

Nine students' SEVIS statuses are reinstated

Changes happened without notice; gaps in students' status remain on their records

By Sabine Chu

ASSOCIATE NEWS EDITOR

On April 25, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) reinstated thousands of international students' statuses in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) after their unexpected termination earlier this month. While some had committed minor infractions such as violating traffic laws, others had no criminal record.

Nine MIT students or recent graduates previously had their SEVIS records revoked. Sarah McDonnell, Deputy Director of MIT Media Relations, told *The Tech* that all of these students' statuses were recently reactivated.

As WBUR previously reported on April 15, one MIT student chose to sue the U.S. government over her SEVIS termination. The student, whom the complaint identified as "Jane Doe," is a member of the class of 2025, is a citizen of China, and intended to pursue a PhD at MIT starting this fall. Her visa was previously revoked in October 2024 over a criminal charge.

However, this charge was later dismissed without a conviction, and she believed that she could remain in the country as long as her SEVIS record

was active. The plaintiff alleges that the termination of her record, which occurred without advance notice from the federal government, was arbitrary and capricious.

The Tech spoke with Kerry Doyle, who is representing this student as an attorney with the immigration law firm Green & Spiegel LLC. Doyle shared that the student's SEVIS record was reactivated on the 25th, which would allow her to apply for post-completion optional practical training (OPT) status and to obtain an I-20 form to begin her PhD program.

However, Doyle also added that this change occurred without notice. She added that for many international students, SEVIS records only showed up as active from the date they were reactivated, not retroactively, creating a brief gap in their documentation during the termination. *The Tech* contacted another student whose record was terminated and later reinstated to an active status. The student confirmed that the termination remains on their record.

Doyle shared that under normal circumstances, there is "only a short list of things that can cause someone to go out of status," such as failing to register for classes or not paying tuition.

When an individual falls out of status, their visa can be reinstated. However, any gap in status could create issues for students trying to change their status if their records showed they were unlawfully present in the United States for any period of time.

Green & Spiegel and the National Immigration Project are also representing the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, which, on April 24, filed a lawsuit with several impacted students challenging the mass SEVIS terminations. At least one of the plaintiffs in this lawsuit is an MIT student.

Doyle has practiced immigration law for around thirty years and spent around three years working for the government. Nevertheless, she said that the SEVIS changes "happened so haphazardly and so quickly that nobody knew how to give people advice, because you just didn't really know it was even happening." Doyle advised international students to stay connected with their school's designated offices and to not make decisions based on hearsay or information from social media. According to her, immigration lawyers believe that President Trump and his policy advisors have been upfront about their intentions and



VIVIAN HIR—THE TECH

The Alchemist statue in front of the Student Center on April 28, 2025.

"we absolutely expect another shoe to fall," McDonnell said that MIT's International Students Office and International Scholars Office have been in direct contact with students potentially at risk. She added that MIT can work with students who are unable to be in the country for an extended period

of time, helping them continue their learning or research remotely.

Vivian Hir '25 contributed to reporting on this article.

This is a developing story. If you have been affected by SEVIS terminations or reactivations, email tt-news-editors@mit.edu.

The NSF terminates multiple MIT-affiliated grants

One research grant studies the cause of misinformation on social media and methods to correct it

By Vivian Hir

NEWS EDITOR

On April 18, the National Science Foundation (NSF) terminated an MIT-affiliated grant titled "Promoting Accurate Information on Social Media." Conducted by Professor of Political Science Adam Berinsky and Professor of Management Science & Brain and Cognitive Sciences David Rand, the research project studies the underlying reasons behind people accepting or rejecting misinformation, as well as methods to correct misinformation.

The grant began July 1, 2021, and it has an end date of June 30, 2025. According to USAspending, the obligated amount is \$881,188 and the outlayed amount is \$513,101. Berinsky

and Rand did not provide further comment to *The Tech*.

The termination letter, which was obtained by *The Tech*, stated that the award was terminated to "protect the interests of the government," as the award does not "effectuate the program goals or agency priorities." The letter emphasized that the decision was final and not subject to appeal.

Caroline Perry, Director of Communications for the MIT Office of the Vice President for Research (VPR), stated that the office has been in contact with Berinsky and Rand regarding the grant termination. According to Perry, a "small number" of MIT-affiliated NSF grants have also been terminated. In an interview on April 30, President Sally Kornbluth commended Berinsky and Rand for

their "critical" research on misinformation. "We support a wide range of intellectual and academic activities, and we will continue to do so now," she said.

The termination is a result of the NSF's recent announcement on April 18 that the organization would terminate awards that "are not aligned with the NSF's priorities." These terminations include awards related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) or combating misinformation. As a result, around 400 grants were terminated that day, which amounted to around \$233 million dollars.

Many of these grants focused on improving STEM education for students from underrepresented backgrounds, including women and minorities. Others focused on address-

ing issues such as environmental and racial justice. Some grants studied misinformation on social media, fact checking, and the detection of deepfakes.

On April 25, an additional 700 grants were terminated after NSF Director Sethuraman Panchanathan resigned on April 24. "I believe I have done all I can to advance the critical mission of the agency," Panchanathan wrote in his statement.

Previously, on February 11, U.S. Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Ted Cruz (R-TX) released a database of NSF grants that he alleged were linked to DEI initiatives. Cruz requested "significant scrutiny" of these awards. As of May 1, the list includes thirteen active grants for research groups from MIT. Cruz's database,

which Democratic staffers in the House of Representatives criticized for being "erroneous" and "McCarthyistic" in a recent report, does not include Berinsky and Rand's grant.

The MIT Office of the VPR has been closely monitoring federally funded MIT research projects including stop-work orders, changes to the award's scope, changes to the award's terms, or delays in administrative actions such as grant reviews.

According to the MIT Office of the VPR, researchers whose NSF awards have been terminated should notify their DLCI's leadership team and the RAS Contract Administrator. Questions about changes to federal research policy may be sent to research-policy-questions@mit.edu.

This is a developing story.

MIT ISA holds International Fair on April 25

iFair had over 40 cultural and regional clubs host booths and performances

By Vivian Hir and Alor Sahoo

EDITORS

On the sunny Friday afternoon of April 25, the MIT International Association (ISA) held the International Fair (iFair), an outdoor event where over 40 cultural and regional clubs hosted booths on Kresge Oval. In addition, the fair featured a dozen live performances outside the Student Center, from mariachi music to Chinese lion dances. Hundreds of people attended the fair, including local residents and visitors.

This year's event marks the return of iFair after a nearly decade-long hiatus; the fair was last held in 2016. iFair started in 1978 as an event for international students to celebrate

their cultures and grew over time to become a "cornerstone of MIT's cultural calendar," according to the MIT ISA website.

In an email statement to *The Tech*, ISA Co-Presidents Mohit Hulse '26 and Mahdi Afshari '27 wrote that they wanted to start iFair again after learning about the event from the organization's archives. "We believe that reviving this tradition will help create a space for the MIT community to share and celebrate their cultures," they said.

Although organizing iFair was challenging due to the limited documentation of past iterations, Hulse and Afshari stated that the hiatus also allowed them the "freedom to redesign it for today's MIT." These

initiatives included greater involvement from both the undergraduate and graduate student body, as well as collaborations with MIT offices such as the International Student Office (ISO); Student Organizations, Leadership, and Leadership (SOLE); and the Graduate Student Council (GSC).

Fair attendees could sample international dishes and snacks, participate in interactive activities and games, and learn more about various countries' cultures at club booths. International students represent 10% and 40% of MIT's undergraduate and graduate populations, respectively. The clubs at the booths reflected this diverse student body, from the MIT Brazilian Stu-

dent Association to Thai Students at MIT. Club booth representatives enjoyed the fair as a venue for sharing their culture with the broader MIT community.

Georgian Student Association member Tamar Korkotashvili '25, who ran the club's booth at iFair, found the experience "amazing" and "meaningful." At the booth, attendees played trivia quizzes about Georgia to win prizes and practiced writing Georgian scripts. "In my four years at MIT, I feel like iFair was the moment where I felt my culture being appreciated the most," Korkotashvili wrote. "I have never gotten this many questions or as

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LOBOTOMY AND CORPUS CALLOSUM

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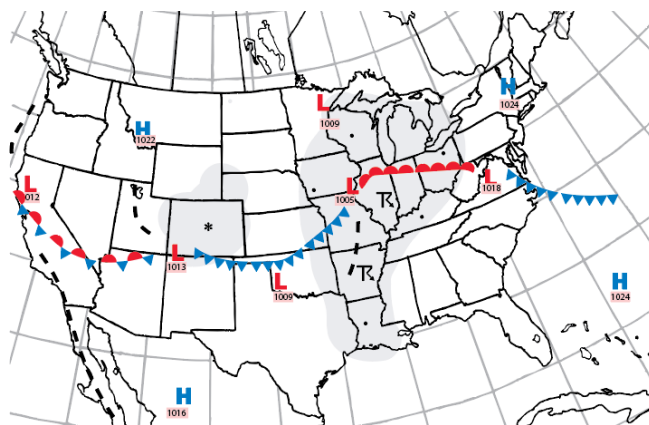
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Weather Systems	Weather Fronts	Precipitation Symbols	Other Symbols
<div>H</div> High Pressure	<div>---</div> Trough	<div>Snow</div>	<div>Fog</div>
<div>L</div> Low Pressure	<div>Warm Front</div>	<div>Rain</div>	<div>Thunderstorm</div>
<div>Hurricane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

Warm and wet for the weekend

By Lou Lahn
CHIEF METEOROLOGIST

In typical Boston fashion, it's been sunny and warm for the most part during the week but going into this weekend we can expect some rain showers, and possibly even thunderstorms on Friday. For those planning to attend Springfest this weekend, it may be wise to be prepared for some rain. Stay dry and have fun!

