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Thursday, March 5, 2026

WEATHER, p. 2

THU: 35°F | 33°F
Snow early.

FRI: 46°F | 45°F
Cloudy.

SAT: 55°F | 35w°F
Sunny.

Pentagon cuts service college fellowships at MIT

Hegseth accused MIT and peers of subjecting service members to "woke indoctrination"

By Samuel Yuan
NEWS EDITOR

In a memo released on Friday, Feb. 27, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth ordered the U.S. Department of Defense to cut its academic ties to MIT by discontinuing graduate-level fellowship programs for senior officers at the Institute.

"Just like we did with Harvard, I am ordering the complete and immediate cancellation of all Department of War attendance at institutions like Princeton, Columbia, MIT, Brown, Yale, and many others starting next academic year," Hegseth said in a video statement on social media.

As grounds for this move, Hegseth accused the Institute and other peer schools of subjecting service members to "woke indoctrination" and breaking the "sacred trust" between "America's institutions and its warriors."

"The Ivy League and similar institutions have gorged themselves on a trust fund of American taxpayer dollars only to become factories of anti-American resentment and military disdain," Hegseth said. "They've traded true intellectual rigor for radical dogma."

A press release stated that Senior Service College fellowships hosted at MIT would be canceled starting with the 2026–27 academic year, but added that service members currently enrolled would be allowed to complete their studies.

At this point, it appears that undergraduate programs like Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) will remain unaffected.

In a statement to *The Tech*, MIT spokesperson Kimberly Allen emphasized the Institute's longstanding relationship with the military.

"MIT is proud of its significant role in military education. Over 12,000 military officers have been commissioned from MIT, with more than 150 reaching the rank of general or admiral. We have taught military science classes dating back to the opening of our doors," Allen said.

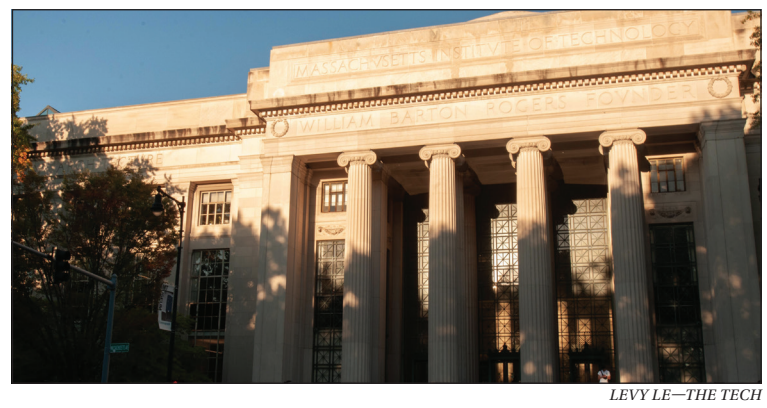
Allen added that the Institute's acclaimed programs in computer science, naval engineering, nuclear science, and more were "critical to modern defense."

"We're honestly surprised at the idea of taking such educational opportunities off the table," Allen said.

On Feb. 28, the Institute updated its homepage with links to articles, webpages, and other media highlighting its commitment to the military in an apparent response. One post spotlighted MIT's Air Force ROTC program; another noted that MIT has awarded 604 degrees to service members in the last five years.

An attachment to the departmental memo from Hegseth shows that seven Senior Service College fellowships at MIT were canceled, the fourth-highest number out of the affected institutions. For comparison, 21 fellowships were canceled at Harvard, 11 at Johns Hopkins, and one at Princeton.

Hegseth also wrote in the memo that a "revised list of elite institutions" was being compiled by the Pentagon to replace the affected universities. Potential schools under consideration include Liberty University and Hillsdale College.



LEVY LE—THE TECH

Massachusetts Avenue outside of Lobby 7. The Pentagon announced on Friday, Feb. 27 that it would cut senior officer fellowship programs at MIT and other top schools.

Rep. Seth Moulton on Senate bid and American politics

Rep. Moulton, 47, is primarying the incumbent 79-year-old Democrat Senator Ed Markey

By Samuel Yuan and Vivian Hir
EDITORS

Representative Seth Moulton, Democrat from Massachusetts, is vying for his party's nomination for the Senate in September against incumbent Senator Ed Markey with a campaign largely focused around age. Moulton, 47, is primarying the 79-year-old Markey, who was elected to Congress nearly 50 years ago.

