

Mixed reactions to Vemuri's OneMIT speech

2025 class president Megha Vemuri criticized MIT's research ties with the Israeli military

By Sabine Chu
ASSOCIATE NEWS EDITOR

At the OneMIT Commencement Ceremony on May 29, 2025, Class President Megha Vemuri denounced Israel's actions in Gaza during her speech to the newly minted graduates of the Institute. Her words elicited both cheers and boos from the audience.

After asking her fellow graduates to "approach the future with intentionality and integrity" and acknowledging the "fear in many of our hearts," Vemuri said, "MIT wants a free Palestine." Like Vemuri, some of the graduates wore keffiyehs, a traditional Middle Eastern headscarf that has become associated with the pro-Palestinian movement. Others in the audience held Israeli or Palestinian flags as she spoke.

Vemuri cited MIT's April 2024 undergraduate and graduate referenda calling for a permanent ceasefire. She condemned the Institute's research connections with the Israeli military, characterizing them as "genocidal."

When leading the tradition of turning the class ring, Vemuri said that her fellow graduates "carry with us the stamp of the MIT name, the same name that is directly complicit

in the ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people." Several students and guests walked out.

President Kornbluth, who delivered her charge to the graduates immediately after Vemuri, was greeted by a mix of jeers and applause from the audience. She opened by saying, "At MIT, we value freedom of expression, but today is about the graduates." After continued interruptions by members of the audience, she added, "There is a time and a place to express yourselves, and you will have many, many years to do it." Kornbluth said, "At MIT, we allow a lot of room for disagreement... The friction of disagreement is a very effective way that we sharpen each other's thinking."

Vemuri barred from attending undergraduate degree ceremony on May 30

The MIT administration barred Vemuri from attending the Undergraduate Degree Ceremony held on May 30. Traditionally, the Class President delivers remarks at the Undergraduate Degree Ceremony. Grace Li '25, Vice President of the Class of 2025, spoke instead.

In a statement to *The Tech*, Institute spokesperson Kimberly Allen

emphasized that "MIT supports free expression." According to Allen, the speech Vemuri provided in advance to MIT was different from the one she gave. Allen said that MIT's decision was in response to Vemuri "deliberately and repeatedly misleading" organizers and "disrupting an important Institute ceremony" by "leading a protest" in her speech.

In the May 30 ceremony, Natalie Lorenz Anderson '84, the president of MIT's Alumni Association, led a second turning of the class ring, saying that this "sacred tradition" had been "overshadowed by some other activity." A handful of students booed this do-over of Vemuri's actions, and others appeared not to turn their rings. During Chancellor Melissa Nobles' speech, several students chanted, "Let Megha walk." Nobles paused, then responded, "I respect that you have a message to send, but this is not the time or place" to scattered applause.

According to a statement from Vemuri, she was restricted from campus until 4 pm on May 30. However, the MIT administration confirmed that she still received her undergraduate degree — according to The New York Times, by mail. She wrote in a general



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAKA EJILEMELE

Graduates raise their Brass Rats at the OneMIT Commencement ceremony on May 29, 2025.

press release that she was not disappointed to be barred from the undergraduate ceremony but believed that MIT "massively overstepped" by restricting her with "no indication of any specific policy broken."

Mixed reactions to Vemuri's speech

Student, faculty, and alumni reactions to the speech and MIT's decisions were mixed.

Emma Lee '25 sat at the front of the audience during the OneMIT ceremony. She told *The Tech* that she was "so proud" of Vemuri, and was among those chanting "Let Megha walk" at the Undergraduate Degree Ceremony. Lee said that some of her classmates were frightened or confused by chants by both pro-Palestine and pro-Israel protesters at the One-

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Hank Green addresses the Class of 2025

Green: "If I learn something new that day, that is a good day"



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAKA EJILEMELE

Hank Green delivers his commencement speech at the 2025 OneMIT ceremony on May 29.

By Veronika Moroz, Karie Shen, Alex Tang
EDITORS

On May 29 at the OneMIT Commencement Ceremony, science communicator Hank Green delivered the commencement speech to

the graduating class of 2025: silly but pensive, scientific yet humanistic.

Green openly engaged with the graduating class, joking that some people were seated close enough to the podium that he could almost "crowd-work" them.

Opening his speech with jabs at unironed stoles, facts about bones, and a description of what he terms "Hahaha I fooled them again" syndrome (an alternative to "imposter syndrome" where Green describes being "pleased" to have "cleverly convinced" people that he belongs), Green introduced the survey he had sent out to the graduating class prior to his speech. He focused on one question in particular: What was the most MIT thing you did while you were at MIT?

The most common response — unsurprising given the Institute's

motto of Mens et manus — was "built." Among the things built were bridges, startups, Geiger counters, and ukuleles.

Acknowledging the pressures new graduates face from rapidly evolving "opportunities and tremendous disruption" due to climate change, rapidly developing artificial intelligence, and attacks on higher education, Green stated, "I imagine that it can be pretty easy to focus on the building and less on the people."

With his educational YouTube channels Crash Course and SciShow becoming a staple in American public school classrooms, Green is no stranger to neither the physical sciences nor the process of building an organization. "If I could attribute my

Hank Green, Page 3

MIT closes the ICEO and eliminates the VPEI position

President Sally Kornbluth: "Community is best built locally rather than top down"

By Vivian Hir
NEWS EDITOR

On May 22, President Kornbluth sent an email to the MIT community announcing the closure of the Institute Community & Equity Office (ICEO) and the elimination of the Vice President for Equity and Inclusion (VPEI) position. According to its website, the aim of the ICEO was to foster "inclusive excellence and community building at MIT" by pro-

moting equity and diversity. The office offered services and programming focused on community building such as the MIT Values programs and the MLK Visiting Scholars and Professors Program, which selects 10-15 distinguished scholars a year who hold visiting appointments.

