

MIT Spouses & Partners Connect closes

Budget cuts caused the MIT Health Community Wellness program to end on May 23

By Vivian Hir
NEWS EDITOR

On May 10, MIT Spouses & Partners Connect (MS&PC) Program Manager Jennifer Recklet Tassi announced in an MS&PC email newsletter that MIT Health was to close MS&PC and the Language Conversation Exchange (LCE) due to budget cuts. Additionally, the getfit and Step Your Way programs were also discontinued, according to an MIT Health letter. In an email statement to *The Tech*, spokesperson Abby Abazorius wrote that the program closures “were carefully considered to ensure they would not impact any part of MIT Health’s core clinical mission.”

Staff member Recklet Tassi and Program Assistant Viktoriia Palesheva were notified that their roles would end on May 23. “Our hearts are heavy, but we want you to know

that it has been our honor and pleasure to be part of your life at MIT,” Recklet Tassi wrote. On May 21, the program held a farewell event; nearly 100 people attended, honoring the work of Tassi and Palesheva.

Founded in 1972 by former MIT Medical psychologist Dr. Charlotte Green Schwartz, MS&PC was established to provide a support group for the wives of graduate students, postdocs, and faculty members. Schwartz’s research on the international community at MIT made her realize that families needed support in relocating to the Boston area. Originally called the “Wives Group,” the name was changed in 2000 to MIT Spouses & Partners. In 2022, MS&PC celebrated its 50th anniversary.

MS&PC welcomed anyone with a partner affiliated with MIT and

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PHOTO COURTESY OF ILJA HEDEMAN

Members of MIT Spouses & Partners Connect (MS&PC) take a group photo at the MS&PC farewell event on May 21, 2025.

Four MIT Health programs closed

MS&PC, LCE, getfit, and Step Your Way affected by budget cuts

By Vivian Hir
NEWS EDITOR

In mid-May, MIT Health announced in a letter the closure of the following Community Wellness programs due to budget reductions: MIT Spouses & Partners Connect (MS&PC), Language Conversation Exchange (LCE), getfit, and Step Your Way. All four programs closed on May 23.

Staff members of these programs did not respond to *The Tech*’s request for comment by time of publication. In an email statement to *The Tech*, MIT News Office spokesperson Abby Abazorius wrote that the program closures “were carefully considered to ensure they would not impact any part of MIT Health’s core clinical mission.”

“We understand that the loss of these close-knit communities will be felt by participants and others across the institute,” MIT Health stated in their letter. The letter recommended community members make use of other MIT resources, such as the International Scholars Office (ISO) and the Department of Athletics, Physical Education and Recreation (DAPER).

Founded in 1972, MS&PC was a support network for the spouses and partners of MIT students, postdocs, staff and faculty who were new to the Boston area. Many members of MS&PC were international spouses, meaning that they needed support and help with relocation, such as learning Eng-

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VIVIAN HIR—THE TECH

The entrance of the MIT Health E23 building on May 26, 2025.

IS&T ends iPad loaner program

Zac Burton '26: “Unilateral decisions that lack consultation from the people whom they impact are ridiculous”

By Vivian Hir
NEWS EDITOR

In mid-May, the MIT Information Systems & Technology (IS&T) department updated their computing equipment loaner page to state that the “COVID-era iPad loaner program has been discontinued for all MIT community members.” The webpage did not specify the date of the announcement, and IS&T did not send out an email about this change to MIT students. Furthermore, the Knowledge Base pages for the student iPad loaner program and student loaner iPad remote management are no longer available.

The iPad loaner program, first announced in a letter from former president Rafael Reif in July 2020,

was launched to help undergraduate students and graduate TAs smoothly transition to remote learning and teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to MIT’s 2020 Town Gown Report, IS&T distributed almost 4,000 iPads to students in 50 states and 73 countries and territories in the 2020-2021 academic year.

According to an email statement from IS&T Associate Vice President of Technology Olu Brown ’99, IS&T decided to discontinue the iPad loaner program because of lower student demand over the years. “With on-campus instruction fully restored, with fewer requests for iPads, and due to the age of the tablets, it was an appropriate time to phase out this offering,” he wrote. Brown stated that the decision was not related to departmental

funding cuts. IS&T has yet to determine what will happen to returned iPads.

Although the iPad loaner program has ended, Brown clarified that undergraduate students in the classes of 2026, 2027, and 2028 can continue to use their loaner iPads until they graduate. IS&T continues to offer its student loaner laptop program for undergraduate students who need a laptop for academic purposes.

While some students take paper notes or own personal digital note-taking devices, including iPads, several students said that their learning experience at MIT would be significantly different if

iPad loaners, Page 2

MIT launches new website

“Understanding MIT” appears to respond to scrutiny from the Trump administration

By Sabine Chu and Karie Shen
EDITORS

On May 20, President Kornbluth emailed members of the MIT community to emphasize the administration’s commitment to “the future of American science and innovation” and to detail its response to recent federal funding cuts targeting higher education and research. In her email, Kornbluth included a link to a new website, Understanding MIT, which describes the Institute as “merit-based and affordable” and lists MIT’s contributions to medicine, national security, and agriculture, among others.

The website comes at a uniquely perilous time for higher education. Beyond sweeping cuts to research funding and threatened increases on the

endowment tax, the Trump administration has explicitly targeted specific universities, particularly those perceived as “elite.” On May 22, the government stripped Harvard, just two miles away from MIT, of its ability to enroll international students after the university pushed back against funding freezes and threats against its tax-exempt status.

Unlike other top schools like Harvard or Columbia, MIT has thus far avoided being singled out by the federal government. Although President Kornbluth told *The Tech* on April 30 that MIT would have responded like Harvard if put under similar pressure, the Institute has kept a low profile overall: in the same interview, Kornbluth stated that her conversations

Website, Page 2

BEANTOWN TA-QUERIA TO CLOSE

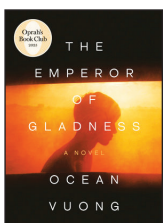
due to building renovations. **NEWS**, p. 3

FRENCH HOUSE NO MORE...

because graduation! commencement! **CAMPUS LIFE**, p. 4

ASKING QUESTIONS?

How?? **CAMPUS LIFE**, p. 4



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Low Pressure	Warm Front	Rain	Thunderstorm
Hurricane	Cold Front	Light	Haze
	Stationary Front	Moderate	
		Heavy	

Compiled by MIT Meteorology Staff and The Tech

Tricky Forecast for MAY 29

Commencement Ceremonies

By Conrad Straden
METEOROLOGIST

With commencement happening this week, all eyes are on the forecast for this afternoon's OneMIT ceremony. The rain in the morning and early afternoon looks like it might clear out in time. Still plan for a chilly afternoon (only a mere 60°F) and cloudy skies or light drizzle. Luckily, the weather improves substantially for degree ceremonies on Friday. Saturday features

another Nor'easter, this one with a more inland track compared to last week's. These are fairly rare this time of year, with only about 2% of all Nor'easters happening in the month of May. The system swiftly moves through, with the heaviest of the rain done by noon on Saturday, with lingering showers in the evening. Finally, on Sunday the sun starts poking through once again. Looking ahead, the first week of June remains dry and warm, with temperatures running in the 70s and even 80s.

SITUATION FOR NOON (ET)

Extended Forecast

Today: Rain. High around 60°F (16°C). Southeast winds 5-10 mph, gusting to 20 mph.

Friday: Cloudy. High around 75°F (24°C). Southwest winds 8-12 mph, gusting to 25 mph.

Saturday: Heavy rain in the morning. Scattered showers in the evening. High around 64°F (18°C) and overnight low around 53°F (12°C). South to west winds 10-20 mph, gusting to 35 mph.

Sunday: Mostly sunny. High around 66°F (19°C) and overnight low around 51°F (11°C). West winds 10-20 mph, gusting to 30 mph.