MAY 1

SITUATION FOR NOON (ET)

Extended Forecast

Today: Mostly sunny. High around 63°F (17°C). Southeast wind 5-10 mph.

Tonight: Mostly cloudy. Low around 51°F (11°C). South wind 10 mph.

Friday: Chance of showers and thunderstorms. High around 73°F (23°C). South wind 13-16 mph.

Saturday: Showers. High around 70°F (21°C) and low around 53°F (12°C). South wind 10-14 mph.

Sunday: Partly sunny with a chance of showers. High around 63°F (17°C) and low around 50°F (10°C). Southwest wind 11 mph.

iFair reflects MIT's diverse student body

iFair, from Page 1

much interest about Georgia at MIT before, especially from American students.” Sloan MBA student Fakhri Guniar, one of the iFair representatives for the Association of Indonesian Students at MIT, also appreciated the opportunity to showcase his country’s culture. The booth displayed facts about Indonesia, from its rich wildlife to unique geography. Guniar also enjoyed visiting other booths at iFair: “Everyone is really nice and passionate about sharing their culture and experiences as well.” Similarly, guests enjoyed iFair for the diverse array of booths. Almira Nurlanova ’27, an international student from Kazakhstan, said that the fair was “so much fun,” and hoped to organize a booth for the Central Asian Association next year. Adam Lipson, a visitor from Newton, Massachusetts, found the booths to be “very interesting,” particularly the calligraphy activity hosted by the MIT Chinese Students Club and the aforementioned quiz about Georgia.

Besides organizing these booths, iFair also showcased performances on the Student Center steps throughout the event — traditional dances, music, and so on. One particular event that showcased the unifying spirit of iFair was the fashion show. Models showed off

all kinds of traditional attire, from the colorful blouses and floral embroidery of the Honduran traje tipico hondureño, to the flowing sleeves of Chinese hanfu robes, to the long, sleek, and elegant South Asian kurta tunics.

Yichen Gao ’25, the organizer of the fashion show and a member of the ISA executive board, was excited to incorporate her dual interest in “fashion and art” to “not only highlight beautiful clothing” but also to give students a “space to express their identities and backgrounds.” She noted that students often “get caught up in the academics here [at MIT],” but she hoped that the fashion show — and iFair as a whole — helped to remind people that MIT’s community is global and infused with the “unique experiences and customs” of every student.

Following the success of this year’s iFair, participants looked forward to next year’s iteration. Muele Wilcox, a second year Sloan MBA student who led the African booth (a collaboration between several African student organizations), echoed this sentiment. “If you weren’t here this year, make sure to be [at iFair] next year!” she said.

2026 marks ISA’s 50th anniversary as a club, and the organization plans to invite alumni to next year’s iFair.



VIVIAN HIR—THE TECH

Steven Reyes ’25 in front of a world map with pins of people’s hometowns at Kresge Oval on April 25.

Have something to say?

Write opinion for *The Tech*!

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Dayglow the headliner for SpringFest 2025

Concert will be held at Briggs Field on Saturday, May 3 at 6:30 p.m.



MIT SEB presents SpringFest featuring Dayglow on Saturday, May 3, 2025 at 6:30 PM on Field A. Tickets are \$5 on mit.universitytickets.com until May 1.

By Sabine Chu
ASSOCIATE NEWS EDITOR

SpringFest’s 2025 headliner will be indie musician Dayglow. The concert, organized by MIT’s Student Events Board (SEB), will be held on Saturday, May 3 at 6:30 p.m. on Briggs Field A. Student bands The Deuce and Juno, as well as DJs Benjamin Ebanks ’25 and Isaac Villalobos ’25, will open the concert. Along with these performances, SEB will hold a carnival on Kresge Oval from 5 to 8 p.m. on Friday, May 2.

After founding the solo project Dayglow in 2017, frontman Sloan Struble has released four studio albums, most recently 2024’s eponymous *Dayglow*. Struble, whose upbeat but introspective style is featured in songs like “Can I Call You Tonight” and “Hot Rod,” is no stranger to college festivals. He performed at Yale’s Spring Fling in April 2024 and at Georgetown’s Spring Concert earlier this month.

In a statement to *The Tech*, SEB Co-President Olivia Beniston ’25 wrote that the club first worked with a booking company to find a list of artists available in the spring who met their budget, then used results from a student survey to narrow down options based on genre. SEB also used a tool based on Spotify’s API that was created by a previous SEB president to track artists’ popularity during the fall and early spring months.

Citing 2023 SpringFest headliner DoeChii, who recently won a Grammy Award in 2025, Beniston said, “If we can’t get someone famous, we can hopefully get someone who will be famous.” Finally, the club tried to take qualitative information into account, such as comments from students or performance videos. “We want to see active crowd work and energy in the artist we choose,” Beniston said.

SEB began planning for SpringFest in the fall semester, creating a top-five artist list to inform an offer to

their management agency. SEB aims to establish an offer by January, then finalize the contract before spring break, after which they can announce the artist. The organization works with different groups at MIT and elsewhere to coordinate food, safety, activities, and marketing.

According to Beniston, over 95% of SEB’s budget is dedicated to the SpringFest concert and carnival. Expenses include artist and production costs for the concert, as well as food, inflatables, entertainment, and amenities for student groups at the carnival. Beniston emphasized that SpringFest allows students to see artists at a significantly reduced cost compared to normal concert ticket prices.

This year, Beniston and co-president Wilhem Hector ’25 are especially excited to include inflatables and a petting zoo at the carnival. The concert will feature the “Dam,” an arch structure through which stu-

dents can enter. SEB will also give out glow sticks and light-up beach balls at the concert. Hector wrote, “Nothing at MIT brings over 1600+ community members and students together for a fun time. SpringFest is a unique tradition that should be a part of everybody’s MIT journey.”

The Tech solicited the student body for feedback on SEB’s choice of Dayglow for the concert.

“I’m so excited that Dayglow is headlining! I actually went to his concert three years ago,” Ruth Shifera ’25 wrote. “I’m a little worried he’s not hype enough for SpringFest, considering we’ve had artists like DoeChii in the past, but I’m personally very happy.”

The carnival portion is free for all MIT students. Early bird tickets for the concert will be available for MIT students for \$5 at mit.universitytickets.com until May 1, at which point general admission tickets will become available.

1,089 admitted students attend CPW 2025

Campus Preview Weekend turns 40: nearly 700 events are hosted over 3.14 days

By Vivian Hir
NEWS EDITOR

From April 17 to 20, MIT held Campus Preview Weekend (CPW). According to Director of Communications Chris Peterson, 1,089 admitted students attended CPW, which consisted of 692 registered events.

2025 marks the 40th birthday of the annual event. In celebration, the Admissions Office held a CPW Birthday event at La Sala de Puerto Rico in the Student Center on April 18. Students, staff, and admits wore party hats, ate cake, and played games.

According to “The rise and fall of CPW,” an MIT Admissions blog post written by CJ Quines ’23, the first admitted student programs were held in 1985 — Campus Preview for women, and Minority Spring Weekend for minorities. In 1987, the programs were merged and renamed “Campus Preview Weekend.” In 1999, CPW became open to all admitted students, resulting in a large increase in attendance in the next decade, from 714 students in 2000 to 1,061 in 2009. The number of events and level of undergraduate participation also grew significantly, from 196 events in 2004 to around 600 events in 2007.

In an email to *The Tech*, Senior Assistant Director for Outreach Lauren Rodriguez described CPW as “unique” for being a combined effort by the entire MIT community. “We know that what our admits love the most about MIT is its people,” she wrote. “CPW really shows off what

our people are capable of doing together to celebrate themselves and the next generation of students.”

The majority of events were student-run — 119 by FSILGs, 224 by residence halls, and 235 by student groups — but the Admissions Office, academic departments, and administrative offices also organized activities. Long-running traditions included “CryoFAC,” an East Campus liquid nitrogen ice cream event, and the MIT Spinning Arts Club’s CPW showcase. New events included a jigsaw puzzle scavenger hunt organized by MIT Admissions and a 24-hour marathon of *Avatar: The Last Airbender* at Simmons Hall.

Although the structure and format of CPW 2025 remained similar to those of recent CPWs, a few changes were made. According to Rodriguez, the admitted students’ welcome ceremony was moved from the Rockwell Cage to the Johnson Ice Rink for improvements in space and temperature control. The Admission Office also increased and streamlined access to air mattresses for volunteer hosts who requested one, distributing more than 600 mattresses on April 17.

The Tech spoke with admitted students about their CPW experience and impressions of MIT.

Sophia Smith, an incoming coxswain for the women’s openweight crew team from Washington D.C., enjoyed learning about academic requirements and the various first-year learning communities at the academic expo. Smith noted that she didn’t expect

the active Greek life scene at MIT. “I definitely came in with some different ideas about fraternities and sororities,” she said.