In January 2024, President Kornbluth started a working group led by then-VPEI Karl Reid '84, SM '85, to perform a comprehensive assessment of the ICEO and

its work. About 18 months later, the working group found that the MIT community appreciated the ICEO's programs and continued to value the "pursuit of inclusive excellence."

However, the working group expressed interest in reconsidering how to approach this work. "A common refrain, matching what I'd heard myself, was that community is best built locally rather than top down," Kornbluth wrote. A new Standing Institute Commit-

tee has been established to determine the best approach towards supporting the MIT community and will replace the Council on Belonging, Achievement, and Composition.

According to MIT spokesperson Kimberly Allen, the decision to close the ICEO was unrelated to the Trump administration's crack-down on DEI in higher education or MIT's status as one of 45 colleges investigated for potential Title VI violations. Besides MIT, other

universities have closed their DEI offices, such as the University of Michigan and Purdue University. Some universities like Harvard and Northeastern have renamed their DEI offices using words like "community" and "belonging."

Programs in the ICEO will be moved to other MIT units. For instance, the Department Support Program and the MLK Visiting Professors and Scholars Program will be under the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty.

RIP CELTICS. OR PERHAPS NOT?

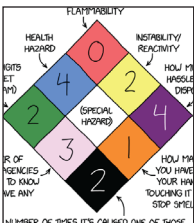
Injuries, potential trades, and rebuilding. **SPORTS, p. 4**

EECS INTRODUCES 6.100

as well as new prerequisites for 6.1010. **NEWS, p. 3**

PLANS TO REVOKE VISAS

for Chinese citizens. **NEWS, p. 2**



THE EXTENDED NFPA HAZARD DIAMOND

Terrifying lab accidents who? **ENTERTAINMENT, p. 7**

FOSSILS OF THE REAL-LIFE HOBBIT

A much longer-lived species than previously thought. **SCIENCE, p. 5**

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Green encourages students to stay curious

Hank Green, from Page 1

success, whatever it is, to anything besides luck, it’s that I literally can’t stop believing that there is any better use of time than learning something new,” Green said. He stated emphatically, “If I learn something new that day, that is a good day.”

In an interview with *The Tech* and MIT News, Green said that he feels everyone possesses such curiosity, including his eight-year-old son, who recently wanted to know what dark matter is. “Wouldn’t we all?” Green joked.

“[Curiosity] may be the single most important factor in your career,” Green said. In his speech, Green said that rather than letting curiosity be steered by capitalist impulses, social content platforms, or impossible problems, it should be oriented to align with one’s values.

“If we let ourselves be oriented only by those forces, guess what problems we will not pay any at-

tention to? All of the everyday solvable problems of normal people,” Green said. Later, he added, “curiosity doesn’t just expand the number of tools you have and how well you’re able to use them, it expands your understanding of the problem space.”

Green shared in the interview that his current personal goals involve bolstering fellow science communicators. Green, along with his brother, John Green, started vlogging on the YouTube channel Vlogbrothers in 2007, sending into orbit an online community called Nerdfighteria. In 2012, they launched Crash Course and SciShow, now with over 16 million and 8 million subscribers, respectively. They’ve also launched a multitude of podcasts, each published several New York Times bestselling novels, and raised over ten million dollars for charity. Since then, Green has had to navigate changing modes of communication – including the sudden

booming popularity of TikTok. He recalled thinking, “You can’t do science communication in a minute. That’s impossible. All you can do is dance videos. And then I saw some people doing it, and I was like, ‘Well, f*ck, you can.’”

Now, he helps others develop those skills. “When I was growing up,” Green shared, “there was just one Carl Sagan, and I’d like for there to be a million of them. I’d like for that weight to be shared more.”

His latest pursuit is a book tentatively titled “In Defense of Cancer,” a title that may elicit a confused reaction. A 2024 post on X by Green may help to explain: “In defense of cancer, it kills itself too.”

However, in an increasingly complex and divided world, it is no longer enough to solely be fluent in the language of science, Green argues, but also in understanding conflict, and how people’s minds change. “You can’t hate people for being an opponent,” Green stated. In his interview with *The Tech*,

Green described his interest in pre-bunking misinformation, explaining, “The most effective strategy we have is just getting to them first,” which starts by listening, and understanding.

In the midst of troubling attacks on free speech and democracy, as well as trust in science, Green acknowledged to the new graduates that the world can feel “so big,” but that these thoughts “alienate you from the reality of human existence, from your place as a builder, not just of tools, but of meaning.”

“It might be a playlist for your friend, and it might be the Human Genome Project. All of that, we’re doing it for people,” he said in the interview. “Keeping oriented toward people – not building around them as an obstacle, but building for them – is the thing that I wanted to be focused on.”

Green left the new graduates with four points of wisdom, ranging from the light-hearted “don’t eat grass,” to philosophical encour-

agement to “accept that your joy can be one of the things that you produce.” He stated that some people keep ideas in their head in fear of exposing it “to the imperfection of reality,” and urged the graduates to “stop waiting” and “get the ideas out.” Finally, he reminded the audience to “ask yourself where value and meaning come from, because they don’t come from banks or tech or cap tables. They come from people.”

“Something very special and strange is happening on this planet and it is you,” Green said.

Green ended his speech with a salute that oriented both the love for science and the dedication towards people that define MIT graduates: “When I asked you what you did at MIT, you said you built. But when I asked you what was giving you hope, you did not say buildings. You said people. So, graduating class of 2025, go forth, for yourself, for others, and for this beautiful, bizarre world.”

The MIT ESI closes after 11 years

The Environmental Solutions Initiative’s programs will be redistributed across MIT

By Vivian Hir
NEWS EDITOR

In May, Director of the MIT Environmental Solutions Initiative (ESI) Professor John Fernández ’85 announced that the initiative would close at the end of the spring semester. As of June 2025, the programs in ESI are being redistributed across different units in the Institute, including the School of Architecture and Planning as well as the Climate Project. A celebration to commemorate the legacy of the ESI was held on May 28.