Students say iPads enhance learning

iPad Loaners, from Page 1

the loaner iPad program did not exist in an online survey from *The Tech*. "I found it much easier to copy and paste, resize, and take organized notes compared to traditional pencil and paper," Lauren Higgins '26 wrote. Similar to Higgins, Zheming Zhang '27 saves time by using his iPad for note-taking, as he does not have to "fully handwrite notes" or "physically manage multiple notebooks." Students also appreciated that the loaner program helped them save money. "I couldn't afford my own iPad, and I was grateful that MIT offered the loaner iPad so I

could keep up with my peers," Higgins wrote. Higgins also said that the discontinuation of the program would "only serve to further inequity," since she believes that students who can't afford to buy an iPad "will be at a disadvantage." Caleb Pascale '28 also shared this concern, stating that the program has been a "huge resource for low-income students." Zac Burton '26, a student with ADHD, finds the iPad to be a valuable tool because it can organize his notes all in one place. Upon hearing the news, he was disappointed. "Unilateral decisions that lack consultation from the people whom they impact are ridiculous," Burton wrote.



The entrance of the MIT IS&T building on May 26, 2025.

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Website highlights MIT's national contributions

Website, from Page 1

with politicians have focused on the importance of "curiosity-driven research" to the nation's economic and technological success. Many of the pages on Understanding MIT strike a similar vein, addressing "American innovation," defense, and "practical education." Several pages emphasize MIT's contributions to the military, including a subsection on the "National Security" page dedicated to Lincoln Laboratory and a link on the "American Innovation" page to MIT News' "Department of Defense" tag. A page titled "Our Endowment" highlights MIT's strengths in financial aid (free undergraduate tuition for families earning less than \$200,000) and "robust research" that contributes to "American competitiveness," mirroring President Kornbluth's statement to *The Tech* on April 30 that "science and technology — the R&D investments that have been made in universities in

partnership with the government — are the key drivers of American success." The page notes that increased taxes on educational endowments, such as the one proposed by the Trump administration, would directly impact these areas. However, one page, "Merit and Excellence," goes further in appearing to respond directly to criticism from the Trump administration and other conservative leaders. The federal government's hostility toward diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts is one of the hallmarks of its rhetoric regarding higher education. Accordingly, one paragraph on the "Merit and Excellence" page, labeled "Rigor in admissions and hiring," highlights how MIT "eliminated DEI statements in faculty hiring" in May 2024. Moreover, President Trump has long criticized "cancel culture," alleging that it creates an unfriendly environment for free expression. A paragraph headed "Commitment to free speech" touts the MIT Statement on Freedom of Expression

and Academic Freedom, which the faculty endorsed in December 2022. Finally, Trump has often characterized elite education as antisemitic and pushed for harsher disciplinary measures against student protesters. The "Merit and Excellence" page cites MIT's "longstanding commitment" to combating racism and antisemitism, stating that "students who violated campus rules" faced "probation, full suspensions, and/or bans from campus" under the heading "Strengthened discipline." In an email statement to *The Tech*, Institute Office of Communications spokesperson Kimberly Allen wrote that the site "reflects topics that often come up" in conversations that President Kornbluth and other MIT leaders have had in D.C. Some students expressed concern about Understanding MIT's tone to *The Tech*. Jonathan Anziani '25 wrote that he does not believe the site "paints an accurate picture of this school" or intends to do so. Anziani, who took particular issue



Henry Moore's *Three-Piece Reclining Figure, Draped*, on Killian Court on May 12, 2025.

with MIT "touting their crackdown on student activism," wrote, "The goal of this website is to protect MIT from Republican representatives." Victoria Martens '26 wrote that although she does not know if Understanding MIT is an accurate

representation of the Institute, she understands why the administration created the website. Martens called the Trump administration "extremely anti-intellectual," adding, "They will make an example out of MIT if we give them anything to go off of."

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MS&PC, from Page 1

had a large international population. Many had to navigate learning English, finding a job, and using the healthcare system for themselves and their children. To help spouses smoothly adapt to life in the U.S., MS&PC offered programs and services from interest groups to weekly gatherings to career assistance.

The closure of MS&PC occurred amidst an unprecedented time for international students in the U.S., who have been targeted by the federal government through SEVIS status terminations and orders halting the scheduling of new student visas. Recently, the Trump administration revoked Harvard’s ability to enroll international students. In a letter sent on May 22 regarding this news, President Kornbluth reaffirmed MIT’s commitment to international students, stating, “MIT would not be MIT without you.”

As MS&PC Program Manager, Recklet Tassi not only oversaw the program but also offered individual appointments for members who sought direct guidance in various areas, such as emotional support or career advice. She has been working for MS&PC for nearly three decades. Tassi did not respond to *The Tech’s* request for comment by the time of publication.

In response to the closure of MS&PC, some members of the program, along with other MIT community members, have been working to raise awareness about the impact of MS&PC through articles in *The Tech* and the MIT Faculty Newsletter, urging admin-

istrators to reconsider the closure of MS&PC. Many volunteers wrote emails to MIT administrators, advocating for the program’s continued existence.

Holland Hamilton, an MS&PC member from the U.S. and the spouse of an MIT graduate student, found the MS&PC parenting meetings to be a major source of support as a new parent. Through MS&PC, Hamilton found a network of other parents who have helped her “navigate all the ups, downs, and in-betweens of daily parenting life.”

Sunita Arora, a former MS&PC member from India, credits MS&PC for giving her the confidence to apply to master’s degree programs in the U.S. Initially, Arora was unsure what the “next chapter” of her career and overall life would be, as she left her managerial position at UnitedHealthcare Group in India to support her husband’s studies in the MIT Sloan MSMS Program. During her time at MS&PC, Arora raised her first child and was also the founder of Career Connect, an MS&PC program that provided training for spouses seeking jobs.

Inspired by a spouse who attended the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) along with the guidance of Recklet Tassi and other spouses, Arora decided to apply to master’s programs. At MS&PC, Arora not only received coaching for the GRE through a study buddy, but she also received guidance on graduate school applications. She found the free resource to be very helpful, as she was living on a tight budget and could not afford to pay for tutoring services. In the end, Arora got into all three schools she applied to, and attended HGSE.

“MIT Spouses & Partners Connect has a place here,” Arora said in an interview with *The Tech*. “It’s not ‘good to have’; it’s a ‘must-have’ to keep the ethos and the sense of community.”

Sol Rosito, a former MS&PC member from Argentina, credits the program for giving her confidence during the job search process. Recklet Tassi helped Rosito prepare for interviews and reviewed her CV. Now, Rosito is a research fellow in biostatistics at Harvard University and the Dana Farber Cancer Institute.

Besides the professional guidance she received at MS&PC, Rosito is grateful for the emotional support she received from the community and staff members. Rosito remembers Palesheva for her “warmth, openness, and genuine support.” as it had a huge effect on her. “She and Jennifer created a space where people felt safe and valued, something that’s rare and deeply needed during such a vulnerable period of transition,” Rosito wrote in a statement to *The Tech*.

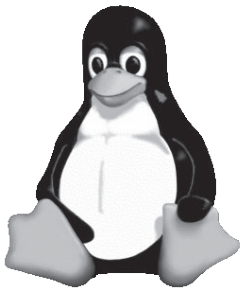
Anita Satyajit, a former MS&PC member from India, appreciates the strong and supportive community at MS&PC as she felt “displaced” and struggled with a “lack of purpose” when she first arrived in the U.S. Satyajit came to MIT to follow her husband, who was a student in the Sloan Fellows program. Satyajit was an active volunteer in MS&PC, organizing social events and sending out weekly emails. Satyajit fondly remembers MS&PC for promoting “cross-cultural celebration, understanding, and exchange,” which helped expand her “horizons beyond anything [she] had ever anticipated.”

Although Satyajit recognizes that MS&PC makes up a small part of the large international community at MIT, she argued that MS&PC is important for supporting a “very often ignored segment — the people who support and run the homes as students study at MIT.” Satyajit added, “It is the support of these very spouses and partners that allows students to focus undisturbed on their study.”

In a phone interview with *The Tech*, Jay Liew, the spouse of an MIT faculty member, described MS&PC as the community “that kept everyone together” when he moved to Cambridge during the COVID pandemic in 2020, a period that he found to be “very isolating.” When Liew learned about the closure of MS&PC, he was “very sad” and “pained” by the decision.

Although Liew understands that MIT Health is experiencing financial difficulties, he believes that MS&PC should continue to run, even if that means on a reduced budget or lower pay. “If you’re just looking at a list of people to lay off and you see two names, you think that you’re just laying off two people,” Liew said. “But then you don’t realize that these two people have impacted thousands of people’s lives throughout the years.”

