

MIT's Oldest and  
Largest Newspaper

thetech.com



WEATHER, p. 2

THU: 68°F | 60°F  
Mostly cloudy  
FRI: 78°F | 59°F  
Partly cloudy  
SAT: 82°F | 63°F  
Sunny

Volume 145, Number 13

Thursday, August 21, 2025

# Boston Globe publishes article about Kornbluth's handling of a cancer research scandal at Duke

## Article criticizes Kornbluth for not stopping Anil Potti's research misconduct sooner

By Vivian Hir  
NEWS EDITOR

On Aug. 13, *The Boston Globe* published an investigative article about President Kornbluth's delay in addressing research misconduct when she was Vice Dean for Basic Science at the Duke School of Medicine.

In 2006, former Duke professors Anil Potti and Joseph Nevins published a paper in *Nature Medicine* claiming that their algorithm could use a patient's genetic markers to predict which chemotherapy drugs were the most effective. However, biostatisticians Keith Baggerly and Kevin Coombes at the MD Anderson Cancer Center were unable to replicate the findings in the paper, which led them to send a letter to *Nature Medicine* questioning the paper's methodology. Bradford Perez, a third-year medical student in Potti's lab, also identified issues with Potti's methodology and data analysis.

These research concerns caused Perez to write a memo to Duke School of Medicine administrators in 2008. Despite the memo, Potti and Nevins were still able to conduct a clinical trial for their research, which ultimately enrolled a total of 117 cancer patients.

In September 2009, Baggerly and Coombes published a paper in the *Annals of Applied Statistics* that claimed that the errors in Potti's research could have harmful effects on the patients. As a result, Kornbluth met with Potti and Nevins regarding the alleged research misconduct case, and Duke suspended

the trials. However, Kornbluth then consulted an external committee to review the case, and the committee did not identify signs of scientific misconduct. In January 2010, Duke restarted the clinical trials. A number of researchers at Duke have criticized Kornbluth for not quickly responding to the research misconduct scandal. Several past and current researchers at Duke did not respond to *The Tech* request for comment by the time of publication.

In 2010, Lisa McShane, a biostatistician from the National Cancer Institute (NCI), conducted an investigation into Potti and Nevins' research, as she believed that the algorithms were falsified. From the investigation, McShane found multiple discrepancies and inconsistencies in the data that Potti was unable to answer. According to the NIH press team, McShane declined to respond to *The Tech*'s request for comment. McShane's in-depth investigation was followed by *The Cancer Letter*'s report in July 2010 that found that Potti lied on his resume, claiming that he was a Rhodes Scholar when he never received the award. As a result, Potti was placed on leave. Nevins retired from Duke in 2013.

In 2015, Duke settled a lawsuit for an undisclosed sum that claimed that patients in Potti's research were harmed in the chemotherapy trials, which was terminated in 2010. The same year, the Office of Research Integrity (ORI) concluded that Potti engaged in research misconduct by falsifying research data. Many of



COLIN CLARK—THE TECH

A courtyard bordering building 6C at MIT on May 8, 2025.

Potti's research papers were retracted as a result.

In response to *The Boston Globe*'s article, Kornbluth wrote a letter to the MIT community on the same day. In her letter, Kornbluth acknowledged her role in the research misconduct case. She stated that she was new to being an university administrator at the time, and that the incident taught her the importance of establishing "timely internal investigative pro-

cesses" and "ensuring that they are entirely independent from those who undertook the research."

Kornbluth admitted that research misconduct can be challenging to identify when an "individual is intent on deception." She emphasized the importance of cultivating a culture of trust in data and people. "It's crucial that we continue to foster a culture in which everyone, regardless of their position, feels empowered

to raise concerns and knows they will be taken seriously," Kornbluth further emphasized.

In a statement to *The Tech*, Deputy Director of Media Relations Sarah McDonnell stated that the presidential search committee in 2022 performed a thorough review of her previous record. According to McDonnell, Kornbluth mentioned the Potti case during the interview process for the purpose of transparency and honesty.