Madison Sutkaitis from Bristol, Connecticut, found CPW “really fun” because of its many parties and opportunities to meet people, such as Burton 1’s “blue party” or New House 4’s “P4rty in the S4hrs.”

“I thought there wouldn’t be a lot of parties and a lot of culture at MIT because it’s the really smart, kind of nerdy school,” Sutkaitis said. “There’s actually a lot more than I thought and it’s been really cool.”

K’vion Berry from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, had positive opinions of the MIT community, finding the students friendly and interesting. “Everyone is happy to talk to you,” he said. In addition, Berry appreciated how the academic environment at MIT encourages teamwork and collaboration, rather than competition. In terms of student groups, Berry expressed interest in the MIT Rocket Team and the MIT Solar Electric Vehicle Team, as he wants to “physically build new things.”

Jake Jackson from Soddy-Daisy, Tennessee, also had favorable impressions of MIT, from the people to the campus. “I’ve actually never been in a big city before — it’s my first time,” he recalled. “This is a ten out of ten impression.” Although Jackson acknowledges that academics will be “super hard” at MIT, he is excited to attend. “I think it’s going to be very worth it. I’m really looking forward to it.”



LEE CHEN—THE TECH
Students perform at a dance display during Activities Midway, where various student clubs and organizations showcase their activities.



LEE CHEN—THE TECH
Admitted students gather around pizza during *The Tech* Open House, part of MIT’s Campus Preview Weekend.

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Seeking close connections, too many degrees, and answers to life

Auntie Matter: “There’s always time to pivot and reroute, even much later down the line”

By Auntie Matter

I'm about to graduate with my PhD, MEng, and SB from MIT. While these years have taught me a lot and brought both pain and delight, there is a part of me that remains very sad because I don't think I made any true close friends at MIT with whom I'll have a lifelong connection, as though they were like siblings I could call anytime and share what's on my mind. My true best friends are still my childhood friends from high school whom I talk to regularly and see every year when we all go home for Christmas. Those childhood friends, not MIT friends, are the ones I connect with the most and feel like they're my family.

Don't get me wrong — I'm not an introvert and have had great times with my MIT friends, but all of the people I hung out with during undergrad/MEng moved far away and we basically lost contact. (I should say I never had a big friend group where everyone knew each other, more like individual friends from various activities/groups.) As a PhD student, I made a whole new set of friends at MIT. But these grad school friends and I will be in different cities after graduation and I just don't feel like we're close enough to stay personally connected on a regular basis given the distance. Sure, we see each other a lot now as students, go to events together, grab lunch together, etc. but they're not the people I could talk to for hours and just open my heart to, unlike my very close childhood friends. I hear stories about other people making lifelong friends in college, those friends being groomsmen/bridesmaids and godparents to each other's kids, and it makes me sad that I didn't meet anyone at MIT with whom I can share a special lifelong bond like that. I'd love to have some best friends from my post-high-school adult life, and I really thought I could find those people at MIT, but now that I'm leaving MIT, I feel really bad like maybe I just missed good opportunities to find friends.

— friend seeker

Dear Friend Seeker,
Can I give you a little tough love? Breathe for “yes,” backflip for “no.” Okay, I'm seeing no backflips, so here are my takes on the situation:
You have an extremely narrow definition of the word “close.”
You don't have close friends from MIT because you don't want to have close friends from MIT.
Even if you're right, and you just didn't find your people at the 'tvte, you've got many, many more years to find many, many more friends in the outside world.
And you will.

Let's address these one by one. First, you have an extremely narrow definition of the word “close.” Sibling-level? That's crazy! Most people have, what... one sibling? Two? You're not going to find 15 siblings, at MIT or elsewhere. However, what you can find are different friends who fill different niches. Some of those people will be navel-gazing-conversation-worthy. Some won't. Some will match your sense of humor, interests, or views. Some won't. They can all be “close” in different ways.

Next, you don't have close friends from MIT because you don't want to have close friends from MIT. You've gotten out of touch with your undergrad friends because you chose not to stay in touch with them. If you lose your connections to your grad school friends, it will be because you chose not to stay connected. And you don't feel like you can open your heart to these people because you've chosen not to open your heart to them. This isn't a problem if you didn't want to become close to them, but any sentence that starts with “I just don't feel...” is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Life is large and unexpected. You can grip the wheel a little less tightly; maybe you'll like the back roads.

Nevertheless... even if you're right, and you just didn't find your people at the 'tvte, you've got many, many more years to find many, many more friends in the outside world. You're graduating from a PhD program that you likely started right after undergrad, so you're probably... 27? Maybe 30? Dude, there is so, so much life left to live. Have you ever read the *New York Times*' Weddings section? Do you know how many people meet their life partners way after school ends? Can you guess how many more people meet running buddies, board game compatriots, friendly-ish political-debate-havers, or, yes, sibling-adjacent close friends after graduation? Can you even guess?

Last, and certainly not least: and you will. This format worked better before I thickened the list with explanations, so let me write it more explicitly: you will find close friends. You are fun, you are thoughtful, and you are lovable. Why do I say this so confidently? Because you're able to maintain relationships with your childhood friends whom you only get to see a few times a year. Because you make friends wherever you go, whether that's in undergrad or your PhD program. Because you're a human, and human beings make friends. All you need to do, dearest Friend Seeker, is to realize that not every friendship is going to look the same, that “closeness” is an arbitrary metric, and that these two facts are beautiful, exciting, and inherent to the game.

Lucy Dacus once sang, “You can't feel it for the first time a second time.” You won't find your childhood friends again, some connections will flare out, and nothing lasts forever. But if you want them bad enough, some things can last for a very long while. You just have to act like you want them.

Your friend,
Auntie Matter

so i'm currently a second year student (majoring in 5-7, minor in 17 (public policy)) on the premed track. i want to pursue an md/jd (ambitious and expensive... i know!) which requires taking both the mcat and lsat. i currently do not plan on taking a gap year prior to matriculation. however, i do not know how i would be able to make the time to prepare/take both exams on top of schooling and other extracurriculars. you may be asking yourself, “well, motion man, have you thought about doing that during iap/breaks?” in which case, yes, i have.

the problem is i have already come to the conclusion that summer 2025 will be used for more extracurriculars (i have a lot of healthcare experience but need to gain legal experiences for law school app). so summer 2025 is out of the picture for exam-taking. iap 2026? i already plan on doing a brazil trip for a literature class (not official but im close with the professor and he told me i have a seat) which i have to take or else my courseroad will be cooked. i was intending on applying next year which would be 2026 so im literally cooked. so my question for you is should i take a gap year and use that time to 1) gain more healthcare and legal experience for md/jd apps 2) prepare and take both exams 3) recover from the hell that is mit, or should i figure it out and apply without gap year?

— pre-med

Dear pre-med,
I'm going to ask you some questions, and I hope that gets you thinking about the why, the how, and the what. You need to ask yourself: Why do you want an MD/JD? How much time do you want to spend in medicine versus law? From what you've written, you sound like you have a dream, but you should really reflect on if this is something you truly want.
Don't take this as personal criticism, but your query never really addresses the “why” of an MD/JD. Think about it: are medical malpractice, public health, expert witnessing, or patent law careers you are genuinely interested in pursuing? Think about how an evolving world will impact the work that you want to do, and don't let the allure of some extra letters after your name affect your eventual decision.
Once you have sufficiently answered the why, you need to answer the how — spe-

cifically, how will you reasonably take both the MCAT and LSAT in basically less than a year's time? These are arguably two of the most difficult graduate school entrance exams in the world. Doing great on one of these exams is already an incredible feat. And as you said, no summer or IAP is open for you.

You might be biting off more than you can chew. If you are excelling academically while taking many units a semester, then you might be capable of pulling this off, but it doesn't mean you should! There's too much to do in too little time. Also, you will need to take the STEP 1/2/3 exams and board exams to become a doctor, plus the bar exam to practice in different states.

If you think MIT is a certified firehose, this is a bona fide tsunami.

So, what does this mean? You should take time off if you really want an MD/JD — two or maybe even three years. In fact, I have a relative in the Matter Family who is pursuing an MD/JD, just not at the same school. (He left a T5 med school to get a JD at a T5 law school.) He just wanted something different. Which is to say: there's always time to pivot and reroute, even much later down the line in your career.

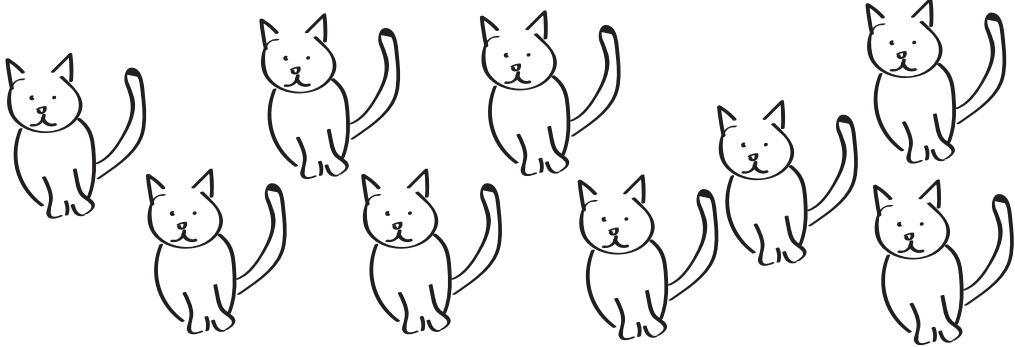
Planning for the future — especially something as specific as an MD/JD — is such a weird and complex psychological problem. Nobody is immune to it, especially at a place like MIT. Reality is far from that. Remember, an MD/JD is seven years of life in school after MIT. Seven years! Don't compress your workload and push yourself to your limits just because you can. You should find the beauty in having an imperfect plan, not goals that you feel peer-pressured into achieving. I'm not saying that you are being peer-pressured, but it is a factor to be aware of.