“I have poured my heart and soul into an organization that I believe was simultaneously ahead of its time and long overdue at MIT,” Fernández wrote in a statement to *The Tech*. “In fact, the reality of the ESI reflects the broader and sobering reality of environmental priorities in the larger world – we are (as a civilization) far behind where we should be in addressing a wide range of environmental challenges, but the mechanisms for doing so are ahead of our current time which is dominated by an extraction economy that singu-

larly and zealously guards financial gains.”

Fernández clarified that the closure of the ESI was not related to federal or Institute funding cuts. The decision was made after many discussions with a group of MIT faculty members and the Vice President of Research (VPR), which began more than two years ago when Fernández considered stepping down. According to Fernández, one of the main points raised in the discussions was that the formation of many environment and sustainability units after the founding of ESI called for “simplifying the landscape at MIT for several reasons,” including “administrative resources” and “clarity of mission.”

The ESI was founded in 2014 as a campus-wide initiative to solve various environmental issues through interdisciplinary research. ESI projects were divided into three areas: research, education, and engagement. Within the Institute, the ESI advised undergraduate climate and sustainability groups and collaborated with other MIT units such as the MIT Energy Initiative (MITEI)

and the Office of Sustainability. Prof. Susan Solomon was the first director, and Fernández was the director from the fall of 2015 until its closure.

The initiative developed six research programs that each addressed different aspects of climate change and the environment, from Climate Justice to Mining and the Circular Economy (MCE). The research projects resulted in collaborations with national and international partners from various sectors, such as the World Resources Institute and the Inter-American Development Bank. The ESI has also provided research opportunities for students through UROPs, the Martin Fellowship, and the Rapid Response Group (RRG). Furthermore, the ESI’s research seed grant program has funded research proposals in various domains, from sustainable cities to plastic pollution.

Besides contributions to environmental research, the ESI also founded the environment and sustainability (E&S) minor. In the minor, students take five to six subjects and fulfill three requirements, one of

which is taking one subject in each of the two core areas of study – Context and Perspective and Sustainable Solutions. For elective subjects, students could choose from over 110 classes in 17 different departments to fulfill the minor. According to Education Program Director Chris Rabe, the E&S minor program will continue under the MIT Climate Project office and current students will be unaffected.

Solomon felt “deeply honored” to be the founding director of the ESI because the initiative started “a new thrust in sustainability education at MIT” and encouraged people from all across the MIT community to solve “cross-cutting environmental issues.” Solomon commended Fernández’s leadership as director for the past ten years, stating that “its current scope reflects his exceptional leadership.”

Eli Brooks ’22, an E&S minor, was disappointed to learn about the closure of the initiative. “As one of the most innovative and forward-thinking universities in the world, it is baffling to be closing such a department whose sole purpose was

to give some of the most brilliant young minds the tools and knowledge to help improve this Earth,” Brooks wrote in a statement to *The Tech*. He appreciated the ESI for encouraging students to consider their future work’s impact on the environment and sustainability, regardless of the field they ultimately pursued.

Swochchhanda Shrestha ’21, an E&S minor who now works on EV batteries at General Motors, found the ESI to be an important part of his academic experience at MIT. Shrestha liked the ESI’s class offerings because of its “holistic view of environmental topics” in areas such as engineering and social science.

“I hope that the spirit of ESI, especially the emphasis on taking classes across different courses to get a better understanding of interesting topics, continues to live on in some way at MIT,” Shrestha wrote. “The guidance and framework for getting more involved in environmental studies will certainly be missed by incoming classes in future years.”

EECS department introduces 6.100

The change aims to improve the pacing of the introductory course

By Vivian Hir
NEWS EDITOR

Beginning in fall 2025, the Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) department will offer 6.100, a 12-unit full-semester subject that combines 6.100A and 6.100B. 6.100 is based on the structure of 6.00, another 12-unit full-semester subject, which was first offered in 2005 by Prof. John Guttag. The official course number for 6.100 is 6.1000 in the course catalog.

In the 2014-2015 academic year, 6.00 was divided into two 6-unit half-semester subjects (6.0001 and 6.0002) so first-year students could take half-semester subjects over two semesters. By doing so, first-year students could take 6.0001 in the fall semester without having to exceed the 54-unit credit limit. According to a 2014 article in *The Tech*, the other reason for the change was to provide “two different entry points into the 6.00 curriculum” based

on their level of programming experience.

However, student and instructor feedback suggested that 6.100A’s structure as a half-semester course did not work well because of the fast pace needed to cover the course content. “Considering that the material covers all the essentials of Python, from variables and expressions up to functional and object-oriented programming, six weeks is much too fast,” the website stated. The department believes that combining 6.100A and 6.100B into 6.100 will offer more flexibility in the pacing of the course, ultimately leading to a better teaching and learning experience.

6.100A and 6.100B will still be offered in the 2025-2026 academic year as 6-unit subjects, but they will be taught over a full semester instead of a half-semester. 6.100L will replace the 6-unit half-semester subject 6.100A. The

In Memoriam: Shashata Sawmya SM ’24

Shashata Sawmya, a graduate student in the Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) Department and member of MIT Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (CSAIL), passed away in Canada while attending an academic conference. Sawmya earned his master’s degree in EECS from the Institute in May 2024 and was part of Professor Nir Shavit’s group at CSAIL.

In an email to the EECS and CSAIL communities, Professors Asu Ozdaglar, Leslie Kolodziejcki, and Daniela Rus described Sawmya as a “talented and promising scholar working in connectomics, neural reconstruction and modeling, and efficient and interpretable neural computation.” Sawmya received his undergraduate degree in computer science from the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology in 2021. He came to MIT to begin his graduate studies in 2022.

In an email to the MIT community, MIT President Sally Kornbluth described Sawmya as a “community builder.” Sawmya was president of MIT’s Bangladeshi Students Association, and a resident of the Westgate Dormitory on campus. He was remembered by his Head of House as “warm and friendly.”

Funeral arrangements have yet to be announced.