This is not the first time Moulton has jostled with incumbents in his party. His entry to Washington in 2015 came shortly after he defeated former congressman John Tierney in a primary, despite the latter's rapport with the Democratic establishment.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SETH MOULTON'S CAMPAIGN

Rep. Seth Moulton, 47, is challenging the 79-year-old Senator Ed Markey in the 2026 primary elections this September.

This is also not the first time Markey has faced a younger primary challenger either. Six years ago, Markey successfully warded off then-Representative Joseph P. Kennedy III, who similarly targeted the Senator's age. If Markey wins again this time, he will serve until age 86.

In this primary, Markey appears to have most of the Democratic establishment's support, with endorsements from Senator Elizabeth Warren and Boston Mayor Michelle Wu. Meanwhile, Moulton has occasionally veered away from his party's playbook: in 2024, Moulton was criticized by others in his party for suggesting that transgender athletes should not compete in women's sports.

Moulton, who represents Massachusetts's sixth congressional district, which covers the northeastern corner of the state, previously served as a Captain in the U.S. Marine Corps and completed four tours in Iraq. He was born in Salem, MA, and holds a bachelor's degree in physics and master's degrees in business administration and public policy from Harvard.

On Sunday, March 1, *The Tech* conducted an in-person interview with the Massachusetts congressman on his campaign, platform, and positions.

The following has been lightly edited for length and clarity.

Moulton, Page 3

3/5 IN SHORT

The last day to add a full-term subject this semester is Friday, March 6.

The deadline to apply Flex P/NR to a Fall 2025 subject is Friday, March 6.

The deadline to drop half-term subjects offered in the first half of term is Friday, March 6.

The last day to change a full-term subject from listener to credit is Friday, March 6.

Cross-registration must be completed by Friday, March 6 to avoid penalty.

Graduate registration for PE & Wellness classes opens Tuesday, March 10 at 8 a.m.

Interested in joining *The Tech*? Email *tt-join@mit.edu*

Send news and tips to *tt-tips@mit.edu*

MIT Faculty share insights on TFUAP proposal

Some faculty applauded changes, others, including an undergrad, disapproved

By Grace Zhang
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

On Feb. 18, MIT faculty gathered in Huntington Hall (10-250) for the first faculty meeting of 2026, where they discussed the recent proposal released by the Task Force on the Undergraduate Academic Program (TFUAP). The set of recommendations, made public on Feb. 5, outlines sweeping changes to the Institute's undergraduate curriculum.

In terms of its overarching goals, the TFUAP proposal seeks to "advance curriculum, align the Institute's curriculum and policies with [its] aspirations, and adapt to the future."

President Sally Kornbluth delivered opening remarks at the meeting, which was followed by a briefing on the proposal's main recommendations from TFUAP Co-Chair and Biology Professor Adam Martin. The final hour was dedicated to faculty comments and open discussion.

"The curriculum belongs to the faculty," Kornbluth began. She then pointed to MIT's legacy of innovation in education and research to emphasize the importance of preparing students to be "well-educated, productive members of society." Before passing the floor to Martin, Kornbluth also posed the central question of the meeting: "What does an educated MIT student need to know?"

In a rare exception at February's meeting, representatives from the Graduate Student Union (GSU) and undergraduate members of the Faculty Policy Committee were also permitted to speak if they wished.

Faculty reactions

Reactions among faculty were mixed, ranging from disappointment to enthusiasm.

"Physics is the beating heart of our institution," said Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) and Mechanical Engineering Steven Leeb, calling one semester of physics "not adequate." Leeb also asserted that the TFUAP's new governance structure of approving curriculum changes within subcommittees and by the Committee on Curricula (COC) would take away the faculty's right to vote.

Some faculty also opposed the removal of the Institute Lab requirement. According to Assistant Professor of Physics Kevin Burdge '15, such a change would be "doing the undergrads a great disservice," especially now that students are spending more time on their devices and less time engaging in hands-on learning. Speaking as a faculty member, Kornbluth echoed Burdge's sentiment.

Others voiced reservations about direct funding for faculty-student UROPs. Professor of Physics Anna Frebel said that this change would limit opportunities for graduate and PhD students to become "mentors and leaders," while increasing the mental workload for faculty. Similarly, GSU President Teddy Warner G warned that prioritizing faculty-student UROPs would create a "loss of opportunities" for wet-lab research groups.

Meanwhile, EECS Professor Gerald Sussman did not think the proposal made enough changes. According to Sussman, the TFUAP's current class structure reinforces the teaching of math as programming as mechanical skills, rather than as a higher-level way of thinking and a way to decode a "language."

