’m writing to you in solitary confinement in a pre-trial detention center. Neither my knowledge nor my ideas were needed by my Motherland — my Motherland considers my place to be in a strict-regime prison.\* So much the worse for the Motherland. I have a right to Ukrainian citizenship and want to exercise that right. I’m a Russian political prisoner and a third-generation Muscovite, but the battle for the future of all humanity is being waged by another country. Putin is pushing Russia and all of humanity into the Middle Ages. I’ll fight him to the end. Either my end, or his. I’m writing this on May 9, celebrated in Russia as Victory Day over fascism. Victory over fascism is inevitable.*

*\*(I have been sentenced to 10 years for my words on the internet against the war, against Putin, for Ukraine.)*  
— Andrei Trofimov, Pretrial Detention Center 1, City of Tver, May 9, 2024

Trofimov’s courage and willingness to go to jail for his beliefs are admirable. He follows a century-long tradition in Russia of political prisoners speaking their conscience from incarceration. Now, students in the United States who have expressed their views (while breaking no law) are also being detained illegally in detention centers. If history bears out, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials will move from visa holders to green card holders, from green card holders to naturalized citizens. Then they will come for the native-born. No one is safe from such tyranny. It is better to speak out and reverse this injustice while we can.

Kate Brown is the Thomas M. Siebel Distinguished Professor in History of Science and interim Department Head of the Program in Science, Technology, and Society.

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By Opinion Writer  
STAFF REPORTER

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# Broad Institute discusses impact of funding cuts and federal changes for fiscal year 2026

*The 15% indirect cost cap could lead to \$50 million funding cuts for the Broad Institute*



**The Broad Institute executive leadership team** answers questions about funding cuts at Broad community update meeting, March 25.

On March 25, the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard held a community update meeting regarding the potential impact of federal funding cuts on the Institute's budget, as well as the ramifications of recent executive orders on the Broad community. The meeting was held in person at Merkin Auditorium and on Zoom.

Broad Institute Director Todd Golub stated that while the Broad Institute plans to implement some changes, he emphasized that the executive leadership team does not have "all the answers to those questions yet, because too much is in flux." Despite the uncertainty, Golub expressed optimism. "I can't think of another place to be doing science with the greatest potential for every patient," he said.

Golub shared that, as of March 25, only one out of the 500 to 600 grants in the Broad Institute was reported to be terminated. The executive leadership team did not provide an exact value for the total number of grants in the meeting, nor did it disclose details regarding the terminated research grant. The Broad Institute is currently challenging the termination and is issuing an appeal. Golub cautioned that there may be more in the future, given recent events in which NIH grants for research areas such as COVID-19 and HIV/AIDS have been terminated.

According to Golub, the NIH indirect cost cap of 15% would result in a funding cut of \$50 million for the Broad Institute. Currently, the Broad Institute's indirect cost rate is 75%, according to an internal document provided by the Office of Sponsored Research.

Given these circumstances, Golub said that the Broad Institute will have to reduce spending in non-personnel costs, facilities expenses, and adjustments in salary.

Non-personnel costs are operating costs unrelated to salary expenses or benefits. Golub suggested reducing costs in areas that are "really nice to have" for the Broad community, but are not necessarily "critical to the work that we do," such as the Broad's food budget, summer barbecue, and annual scientific retreat. "They're really expensive events," he said.

To reduce facilities expenses, the Broad Institute is turning to subleasing lab space. Earlier this year, the Broad Institute opened a six-story, 225,000-square-foot research building on 300 Binney Street in Kendall Square. Although the Broad Institute planned to sublease some sections of the building for the first few years, Director of External Communications David Cameron

wrote in an email to The Tech stating, "Given the ongoing soft market for lab space in general, we are looking at subleasing more space in these buildings than originally envisioned." Golub acknowledged that subleasing would be challenging, as there has been a surplus of available lab space on the market due to research funding cuts in the life sciences sector. "That direction probably isn't going to get better as everyone's feeling that pressure," Golub said.

Increases in Boston lab space vacancies have been an issue since last year. In Collier's 24Q4 Greater Boston Life Sciences Report, Research Director Jeffrey Myers reported that the total availability rate in the greater Boston area is 26.9%, which is 10% higher than the availability rate in 2023. (Vacancy increases had already occurred in 2024 before funding cuts, primarily due to new construction.) Currently, more than 15 million square feet of space for Boston's life sciences research is available for use.