—Alex Tang

English for Speakers of other Languages Program closes

On May 16, Nancy Kelly, coordinator of the English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) Program for Service Employees, notified former and current tutors over email that the program would pause indefinitely that week. Kelly, who had served as the program’s coordinator since its inception in 2009, stated that she would be leaving MIT due to “staff reductions” and was uncertain about the future of the program.

The ESOL program allowed essential employees who were non-native speakers to improve their English language skills through free-form conversations with volunteer tutors. Abby Abazorius, an MIT spokesperson, told *The Tech* that 172 MIT employees participated in the program, which was supported by over 600 tutors and supporters.

The program’s website also included other resources for tutors helping their students to gain citizenship, obtain a driver’s license, or pass a high school equivalency test. In 2013, ESOL offered a workshop on basic computer skills. In 2023, MIT News highlighted Housing and Residential Services team member and program participant Sally Romero, who called learning English a “very big milestone for me.”

As of June 3, the ESOL page on MIT Human Resources’ website is no longer accessible. In a statement to *The Tech*, Kelly wrote that the program was “only possible with the help” of tutors and supporters including “students, staff, faculty, affiliates, and retirees.”

—Sabine Chu

A summer of woe lies ahead for the Celtics

Trades are coming: no one is safe

By **Alex Tang**
EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Trade talk is swirling in Boston after the Celtics bowed out in just the second round of the NBA Playoffs, falling to the New York Knicks in six games. In the closing minutes of game 4, superstar Jayson Tatum ruptured his Achilles tendon, a tremendous setback that all but crushed the Celtics’ hopes of coming back from a 1-3 game deficit. After the loss, all eyes turned to next season and whether or not Tatum would be healthy in time for another run at the Larry O’Brien trophy. The timeline for Tatum’s return ranges from nine months to over a year, meaning the Celtics are

likely to play the majority of the 2025-2026 season without him. The Celtics won their 18th NBA championship a little less than a year ago. In March, the team was sold for \$6.1 billion, the highest price tag ever for any franchise in North American sports history. Looming large, however, are the payroll and luxury tax payments due next season, which will cost the Celtics over \$500 million as Tatum’s supermax contract extension takes hold. The amount also includes the supermax contract for Jaylen Brown, who, in 2023, signed a five-year contract worth up to \$304 million. According to SporTrac, a database of player contracts, Tatum and Brown are the two highest paid players in the NBA.

Age, injury, and cost are all factors that will be crucial in the coming decisions that the Celtics front office will make as they approach 2025-2026, likely without their franchise superstar. Two-time champion and defensive anchor Jrue Holiday is perhaps the most mentioned player to be moved amidst trade rumors. He will be 35 by the start of the next season and currently commands a hefty \$34.8 million salary. Starting center Kristaps Porzingis is another player to look out for; his tenure in Boston has been marked by injuries and sickness. Center Al Horford turned 39 last week and will become a free agent. Coach Joe Mazzulla was spotted in Turkey, scouting out a

potential budget-friendly frontcourt option in Nigel Hayes-Davis from EuroLeague team Fenerbahce. There are many suitors. One team that stands out is the Dallas Mavericks, who seem particularly eager to “win now” after trading superstar Luka Doncic midway through the season earlier this year. With the number one pick in the upcoming NBA Draft, which is almost certainly going to be used on Duke Forward Cooper Flagg, the Mavs appear to be interested in strengthening their frontcourt by pairing Holiday with Anthony Davis. Brown himself was named in a potential blockbuster swap for Flagg, although the prospects for such a

trade have diminished in recent weeks. The Los Angeles Clippers and San Antonio Spurs have also been implicated as potential trade destinations. Utah Jazz CEO and former Celtics player Danny Ainge might get involved in a three-way trade, should an opportunity arise. When he was President of Basketball Operations for the Celtics, Ainge pulled off a heist for the history books, trading Kevin Garnett and Paul Pierce to the Brooklyn Nets for the picks that materialized in Brown and Tatum in 2016 and 2017, respectively. No one on the team is immune to the rumors. Are the Celtics beginning a rebuild too soon?

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Where ‘hobbits’ come from: tracing *Homo floresiensis* origins

New fossils reveal the tiny species may have had a much taller ancestor

By Daina August

When archaeologists dug up the first *Homo floresiensis* fossils in Indonesia’s Liang Bua cave in October 2004, nobody knew what to make of them. They were unlike anything previously excavated. The most complete specimen, a woman designated LB1 and later nicknamed ‘the Hobbit,’ was tiny. At 30 years old, she stood only about 3.5 feet (1 meter) in height, and her brain was almost the size of a chimpanzee’s. Still, her skull was unmistakably human-like. *Who was she*, researchers wondered, *and how did she become so small?*

Thanks to a recent paleontological discovery in the So’a Basin, another area on the same island as Liang Bua cave, University of Tokyo anthropologist Yosuke Kaifu and his team have shed some light on how LB1 and the other so-called ‘hobbits’ evolved their tiny stature. Their findings finally provide closure to a debate that has persisted ever since those little bones were found in Liang Bua Cave: Where, if at all, does *Homo floresiensis* fall on the hominid evolutionary tree?

Neither disabled nor dwarf
The Indonesian island of Flores is fairly far away from the mainland, far enough that scientists initially assumed humans hadn’t reached the island during pre-*Homo sapiens* migration waves. When scientists discovered the tiny bones from Liang Bua cave, some researchers couldn’t believe they were from a new species. They cited LB1’s skull size and asymmetry as a sign of disease. Microcephaly can drastically reduce brain size in modern humans, sometimes to levels similar to that of LB1; the Rampasasa people na-

tive to Flores were known to be a pygmy people far shorter than the average *Homo sapiens*. Some scientists were convinced that these fossils merely belonged to a microcephalic pygmy. This debate raged for nearly a year, with deniers continuing to insist that differences between LB1 and the average modern human woman could be attributed to disease. However, LB1’s skull lacks many features that are characteristic of *H. sapiens*. Furthermore, while the Rampasasa people are pygmies, they are still much taller than LB1.