Several faculty in the Economics department expressed support for the TFUAP proposal. "I read the proposal with great delight," Senior Lecturer in Economics Sarah Ellison said. "It has [the] potential to be a huge step forward."

Professor of Economics Benjamin Olken and Associate Professor of Economics Frank Schilbach also stated their approval of the proposal, highlighting the cost-benefit analysis and policy changes to enforce in-person attendance, respectively.

TFUAP, Page 2

GOOD OLD DAYS

Remembering 2016. **CAMPUS LIFE, p. 4**

AMERICAN ROAD TRIP

Hadelich and Weiss celebrates American democracy with BSO. **ARTS, p. 5**

UP NEXT: BASEBALL

The start of spring brings another season of baseball at MIT . **SPORTS, p. 8**

OH MY PEAS

Kate Brown shares her new book. **SCIENCE, p. 10**

ABOUT IRAN

MIT has yet to release a statement about the conflict in Iran. **OPINION, p. 11**

SECTIONS

WEATHER WEATHER WEATHER WEATHER

Today
Rain Showers Late.
38°F
3°C
Wind Speed: 10-15.
Gusts: 20.
Direction: NE.

Tonight
Mixed Precipitation..
32°F
0°C
Wind Speed: 10-15.
Gusts: 30.
Direction: NE.

Friday
Snow Early.
35°F 33°
2°C | 1°C
Wind Speed: 10-15.
Gusts: 25.
Direction: NE.

Saturday
Cloudy.
46°F 45°
8°C | 7°C
Wind Speed: 10-15.
Gusts: 40.
Direction: SW.

Sunday
Sunny.
55°F 35°
13°C | 2°C
Wind Speed: 5-10.
Gusts: 15.
Direction: W.

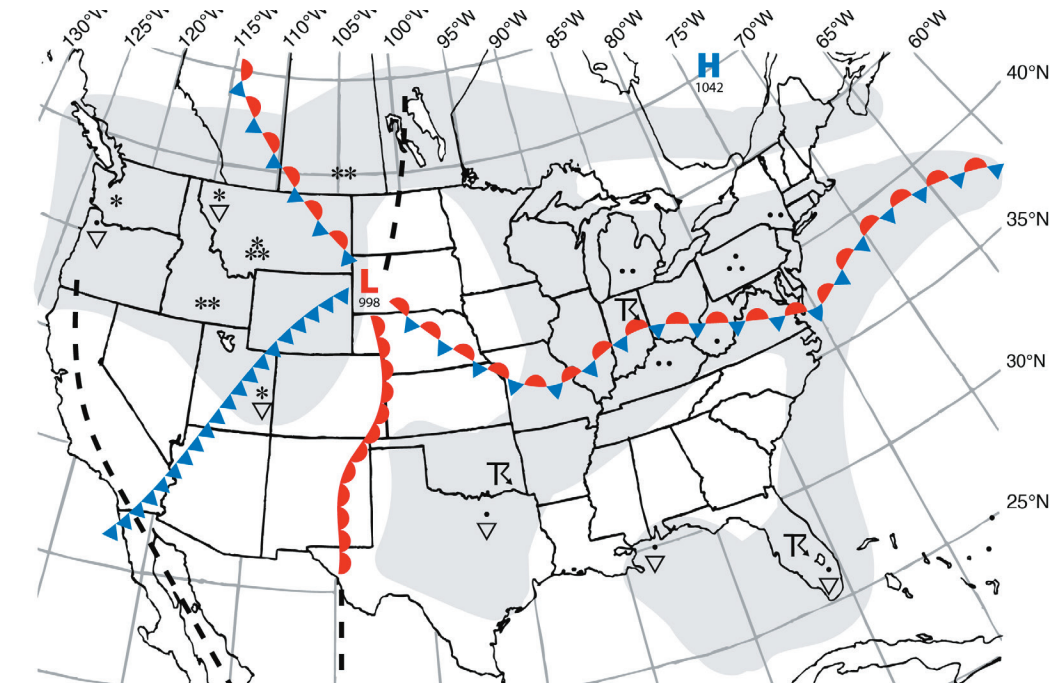
Brief warm up ahead but winter is not over yet