Finally, life after an MD/JD isn't a utopia. I'll talk about MD/PhDs, since I'm more familiar, but similar ideas apply to MD/JDs. A typical MD/PhD will do research for four to five years. You do residency and fellowship for at least six years. Then you do your postdoc — god knows how long — until you are, like, 42 or something. Then you become an assistant professor (if you even get hired) and have to fight for tenure. At that point, you're 50 years old, middle-aged, and there's only more work to do. In my opinion, balancing medicine and law is no different: there isn't really a balance.

My final message is that thinking about the big picture is crucial here. You don't live life twice.

Peace,
Auntie

P.S. The dominoes seem aligned for you in the direction of medicine, so just apply MD only.



Join The Tech You'd be a good CATch

Solution to Lobotomy

from page 8

+14	7	5	3	+10	4	8	×13
+8	5	+23	1	+23	8	4	6
5	1	3	7	4	+12	6	8
8	2	×24	4	×21	7	+14	1
×33	4	8	×240	5	3	1	7
4	×96	2	8	+16	5	7	3
7	3	1	×80	8	6	×360	4
×576	8	4	2	+14	1	3	5

Solution to Corpus Callosum

from page 9

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

Solution to I've Lost Count!

from page 10

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13					
L	A	P	S	E	T	E	R	R	A	C	P	R					
14	I	C	E	S	E	15	A	R	I	A	S	16	L	A	O		
17	S	T	E	N	O	18	G	R	A	P	H	S	19	O	T	S	
20	A	I	L	S	21	A	S	T	O	R	22	U	S	E	E		
23	E	A	S	24	25	F	A	T	L	E	S	26	S	S			
27	S	L	E	I	G	H	28	T	O	F	H	A	N	D	29		
32	P	E	A	S	E	A	L	33	34	B	A	D	A	T	35	36	
37	C	O	R	A	S	T	E	38	39	W	S	40	41	R	O	L	O
43	A	S	T	H	E	44	45	A	T	O	M	46	47	O	P	T	
48	H	I	D	D	E	N	49	50	F	I	G	U	R	E	S		
52	S	T	I	N	T	E	51	52	S	T	N	53	54				
55	T	E	N	T	R	E	55	56	57	58	E	59	60	61	62		
63	A	N	E	64	C	A	N	I	N	E	65	T	O	O	T	H	
66	G	E	S	67	S	T	I	L	T	68	A	R	O	S	E		
69	E	T	S	70	S	E	C	T	S	71	R	E	T	A	N		

CONCERT REVIEW

Mitsuko Uchida’s graceful performance stuns the audience at the BSO

The BSO performs Beethoven and Shostakovich

Decoding Shostakovich, Orchestral Program 3: Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4 in G, Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 15

Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO)

Conducted by Andris Nelsons

Featuring Mitsuko Uchida on piano

Boston Symphony Hall

April 19, 2025

By **Cristine Chen and Vivian Hir**
ARTS WRITERS

On Saturday, April 19, the BSO concert began with iconic pianist Mitsuko Uchida’s breathtaking rendition of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4, which mesmerized the audience. After Uchida’s performance, the BSO performed Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 15, the composer’s last symphony before his death in 1975.

Uchida, renowned for her profound musical insights and the emotional depth she brings to her interpretations, proved why she is regarded as one of the foremost pianists of our time. Known for her unparalleled interpretation of composers like Mozart, Schubert, and Beethoven, her performance was nothing short of revelatory, capturing the full range of Beethoven’s complexity with both grace and intensity.

The concerto began with the piano’s stately opening in Allegro Moderato, followed by the violin’s sweet and soothing melody. As the crescendo built up, the vio-

lin’s articulation became more complex, especially as the syncopation mimicked gallops and leaps and culminated into a regal sound.

In the first movement, Uchida played with a graceful fluidity, her fingers gliding over the keys with controlled, methodical precision. The ascending and descending notes had a rolling, wave-like quality. The music was like water, constantly changing shape. At times, she played lightly, causing the notes to flutter like a butterfly and take on a shimmering, sparkly quality. Her performance was marked by elegance and poise, creating a dreamy and ethereal atmosphere.

As the instruments conversed through their calls and responses, a sense of blissful harmony unfolded, with each movement building tension and release with a hypnotic rhythm. The music enveloped the audience — each note like a breath — lulling them into a state of serene reverie. This blissful, dreamy state was romantic and dizzying.

In the second movement (Andante con moto), the forceful bowing of the violin sounded angry, providing significant contrast to the piano’s slow and quiet solo because of its contemplative, brooding nature.

The constant back and forth between the violin and piano gave rise to tension that felt tangible, ultimately leading to a moving piano solo full of sorrow. The piano’s trills resembled swirling winds that became increasingly stormy. Then, the piano returned to its quiet state, concluding with the violin’s nicely drawn out, faint bowing that reflected the sadness in the piano’s melody.

The concerto ended with Rondo, a movement distinctive for its jovial, light-hearted opening. The rapid sixteenth notes in the violin and piano pulsed with palpable energy, creating a celebratory atmosphere. Unlike the second movement, the back and forth between the piano and violin was much more playful and amusing, which was refreshing.

After she played the final chords with full force, the applause was relentless, echoing through the hall for what seemed like an eternity. Enthusiastic shouts of “Bravo!” and fervent calls of “Encore!” filled the air, a testament to the stunning performance that had just unfolded.

After the intermission, Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 15 unfolded with a series of striking juxtapositions. In the first movement



PHOTO COURTESY OF HILARY SCOTT

Pianist Mitsuko Uchida takes a bow with Andris Nelsons on April 17.

(Allegretto), the piece sounded mischievous and clown-like, especially the humorous recurrence of the William Tell overture motif and the childish tune of the glockenspiel chime. Similarly, the violin’s pizzicato contributed to a jumpy, tip-toey feeling.

At other times, the symphony felt somber and pensive, weighed down by the weariness of the day and trudging forward with a quiet resolve. In particular, the cello solo in Adagio was elegiac due to the high notes that possessed a piercing quality. The vibrato further added to this sadness because of a gentle shaking that conveyed emotional tenderness.

Yet, in other instances, the hall erupted with triumphant booms, climatic sharp snaps, and the playful, gentle twinkling of a night sky, as if the music itself was capturing the contrast between the burdens of life and the fleeting moments of joy. The symphony’s shifts kept the audience on the edge, swept between moments of deep reflection and bursts of exuberant energy.

Adagio Allegretto, the final movement, was tumultuous and jarring due to its dissonance, capturing the composer’s trepidation of reaching the end of one’s life. As the piece

drew to a close, Conductor Andris Nelsons raised his arms in a dramatic gesture, leading the orchestra through the final moments of the piece with commanding intensity. In perfect unison, the musicians brought the symphony to a thrilling close, the last notes hanging in the air as if suspended in time.

The audience erupted into resounding applause while Nelsons paused and then offered a gracious nod to the orchestra, acknowledging the fervent cheers.

After the concert ended, we stepped into the warm evening, where the city greeted us with the noisy hum of cars and buses, as well as the lively chatter of crowds hurrying along the sidewalks on a weekend night.

At that moment, we were reminded of Shostakovich’s own musical shifts — how the frenetic pulse of the city mirrors the breathless rush of our own lives. Yet when seen from afar, from the stars themselves, all that noise and motion shrinks to nothing; we are just specks of dust on a rock spinning endlessly through the dark. As in Shostakovich’s symphony, life swings between the chaos we feel up close and the vast, indifferent stillness that surrounds us — fleeting music played against an eternal quiet.

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RESTAURANT REVIEW

Oleana: not a must have, more of a “why not?”

A decent — but not mind blowing — dining experience

★★★★☆

Oleana

Middle Eastern, \$50-100

134 Hampshire St.,
Cambridge, MA 02139

Sunday to Thursday 5:30
p.m.- 10:00 p.m.

Friday and Saturday 5:30
p.m.- 10:30 p.m.

By Alor Sahoo
EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Located in Cambridge’s Inman Square, Oleana prides itself on its fresh Middle Eastern cuisine, so I had to investigate. Upon entry, my group of five (myself included) put our coats away in a separate room before heading to our reserved table. While the interior is fairly austere, the wood panelling around the room contributed to a log cabin atmosphere. The environment was bustling, but not overly boisterous; I was able to hear everyone without issue.

Beyond the food itself, our waitperson handled allergies well — someone in our party was (mildly) allergic to shellfish, and every time a new dish arrived, she notified

us whether it was safe for him to consume. We ordered around the allergy anyways, but it was a nice thought!

Since the food was served family-style, we ordered and split seven distinct dishes described below. Our group had gotten dessert at Toscanini’s before the meal, so we ate less than we might have otherwise.