In late 2005, archeologists found a new set of fossils in Liang Bua cave, bringing the total number of known ‘hobbits’ to nine. One of them lived 60,000 years later than the rest. Considering that it is highly unlikely that the cave had been a burial site exclusively for people with one specific disease for 60,000 years, scientists concluded that LB1 and the other individuals found in the cave were new evolutionary cousins of *H. sapiens*.

Undeniably modern
With *H. floresiensis* established as a distinct species, researchers pivoted their focus toward placing humanity’s new evolutionary cousin onto the hominid family tree. An early idea posited that this new species was a descendant of *Homo erectus*, the first known hominid species to migrate extensively outside of Africa. Given that *H. erectus* fossils have been found on other Indonesian islands and that island species often dramatically change in size, most paleoanthropologists accepted this hypothesis, even though many known *H. erectus* individuals were twice the size of LB1. However, the Liang Bua fossils’ incredibly small brain size doesn’t fit standard evolutionary models, which suggest

that brains generally enlarge over time. Some scientists wondered if earlier species with smaller brains had larger ranges than previously expected, reaching all the way to Southeast Asia. Since those species are more similar to the Flores hobbits than *H. erectus* in terms of stature and brain size, it isn’t difficult to imagine how the species could’ve become more specialized on an island. Unfortunately, prior to Kaifu and his team’s latest findings, scientists were unable to definitively confirm or deny either of these theories because of the limited number of bones found in Liang Bua cave.

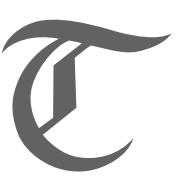
A specialized descendant of *Homo erectus*

Over a decade after the first *H. floresiensis* fossils were found in Liang Bua cave, Kaifu and his team unearthed a third set of bones in the So’a Basin, another location on the island of Flores — a handful of teeth much smaller than those of *H. erectus*, but not entirely dissimilar. Even more surprisingly, they were smaller than the teeth found at the original Liang Bua site. However, by themselves, teeth aren’t enough to determine the size of a hominid or their appearance. For that, scientists needed bones. Recently, the team found key evidence: a piece of an arm bone.

Through geomagnetic and isotopic analysis of surrounding rock layers, Kaifu and his team determined the new fossils were about 700,000 years old. After making casts of the samples, Kaifu and his team examined the proportions and dimensions of the arm fragment to determine the individual’s age and stature: a healthy, full-grown adult even shorter than LB1. Additionally, the arm bone was more structurally similar to that of other

members of genus *Homo*, ruling out the possibility that the Flores hobbits were of the genus *Australopithecus*. As for the teeth, researchers compared the shape of the So’a teeth with known samples: *H. floresiensis* teeth from Liang Bua, *H. erectus* teeth from Java’s Sangiran site, and *H. habilis* teeth from Africa. They found that the So’a molars were very similar in shape to the Sangiran teeth but comparable in size to the Liang Bua teeth. These similarities support the hypothesis that *H. floresiensis* is a direct evolutionary descendant of *H. erectus*, with the individuals at So’a Basin representing an earlier form of the species.


Although the So’a molars still lack several of the specific features associated with the Liang Bua Cave individuals, the So’a fossils are far older than those from Liang Bua (700,000 years old versus 80,000 years old). Therefore, it is possible that the distinguishing dental characteristics seen in LB1 and LB6 evolved later in the species’ history. This new finding dramatically changes the timeline of *H. erectus* migration and *H. floresiensis* evolution: in order for *H. erectus* to have had enough time to evolve into a new species half as tall, the initial migration to Flores must have taken place around 1 to 1.2 million years ago. Flores’s hobbits are therefore a much longer-lived species than previously thought, which sparks even more questions about the Flores hobbits— where they lived, and how their species managed to survive for so long. While there isn’t enough data to answer these questions yet, Kaifu and his team’s discovery brings hope to some researchers. Perhaps one day, paleoanthropologists will find more answers in new bones.



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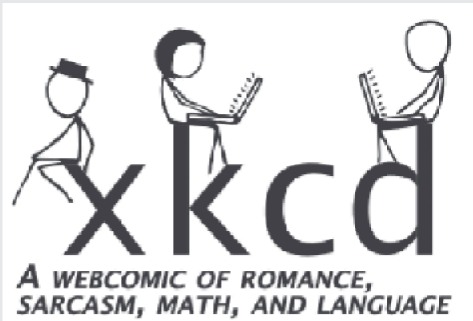