By Conrad Straden
CHIEF METEOROLOGIST

Tonight's system will bring some more mixed precipitation, similar to Tuesday night. Light rain breaks out in the early evening, changing to sleet around midnight, and then to snow through Friday morning. The exact timing of changeovers are still uncertain, and a few degrees difference in temperature could mean we end up with no accumulation or several inches of snow. The bulk of the precipitation will move out by Friday morning; however, a light drizzle or mist will linger most of the day. Saturday will warm up, but it will remain cloudy and damp. Sunday will be stellar, with temps near 50°F and lots of sunshine. Looking ahead into next week, some models are showing extreme warmth with temperatures near 70°F, but I would take those with a grain of salt. The sea surface temperature in Boston Harbor is 36°F right now which is much colder than usual. This means that with a sea breeze (or any wind with an easterly component), we will remain much cooler than inland. For instance, it might be nearing 70°F in Worcester yet only in the 40s here. This is a typical early spring phenomenon in Boston. Sometimes this temperature difference can occur rapidly — called a backdoor front, it can drop temperatures by 20 degrees in just minutes. For next week, temperatures will likely stay in the 50s instead.

While meteorological winter is now over, that doesn't mean we are out of the woods yet for wintry weather. Next week the Polar Vortex (PV) is forecast to split, causing a Sudden Stratospheric Warming event. In simple terms, this means that the upper layers of the atmosphere will experience rapid warming, which causes cold air in the troposphere to move southward into the mid-latitudes. The effects are generally delayed a few

Weather, Page 2 (Below)



TFUAP breaks a "100-year compact"

TFUAP, from Page 1

Differing GIR requirements

Given the flexibility of the newly proposed Science, Math, and Computing (SMC) core, first-year students could face differing GIR pathways from their very first semester. While TFUAP recommendations still mandate 12 units of single-variable calculus, physics I, and multivariable calculus, it would allow students to have a more flexible choice between chemistry and biology, as well as computation and probability, statistics, and machine learning (PSM).

Notably, if a student uses AP or Advanced Standing Exam (ASE) credit to place out of Physics I, they would still be required to take another physics class. Professor of Physics Krishna Rajagopal said that some majors might require Physics II (8.02), while others would not. In addition, he hinted at the development of a new 8.02 variant that would focus on quantum information and entropy, which would be more geared towards biology or chemistry majors compared to the traditional 8.02 class.

This would be a significant change to the first-year experience, as noted by Leeb, who called it the breaking of "a hundred-year compact" with the incoming, undecided freshman. Rajagopal agreed with the magnitude of the change, adding that whether the change was good or bad "depends on perspective."

Kornbluth emphasized that majors should maintain multiple paths so students could still switch majors freely. Earth, Atmospheric, and Planetary Sciences (EAPS) Professor Andrew Babbin expressed a similar view. "The benefit of education is exploration," he said. "You [should] always have that flexibility."

Implementation strategy

Professor of Materials Processing W. Craig Carter suggested dividing the TFUAP proposal into smaller components. This would allow faculty to make decisions about areas with general agreement and deliberate more contentious sections. His remarks received a round of applause.

Following Carter, Professor of Sociology and Sloan Professor of Behavioral and Policy Sciences Susan Silbey urged faculty members to consider how they would meet the proposal's requirements before voting, instead of voting first and creating a series of subcommittees to address problems that would arise later.

Professor of Chemistry Rick Danheiser also supported the idea of breaking up the TFUAP proposal, expressing concerns about policy changes and indicating a preference to consider them separately from the new curriculum.

In response, Martin emphasized that the current TFUAP recommendations are only a draft, and that it is unlikely there will be a single vote on the proposal in its entirety.

Student involvement

As an undergraduate member of the Faculty Policy Committee, Aarushi Mehrotra '26 spoke to summarize undergraduate feedback gathered through a dormspam survey, mentioning support for earlier syllabi posting, interim grades before the drop date, and the removal of the REST requirement. However, she also brought up concerns that certain policy changes could diminish MIT's unique culture and limit students' personal choices.

In addition to the involvement of the Registrar's Office and other relevant units, Rajagopal advocated for input from current undergraduate students. "We need [these students] to be involved to the point where they can stand in front of the faculty and say they're coauthors of this proposal," he said.

Upcoming town halls

The Feb. 23 and Feb. 24 town halls have been rescheduled to Tuesday, March 10 from 2–3:30 p.m. and Wednesday, March 11 from 7–8:30 p.m. due to a campus-wide snow closure that was in effect from Feb. 22 through Feb. 25. According to the TFUAP, feedback received by March 15 will "be most useful" to them.

Weather, from Page 2 (Above)

weeks, which means we will not see the effects until late March and early April. While it might be too late for sustained wintry weather, it could still mean more below-average days, delaying the nicer weather. The PV previously split back in late November, which is why December temperatures were below average. Having more than one PV split in one winter season is fairly rare, occurring about once per decade.