Liew criticized MIT Health’s decision to end the program on a two-week notice, as he believes that the announcement did not provide enough time for a proper transition, and was too abrupt for the staff members. “[Jennifer] has poured her whole life to MIT having worked here for three decades, and then all she got was a two-week notice,” Liew pointed out. “That’s not very compassionate.”



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Students voice their concerns

MIT Health, from Page 1

lish or finding a community. The program organized activities and events across many areas, from Parents Connect for first-time parents to Career Connect for people who would like job assistance. In light of the closure, some MS&PC members and MIT community members have coordinated efforts to continue the program through advocacy and awareness.

LCE was an organization that hosted language exchange events for all members of the MIT community, including spouses and partners. “It’s more than learning a language — we connect people across MIT for conversation, cultural exchange, and friendship,” the LCE website said. At monthly lunch events, attendees could practice a language with either native speakers or other language learners. Besides organized events, LCE also offered a language partner matching program in which two language learners could meet up regularly in their free time for conversations.

Eleanor Li ’27 described LCE as an “amazing community,” meeting many people from the lunches. Li enjoyed the conversations she had with other Spanish learners and speakers at LCE, as she got to practice her Spanish while simultaneously learning new things. “The casual chats were fun and I learned about people’s days, passions, and some new Spanish words and expressions!” Li wrote in a statement to *The Tech*. Li expressed regret that the “unique experience won’t be available” for future MIT community members.

Ling Dong G found being part of LCE to be an “incredibly rewarding” experience. “The program offers a rare space at MIT for genuine, informal cross-cultural dialogue in a low-pressure environment, and gave me the opportunity to connect with members of the MIT community I likely never would have met otherwise,” Dong wrote in a statement to *The Tech*.

Dong was shocked and disappointed to learn about the closure of the LCE. From Dong’s perspective, LCE was not only a language program, but also a “support system” for the international community at MIT. “The LCE has long served as a point of connection for many in the MIT community — especially international students, their spouses, and visiting scholars — who rely on it not only for to learn different languages and cultures, but also for building community in what can otherwise be a very isolating environment,” Dong wrote.

In her statement, Dong highlighted the loneliness that many international spouses experience when moving to the U.S., as they may not speak English or personally know anyone in the area. Dong views the program’s closure as an “missed opportunity for MIT to reaffirm its commitment to diversity and inclusivity” and a major loss for the “broader MIT community.”

The getfit program was a 12-week winter fitness challenge from early February to April in which teams of five to eight people worked together to achieve weekly exercise goals for individ-

uals and teams based on the number of minutes exercised. These minutes increased each week, from 150 in week 1 to 300 in week 12. Based on the average number of minutes exercised, teams could qualify for weekly prize drawings.

According to the getfit website, nearly 75% of getfit participants said that the fitness challenge made them exercise more. Furthermore, the majority continued to exercise regularly for at least six months after the challenge ended. Some participants noted other benefits, including weight loss and improved muscle tone. According to a 2024 MIT News article, the 2023 challenge had 3,385 participants on 501 teams, with a total of 12,890,676 logged minutes.

Similar to getfit, the Step Your Way program was a six-week challenge in the fall in which participants logged their number of daily steps. Individuals who met the minimum six-week total of 270,000 steps would be entered in a prize drawing.

Catherine Tang ’25 enjoyed getfit because the team-based incentives encouraged her to exercise more regularly during the winter. “I’m disappointed to see this go, as it was a part of my time at MIT [that] I really enjoyed,” Tang wrote in a statement to *The Tech*.

Alicia Ouyang ’19 G also appreciated getfit for its community, and she believes that the closure of getfit is a sign that MIT Health does “not understand that the investment into preventative health avoids higher costs later down the road.”

Beantown Taqueria to close in summer

The store operated for 13 years



VIVIAN HIR—THE TECH

The storefront of Beantown Taqueria on May 26, 2025.

By Sabine Chu
ASSOCIATE NEWS EDITOR

In an undated letter posted in their restaurant, Beantown Taqueria has announced that they will close due to building renovations this summer. Although proprietors are unsure about the exact date, Beantown’s closure could happen as early as July. The letter expressed Beantown’s “deepest gratitude” for “13 years of service” and mentioned “the possibility of relocating to a new location.”

To save money, the letter stated that Beantown Taqueria would discontinue their signature rotation of buy-one, get-one (BOGO) deals, which applied to specific items for each day of the week. Instead, the restaurant will offer “Get One Half Off inflation specials.”

The Central Square restaurant has served Mexican and Tex-Mex food at 245 Massachusetts Avenue since 2012. A Boston Globe article from 2013 praised the chilaquiles as

“wonderfully resourceful” and the tacos as “food coma-inducing.” Beyond its food, Beantown’s BOGO options and long hours (closing at 4 a.m. on weekends) made it popular with MIT community members. Student organizations, offices, and labs also took advantage of the restaurant’s catering options for events.

Beantown manager Hugo Mendez told *The Tech* that landlords notified the restaurant about the building renovations around February 2025. Mendez added that vendors do not know whether they will be able to return. Mendez described “generations” of MIT students coming into the restaurant, his favorite memories being of MIT’s Solar Electric Vehicle Team (SEVT) and Motorsports, who work nearby at 265 Massachusetts Avenue (Building N51).

As a SEVT member who “spent a lot of late nights working in N51/N52,” Sophie Fan ’26 enjoyed weekly catered lunches from Beantown every Sunday. Fan praised the burritos, birria quesadillas, tres leches, and flan. She stated that Beantown was “so kind to support our build team.”

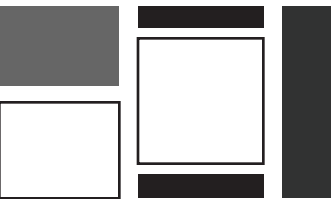
Gloria Zhu ’26 wrote to *The Tech* that as a freshman, she ate at Beantown at least once every week and “memorized” the BOGO deals. Zhu, who especially liked the restaurant’s carnitas quesadillas, wrote that Beantown’s late hours, proximity to campus, relative affordability, and quality were “all a college student could really ask for.”



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VIVIAN'S REFLECTIONS

On graduating and leaving French House

Why returning to an MEng won't be the same as being an undergrad

By Vivian Hir
NEWS EDITOR

For the past month or so, I have been thinking a lot about my undergraduate experience at MIT. For me, senior spring was a strange time — my semester was busy, but at the same time, I still had free space in my mind to reflect a lot on my four years. In past semesters, I was so focused on each upcoming deadline that I got lost in work and didn't spend much time thinking about how I changed over time.

A lot of my underclassmen friends have asked me, "What does it feel like to graduate?" The complex mix of feelings I have about graduation is unlike anything I've experienced in my life. Although I am relieved that I finally reached the finish line of my undergraduate academic marathon, I overall feel bittersweet. I will no longer be living in French House, my main source of community at MIT, and some of my friends in the Class of 2025 will be leaving the Boston area for graduate school or work.

The idea of graduation didn't feel real until my friend and I submitted our final project for a class the night before the last day of classes. As we chatted on our walk back to our dorm, we realized that we were done with undergrad at MIT. There were no more problem sets to complete, no more midterms to take, and no more essays to write. It was over. Tomorrow was the last day of classes. We then tried to remember our first day of undergrad, which was such a long time ago for us that we could not recall what exactly happened that day.

I had some trouble sleeping that night. As I lay awake in bed, my mind kept repeating the phrase, "Undergrad went by too fast." I had known time goes faster as one gets older, but never had it felt so sped up until now. So much of my time at MIT was devoted to academics and activities that, by the end of each school year, I always wished that I could have been less stressed and more relaxed, though that wasn't really practical in reality.

I also had this feeling of regret that came with wanting to do more at MIT, but not doing it in the end simply because my time was limited and precious.

There were activities I wanted to do but never did, classes I wanted to take but never ended up taking, and time I wanted to spend with friends but didn't. Yet it is important for me to come to terms with the fact that, at the end of the day, I only live one life, so it is pointless to consider alternate lives. Nor did I live up to the aspirations I set for myself before coming here. I still believe that I could have had a smoother academic experience here if I had better study skills, time management habits, and work ethic.