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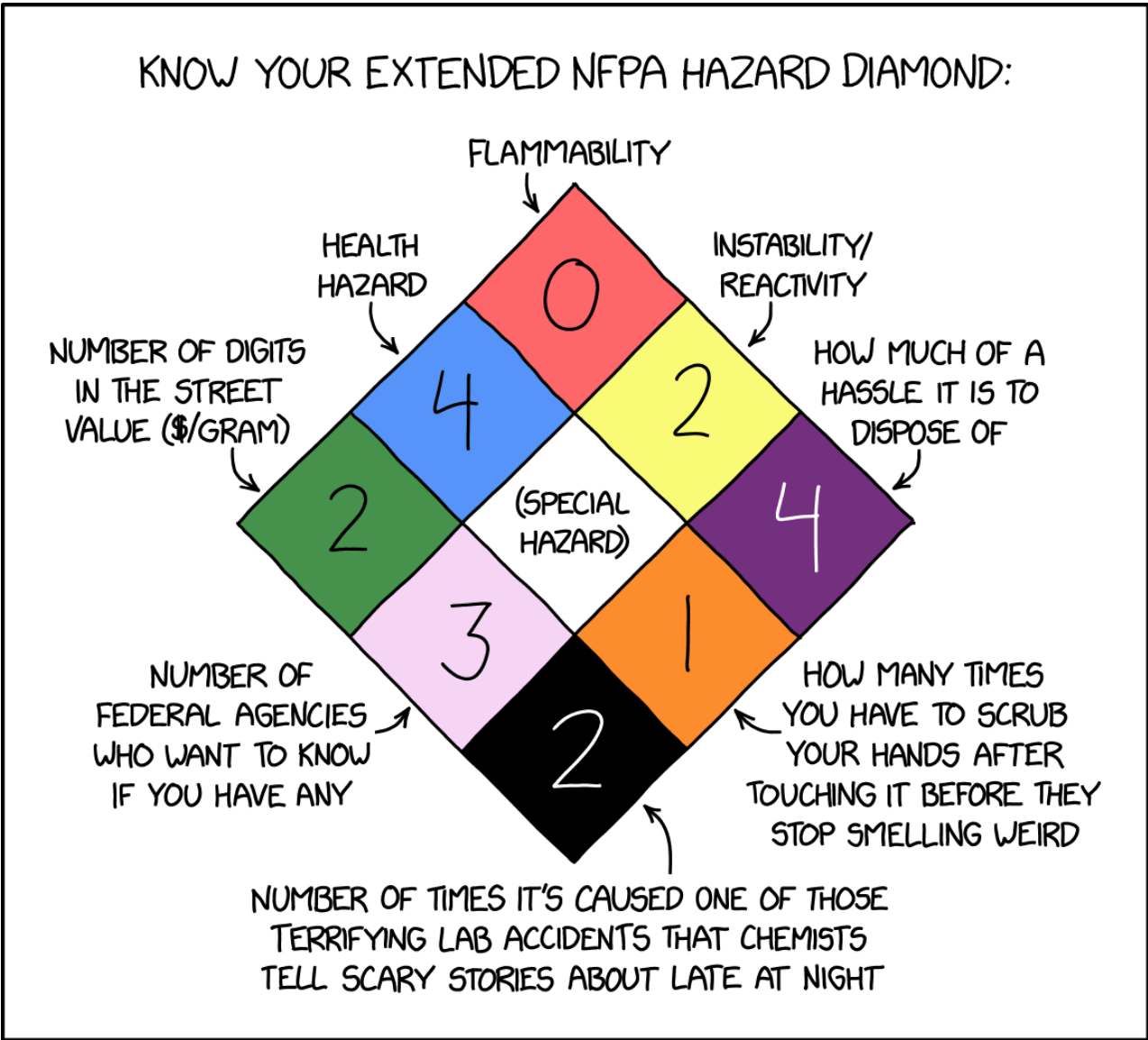
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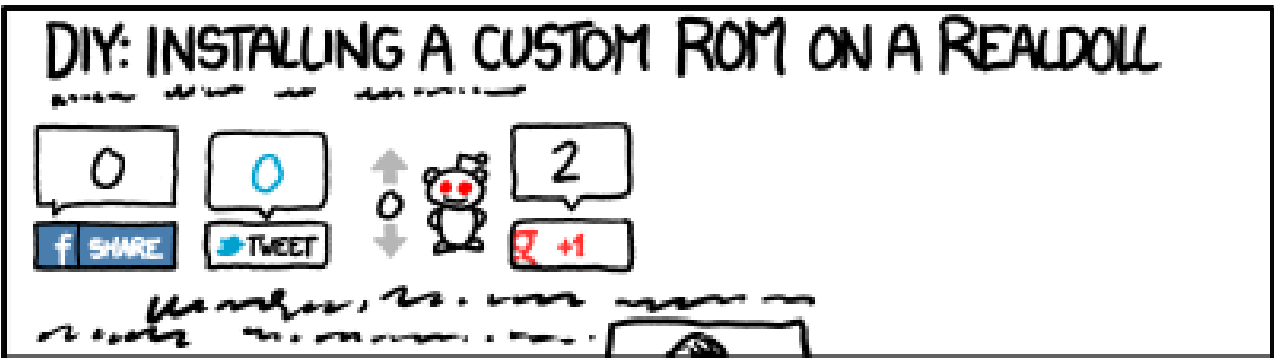
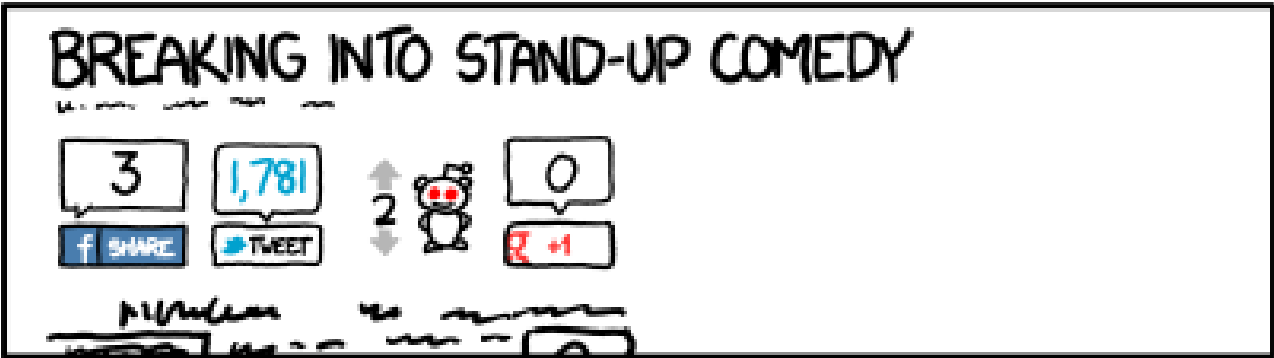
by Randall Munroe

[2638] Extended NFPA Hazard Diamond



With most labs, the hushed horror stories are about something like dimethylmercury or prions, but occasionally you'll get a weird lab where it's about the soda machine or the drop ceiling.

[1034] Share Buttons



SOMETIMES THE MOST INTERESTING PART OF AN ARTICLE IS THE SHARE BUTTON VOTE BREAKDOWN.

The only post to achieve perfect balance between the four was a hilarious joke about Mark Zuckerberg getting caught using a pseudonym to sneak past the TSA.