In other news, this Sunday is the beginning of Daylight Savings, which means clocks "spring" forward an hour. What this means is we will lose an hour of sleep Saturday night, but gain an hour of daylight in the evening. Sunset on Sunday will be at 6:42 p.m., while sunrise will be at 7:08 a.m.

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Moulton stresses need for progressive leadership

Moulton, from Page 1

***The Tech*: A big part of your campaign is the age issue: your opponent Senator Markey is 79 and you're 47. Why is this something that young people should care enough about to go and take the time to vote for you in the primary?**

Moulton: Because this is a time in America when change can't wait. The same old playbook in the Democratic Party has gotten us a second term from Trump, and he's hurting a lot of people all across America. So this isn't a time when we're knocking it out of the park as Democrats. It's time when we need to change.

There's a new generation of leaders who are stepping up in the party all across the country and right here in Massachusetts, who want to take us forward, who are not just going to fight for the next five years, but for the next generation. I think that's the kind of leadership we need right now.

***TT*: Other than age, are there policy positions that you and Senator Markey clash on? Can you also elaborate more on your plans for bettering affordability and housing — Massachusetts is not a cheap state, especially for college students.**

Moulton: I have the most progressive and aggressive affordability agenda of any elected official today, because people in Massachusetts are really hurting. It plants the flag at the ground. It says that housing, healthcare and education should be human rights. I think those should be our "3 for 30" in response to Republicans' Project 2025. If we show that kind of leadership on the issues, as opposed to just opposition to Trump, then we can win a lot more elections and get a lot more voters to our side.

But there are a lot of other differences between myself and Senator Markey as well. I'm not going to vote for Senator [Chuck] Schumer. I think we need new leadership from the top on down in the Senate. I founded Serve America, an organization that's helped flip 24 seats from red to blue all across America, and we brought amazing new leaders to Congress as a result of that. So I don't think it's enough just to get yourself reelected. You should fight to build the whole Democratic team.

And I'm also not going to vote for Marco Rubio to be Secretary of State. You know, I'm not going to vote to go to war in Iraq like the Senator did. That was a huge mistake, naively believing the lies of the Bush administration.

***TT*: A lot of folks at MIT are worried about the scientific funding cuts under the current administration. You come from a STEM background. If you're elected to the Senate, what will you try to do about this? And have you done anything in this vein to promote science and research during your time in the House?**

Moulton: Yeah, I've done a lot, because there aren't many scientists or people with a science degree, even in Washington. We need to invest more heavily in scientific research, especially basic scientific research. There's a lot of push for just, okay, the private sector can do this. But they're not going to afford the risky, cutting edge scientific research that really drives innovation, and, frankly, drives our economy, all across the board. So we need to keep up that funding.

There are opportunities to [invest] in a bipartisan way so that [the funding] doesn't get cut when a Republican president comes into office. And that's something that I've been working on, too. The Armed Services Committee actually funds a fair bit of scientific research funding, and so that's something I support there.

***TT*: Many immigrants and international students come to Massachusetts because of its research ecosystem. But now they're worried about some of the federal policy changes. Do you think it's important that America remains open to foreign talent?**

Moulton: Immigration is our secret sauce — that's what makes America so competitive across the world. What Trump is doing by persecuting immigrants is not just un-American, against our values, and against our laws. It's also really harmful to our innovation agenda. I mean, you look at so many top companies and they were founded by immigrants. It's an unbelievably shortsighted, politically expedient program, and I think you got to make that case a bit more broadly.

Democrats like to talk about how immoral [persecuting immigrants] is, but we need to talk also about how it hurts our economy and how it hurts information, and lift up stories of immigrants who are such a part of America's leadership and science and technology.

***TT*: Secretary Hegseth announced recently that the Pentagon is cutting academic ties with MIT, Harvard, and other top universities due to them being "woke." You went to Harvard, and you've served in the military. What do you make of that decision?**

Moulton: I've really encouraged my alma mater Harvard and other universities as well to fight. Don't just take this lying down. Let's be clear: he's preventing officers in the military from going to institutions that they applied to. You know, the military is not forcing them to go to Harvard. It's individual officers who say, I want to go to that school, right? So they're the ones who are applying. And Hegseth thinks he's smarter than all the rest of them, but actually I think he's really dumb.