At the same time, however, I am pleased that I have achieved things in college that I never imagined doing four years ago. If you told my high school self that I would take on long-distance running as a hobby, I would have laughed in your face. Similarly, I wouldn't believe you if you said that I would become the News Editor for *The Tech*, writing many articles about current events at MIT.

Although I am graduating this May, I will be returning in the fall to do my MEng, which means that I am technically not leaving MIT. I will see my fellow editors at *The Tech* meetings in the fall, and a number of my friends are staying for an MEng. My underclassman friends will still be at MIT. Campus will still be the same familiar place with familiar faces. I will still be in the same research group next year. I appreciate these aspects of continuity, as the shift won't be significant compared to my friends who are studying at a different institution or working at a company.

Despite staying here for another year, graduation still feels like graduation. Next year won't be the same. While some view undergraduate graduation for rising MEng students as a "fake" graduation, I consider undergrad and MEng as two distinct phases. I will be a graduate student, which means taking Course 6 graduate classes and devoting a lot of my time toward writing a thesis.

Although the academic difference is one factor for the distinction, the biggest change for me will be leaving French House and living off-campus in an apartment in the fall.

This is something that I am still trying to process. While apartment life has its own perks, I will miss living in French



PHOTO COURTESY OF MIT FRENCH HOUSE

French House at Dîner de Noël, a year-end formal, on Dec. 12, 2024.

House, a community that has been an integral part of my undergraduate experience at MIT. It is hard for me to imagine an alternate life in which I live in a dorm other than New House, since the kitchen has been the place where I have eaten countless French House dinners, cooked various dishes, had all kinds of conversations, and made many friendships.

Dorm life is not perfect, but there's something special about living on a floor with around 30 other peers who are your friends. Being surrounded by so many friends has led to many opportunities for social spontaneity, from late-night conversations in the kitchen to baking sessions. As a result, I found my social life at MIT to be quite enriching, which made the academic struggles here much more bearable.

Besides the social aspect of French House, I will miss the home-cooked dinners that not only have provided me with sustenance six times a week, but also have given me a sense of stability throughout my undergrad. No matter how stressful and difficult my day was, I would come to the kitchen for dinner at 6:15 p.m., stop thinking about work as I ate my meal, and talk with people sitting near me. It is from these dinners and small conversations over time that I have gotten to know the people on my floor.

French House has also been a place where many cherished memories were made. I won't forget the time when my friend got a shopping cart full of pineapples as a secret Santa gift, causing everyone to roar with laughter, or the time another friend made a broccoli-themed dinner and decorated the kitchen with green balloons. I still think of the long late-night conversation I had with the '24s in the kitchen the night before move out day last year, sharing stories until it was past 3 a.m.

Living at French House has meant so much to me that I became its historian, interviewing alumni for a history project and organizing a 50th anniversary reunion. Although the cultural house has changed a lot over the past 50 years, I am glad that our love for cooking and tight-knit community has remained constant from decade to decade, and I hope that it continues like this in the future.

I won't be in this type of unique living arrangement ever again. Similarly, I don't think I will find another community like French House in the future, which saddens me. Despite this, I know that it is time to close this chapter of my life, and move onto the next one. My time at French House has come to an end, but the community will always have a special place in my heart.

DID YOUR MIT ESSAYS GET YOU IN?

The Tech is collecting successful application essays (hint: yours!).

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ADVICE

Questions?

To articulate or not to articulate?

By Auntie Matter

Auntie Matter, I've never been good at phrasing questions satisfyingly. And what can be the thing for me to do with that?
— My Little Jitterbug

Dear My Little Jitterbug,

This might sound a bit crazy, but have you tried asking questions to yourself in your head before saying them out loud? Even crazier, have you tried talking to yourself at all? The feedback loop in your own mind is the greatest way to sharpen your questions.

Do you get that bubbling feeling inside your chest when you feel the urge to ask someone a question? That happens to me pretty often. It's in these heightened moments of focus that you should "speak" the question (or related ones) in your own head — whether they're follow-ups, tangents, and so on — so that you're ready to ask them out loud.

Your concern is important, since this deep, reflective self-awareness is sometimes lacking on campus. The fact that you have submitted this question to me shows me that you are indeed self-aware and I applaud you for that.

This isn't a dig at MIT students — it's understandable why many of us lack this skill. The world around us demands answers, but rarely do we step up to the plate and pose our own questions to the world. So, you ask, where do the opportunities to ask questions arise? Research, recitations, office hours, late night conversations with friends? I'm not quite sure myself, but any environment where you can safely be clueless and absorb whatever answers are thrown at you is incredibly liberating.

So, if you're asking questions to the right kinds of people, is there really a "right" way to ask them? Maybe there isn't. There have been plenty of times when a TA, professor, research supervisor, or PI has looked at me like I'm a one-eyed son of Poseidon after I've obfuscated, mumbled, and jumped over words. In those moments, I realize that my questions rose out of sheer spontaneity, and frankly, that's a good thing. Asking questions becomes a sort of vulnerability, whether in front of your peers or even to yourself. Ultimately, being real is more important than being articulate.

Peace,
Auntie Matter

Know something important we should write about?

(We probably don't know about it.)

Let us know.

news@tech.mit.edu

Solution to Stoles

from page 9

⁺¹¹	4	2	3	⁺⁹	1	5
	5	3	4	2	1	
⁺¹⁰	1	4	5	3	2	
	2	⁺¹⁸	5	1	⁺¹¹	4
⁺³	3	1	⁺¹⁰	2	5	4

Solution to Caps

from page 9

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

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The MIT Free Speech Alliance, an independent alumni nonprofit, congratulates all members of MIT's class of 2025. We hope you're proud of the work you've put in so that you can savor this moment.

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To read our letter to the MIT class of 2025 and join MFSA free of charge, scan the QR below or visit mitfreespeech.org/2025.



EVENT REVIEW

Award-winning author Ocean Vuong presents *The Emperor of Gladness* at First Parish Church

Vuong: “I want a book that just holds people and allows them to transform internally”

Ocean Vuong
The Emperor of Gladness
First Parish Church,
Cambridge
May 16, 2025

By Vivian Hir
NEWS EDITOR

On May 16, 2025, author Ocean Vuong presented his latest novel *The Emperor of Gladness* at the First Parish Church. The host of the event was Harvard Book Store, and its moderator was *Here & Now* senior producer Emiko Tamagawa. Vuong is known for his *New York Times* bestselling novel *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* and his critically acclaimed poetry collections, *Time is a Mother* and *Night Sky With Exit Wounds*. He has received the Ruth Lilly and Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Fellowship from the Poetry Foundation, the Whiting Award, and the T. S. Eliot Prize for his work. A Vietnamese refugee, Vuong grew up in Hartford, Connecticut, and is currently a poetry professor in the MFA program at New York University.

The Emperor of Gladness centers around Hai, a suicidal 19-year-old college dropout from East Gladness, Connecticut, who attempts to jump off a bridge. Before he does, he encounters Grazina, an elderly woman with dementia who urges him to live. Afterward, the two develop a close relationship as Hai becomes her caretaker. The novel provides a close-up portrayal of working-class American life, navigating themes such as poverty, labor, and family.

Vuong began the event by reading a harrowing passage about the opioid epidemic's toll on a community and Hai's conversation with Marlin, a sex addict, at a rehab center. What motivated Vuong

to select this passage was his experience growing up in a community that was hit by the onset of the epidemic in the 2000s. “Much of my childhood was kind of inundated by it,” he said.

The passage was incredibly vivid, as Vuong seamlessly wove in details of the destruction that drug addiction brought along with nostalgia for a time before the rise of digital technology. The passion and poignance of his reading, immersed the audience in Hai's world, set in central Connecticut, 2009.

When Vuong read a humorous conversation about MSG between Hai and Marlin, he took on two distinct voices, which brought the characters' personalities to life and elicited chuckles in the audience. Despite the passage's dark and heavy beginning, Vuong effectively balanced it with humor at the end.