# DSL introduces the Student Group Funding Council

## The SGFC replaces the UA Finance Board for funding MIT undergraduate student organizations

By Vivian Hir  
NEWS EDITOR

Starting in the 2025–2026 academic year, student organizations will apply for funding through the Student Group Funding Council (SGFC). This change replaces previous funding sources that include the Undergraduate Association (UA) Finance Board, Graduate Student Council (GSC) Funding Board, and the Association of Student Activities (ASA) Large Event Fund (LEF) and Assisting Recurring Cultural And Diversity Events (ARCADE) funds. The council is composed of nine voting members that include representatives from the UA, ASA, GSC, as well as three elected members.

The SGFC was formed in 2025 based on the recommendations

from the Student Organization Working Group's (SOWG) final report, which proposed a single funding board for all recognized student organizations for greater efficiency and a more streamlined funding process.

Led by the Division of Student Life, the SOWG met in Spring 2023 to discuss and propose changes to student organization policies and structures at MIT, including financial management and recognition processes. According to the report, the new funding board's money comes from the New Fund, which is primarily composed of the Student Life Fee, as well as the LEF and ARCADE funds.

Previously, student groups applied for funding individually through various sources, each one

with different deadlines and rules. These differences resulted in challenges for organizations with both undergraduate and graduate students, since groups were either labeled as undergraduate or graduate. "This binary designation became impractical and inconsistent," Student Organizations, Leadership and Engagement Office (SOLE) Director Paul Murphy wrote.

According to Murphy, the purpose of the SGFC is to improve the funding process by removing the undergraduate and graduate funding distinction and combining these separate funding groups into one. "The unified structure aims to reduce confusion and create a more equitable and accessible funding process for all student groups," Murphy wrote.

The SGFC has three application cycles (spring, summer, and fall). Each cycle will have a multi-week application window along with an appeal process after preliminary allocations are released. Each funding application will be reviewed by two council members and will be voted on by the entire council. The application requires student groups to provide a detailed budget request and a justification for the requested funds. Funding applications will be evaluated based on educational outcomes and budget review.

The deadline for the SGFC fall funding cycle closed on Aug. 15. Allocations will be released on Aug. 29, and appeals will be released on Sept. 2.

Questions and concerns about SGFC can be sent to [sole@mit.edu](mailto:sole@mit.edu) or [sgfc-exec@mit.edu](mailto:sgfc-exec@mit.edu).

### IN SHORT

**Residential Exploration (REX)** will happen from Saturday, Aug. 23, to Wednesday, Aug. 27.

**First-year student orientation** begins on Sunday, Aug. 24.

**Registration opens** for all students on Monday, Aug. 25.

**Undergraduate registration for first quarter PE&Wellness classes** open on Friday, Aug. 29 at 8 a.m.

**Interested in joining *The Tech*?** Email [tt-join@mit.edu](mailto:tt-join@mit.edu).

**Send news and tips to *tt-news-editors*** at [tt-news-editors@mit.edu](mailto:tt-news-editors@mit.edu).

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SCIENTIFIC EFFECTS BRACKET  
xkcd. ENTERTAINMENT, p. 4

UNIVERSITIES NEED FUNDING  
I lose, you lose, we all lose. Everyone  
loses. OPINION, p. 3

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WEATHER FORECAST

Weather Systems	Weather Fronts	Precipitation Symbols	Other Symbols
H High Pressure	- - - Trough	☁ Snow	☁ Fog
L Low Pressure	—••• Warm Front	☔ Rain	☁ Thunderstorm
§ Hurricane	▲▲▲ Cold Front	☂ Light	☁ Haze
	▲▲▲ Stationary Front	☂ Moderate	
		☂ Heavy	

Compiled by MIT Meteorology Staff and The Tech

Temperatures to rebound for the weekend

By Conrad Straden

METEOROLOGIST

Why is it so cold in the middle of August? Well, the unusual combination of a polar air mass and a close pass from Hurricane Erin have brought some unseasonably cold and windy weather to campus this week. Following yesterday's rain, today features stronger northeast winds--both associated with the hurricane's broader influence. Erin will pass over 400 miles to our southeast on Friday, meaning no direct impacts. Out in the ocean, however,

Erin is whipping up huge waves that will cause damaging surf up and down the eastern seaboard. The wave and rip current threat will be greatest for the Boston beaches on Friday and Saturday as the storm heads east and out to sea. Weather wise, this weekend will be pleasant with highs around 80°F and lots of sunshine. As for next week, Monday could feature some afternoon thunderstorms and temperatures will still be running slightly below average. This should make for a pleasant end to the month with highs in the 70s.