***TT*: You served in Iraq and you've made statements condemning the Iran strikes by drawing parallels. Can you elaborate on your position and what these foreign policy developments might mean for young Americans?**

Moulton: What they could mean is another endless war. There are two foundational problems with the Iraq War. One is that it was based on a lie about nuclear weapons. Similarly, Trump is obviously lying about Iran's nuclear program, because he said he obliterated it. Yet now, just months later, we're going back to attacking again. And number two, there is clearly no plan in Iraq for the day after: what comes next.

Hope is not a strategy. All we're getting from Trump right now is bombs and bluster. And that's not guaranteeing regime change or no nuclear weapons program or anything else. So we need to see a plan and a strategy for this war, and there's no one who deserves that more than our troops. They're our troops who are asked to risk their lives for something that we don't even understand.

***TT*: You went from STEM to politics. Has studying physics in college helped you think about your day to day in Congress differently?**

Moulton: Absolutely, because I think we do make a lot of decisions about science-based things. And to have so many people in Washington who have backgrounds as lawyers or social scientists or just students of politics, as opposed to actual people who studied science and math, that's a problem. I think we need more people in Washington who understand science and math to bring a more rational [instead of] political decision making calculus.

JOJO'S BIZARRE MUSINGS

Turning the calendar back to 2016

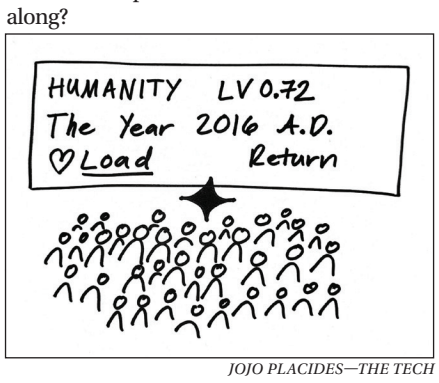
And why everyone is yearning to load back into the world's last "save point"

By Jojo Placides
CAMPUS LIFE STAFF WRITER

Picture this: the insane whirlwind of the modern day. You raise your head from your never-ending pile of problem sets. You see that the threat of nuclear war looms above you, and the sea levels rise and brood over America's coasts. Every glance at a newspaper gives you a heart attack and a half. You look at your phone and see a stream of AI slop: a meaningless river of static that blends into a dreary, robotic gray.

Then, suddenly, you awaken in your childhood bed. It's July 20, 2016. Sunlight bleeds through your innocent, pure curtains as chalky as the clouds themselves. Someone knocks at the door: your friends, who want to play Minecraft with you. The tune of "Get Lucky" by Daft Punk rings through the hallways. Instead of stressing over problem sets and midterms and social anxiety and questioning if everyone hates you, you build houses, find diamonds, and avoid zombies. In this short moment in time, the world seems like a vast, colorful place, yours for the taking.

Was the past decade a bad dream all along?



JOJO PLACIDES—THE TECH

A group of people surround humanity's last save point; should they load it or return back to their regular lives?

Nowadays, people across social media joke that everything past 2016 has been an enormous nightmare, and that maybe the great time-space continuum ruptured and sent our planet flying into an alternate universe of insanity, where nothing goes right. Following this, a huge surge of nostalgia for 2016 has swept through our generation. Endless posts reminisce over bottle flips, Pokémon Go, and skinny jeans.

Nostalgia isn't just a *personal* issue. Yes, in isolation, it is: it's practically a rite of passage when one has a simple yearning for childhood simplicity. I've been a lifelong victim of nostalgia. I'm an immigrant from the Philippines who has lived in the United States for four years. There hasn't been a single second when I don't reminisce about the simple, childhood days back home: warm sunsets after a long day of playing hide-and-seek in the playground, or colorful Christmas lights lining neighborhoods while we carolled from house to house. Nostalgia is practically home to me.

But when an entire generation starts developing nostalgia for the same period of time, you might start wondering: are there deeper factors in play? And why 2016, specifically?

The current consensus is that the 2020s is the decade from *hell*. Most of that consensus can be traced back to one observation: that humanity is no longer optimistic about technological progress. In previous decades, with one technological advancement after another, we became convinced that humanity could achieve even greater things. That's why people back then — especially after the moon landing in 1969 — imagined our future as one of teleportation, flying cars, and interplanetary travel.