Sultan’s Delight: This was delightful, so much so that it was the only dish that we ordered twice. The lamb was quite flavorful and fork-tender, and the tamarind sauce complemented it perfectly. The eggplant puree was a nice touch. 10/10.

Za’atar Bread: Nice, especially with the date butter and goat milk labne. However, it wasn’t the most interesting thing — I think I’ve been spoiled by my friends’ homemade focaccia and similar bread. 8/10.

Ricotta Köfte: These ricotta balls had a nice al dente bite to them, but were somewhat bland, having not absorbed much of the garlic saffron broth. Beyond their tender mouthfeel, there were no other contrasting “crunchy” textures, which was disappointing. The aroma was pleasantly floral, though rather one-note. Some might argue that not every dish needs to be individually balanced, but I believe each should be able to stand on its own, given that they aren’t marketed as a set. 6/10.

Lamb Shish: Unfortunately, the lamb was rather tough. I couldn’t taste the cashew dukkah at all. The freekah and nettle pilaf had a nice mouthfeel, but ultimately didn’t contribute enough moisture to outweigh the dryness of the lamb kebab itself. 5/10.



ALOR SAHOO - THE TECH

The Sultan’s Delight, a dish reviewed in The Tech’s assessment of Oleana.

Mushroom & Artichoke Briouat: This savory, crepe-like mushroom and artichoke dish was quite balanced — the exterior was crispy and the filling was hearty. The snap peas on the side were perfectly cooked. Even though it was not portioned into five servings beforehand, this was an easy dish to cut up and share. 9/10.

Fatteh: This mixture of caramelized onion, cauliflower, crispy mushrooms, pine nuts, and yogurt alongside a wafer was delicious. We were instructed to break and mix everything together before eating it, which helped meld all the flavors together. The balance of textures was satisfying, but not particularly noteworthy. 8/10.

Ekmek Kataifi: For dessert, we ordered this unique, exquisite combination of fenugreek pudding, kaymak & fig jam ice cream, and pomegranate sauce — it was the perfect ratio of sauce to cold, fatty ice cream, to spicy pudding. 10/10.

An awkward note regarding payment: I paid with a gift card, but I couldn’t tip on a gift card. As a result, I had to tip on my credit card and now have \$30 left on a gift card that I’ll likely never use, which was already paid for by the gift giver. Unfortunate.

Overall? If you’re on someone else’s dime, Oleana is a great place to splurge. On the flip side, if you’re paying, you might want to make sure you eat a bit beforehand!

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Monday, May 5, 2025

4–5:30 PM

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Searching for superconductivity

Meet Maria Bambrick-Santoyo, an electrical engineering PhD student and superconductor researcher

By **Veronika Moroz**
SCIENCE EDITOR

Maria Bambrick-Santoyo is a PhD student in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at MIT, and does physics research in the Mundy Group at Harvard University. Both a dedicated scientist and a mentor to countless young students, Bambrick-Santoyo graduated from Yale last spring, where she served as co-president — and later advisor — of the Yale Society of Women Engineers. Furthermore, she was the sole recipient of the prestigious 2024 Yale Applied Physics Prize.

The Tech sat down with Bambrick-Santoyo to discuss her career trajectory and her goals for the future. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

***The Tech:* What are you working on, and how did you get interested in it?**

Bambrick-Santoyo: I am looking at making new materials. For everything from the wooden table in your room to your phone, there are differences in the way that the atoms make up those two things — they behave very differently and serve very different functions. Now we have scientific tools to look at the ways that atoms are arranged at the atom-by-atom basis, and make conclusions about what their properties might be. For example, you can think about how closely the atoms are connected or how many electrons they have; that differentiates something from being a piece of wood versus a chip in a computer that can do calculations that you need.

I'm trying to make a superconductor, which is a material that perfectly transmits electricity. A sizable fraction of the power that we generate is lost during transmission — if you were to transmit power without losing any of it, that would help in using less energy.

The superconductors only superconduct at very low temperatures, so the goal is to push that temperature higher. But, as for how we expect to go about it, one leading class of high-temperature superconductors is a copper oxide-based material, so I'm working on an analog of that material. If we can figure out a way to create a nickel oxide material that matches the electron configuration of copper, we might learn some fundamental rules about what makes a superconductor superconduct, or have the possibility of making a better one.

I chose to major in applied physics using the decision-making tactic of like, "What do

I like spending time on?" Someone recommended that I try out research when I was an undergrad. It just so happens that the first lab I joined was a materials science lab, adjacent to what I'm doing now, but not the subfield that I ended up in. From that, I learned that I really liked research. But after about a year of working on that project, I was like, "Okay, I wouldn't want to spend another year on this; I'm a little bit bored of it."

Then I was like, "Maybe I want to do renewable energy." I did a summer of solar cell research, but I've always thought that superconductors sounded interesting. I emailed a professor at Yale and asked, "Can I work with you?" Ultimately, I spent a year and a half on that quantum materials project. By the time the year and a half was up, I was like, "I could spend another year and a half on this, I could start this project all over again." I didn't hate any project I did. I just progressively enjoyed them more and more.

I also talked to a lot of different people about their work and tried to keep track of how I was feeling in response to it. For the ones that I had more follow-up questions, I was like, "Okay, that's probably where my interest lies."

***TT:* What advice would you give to your younger self, say, four to five years ago?**

Bambrick-Santoyo: Seek out mentors who believe in you. That was probably the single greatest factor that impacted my experience for the better.

Currently, I'm in a very supportive lab environment and very supportive department, but that has not always been the case, and that has posed serious challenges to my ability to want to stay in this field. I read a study that surveyed college women and men in freshman physics courses on how well they think they know the material — at the end of the year, the women who received an A had the same self-perception of their knowledge as the men in the class who had received a C. When I read that, I was like, "Wow, maybe I'm not unqualified — maybe I'm just impacted by the patriarchy?"

My freshman-year Multivariable Calculus professor was great, so I asked her to be my academic advisor. I ended up taking three more of her classes, became her teaching assistant, and then we just started getting lunch once a semester during the last two years of my undergrad. She became a big mentor for me.

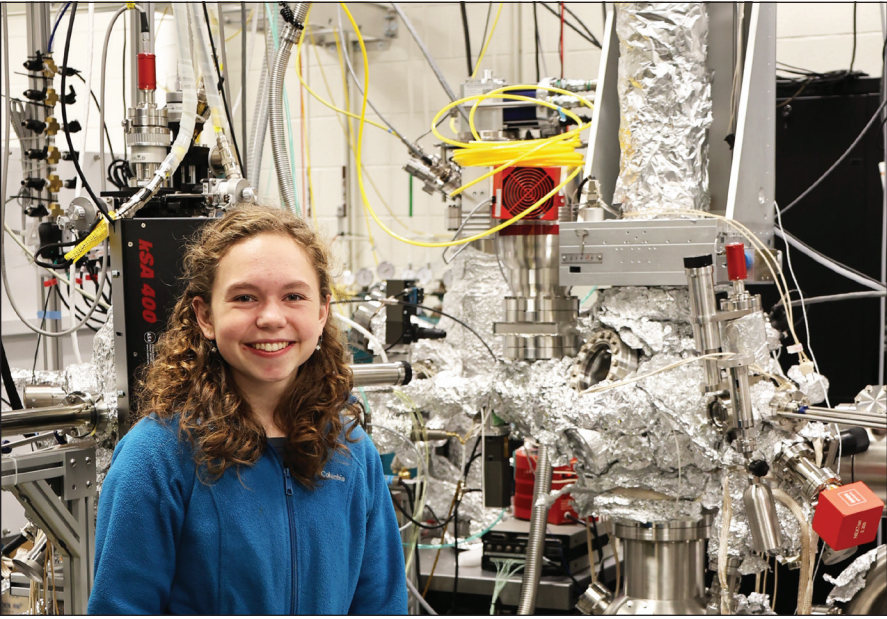


PHOTO PROVIDED BY MARIA BAMBRICK-SANTOYO

Bambrick-Santoyo in her old quantum materials labs at Yale

There were also personal mentors — older students who were really supportive, family friends who really cared about me, my grandparents, my parents. There's a whole spectrum of mentors.

Another thing I realized is that your ability to be a good scientist is not determined by how easily science comes to you, but by you taking the time to understand concepts. Anyone can sit down and put in the effort to learn something — even though it might seem easier to others, this doesn't mean that you're not "cut out" to be a scientist.

***TT:* Looking forward, what are your hopes for your PhD?**

Bambrick-Santoyo: Typically, my days are a combination of data analysis and doing experiments. This breaks down into the days that you're making your material, while other days are spent characterizing the material by studying its structure, electronic properties, and surface smoothness.

I'm working on two projects right now: one to wrap up my undergraduate work, and one that's my current PhD project.

For my PhD project, I'm using X-ray diffraction to characterize the structure of my films. The wavelength of X-rays is about the same length as the spacing between atoms in the material. Just like how light is used to see through an optical microscope, here, you're using X-rays to see, and it can tell you what type of material you made and how good it is.

As for the project wrapping up my undergraduate work, I'm working with 3D intensity maps. These maps are visualized as a cube where the x-axis and y-axis represent momentum, and the z-axis represents energy, with each point assigned an intensity. Depending on what direction you slice through the cube, you can extract information about the material's "electronic DNA," kind of like the rulebook that determines its properties.