AUGUST 21

SITUATION FOR NOON (ET)

Extended Forecast

**Today:** Mostly Cloudy. Chance for rain early. High around 68°F (20°C). Northeast winds 10-15 mph.

**Tonight:** Cloudy. Low around 60°F (16°C). Northeast winds 10-15 mph.

**Friday:** Partly Cloudy. High around 78°F (26°C) and overnight low around 59°F (15°C). North winds 10-15 mph.

**Saturday:** Sunny. High around 82°F (28°C) and overnight low around 63°F (17°C). Winds light and variable.

**Sunday:** Mostly Sunny. High around 79°F (26°C) and overnight low around 66°F (19°C). South winds.

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2025-2026  
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The Mind and Hand Book is the official guide to MIT's expectations of all undergraduate and graduate students, including the policies on academic integrity, alcohol, drugs, hazing, and sexual misconduct.

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THE KNIGHT SCIENCE JOURNALISM PROGRAM @ MIT



# When universities suffer, everyone loses

*Undergraduate Association (UA) President Alice Hall and former UA President Enoch Ellis argue that if “universities are starved of funding, the result will be catastrophic”*

By Alice Hall and Enoch Ellis

The United States has long prided itself on being a nation of innovation. Until recently, our federal spending reflected this vision. The current administration is changing that.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) serves as a critical source of research funding across the nation. By providing grants to private companies, universities, hospitals, and other research institutions, the NIH has enabled life-changing and life-saving developments that extend far beyond the labs they fund.

Although it can be hard to predict how work in highly specialized labs ever makes it to the doors of the average American, everything from the ways we grow food to the ways we care for our aging parents has been improved by research funded by the NIH. While the end goal of some research is immediately clear, the significance of other projects may only emerge over time. Take well-known drugs such as Ozempic and synthetic insulin: without NIH support in early development stages — before substantial private capital got involved — these life-changing medications would not have been possible.

Recent shifts in government perspective have questioned the value of basic research across all scientific disciplines and brought an abrupt halt to important projects. Research to prevent strokes and heart disease: terminated. Work to further understand and prevent obesity: canceled. Efforts to save millions of Americans fighting against cancer: slashed. And with proposed 40% cuts, this is just the beginning.

In the past decade alone, NIH funding has generated almost \$800 billion in returns. According to a 2025 report, the \$36.94 billion awarded by the NIH to researchers across all 50 U.S. states and Washington, D.C. supported over 400,000 jobs. But now, this research is at risk. Despite seeing economic returns of \$2.56 for every dollar spent, chaotic efforts to cut inefficient government spending have put the NIH in the crosshairs.

We must understand that the economic and strategic leverage the U.S. enjoys today was not achieved by accident. It came from deliberate investment in research. If we become complacent, we will lose it. No matter what issues people may have with universities, there are better solutions that won't harm millions of Americans as collateral damage.

As MIT students, we've seen the impact our university has on the rest of the country. It's estimated that since 2014, MIT alumni have launched roughly 30,200 active companies that employ 4.6 million people and generate \$1.9 trillion in annual revenues. These benefits ripple through the economy, from small business owners in every state all the way to us as consumers. These returns help boost GDP and decrease the deficit, making them a worthwhile investment.

This story is not unique to MIT. In 2023, the Michigan University Research Corridor added over 81,000 jobs and contributed nearly \$24 billion to the state economy. The University of Alabama System is the state's largest employer with roughly 67,000 employees and an economic impact of \$18.6 billion annually. Over the 2019-2020 fiscal year, the University of South Florida generated \$14.07 in economic impact from every dollar of state funding.

It's these direct economic returns, coupled with the impacts of innovation, that have allowed America to be as dominant as we are. It's no surprise that the United States ranks first in global GDP and leads the world in many advanced technological sectors.