Vuong did not originally intend to become a writer. He grew up in a working class family — his mom was a nail salon worker and his stepdad a factory worker. However, he gradually came to understand that writing was a powerful tool for “tending to the human condition,” including the universal difficulties of death and illness. Although Vuong recognizes writing as a tool that can be weaponized, he prefers using writing “to understand people, particularly suffering, as best as [he] can.”

Vuong's motivation to begin *The Emperor of Gladness* with Hai's suicide attempt was the lack of discussion in media about people who ultimately do not die by suicide. “I always wondered, ‘What's day two like for that person?’” Vuong said. He has personally been affected by suicide, losing two high school friends and a close uncle.

Vuong admitted that he still doesn't have an exact answer to what keeps someone alive after a crisis. “We forget that we were supposed to die because there's another person who is tying us back to the world because they need something,” he said. “And I feel like that's often how I find these answers, even in my own life.”

Hai and Grazina's relationship in *The Emperor of Gladness* is based on Vuong's relationship with a friend's grandmother, also named Grazina. He served as her caretaker for two and a half years when he was a college student in New York City. Vuong described his relationship with Grazina as “pivotal and foundational” because it was a “quintessential American story” — both were immigrants who came to the U.S. for better lives.

Despite their different generations and continents of origin, both were refugees who fled wars — Grazina fled World War II, and Vuong fled the Vietnam War. “These supposed racial, cultural differences just compacted into necessity,” Vuong said. “All those things dissolved because we were so contingent on each other.”

Other relationships central to the novel include the ones that Hai forms with his crew members at the fast food restaurant HomeMarket. Hai's experiences are based on Vuong's own work at fast food restaurants. Vuong believes that American values place a lot of emphasis on the “nuclear family,” but not enough on “circumstantial family” — in particular, the “family of labor.”

Although Vuong and his fast food co-workers shared significantly different beliefs, he realized that the intense labor and the “kinetic kinship” caused these ideological differences to vanish. Vuong became vulnerable, sharing the hardships he remembered from his experiences, ranging from his coworkers crying after a difficult shift to the physically taxing work just to earn a living wage.

The mundane, repetitive work in fast food restaurants inspired Vuong to write a novel in which “nothing changes” because he views the majority of American life to be “static, even at its best.” A static life is often perceived as a negative thing because of the lack of progress and meaning, yet Vuong argues that most people in history are simply “stuck” and cannot get out, whether from laborious jobs or unhappy marriages. “I want a book that just holds people and allows them to trans-

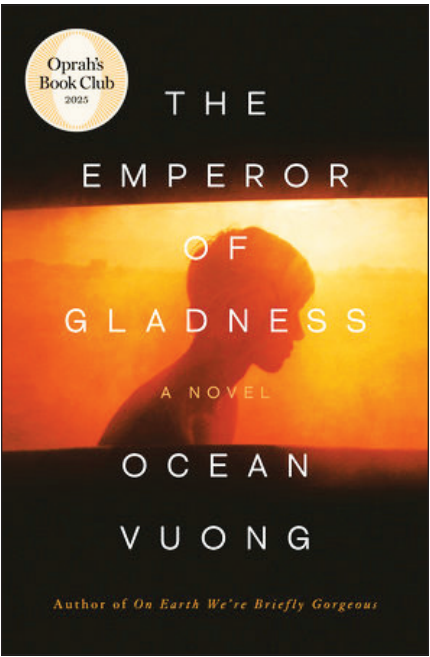


PHOTO COURTESY OF PENGUIN PRESS

The Emperor of Gladness is award-winning author Ocean Vuong's latest novel.

form internally, without giving them the cop out of structural change,” he said. In the novel, Hai undergoes this transformation through the relationships he cultivates with Grazina and the sense of family he finds at HomeMarket.

Vuong concluded the talk by circling back to his thoughts on being a writer, noting that he never saw his job as a “burden” because he was given the choice to be a writer, whereas his entire family worked labor-intensive jobs to make ends meet. “I've always felt that if I chose to be a writer, I had to choose to look at the world — the ugly and the beautiful I have,” he said.

To Vuong, being a writer is a “tremendous privilege” because he can make multiple revisions without any consequences, while his mom and stepdad cannot afford to make mistakes in their work. “So many people in our culture do not get to fix our errors,” he said. “I get to sit and dream and try.”

Congratulations to The Tech's Class of 2025!

Vivian Hir

Lucy Cai

Manaal Mohammed

Jyotsna Nair

Anahita Srinivasan

Kate Lu

Adrienne Lai

Alexa Simao

Omar Orozco

Women’s Track and Field Wins Program’s First NCAA Division III Outdoor National Championship

By Matthew Barnett
SPORTS EDITOR

On May 24, MIT Women’s Track and Field closed out a dominant season with their first Division III Outdoor National Championship Title. With the win, the program claimed the top spot in cross country, indoor track and field, and outdoor track and field. MIT became the first women’s program in NCAA history to win a National Championship in all three meets in the same year.

In a field of 79 scoring teams, MIT won the meet with 56 points, beating out WashU (47 pts) and UW-La Crosse (38 pts) to claim the national title. MIT’s scoring was led by nine All-America honorees, and their victory was cemented by the program’s first relay national championship in the 4x400m.

Scoring breakdown (56 pts)
4x400m (10 pts): 1st, 3:41.59. Olivia Dias ’25, Shreya Kalyan ’26, Krystal Montgomery ’26, Marina Miller ’25.

400m (6 pts): Marina Miller ’25: 3rd, 54.32.
1500m (7 pts): Gillian Roeder G: 5th, 4:27.76. Christina Crow ’25: 6th, 4:28.81.
10000m (5 pts): Kate Sanderson ’26: 4th, 34:48.61.
Pole Vault (3 pts): Katelyn Howard ’26: 5th, 3.85m.
Shot Put (10 pts): Alexis Boykin ’25: 1st, 16.80m.
Along with winning the national title for her event, Boykin set a new record for Division III women’s shot put, surpassing the previous record (16.77m) set in 2006 by Robyn Jarocki from UW-Oshkosh.
Discus Throw (8 pts): Alexis Boykin ’25: 3rd, 45.12m. Em Ball ’25: 7th, 41.90m.
Hammer Throw (6 pts): Alexis Boykin ’25: 3rd, 58.79m.
Javelin Throw (1 pts): Elaine Wang ’26: 8th, 40.44m.

Non-scoring All-America Honors:
3000m Steeplechase: Liv Girand ’27: 10th, 10:58.71.
Triple Jump: Nony Otu Ugwu ’26: 10th, 11.91m.

WANTED

sports·writ·er(s)
/ˈspôrts ˌrīdərs/
noun
noun: sports writers
journalists who write about sports.

Special thanks and best wishes to the Class of 2025 student workers

Caroline Chea
Hanfei Cui
Sam Manzano Davila
Michelle Escobar
Bianca Hanly
Olivia Joseph

Siyoung Kim
Christine Page
Syd Robinson
Mariano Salcedo
Sophie Sun
Eldar Urkumbayev

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ARTS **SPORTS** SCIENCE WEATHER ENTERTAINMENT OPINION NEWS FEATURES CAMPUS LIFE

From cannonballs to magic functions: Fields Medalist Maryna Viazovska presents sphere packing at the 2025 Simons Lecture Series

A dense problem unpacked with symmetry and randomness

By Elizabeth Li
SCIENCE WRITER

On April 29, the Simons Lecture Series commenced with Maryna Viazovska, Professor of Mathematics and Chair of Number Theory at the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), who gave a three-day talk on the infamous sphere packing problem. The lectures attracted standing crowds of mathematicians from all over the Boston area, and excitement was palpable among the students, researchers, postdocs, and professors in the audience.

The annual Simons Lecture Series is financially supported by mathematician and investor Jim Simons. Since its inception in 1999, the series has specialized from featuring one to the now two speakers — one in pure math and the other in applied math. (Professor Thomas Vidick from EPFL presented on Quantum Complexity Theory from May 12 to 14.) The selection process, led by a faculty committee, begins about a year in advance.

“The goal is to have very distinguished mathematicians come and deliver lectures on a very recent, important breakthrough in any of [these] areas of mathematics,” MIT Department of Mathematics Head Michel Goemans PhD ’90 said.