The MIT I know

Ethan Abraham: "The intellectual curiosity here is contagious, and the community thrives on open, thoughtful exchange"

By Ethan Abraham

As committed as we are to our technical studies at MIT, I've often found that the most intellectually stimulating moments happen outside the lab. A 20-minute lunch break frequently turns into 40, not because I'm avoiding work, but because I'm caught in a fascinating conversation — perhaps about Chinese history with an international student, or a spirited debate on FDA policy with a labmate. These moments remind me that at MIT, learning is not confined to lecture halls. The intellectual curiosity here is contagious, and the community thrives on open, thoughtful exchange.

As a PhD student in the applied sciences, I see my research as inherently connected to the broader world. Scientific progress does not happen in a vacuum — it is shaped by social context and ethical responsibility. And so I've come to value not only technical skill, but also the cultivation of a nuanced, critical worldview. What better environment for that than MIT, a community of bright minds from across the globe?

It was with this perspective that I watched the recent commencement ad-

dress by MIT's undergraduate student body president, Megha Vemuri. Her speech, which has since gone viral and garnered national attention, focused almost entirely on the Israel-Palestine conflict. What struck me was not just the topic — MIT students should absolutely grapple with global issues — but the tone and framing of it. The speech did not reference the scientific, technological, or humanitarian achievements of the graduating class. It offered sweeping political assertions without evidence, used emotionally charged terms without clarification, and suggested a moral consensus that does not reflect the diversity of views on campus.

Consider the line: “You showed the world that MIT wants a free Palestine... because the MIT I know would never tolerate a genocide.” Behind this bombastic language lies profoundly narrow tunnel vision. The world is divided into “the good guys” on one side and “Israel” on the other. Oct. 7 is not mentioned, and neither is Hamas, which, in Vemuri’s mind, is probably just an innocent bystander. What does “free Palestine” imply? What evidence supports the claim that the MIT student body speaks with one voice? And what exactly does “genocide” mean in this

context? These are serious questions with historical and legal significance. If we aspire to intellectual rigor in our research, we must also apply that standard to our political discourse.

Many Jewish students I know, and others with diverse perspectives, were hurt by the address because they felt that it left no room for their lived experiences, historical knowledge, or moral reasoning. The suffering of civilians in Gaza is tragic and demands attention. But so too is the suffering of the Israeli civilians murdered or kidnapped on Oct. 7, 2023. Mature political thinking, like good science, requires us to hold multiple truths in tension. Ignoring or dismissing one side of the equation isn't activism — it's intellectual laziness. One can only hope that Ms. Vemuri's science is carried on a higher level of integrity and thoughtfulness than her political rant.

MIT has long stood for rigorous thought, empirical evidence, and the exchange of ideas across boundaries. That includes boundaries of discipline, nationality, and belief. When we use graduation speeches — or any public platform — to make sweeping moral claims, we must do so with humility, clarity, and a willingness

to engage opposing views. Otherwise, we risk turning our community into an echo chamber rather than a forum for learning. The speech given on Thursday inaccurately reduced MIT to a place of dogmatic insularity rather than an institution of evidence-based reason.

Unfortunately, the viral nature of this speech means that millions of people will now associate MIT with a single, highly polarizing perspective. Many of them will never experience what we do — the late-night problem sets solved by unlikely collaborators, the mentorship of faculty who are as thoughtful as they are brilliant, and the moments of spontaneous debate that stretch well beyond lunch.

This is the MIT I know. A place where disagreement is welcome, and truth is pursued not through slogans, but through dialogue. At a moment when the future of higher education as we know it is on the line, I hope we can protect that spirit and lead not just with conviction, but with intellectual integrity.

Ethan Abraham is a first year PhD student in Course V, using molecular dynamics simulations and electronic structure theory to better understand the mechanisms of electrochemical redox reactions.

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By Opinion Writer
STAFF REPORTER

[Yours]

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Don't be stationery!

Pick up a pen and write for The Tech

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6.101 will require 6.100, or 6.100A and 6.100B

6.100, from Page 3

department will continue to offer the 6.100A Advanced Standing Exam (ASE) but does not plan to offer an ASE for 6.100 in the meantime.

According to the website, 6.100 is recommended for students with some level of programming experience, while 6.100A is rec-

ommended for students who have little to no programming experience.

The introduction of 6.100 has affected the 6-3 and 6-4 degree requirements, as they will now require 6.100 or 6.100A and 6.100B before taking 6.101 (Fundamentals of Programming, a Python-based class). 16.C20 can be taken in place of 6.100B. Previously, the

prerequisite for 6.101 was either 6.100A or 6.100L.

According to Prof. Rob Miller, the Education Officer for Computer Science, the reason for changing the prerequisites is that they found students who took both 6.100A and 6.100B to be more successful in 6.101.

Csilla Fulop '27 thinks the offering of 6.100 is a "great idea," but doesn't agree with the changes to the pre-

requisites for 6.101. Fulop Fulop cited the 54-unit fall credit limit, which would restrict some freshmen to taking 6.100A in the fall. As a result, the additional requirement of 6.100B for 6.101 would make freshmen "have to wait another semester to take 6.101, which is a very useful class for others as well."

For Fall 2025, 6.101 can be filled with the old prerequisite,

though the department strongly recommends taking 6.100B before taking 6.101. The new prerequisites will be required in Spring 2026.

However, the department will make an exception for those who passed the 6.100A ASE, meaning that they can take 6.101 without taking 6.100B. The exception may continue for future semesters.

MIT joins universities in filing amicus brief

The brief accompanies a lawsuit filed by Harvard University on federal funding cuts

By Alex Tang
EDITOR-AT-LARGE

On June 9, MIT joined 23 other U.S. research universities in an amicus ("friend of the court") brief accompanying a lawsuit that Harvard University filed to block the Trump administration's attempt to eliminate all federal grant funding. The brief was co-signed by several peer institutions, including Princeton and Stanford. However, Columbia and Cornell were notably miss-

ing. The Trump administration has taken steps to sever all federal ties with Harvard, one of the signatories of the brief. In May, the government attempted to halt all international student enrollment at the school, an effort that was blocked by a federal judge in Boston.