If our universities are starved of funding, the result will be catastrophic. Our innovation infrastructure will be devastated; our technological competitiveness with rivals like China will wane. Our nation's ability to respond to current issues such as declining birth rates or the obesity epidemic will be limited, and our ability to respond to any unprecedented future crises will be compromised. So we call on everyone to reject the notion that research is negotiable, because even though current research cuts are being drawn along partisan lines, their impact won't be.

At the time of writing, the White House has seemingly backpedaled in freezing over \$15 billion in NIH funding after initially putting a block on any new grants or grants up for renewal.

We must remind ourselves — and our leaders — that the level of innovation that safeguards American health, economic prosperity, and international influence is not guaranteed. Public and private colleges are united in opposition to these policies that will cripple the American enterprise, and we urge you to do the same. The question is not whether universities deserve support, but whether we can afford to forsake them.

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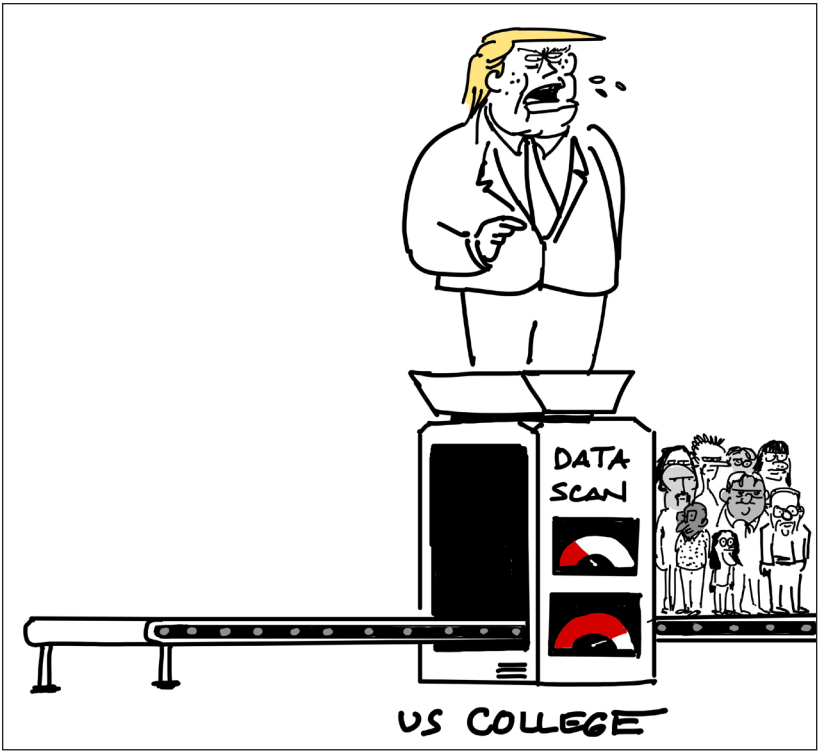
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A Guest Submission, which may be designated as either a Guest Column or a Letter to the Editor, may be written and submitted by any member of the MIT community.

Guest Columns express a particular opinion on campus-relevant matters;

and a Letter to the Editor is an open letter addressed directly to the “Editor,” in reference to a Guest Columns express a particular opinion on campus-relevant matters; and a Letter to the Editor is an open letter addressed directly to the “Editor,” in reference to a particular piece or set of pieces published.

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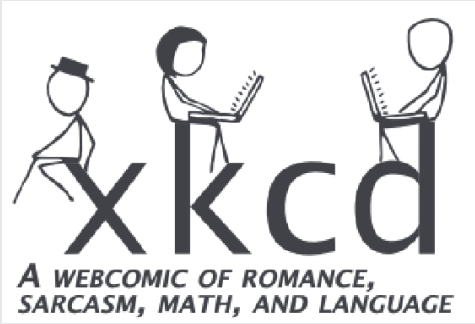