The sphere packing problem was rumored to have been first conceived in the 16th century, when explorers wondered how they could stack as many cannonballs as possible on a ship. It was formalized and abstracted by mathematicians into a problem of how to pack congruent hyperspheres in n-dimensional space such that the density of the spheres’ volume in the space is maximized. While this has fairly intuitive answers in dimen-

sions two and three by aligning the centers of the sphere with the points on the hexagonal and tetrahedral lattices in the manner of cells in a beehive or oranges in a supermarket, the optimal packing becomes obscure and nontrivial in four dimensions and beyond.

Variations of this problem and methods for a complete solution, though not necessarily developed specifically for sphere packing, have been studied for centuries. In more recent years, mathematicians have generally approached this problem by either finding concrete constructions of dense packings or by finding upper bounds by means of semidefinite optimization, as MIT Professor Henry Cohn ’95 and Harvard Professor Noam Elkies have done.

Viazovska builds on the work of Cohn and Elkies, who qualified what are known as magic functions — functions with certain constraints on their values and Fourier transforms such that they prove the optimality of existing packings. Viazovska, along with collaborators, noticed that some packings were extremely close to the known upper bound in certain dimensions, and constructed magic functions in the E8 lattice in eight-dimensional space and the Leech lattice in 24-dimensional space, for which she won the Fields Medal in 2022. Not only did she cover her own work, however, she also presented other relevant research regarding advances toward this problem, particularly with estimating lower bounds — some as recent as April 2025 (by the Weizmann Institute of Science’s Professor Boaz Klartag).

The sphere packing problem may seem geometric at first glance, but it became apparent over the course of the

lectures that the solution also involves varied techniques from harmonic analysis, number theory, algebra, and more. “I would think about these borders between different areas of mathematics as a bit artificial; we create them for convenience,” Viazovska remarked. “In principle, everything has to be connected.” While Viazovska is interested in all areas of math, geometry attracts her the most. She mentioned an old saying: “Geometry is another language for describing mathematics.”

When asked about what contributed to her great success, Viazovska responded, “Maybe the notion of greatness is not the healthiest concept. I knew the method which would be needed, and also knew about this problem in the approach of Cohn, Elkies, and Russian mathematician Dmitry Viktorovich Gorbachev, and probably there were not too many people in the intersection.” She explained, “Many were in this community of linear programming bounds — they’re mostly analysts — and people who worked on modular forms, they were mostly interested in other types of problems.” In response to gaining broader recognition for her work, Viazovska is balancing the opportunity for new projects and collaborations with more responsibilities and duties. A direction of interest she has been pursuing recently is formalization, which involves manipulating mathematical statements as purely syntactic expressions based on rules independent of their meaning. She hopes that these efforts can eventually culminate in new software that can catch mistakes and fill in details to aid researchers in writing papers.

Viazovska has also used her platform to explore other emerging interdisciplinary areas, such as the one between math

and art. One such collaboration was when she worked with artists who were mathematicians by training to create digital sculptures, which were displayed in the *Shapes: Patterns in Art and Science* exhibition at EPFL earlier this year.

As expected, the level of mathematics that Viazovska works at is not usually covered at the undergraduate or even graduate level. However, Goemans still strongly recommends that students attend these lectures, “even if they only understand the first five minutes.” He quipped, “Lots of us also understand only the first five minutes,” adding, “It is still very interesting because you see the connections between different fields. You see problems that other people are interested in. You can then see some of the mathematical tools and techniques and disciplines that you’ve learned in various classes used to solve quite interesting problems.” “It was very inspiring,” said Daniel Potievsky ’28, who attended the lectures. “On one hand, it was dense, but on the other, the core idea she was using was something very simple, like the ideas from algebra and lattice theory, which I could understand.” When asked to give advice for students aspiring to pursue math, Viazovska’s initial response was, “Do it!”

“One part of the advice is to not be upset if you make a project and it does not lead to publication or a new discovery, but you just learned something,” she said.

Viazovska maintained that the mathematical way of thinking and the logical approach to problem-solving are very useful, even when applied to challenges beyond academia. “Maybe it’s also important to live a full life,” she added.

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Caps

Solution, page 4

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

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.

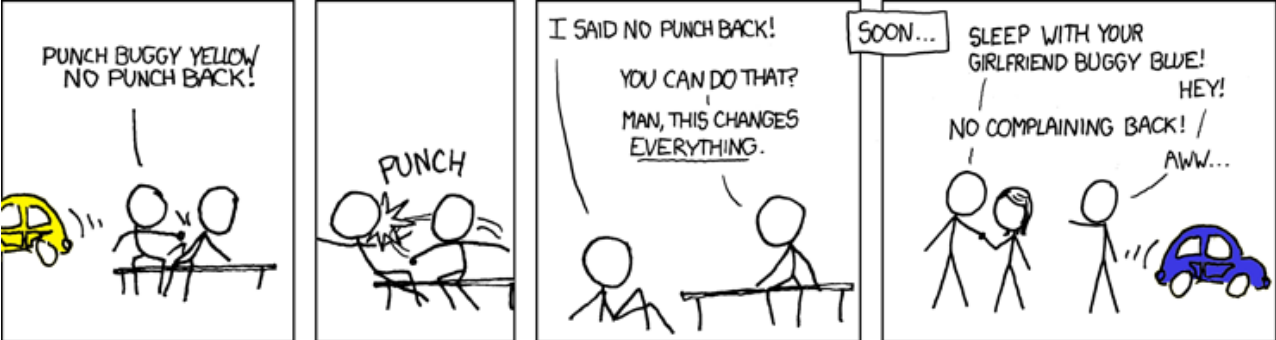
Stoles

Solution, page 4

+11			+9	
				5
+10				
		+18	+11	
×3		×10		

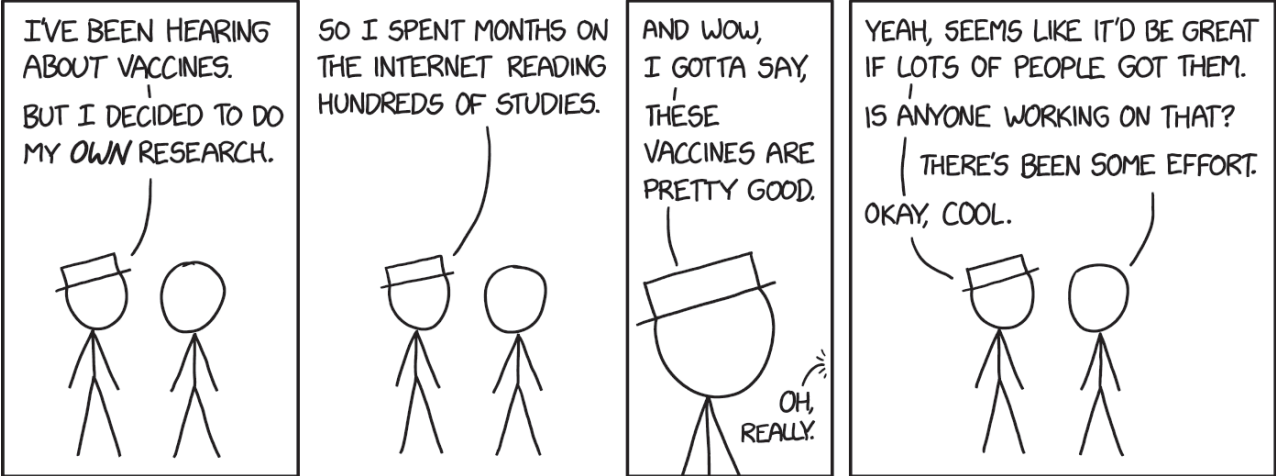
Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column and row contains exactly one of each of the numbers 1–6. Follow the mathematical operations for each box.