That afternoon, MIT President Sally Kornbluth wrote in an email to the Institute community stating, "Although the value to the public of federally funded university research feels obvious to us at MIT, we felt compelled to make the case

for its countless benefits to the court and, in effect, to the American people."

Kornbluth wrote, "The distinctive US model of government support for scientific research is a decisive American success story." The brief cites dozens of instances in which federal support of science resulted in tangible societal impact, from the invention of radar by MIT's Radiation Laboratory during World War II to the development of COVID-19 vaccines by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania.

Kornbluth stated the brief "makes [it] clear that arbitrary cuts to the research ecosystem could have very serious consequences." She added that the brief "emphasizes the public interest in protecting the research enterprise, both as a source of discoveries, inventions and cures with direct benefits in people's daily lives and as a driving force for economic competitiveness, job creation and national security."

Kornbluth concluded her update, writing, "the subject of this amicus is only one of several current threats" to

the Institute and its peer universities. She stated that finding "constructive practical ways to address these concerns is my highest priority."

Further information on MIT's response to recent federal government actions can be found here. MIT is currently involved in two suits: 1) in response to funding cuts to the National Science Foundation and 2) in response to the US Department of Energy cutting funding for indirect research costs. funding cuts by the National Science Foundation.

Kornbluth calls to reject antisemitism

Rabbi Dinin: "Targeting Jews with hate has no place at MIT"

On June 10, President Kornbluth sent an email to the MIT community about recent and ongoing incidents that she says have violated the Institute's values and community standards by perpetuating antisemitism.

"I have been very clear that protecting freedom of expression is deeply important to the intellectual health and vitality of MIT," Kornbluth wrote. "I have also been clear that we absolutely reject antisemitism, and that activism that crosses over into the harassment and targeting of individuals is never acceptable."

On June 9, stickers were found in the Infinite Corridor and Building 16 containing "very hostile messages." Some showed a desecrated Star of David, echoing antisemitic images with long historical roots. The MIT administration is currently investigating the incident. So far, the administration does not know the individuals behind these stickers. Kornbluth emphasized that such actions were "out of bounds," stating that while it is valid to criticize any government's actions, "desecrating a religious symbol crosses a terrible line."

Rabbi Joel Dinin, the current acting director of MIT Hillel, wrote in a statement to *The Tech* stating that the MIT Jewish community was deeply hurt by and concerned about the antisemitic posters on campus. "Targeting Jews with hate has no place at MIT," Dinin wrote. "We are grateful to the Institute for rejecting this bigotry unequivocally and urge our entire community to stand firmly against antisemitism in all its forms."

Kornbluth later highlighted recent incidents of MIT community members being targeted at work over the past academic year. Kornbluth wrote, "This targeting centers on an unfair and willful public mischaracterization of their work." Kornbluth then reiterated that regardless of political views, members of the MIT community must stop acts of threats, intimidation, and the spread of misinformation.

"I truly hope we can strive together, as members of one community, to navigate even our deepest and most passionate disagreements with civility and respect," Kornbluth wrote.

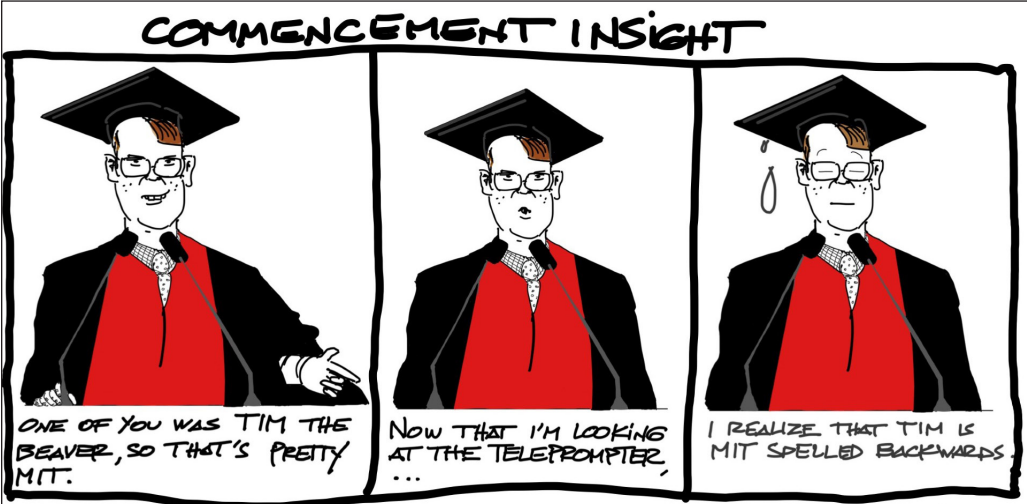


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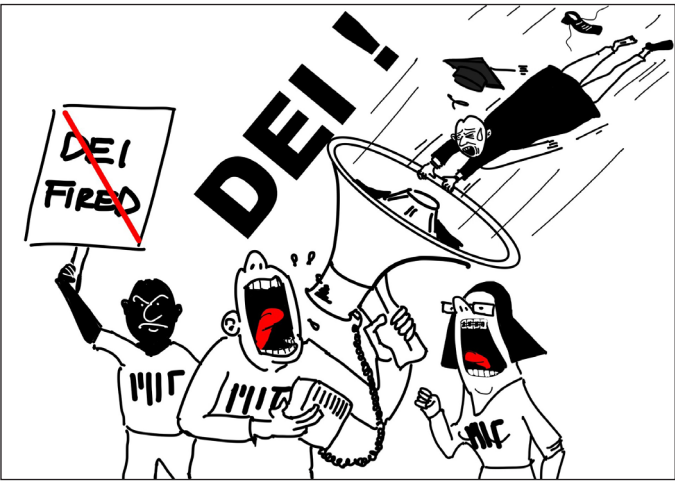


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