Sometimes, discoveries just kind of pop out of the woodworks. There are some materials that, on their own, don't superconduct, but when you put them on top of each other, the interface between them does. Stacking or layering different materials can create an electronic structure that better reduces the dissipation of current. Applying pressure, strain, or changing chemical composition — using various "tuning knobs" to change the chemistry of the material — can help probe the underlying physics.

As a field, I think there's still so much to be explored. I'm working on learning how to make a material that hasn't been made very well before. It's hard to predict where my research will go. Sometimes you start a project with one intention, and then it turns out that it's exciting for a totally different reason, so you pivot, and that's kind of the nature of science.

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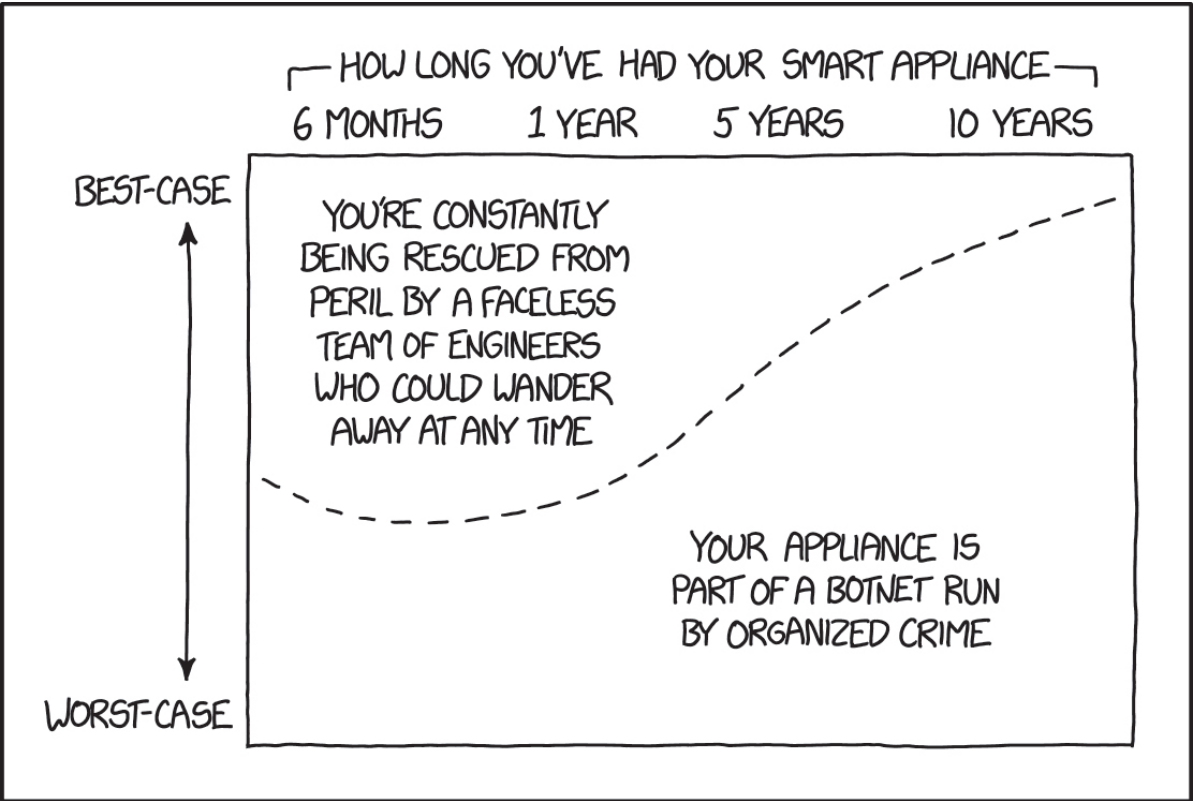
Lobotomy

Solution, page 4

+14		5	3	+10			x12
+8		+22		+22			
					+16		
8	2	x24		x21		+14	
x32			x240				
	x96			+16			
7			x80			x360	
x576				+14			

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.

[1966] Smart Home Security



If they're getting valuable enough stuff from you, at least the organized crime folks have an incentive to issue regular updates to keep the appliance working after the manufacturer discontinues support

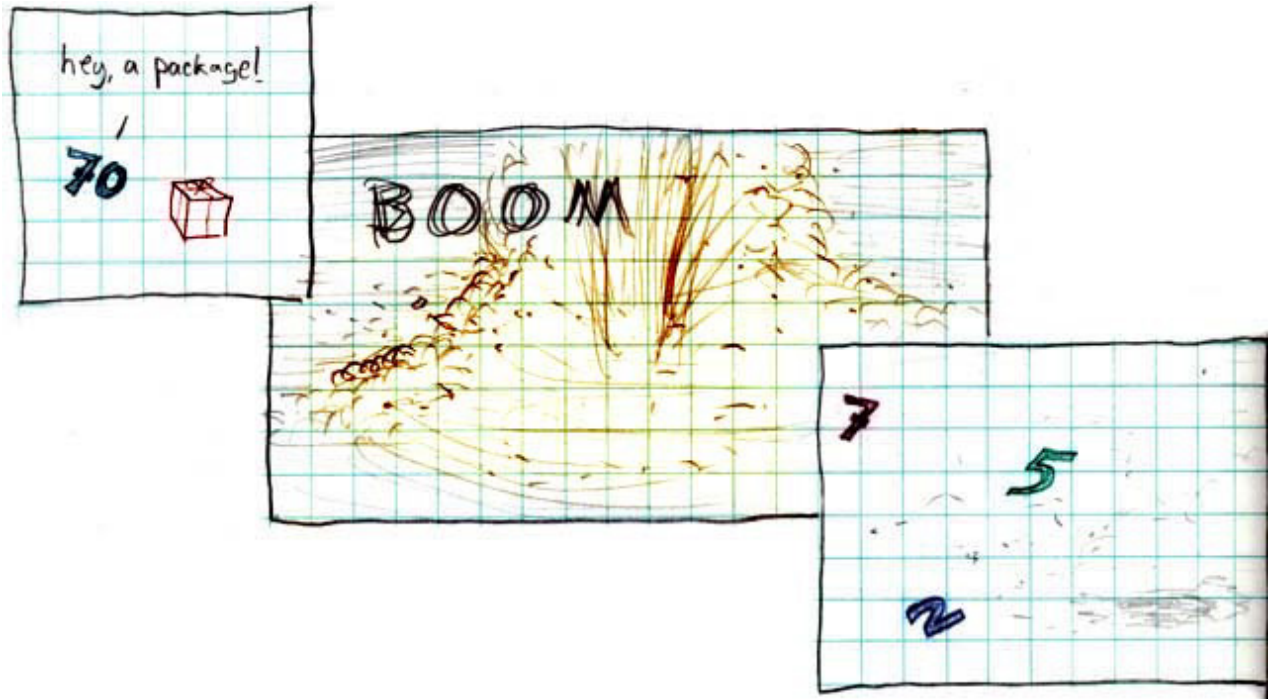
Corpus Callosum

Solution, page 4

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

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.

[5] Blown Apart



Blown into prime factors

I've Lost Count!

by Atul Nadig

Solution, page 4

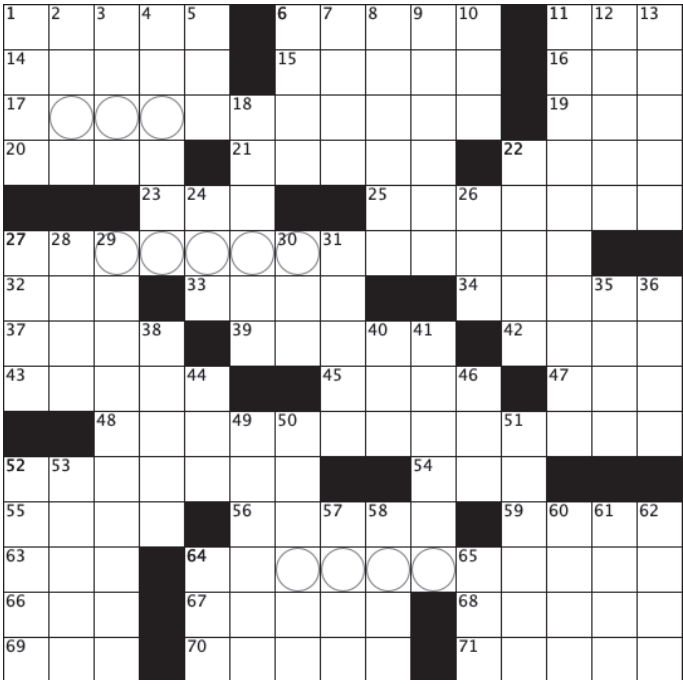
Across

- 1 Slip
- 6 ____ firma
- 11 EMT's skill
- 14 Some frozen drinks
- 15 Met expectations?
- 16 Southeast Asian language
- 17 Shorthand keyboards
- 19 Tiebreakers, briefly
- 20 Troubles
- 21 Mary of "The Maltese Falcon"
- 22 One for whose benefit a legal suit is brought
- 23 Ones who apply to MIT in Nov.
- 25 Lean, as meat
- 27 Magician's deception
- 32 Part of a pod cast?
- 33 Make an impression?
- 34 Unskilled in
- 37 "Downton Abbey" countess
- 39 Hearty dishes
- 42 Caramel-filled candy