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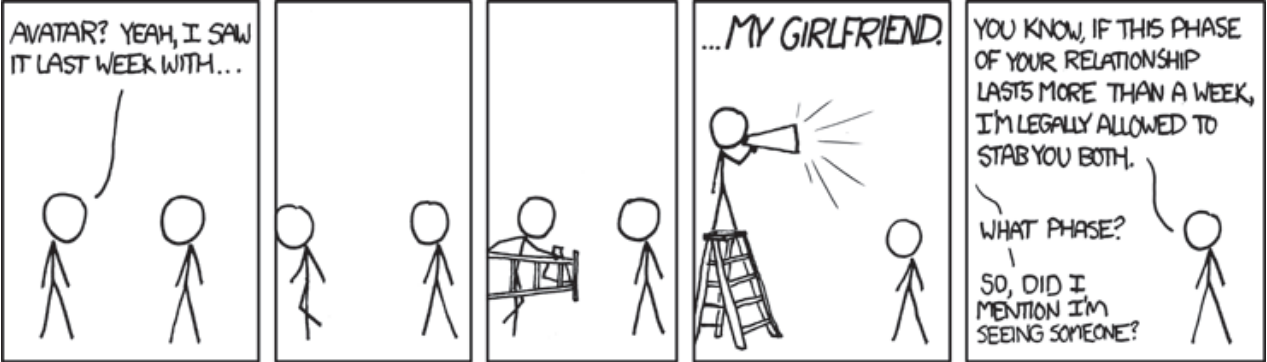