[392] Making Rules



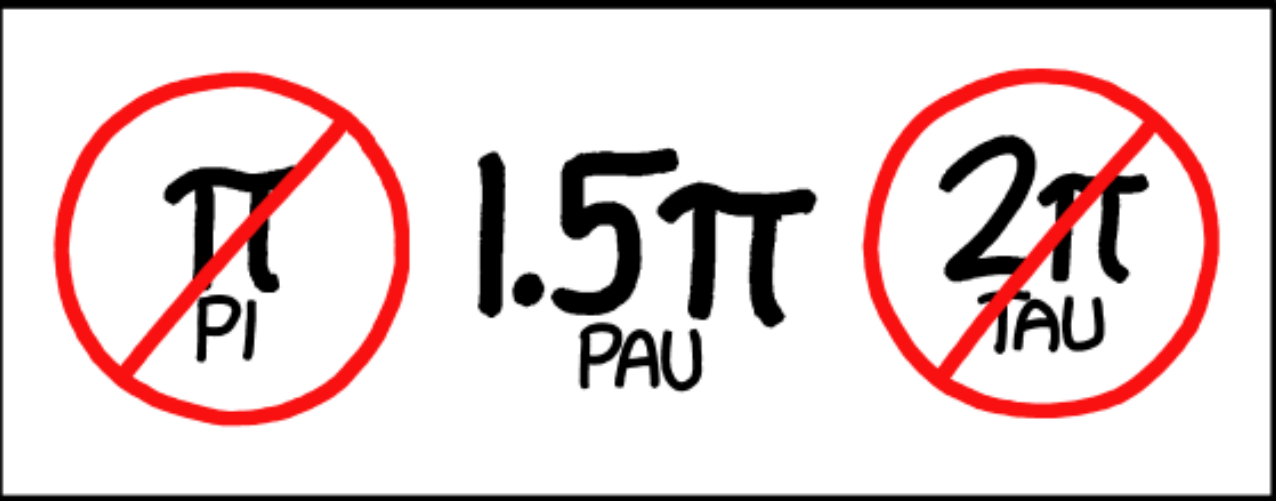
I never understood why someone would expect me to accept their rules right after they'd punched me. I'm sure it's all very symbolic or something.

[2515] Vaccines



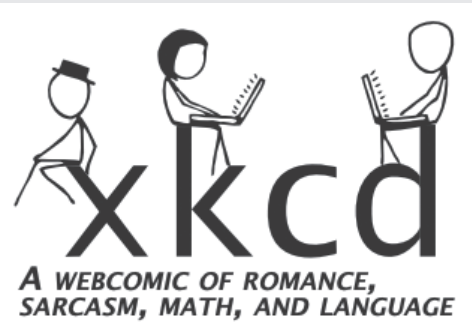
Honestly feel a little sheepish about the amount of time and effort I spent confirming "yes, the vaccine helps protect people from getting sick and dying" but I guess everyone needs a hobby.

[1292] Pi vs. Tau



A COMPROMISE SOLUTION
TO THE PI/TAU DISPUTE

Conveniently approximated as e+2, Pau is commonly known as the Devil's Ratio (because in the octal expansion, '666' appears four times in the first 200 digits while no other run of 3+ digits appears more than once.)



by Randall Munroe

If MIT researchers produce cutting-edge science, who sustains the researchers?

MIT research is supported by an invisible chain of care work institutionalized through MIT Spouses & Partners Connect, which, after more than 50 years of community support, is now being discontinued.

By Alessandra Jungs de Almeida

MIT researchers need to eat and sleep. They need their clothes and spaces cleaned. They even need moments of joy, such as time with friends and family. If they have children, those children need to be cared for, and someone needs to cook, clean, and take them to activities. So much work is required to sustain each researcher and, therefore, to sustain the labor of thousands of MIT researchers every single day. This work, done many times by ourselves and many times by others, is essential for us MIT researchers to have the time and energy to write papers and grants, teach, serve on committees, and advance research, here and everywhere else.

Its discontinuation means the dismantling of a community and of a chain of care work that sustains life at MIT.

In Gender Studies, this kind of work has a name; it is called care work or reproductive work. Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) — developed by scholars like Tithi Bhattacharya, rooted in movements like Wages for Housework, and theorized by Silvia Federici — helps us name and understand this labor that sustains and maintains us. It is often rendered invisible next to what we call “productive work.” Scholars in SRT ask: If workers’ labor produces all the wealth in society, what, then, produces the worker? They named this sustenance social reproduction or “reproductive work” — the work that regenerates life. Without it, life could not be reproduced, and consequently, there would be no production. Giving birth, raising children, breastfeeding, fixing things around the home, educating the youth, caring for the sick and elderly — and yes, even leisure — all fall into this category. For any of us to do

what we do — including research — reproductive work has to be done, and must be done, every day. According to SRT, most of this work is done by women. And we don’t need to be geniuses to see that this is true.

Why bring this discussion to the MIT context?

Picture this: In the 1990s, institutions like MIT were still figuring out what it meant to have women as faculty. (By the way, thank you to the feminists and faculty women before us for making it happen!) Social expectations of the time were clear — women should do reproductive work, especially in the private sphere. This social expectation was so strong that when women were hired at places such as MIT, they often didn’t have children — not necessarily because they didn’t want to, but because it was assumed they would be the ones responsible for the invisible work of care at home. As MIT researchers, they didn’t have the time for reproductive work. Building a family became incompatible with professional life, because society expected them, as women, to carry that load alone. Did their male colleagues face the same dilemma? Probably not, as this mini-documentary on Nancy Hopkins by MIT Press makes painfully clear.

Since the 1990s, some things have changed. Others haven’t. A 2024 report conducted by the Gender Equity Policy Institute shows that among childless adults in the US, women still do twice as much household labor as men — 11.7 hours a week compared to 5.8.

Now, get a new picture. It’s 2025. At MIT, only 28.44% of its faculty are women (310 women in a total of 1,090 faculty). Only 31.74% percent of its postdoctoral community are women (487 out of 1,534). Of the 7,351 graduate students, 42% are women.

Even if some things have improved, women are still a minority when it comes to research appointments at MIT, especially in advanced positions in their careers. Beyond that, as the Gender Equity Policy Institute report shows, women are still primarily responsible for reproductive work in most households.

So, who does reproductive labor to sustain an institution like MIT that demands so much from every researcher?

Many people sustain MIT through reproductive work, as SRT defines it, including paid service workers, school teachers, and health workers. However, the reproductive work inside one’s home is still mostly done in an unpaid way by women. This work sustains research at MIT. In other words, the cutting-edge science produced at MIT and other institutions not only depends on the contributions of those in different labs, but also on the often invisible labor of those sustaining daily life, a kind of labor disproportionately carried out by women.

I am not the first to observe this at MIT. More than 50 years ago, the MIT community recognized that this was not an easy place for those who support the research work carried out here. That’s why MIT Spouses & Partners Connect (MS&PC) — then called MIT Wives (yes, we’ve indeed made some progress) — was created.

As cited in a previous opinion piece in *The Tech*, for over five decades, MIT Spouses & Partners Connect (MS&PC) has quietly but powerfully supported the families behind MIT’s academic engine. It has been a lifeline for those arriving from around the world — often leaving careers, extended families, and social networks behind — to support their partners’ research. MS&PC helped spouses and partners build community, access resources, navigate new systems, and feel seen in an environment that often overlooks their contributions. As reported in *The Tech*, it offered “a sense of belonging to those navigating not just a new campus, but often a new culture and a new life.”

Unfortunately, in May 2025, it was announced that this 53-year program would be shut down. This news was abrupt, and has saddened its entire community, including me — I first came to MIT in 2021 as a scholar’s spouse.

In this network, I saw repetitions of the same story: Families (sometimes with kids, sometimes without) came from far away (Sweden, South Africa, Korea, Peru, and so many other countries or U.S. states) while the MIT scholar was quickly consumed by work. For the spouses and children arriving together, everything was novel: the culture, the language, the way of life. All of this unfolded thousands of miles away from their family and friends. The only person they knew — their partner — was deep in the demands of research and professional life at MIT.

As mentioned above, a considerable proportion of MIT researchers are men, and society is still structured so that men are not typically taking on reproductive labor. So, most (but thankfully not all) of the spouses and partners that I have met are women. The closure of MS&PC, therefore, carries specific and disproportionate gendered consequences.

Without MS&PC, who will support those who support the researchers?

In just less than two weeks, 180 members of the MS&PC community put together testimonials of their experience at MIT through

the network. You can read these testimonials online. The community came so quickly to MS&PC’s defense because, in the process of sustaining MIT research through reproductive work, MS&PC was also essential for spouses’ and partners’ lives. This program created professional orientation, friendship, and a sense of belonging. It helped people navigate a new country, find a sense of self, and build community while supporting their partners.