Recently, however, those developments have fallen out of touch with the original mission of actually *helping* people. Social media reduces people into likes and views to be fed into an algorithm; it harvests attention spans and diverts people's eyes away from the skies and into their phones, scrolling endlessly for an unclear goal. It treats us like mindless animals: ever wondered why it's called a social media *feed*? As a result, people subconsciously no longer view themselves as human beings with messy and complex emotions, but rather as mere numbers in the form of likes and comments. To make things worse, AI is now used to replace human creativity and thought, continuing the conversion of people to training data for deep learning algorithms. Never has the future looked so bleak, from AI slop and the enshittification of the Internet to COVID-19 and corporate minimalism. The more years pass, the more we try to create a virtual reality, and the more evident it becomes that we've immersed ourselves in a virtual *insanity*.

Besides the lack of technological progress, the reason people are so nostalgic for *specifically* 2016 is that the year was in many ways humanity's last "save point" before social media and AI. To everyone outside of Generation Z, 2016 by all means was not a simple time, but one of change and transition, for better or worse. 2016 was a time of political upheaval: the spotlight of Washington D.C. shifted from Obama to Trump, and a huge crack formed in the political landscape, giving way to entanglement and chaos — a crack still extremely wide open in today's political landscape. Additionally, 2016 was one of the last years before social media began looming over the lives of everyone. Since then, many of us have turned to acting with robotic nonchalance. People opt to doomscroll on their Instagram feeds, caught in a dopamine hamster wheel instead of facing the world and its salt and colors. [1]

When it comes to the insane time we live in now, 2016 was really where it all started. It was a boundary year, the threshold between an era of relative stability and an era of chaos: a year when a lot of important decisions were made. So maybe we picked the wrong decisions and got the bad ending. But where does that leave us? The clearest course of action, as one would do in a video game, is to return to a save point.

> **"From Nature and her overflowing soul,**
> **I felt the sentiment of Being spread o'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought**
> **And human knowledge, to the human eye invisible, yet liveth to the heart."**
> **— William Wordsworth, "The Prelude"**

An important fact we must realize, however, is that this is *not* a unique spot that humanity has been in. Humanity has resented technological growth in favor of simpler times before: specifically, in the Romantic era of the late 1700s to early 1800s.

> **"O happy living things! no tongue their beauty might declare:**
> **A spring of love gushed from my heart, and I blessed them unaware"**
> **— Samuel Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"**

At that time, technology was rapidly developing. With the invention of the steam engine in the 18th century, society kicked off the first Industrial Revolution. Factories were popping up everywhere, and city skylines were lined with big, cylindrical chimneys that emitted smoke and polluted the air, converting what was once bright, blue, brilliant skies into a gray, monotonous, smoky one. Millions of workers incessantly toiled under factory owners who put them in cruel conditions just so they could make a quick buck.

When these technological advancements created miserable lives for people, there were bound to be those who yearned for a life more akin to times before those advancements: in a way, returning back to a "save point" before all the wrong decisions were made. People pushed to define a human as something much more than just a cog in a machine — a being with individuality and emotions and guts and rights.

In particular, romantic writers valued moral sensitivity and greater kindness to each other, especially to the marginalized and the poor. For example, Samuel Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" tells the tale of the Mariner who was cursed by the Albatross until he felt the genuine love for human creatures and learned that each creature deserves love and respect.

"O happy living things! no tongue their beauty might declare:

A spring of love gushed from my heart, and I blessed them unaware"

— Samuel Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

The romantics also emphasized the importance of authentic human connection. For instance, in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the monster longs to connect with others as he watches a family from a window for months and learns their language.

Perhaps most central to the Romantic era was the love and wonder for nature, as people reconnected with the pastoral, rural countryside as opposed to their monotonous factory lives. Seeing giant waves crash into cliffsides. Avalanches cascade down snowy mountains. Big and wondrous clouds hovering over the lush, green landscape. Artists looked upon these monstrous scenes in nature — these little "spots of time," as one of the great Romantic poets, William Wordsworth, called them — and felt a strange mixture of not only fear but of awe and wonder: what many called "the sublime."

"From Nature and her overflowing soul,
I felt the sentiment of Being spread o'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, to the human eye invisible, yet liveth to the heart."
— William Wordsworth, "The Prelude"

In a way, people learned to love nature around them, to feel wonder in every sight they witnessed. They also learned to treat each other with empathy, respect, and love.

After all, aren't we all a bit like Frankenstein right now? Aren't we all longing for a deeper human connection? For a world where people are allowed to feel each flavor of each emotion instead of carrying on like nonchalant zombies?