- 43 ____ crow flies
- 45 Small matter?
- 47 Choose
- 48 2016 Movie, or a hint to what the circled letters represent
- 52 Was ungenerous
- 54 Train stop: Abbr.
- 55 Clearing house?
- 56 C.S.A. general
- 59 Struck, archaically
- 63 Hydrocarbon suffix
- 64 Fang
- 66 Some appliances
- 67 Circus prop
- 68 Stopped lying?
- 69 UFO crew
- 70 Religious offshoots
- 71 Treat again, as leather

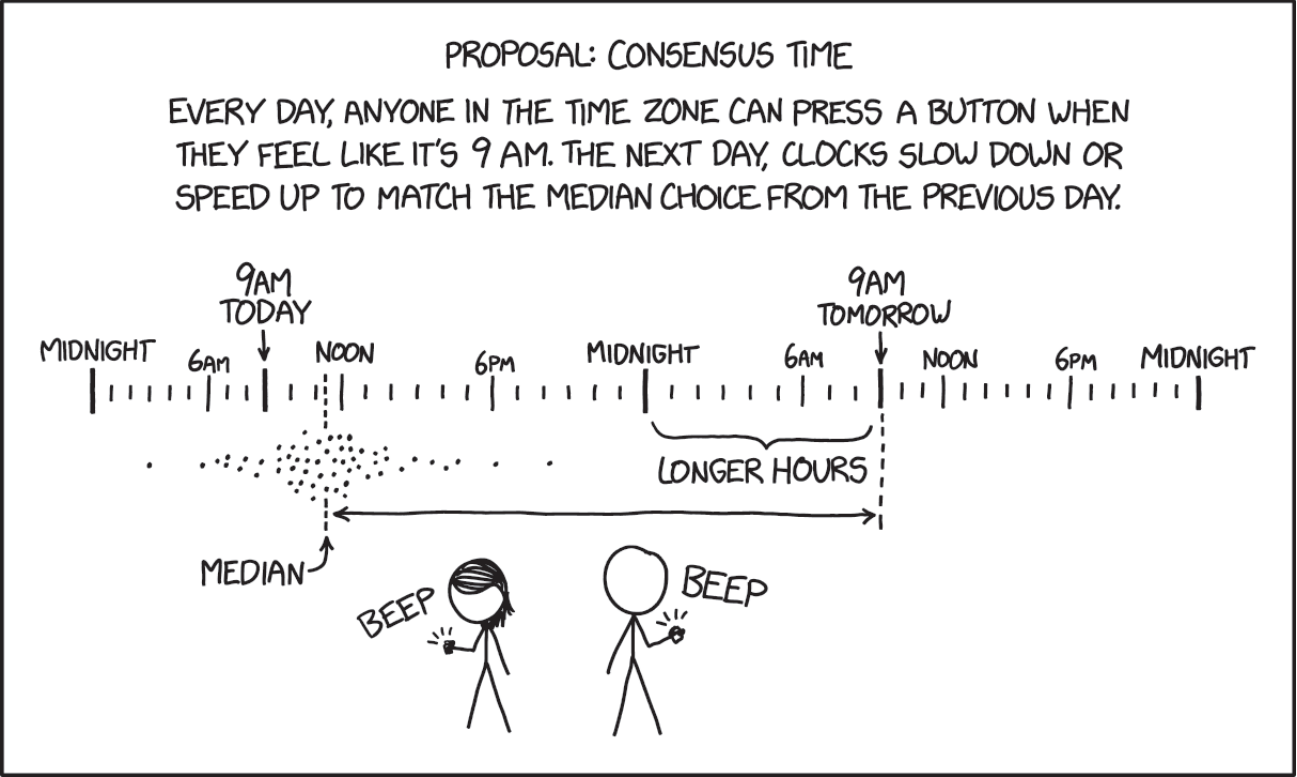
Down

- 1 "Mona ____"
- 2 Play opener
- 3 Something to slip on?
- 4 Karate instructor
- 5 That, in Spanish
- 6 Salts
- 7 Word of proof?
- 8 Scam
- 9 Gung-ho
- 10 Donkey
- 11 They talk secrets behind this
- 12 Cracker toppers
- 13 Valentine's Day gift
- 18 Deep cuts
- 22 Of an arm bone
- 24 Justice Dept. heads
- 26 Q's neighbor?
- 27 Humane org.
- 28 Some summer babies
- 29 Open and direct attitude
- 30 Tit for ____
- 31 City on the Allegheny
- 35 Mont Blanc, e.g., to locals
- 36 Tater ____
- 38 "Ooh! I know this! Gimme ____"
- 40 ?!??
- 41 "Evidently"
- 44 Your time zone



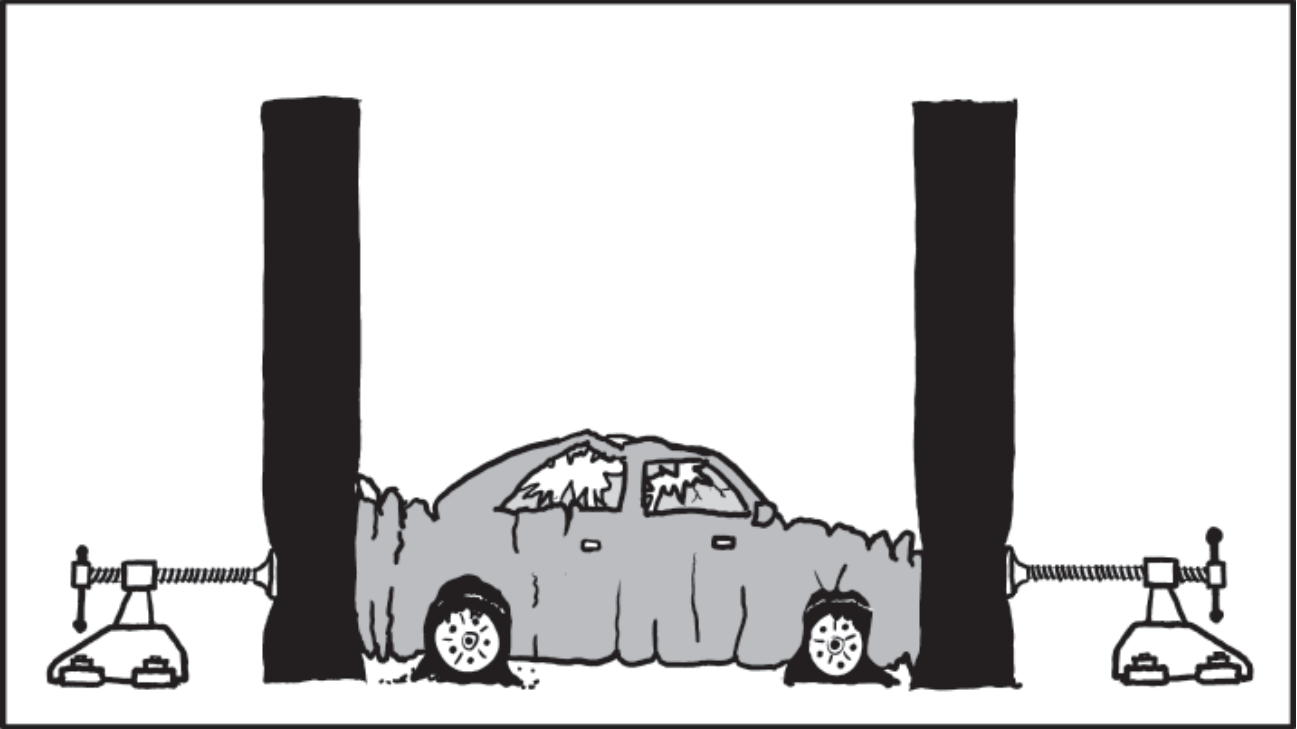
- 46 Course 15, in short
- 49 Place less value on
- 50 Like paradise
- 51 Not achy
- 52 Play station?
- 53 Principle
- 57 Cheerful tune
- 58 Tolkien tree creatures
- 60 Not worth debating
- 61 "____ girl!"
- 62 In that case
- 64 HTML formatting language
- 65 Airport screening org.

[2594] Consensus Time



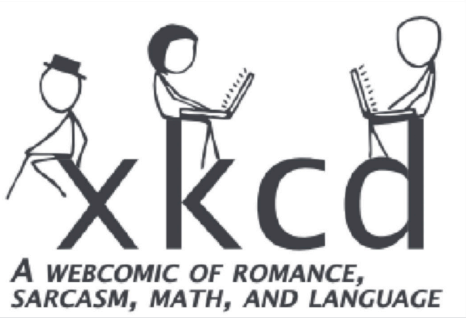
Now, you may argue that the varying hour lengths and feedback effects would cause chaos. To which I say, yeah, and I'm also curious to see how the weekday cycle interacts with it! So, you in?

[1187] Aspect Ratio



WHENEVER SOMEONE UPLOADS A LETTERBOXED 16:9 VIDEO RESCALED TO 4:3, I DO THIS TO THEIR CAR.

I'm always disappointed when 'Anamorphic Widescreen' doesn't refer to a widescreen Anamorphs movie.



by Randall Munroe



PHOTO COURTESY OF EDDY OGOLA '25

The MIT Paraguayan Association performs at the MIT ISA iFair on April 25, 2025.