For example, through the program, I got my first job as a staff member at MIT, received funding to present my research at an international conference through the MS&PC Professional Development Fund, and made friends who, going through a similar experience, genuinely cared about my well-being, and I about theirs. I also received direct support from the program staff in the early months after my arrival through private office hours, which were professionally and emotionally helpful. Even though I didn’t make use of all the available initiatives — such as those geared toward families with children — I can’t imagine what my first years in Cambridge would have been like without this program.

Actually, the program’s impact extends across time: About one year ago, three years after my arrival, MS&PC connected me with someone from Brazil, my home country, who lives on the MIT campus and works in a similar research area. She has since become a close friend — in fact, just before I sat down to finalize this text, we were walking together along the Charles River Esplanade. With this new friend, I’ve been able to share the same care that another Brazilian friend — also an MS&PC connection — once offered me during my early years here, when my spouse was fully immersed in his courses and qualifying exams. This is what a chain of care looks like: It crosses relationships, time, and institutions. And yet, without being embraced by the institution, it might never have begun.

As of May, if MS&PC no longer exists, its termination will neglect the labor of those who do the work that makes it possible for MIT to produce cutting-edge research. This dismissal also includes MS&PC staff labor, including an administrative worker, Jennifer Recklet Tassi, who dedicated 28 years of her life to building the program.

MIT spouses and partners, their spouses (the MIT researchers), know what this program means for the MIT community. And we also know what its absence will mean not only to those behind the scenes but to MIT as a whole. Its discontinuation means the dismantling of a community and of a chain of care work that sustains life at MIT.

This labor of life-making — reproductive labor — is foundational to everything. It must be recognized, valued, and supported. Ending MS&PC sends the opposite message, a message of invisibilization.

There is no excellence without the labor that sustains it. It’s time to center care — not cut it.

Alessandra Jungs de Almeida is a Postdoctoral Associate in MIT’s Women’s and Gender Studies program and a researcher at MIT’s Data + Feminism Lab. She is also a member of MS&PC.

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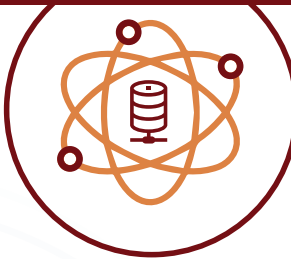
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Evelyn Wang discusses the MIT Climate Project

The VP for Energy and Climate talks about past experiences, goals, and plans

By Vivian Hir
NEWS EDITOR

On May 20, *The Tech* interviewed Prof. Evelyn Wang '00, the inaugural VP for Energy and Climate. Previously, Wang was the Director at the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E), an agency in the Department of Energy (DOE) from 2023 to 2025. Wang currently is a professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering and served as the department head from 2018 to 2022. Her research focuses on heat transfer, with notable projects including her work on solar thermophotovoltaic energy conversion and water harvesting.

In the interview, Wang talked about her past experiences in climate change and energy research, her goals and plans as the VP for Energy and Climate, as well as updates on the MIT Climate Project.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

The Tech: What made you interested in becoming the inaugural VP for Energy and Climate? How will your past leadership experience in the DOE help you in your current role?

Wang: My lab does heat transfer, but this research actually translates to a lot of the energy problems that we face. As a researcher, I'll say that while it's been really exciting, I started realizing that you can only focus on one piece of the problem. As I got more exposed to climate change when I became [the Mechanical Engineering] department head, while there's so much exciting work, it is important to be able to help inspire people to work together more holistically to solve these challenging problems.

I've learned a lot in the government. [ARPA-E's] whole mission statement is to bolster the U.S.'s energy independence. The premise of the agency is focused on, how do you actually support the early-stage research and development to translate into impact in the real world, to actually com-

mercializing technologies? We're supporting a lot of early-stage researchers, which include academics, but also entrepreneurs and industries in general who are able to be immersed in that culture. I've been able to help support this innovation ecosystem and bring that into where the potential of MIT is.

TT: What are your goals as VP for Energy and Climate, and how will you make sure they address the six missions of the Climate Project?

Wang: We're trying to really engage beyond the technologists. We're trying to bring in the policy experts or social scientists — the economists. It's really the combination of these fields of expertise that will find a pathway to actual impact. From looking at how you actually get new technologies deployed, policy matters so much because these costs are so high when you start with innovative technologies, and someone has to take a chance on [them]. We know that we have to remove gigatons of CO₂. How do we do that in economical ways without policy levers?

But at the same time, we also need to develop better technologies. Part of the reason they're so expensive is because the materials we're using are just way too expensive for great performance. And I think this is where we don't have all the technologies, and we have to keep on innovating. We have to understand the science in detail and how technological solutions ultimately have effects on the atmosphere, the land, and the oceans. It's a collective problem.

When you think about these problems, they're never in these kinds of stove pipes; [the missions] are just a helpful way for us to organize. Ultimately, a lot of these things are cross-cutting. That's why it's so hard, right? The targets are always moving. So, [regarding climate change,] you always have to think about how things are dynamic. It makes it really exciting but challenging.

TT: Given recent federal funding cuts that have been tar-

getting climate and energy initiatives, would this significantly impact the MIT Climate Project? How does MIT plan to address this issue?

Wang: It's an important question at this time, and I would say that this is beyond the Climate Project itself. The role of academic institutions is to support our country and the world. There's important national security that we have to also continue, as MIT has a long history of supporting national security. Think about economic competitiveness. These are things that I think we will continue to support as an academic institution.

We rely a lot on federal funding. That's how academic institutions work. We have to partner with the government when we see there are opportunities that are aligned with our goals and also help support our country. But we also have to think about the resources and the diversity of support that we need as we move forward. That includes philanthropy, engagement with industry, and foundations. There are also state funds. There are a lot of different governments, so there's also the international support that we've gotten through the years to collaborate with others as well.

Traditionally, we've had a lot of great collaborations with international entities. I think one that's very well known around MIT is the Singapore-MIT Alliance for Research and Technology (SMART). That's just an example of a framework that we have set up. And there's always a lot of these kinds [of collaborations] emerging in the ecosystem at various levels that I think have been hugely valuable for both sides to work towards common kinds of opportunities and goals.

TT: Do you think an earlier goal of achieving zero direct emissions is feasible for MIT, like the year 2035? Is MIT considering divesting from fossil fuels in its endowment or as research sponsors?

Wang: It's great to set ambitious goals, but I think we also have to be



PHOTO COURTESY OF ADAM GLANZMAN

Prof. Evelyn Wang '00 is the MIT Vice President for Energy and Climate.

cognizant of what is really practical and possible. It gives us credibility as we're thinking about what we can really do, and what we set an example for.

These numbers mean one thing, but what do we really practice, and how do we also engage the community to actually work towards these goals? I'd like to first understand where we are and figure out what the Climate Project can really help potentially accelerate, but with a realistic perspective, rather than just being like, "We need to do this [thing] by this time."

There is an ad hoc committee to look at fossil fuel industry engagement for the MIT Climate Project that's currently led by Professor Anne White, who is also the Vice Provost for Research, and they are doing their work right now. The goal is to have recommendations by the end of the summer. This is still a question of deliberation for the Institute, and once we have that, we can have a better understanding of the different perspectives and what the committee recommends, and then we can potentially figure out a path forward.

TT: What about the Climate Project excites you the most?

Wang: The only [open call topics] that we've launched are focused around these two bigger, kind of holistic problems that we're pursuing: heat stress and cooling solutions, and sensing, sharing, and understanding the state of the climate and planet. Those are going to be the open calls that are emerging within the missions, and we haven't launched any [frontier projects].

It's a little bit premature to speak of what's so exciting, at least within the Climate Project. Holistically, I will say it's hard to pick. Right now, the excitement is, how do we create these partnerships within MIT and with the outside world, so that we can actually make this kind of more holistic impact? Can we facilitate and inspire the connections and actually have people work on problems that they have never worked on before; can they leverage their expertise into solving new problems related to this?

Come back in six months and I'll say, "Look, we have some great, exciting projects that we think are really kind of uniquely different and impactful." So stay tuned.

Aneesh Sharma '28 contributed to this interview.

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