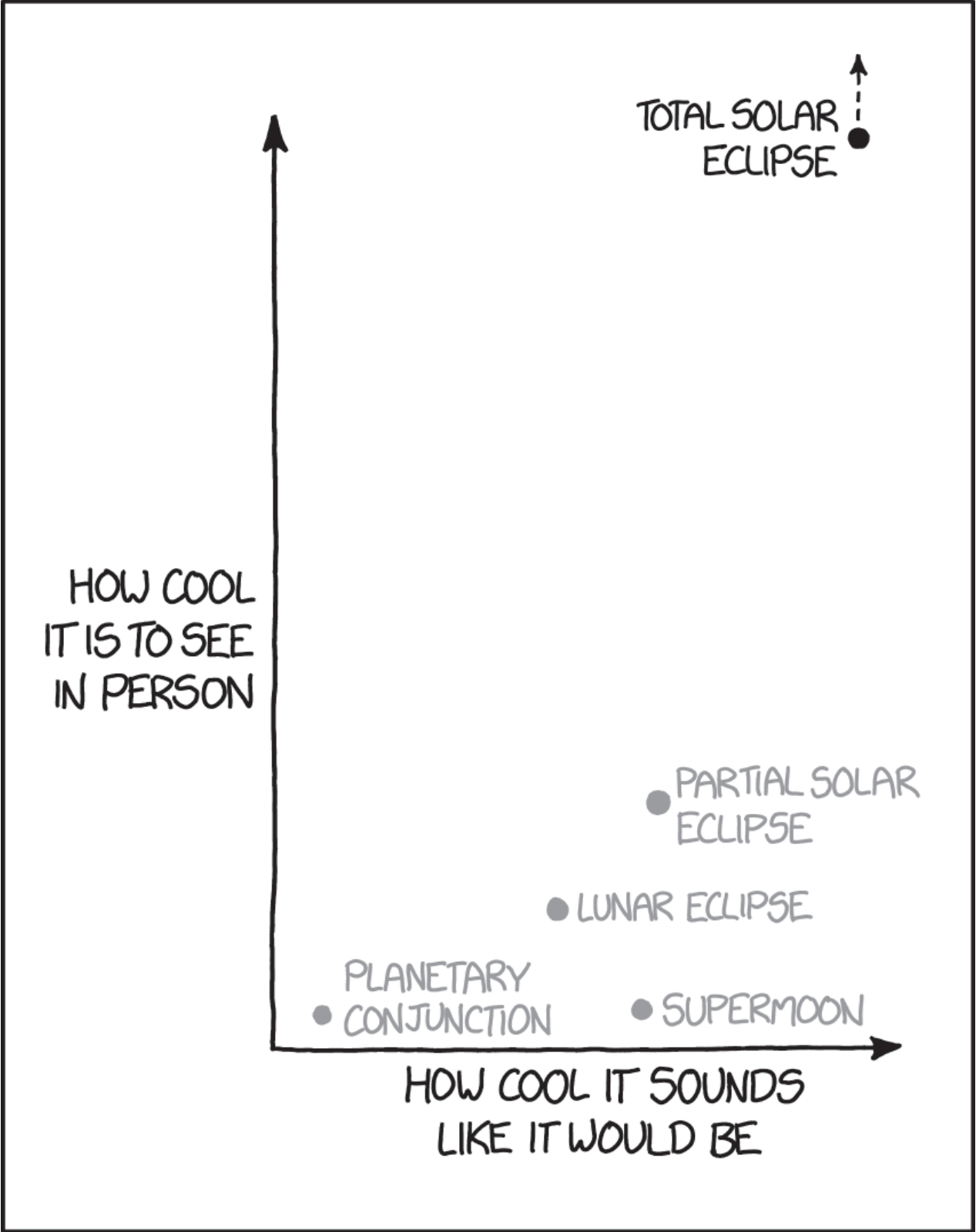
by Randall Munroe

[684] We Get It



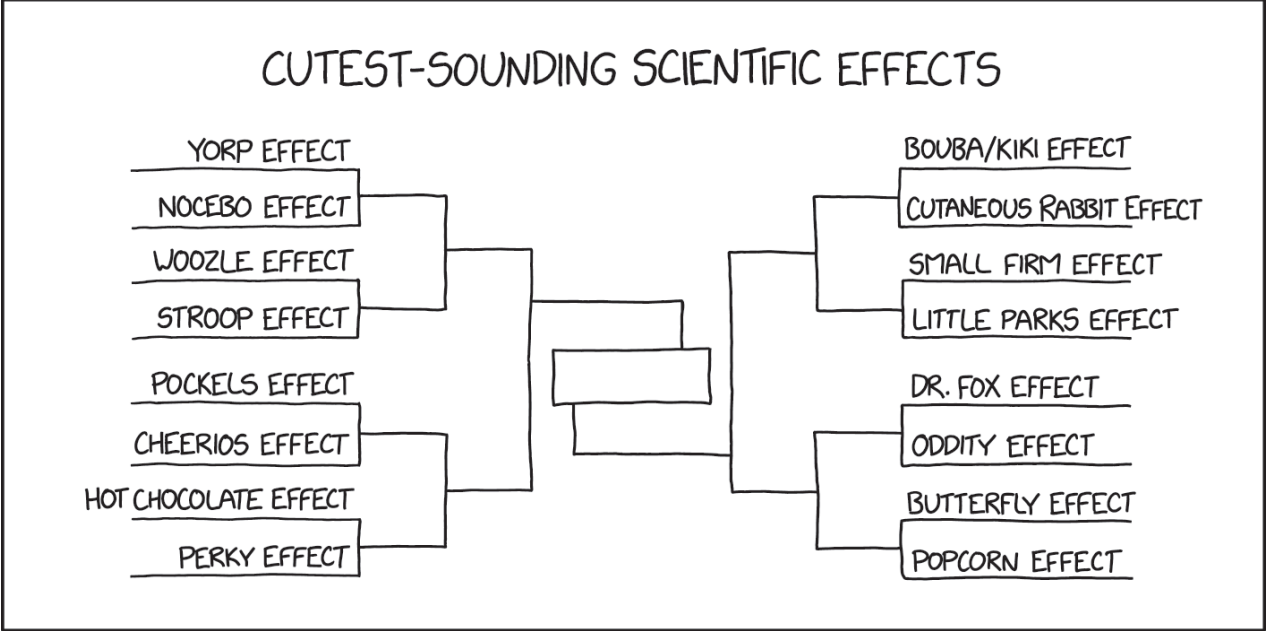
The most brutal way I've ever seen someone handle this was 'Oh, you have a girlfriend. Are you going to get married?' 'I, uh, don't know--' 'Well, do you love her?' ';;' 'Anyway, what were you saying about the movie?'

[1880] Eclipse Review



I watched from a beautiful nature reserve in central Missouri, and it was--without exaggeration--the coolest thing I've ever seen.

[2611] Cutest-Sounding Scientific Effects



he Stroop-YORP number of a scientific paper is how many of the 16 finalist names (sans 'effect') it manages to casually sneak into the text.