Besides lowering facilities costs, the executive leadership team plans to revisit adjustments in salary, specifically merit increases. The historical average annual raise percentage has been around 3% across all employee levels, which amounts to about \$10 million a year, according to Golub. Although an exact plan has yet to be determined, Golub stated that the executive leadership team is considering a tier-based approach that accounts for salaries when determining salary adjustments. Golub later announced that the executive leadership team, including himself, decided to not take a salary increase for the upcoming fiscal year.

Subsequently, Golub stated that the Broad Institute likely has plans to lay off employees, although the exact number of job cuts is unknown. "I think it would not be truthful to say that there will be no action," he said. Job cuts are estimated to happen in late spring to early summer.

Golub said that the Broad Institute is a soft-funded organization, meaning that aspects such as staffing, including research and administration, may fluctuate depending on funding levels. "When our funding goes up, we can hire people," he said. "When our funding goes down, we have to have a smaller staff." While the Broad Institute has an endowment of about \$1.2 billion, Golub said the terms and laws of the endowment require that it "remain in perpetuity." In other words, endowment spending is restricted to the annual interest it earns, which is a little under 5%. According to the 2024 financial report, the estab-

lished spending rate was 4.7% of the endowment value.

After Golub delivered his speech, Yvonne Hao, the Massachusetts Secretary of Economic Development, gave a brief talk online about the importance of the Broad Institute's work. Hao began her speech by expressing gratitude for the Broad Institute's contribution to scientific research. "The fact that you are all doing this work and staying the course of focusing on the mission and what matters is hugely important," she said.

Hao acknowledged that Massachusetts's government does not have as many resources as the federal government. However, she noted that Governor Maura Healey signed the Mass Leads Act in November 2024, an economic development bill that would provide \$4 billion to support science and technology research — \$1 billion of which was allocated for the life sciences industry. "Our goal as a state is to make sure that we have the right resources and the right tools here to continue to support all of you and the work that you're doing," Hao said.

After Hao delivered her remarks, six members of the Broad Institute executive leadership team, including Golub, held a Q&A panel for the in-person and online audience.

In response to a question regarding the Broad Institute's budget plans for the 2026 fiscal year, Chief Operating Officer Dan Shore said that the executive leadership team is currently reviewing non-personnel expenditures, though specific plans have not been fully developed yet.

Following the discussion of the 2026 fiscal year budget was a

question about whether job cuts would directly impact people on a fully-funded grant. Golub clarified that scientists who are funded on a grant will not be affected as long as the project still receives funding. However, Golub emphasized that given the current situation, lab groups should "raise the bar" and ensure that "there's sufficient funding for a reasonable period of time" before hiring a new scientist or staff for a project.

Executive Vice President Stacey Gabriel added that grants not only support personnel costs, but also platform costs. Platforms are defined as technology areas where a team of staff scientists work on building and delivering technologies for various research projects in the Broad Institute. Currently, the Institute has nine platforms, which range from data science to proteomics to genetic perturbation. Gabriel cited the downsizing of the genomics platform as an example, stating that decreased funds in the NIH All of Us Research Program has significantly affected the genomics platform's staffing and capabilities. Funding for All of Us decreased prior to the start of the Trump administration, as the research program has experienced a 71% decrease in budget over the past two fiscal years from 2023 to 2025.

Another community member asked about the possibility of industry partnerships between the Broad Institute and companies in the biotech and pharmaceutical industry. Gabriel said that the Broad Institute will explore these opportunities, which include the recently announced collaboration between Illumina and Broad Clinical Labs on single-cell research.

Chief Communication Officer Lee McGuire said that the Broad Institute plans to work with a lobbying firm in Washington D.C. that focuses on science advocacy. The main goals of lobbying are to stop the proposed indirect cost rate of 15% and to inform people in the federal government the importance of science research on medical advances.

"We need to demystify all the great things that come out of not just the Broad Institute, but the research community in general," Golub said. "These are serious things, like cures for real diseases that really benefit patients." Besides the impact of funding cuts on the Institute's finances, the Q&A session also discussed how the Broad Institute plans to support the Broad community — specifically those in the transgender community and international community — in light of recent executive orders. Chief Community Officer Kedrick Perry reaffirmed that "trans Broadies deserve every single right that any other Broadie does," and urged the audience to show support and compassion for the trans and non-binary community.

In regard to guidance for the international community, McGuire warned that the Broad Institute may not be able to provide helpful assistance if a member is detained. McGuire admitted that the current situation is "very uncertain" and that detentions could occur regardless of the travel's purpose. According to the International Support Services team statement sent via email on March 25, they strongly encouraged international members to avoid personal and business related international travel until further federal guidance is available.

# Capture the Moment

## Join Photo at The Tech

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