LEE CHEN—THE TECH

Students perform at a dance display during Activities Midway, where various student clubs and organizations showcased their activities.



LEE CHEN—THE TECH

Prospective students participate in a CPW event hosted by Technique and Infinite during Campus Preview Weekend.



PHOTO COURTESY OF EDDY OGOLA '25

MIT Flow performs a traditional Chinese fan dance duet at the MIT ISA iFair on April 25, 2025.



VIVIAN HIR—THE TECH

East Campus members holds CryoFAC outside the Student Center on April 18, an event in which students make liquid nitrogen ice cream for CPW attendees.



LEE CHEN—THE TECH

Admitted students enjoy a barbecue at Kresge Oval, hosted by Pi Lambda Phi as part of MIT's Campus Preview Weekend 2025.

Architectural Uprising names Simmons Hall winner of the 2025 Aesthetic Atrocity Award

Steven Holl: “Simmons Hall is still seen as provocative, groundbreaking architecture”

By Vivian Hir
NEWS EDITOR

Simmons Hall wins Aesthetic Atrocity Award

On April 10, Architectural Uprising announced that Simmons Hall was the winner of the first annual Aesthetic Atrocity Award, given to the ugliest building in the U.S. According to the organization’s press release, Simmons received first place in the “Design Against Humanity” category. The awards ceremony will be held at the Beauty and Ugliness in Architecture Conference in Oslo, Norway from May 2-4. Runner-ups for the award include the San Francisco Federal Building and the Ascent at Roebling’s Bridge in the greater Cincinnati area.

Architectural Uprising, an international group founded from a Swedish Facebook community in 2014, favors traditional and classical aesthetics and opposes modernist architecture. The organization criticized Simmons Hall for its “decidedly impractical structure” and for being “plain ugly and terribly to look at.” Committee member Michael Damiant cited the building’s “inhuman scale, awkward structure, and haphazardly placed windows” as reasons for receiving the award.

Despite Architectural Uprising’s harsh criticism, Simmons has received many architecture awards, including the 2004 ACEC (American Council of Engineering Companies) Engineering Excellence Honor Award and the 2003 National AIA (American Institute of Architects) Design Award.

Designed by Steven Holl, the dormitory was constructed from 1999 to 2002, opening in fall 2002. When designing Simmons, Holl hoped that the 350-person residence hall, built to resemble the shape of a sponge, would capture the concept of “porosity.”

In order to embody this quality, Holl focused on constructing “five large-scale openings” across the building. According to Holl’s website, “These large, dynamic openings (roughly corresponding to the ‘houses’ in the dorm) are the lungs of the building, bringing natural light down and moving air up through the section.” Furthermore, the residence hall was conceived of four individual buildings, each with a different porosity: vertical, horizontal, diagonal, and all-over.

In an email statement to *The Tech*, Steven Holl stated that the

dorm’s unique design, including its many windows and curved surfaces, stemmed from a desire for each room and section to have its own “individual character.” Holl believed that the building’s distinct personality would help “contribute to the vitality and the identity of the residents.”

Architectural Uprising denounces modernist architecture

The Tech reached out to Michelle Sofge, Herald Editor of the Classic Planning Institute and a judge for the Aesthetic Atrocity Award. According to Sofge, many of the committee members knew of Simmons Hall before reviewing began. The committee began with a list of more than 50 American buildings compiled from existing lists and suggestions from the public. Each committee member then evaluated every building based on factors including proportionality and perceived symmetry. Despite some “intense discussions among committee members,” Sofge stated that the group “was very satisfied with the result” at the end.

Architects and residents react to the award

When Steven Holl first learned about Simmons receiving the award, he thought that “the photos they used were beautiful.” Holl visited Simmons just three months ago, and found that the residents were “very happy in the forward-looking spirit of MIT.”

For Holl, the building and the students are “future focused,” contrasting sharply with the views of Architectural Uprising, which he sees as aligned with President Trump’s traditionalist architectural agenda. Holl criticized Trump’s recent executive order of “Promoting Beautiful Federal Civic Architecture,” calling it “backward-looking,” and in a March 13 *Dezeen* op-ed, he compared Trump’s architectural preferences to those of Stalin and Hitler. Noting the three leaders’ opposition to modernism and preference for classical architecture, Holl wrote that to suppress modernist architecture is to suppress “any architecture focused on optimism for the future.”

Despite Architectural Uprising’s harsh critique of Simmons, Holl said he is honored that the building is the “lighting rod of modernism,” given that modernist architecture has been highly debated in recent history. “Simmons Hall is still seen

as provocative, groundbreaking architecture, drawing negative reactions from those resisting a modern, forward focus,” he wrote.

MIT Professor in Architecture Mark Jarzombek disagrees with Architectural Uprising’s declaration of Simmons as the ugliest building in the U.S. “Yes, it has some problems, but there are so many truly ugly buildings in the world; it makes no sense to pick this one,” he wrote in an email to *The Tech*. Jarzombek believes that the group should instead consider buildings that “most people can agree on are ugly.”

MIT undergraduate students expressed mixed opinions about the architectural design of the building. Simmons resident Ellie Feng ’28 appreciated the “very distinctive” windows, highlighting the residence hall’s wavy walls and chalk art for having “so much personality.” Caleb Pascale ’28 acknowledged that the building might not be “aesthetically pleasing on the outside,” but admired its overall unique design. “It’s undeniably visually interesting with the shape and windows [and their colors],” he wrote.

Simmons resident Joy Pan ’28 found the curved walls “inconvenient” because they “drastically limit furniture arrangements.” Pan admitted that she considered Simmons to be “pretty ugly” when she was a prefrish, though nowadays she doesn’t see the building as unattractive as before. Luke Ingalls ’28 mentioned that he liked the interior, but found the exterior to be “very ugly.” “I really don’t like how it’s just a prism with small windows and random shapes,” he wrote.

Beyond the exterior: Simmons Hall’s functionality

Although thoughts on the aesthetics of Simmons Hall’s architecture varied, a number of former and current Simmons Hall residents took issue with the building’s functionality — an indirect result of the building’s sponge-like architecture. Adeline Vining ’28 disliked the building for its dim lighting, lack of good social spaces, and difficulty finding the staircases. Feng shared Vining’s concerns, commenting that the “room lighting is so drab and dim that it makes me sad at night.”

Evan Lofink ’27 thought that the design is “novel in a genuinely interesting way,” but finds the interior design unhelpful for promoting a “healthy social life.” Simmons Hall is divided into



VIVIAN HIR—THE TECH

Simmons Hall on April 18, 2025.

three towers (A, B, C), causing some floors to be disconnected and the overall building to be disjointed. As a result, higher floors are composed of fewer residents, whereas most of the lower floors have longer hallways with more people. Pan wrote, “Though the discontinuous floors help somewhat to create smaller communities within Simmons, the lack of floor culture makes this mostly meaningless.”

On the other hand, Dylan Rodriguez Barrera ’26 liked the separated towers because they feel more “cozy,” whereas “super-long hallways” make him feel a “bit uncomfortable.” Similarly, Anwar Atufa ’27 appreciated the separated tower structure for fostering connections. “I live in B tower, and I’ve gotten to know most of my neighbors because of how few of them there are,” he wrote. “I probably wouldn’t have achieved this on one of the floors that isn’t separated by a tower.” Although Atufa recognizes that Simmons has issues with its functionality, he finds the “impractical elements charming because they allow students to come together in antagonizing it.”

Reflecting the overarching concept of porosity, “the permeable openings between and within the four buildings were developed as meeting places, terraces, lounges, and activated passages,” Holl wrote.

Former MIT Director of Planning O. Robert Simha MCP ’57 views Simmons Hall as a failure in regards to functionality. Simha was the Director of Planning from 1960 to 2000 and was involved in the planning and construction of Sim-

mons Hall. In a phone interview with *The Tech*, Simha stated that he disagreed with Holl’s approach that focused more on “design personality” because he believed that the design did not satisfy the social, physical, and functional aspects of a dorm. According to “The Pre-History of Simmons Hall” by Jeff Roberts ’02 MCP ’03, Holl did not have prior experience designing student dormitories at the time.

“The public spaces that were created, particularly the common spaces, are very limited in their ability to perform the wide variety of functions that we hoped to provide the residents,” Simha said. For instance, the two-story Multi-Purpose Room (MPR), which features a movie projector and seating for 125 people, is limited to large events. “The big common room turned out to be this kind of theater space that can’t be used for much else other than as an audience and performance facility,” Simha said.

In addition to issues with the dorm’s functionality, Simha said that the construction of Simmons Hall was very expensive, as costs exceeded the budget in tens of millions. According to an MIT News article in 2000, construction was projected to cost \$40 million, but the final cost amounted to \$92.5 million in 2003.

For Simha, the main issue at hand isn’t necessarily the exterior, but whether the building has met its purpose, criteria, and objectives. “It’s not just a question of taste,” Simha said. “It’s a question of how we apply the high standards of the Institute to everything that we do.”



LEE CHEN—THE TECH

Students scavenge through the remains of a piano after MIT’s annual Piano Drop tradition at Baker House on April 22, 2024. During the event, bricks are dropped from the roof onto a decommissioned piano.

Capture the Moment



Join Photo at The Tech

join@tech.mit.edu