Because if we're following in the footsteps of those Romantic writers, then what might come from these recent nostalgia movements is a Neoromantic era. I'm a bit of an idealist, but what I really hope people learn from these sentimental bouts is that the only way we can move forward again is to:

1. *Become kinder to each other and ourselves*. While industrialists viewed people as a means to gain money, romantics viewed people as imperfect, beautiful beings of emotion and intellect. I hope more people will see each other this way: that everyone has a right to be treated with kindness because of their imperfections. That human thinking, despite all of its chaos and mess, cannot be replaced by AI; for the beauty of human thought cannot be replicated by matrices of ones and zeroes.

2. *Taste every bit of joy and wonder in this vast world*. While industrialists turned away from the towering forests and near-infinite grassy fields that were converted into endless factories, romantics viewed them as sights to be taken in: the expansive colors of the world being the reason they carry on day-to-day. I hope more people take their eyes off their phones and look up, for the world is a gorgeous place, indeed ours for the taking.

It won't happen overnight. People won't suddenly abandon their laptops and go live as hermits in the forests of Appalachia. It will happen gradually in the next few decades.

Overall, this I say: death to nonchalance. Put down your phone for once and go on some crazy side quests! Get out there and tell your friends that you love them, and you're glad that life has strung you all together! Lay on the grass, and take in the enormous scene that's been waiting for you all this time.

When the times are right again and the skies shine that brilliant blue we all saw when we were young, we will realize that we've come, as we always do, a long way.

[1] I got the phrase "salt and colors" from somewhere kind of niche: namely, the song "Land of the Living," sung by the famous Soviet-era singer Eduard Khil. It was a tribute to Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, a French writer and aviator who wrote The Little Prince in 1943, and it garnered critical acclaim for its profound message on love and kindness and caring about the environment. The song's lyrics read: "You're gone forever in flight / And your Prince is gone forever. You loved this life, its salt and colors." I interpret it as both the white and colors of the earth because when you think of colors, you normally think blue, green, red, rather than white. Salt encompasses the white and the grey, and without both, you can't have an accurate description of the world — after all, you can't have the world without the cliffs of Dover or the white beaches that scatter throughout the coasts of the world.

SENIOR SIDE NOTES

On belonging

Some reflections on seeing myself in others and others in myself

By Kanna Pichappan

"We are all leaves of one tree. We are all waves of one sea." — Thich Nhat Hanh

When I came to MIT — starting from my first visit as a prefrosh at CPW — I was touched and inspired by the kindness and earnestness of the people around me. And yet, I missed the deep friendships and communities I had back home in New Jersey. Despite being surrounded by people, I somehow still often felt alone.

Every subsequent year, this has changed in ways that almost feel miraculous. I made deeper friendships, found places I could call home, and learned how to make myself a home for others. Looking back, I think most would agree that this arc is not unusual.

Starting college means entering a new environment where we don't yet know anyone, let alone have meaningful relationships with them — all while navigating a totally new lifestyle and physical space. For some of us, this comes right after leaving behind friendships and communities we'd spent 18 years building. Of course, it takes time to find not only our footing, but also our place.

That said, I've also come to believe that the feeling of not quite knowing where we belong isn't a phase characteristic of only certain life transitions. We live on a floating orb somewhere in the middle of who-knows-where, with no context for any of it — is it really so surprising if we feel a little lost sometimes?

A friend once told me that in a world which can feel tremendously big, it's easy to feel lost and wonder where we belong. In this vast world, it is by seeing others and being seen, caring for others and being cared for, depending on others and being depended on, witnessing vulnerability and being vulnerable ourselves, and — perhaps most importantly — loving and being loved, that we truly know we exist.

But what does love even mean? To me, love is to say, *you are mine*. Not in any sense of possession or ownership, but in the sense of: *I see myself in you, and I see you in me. I care about you the way I care about myself*. There can be particular reasons to love — a shared background, admiration for someone's character, a common interest, sympathy for another's struggles — but I've come to think that our shared experience of being alive on this planet is reason enough. To love simply because you exist and I exist. That, I think, is what it would mean to see the whole world as my own.

SENIOR SIDE NOTES

My metric for living

On the art of feeling alive

By Kanna Pichappan

"Once we stop rushing through life, we will be amazed by how much more life we have time for." — Unknown

But what exactly is this "life" we're referring to? To me, one way to think about life is less in hours and more in vitality, measured by two metrics: presence and agency.

The metric of presence

The first is the depth with which we experience a moment — the literal opposite of "going through the motions." It can be easy to slip into a state of functional numbness, where we become machines that do work without truly feeling or experiencing ourselves. To me, to have "more life" is to embrace vitality — in other words, to reject that numbness.

I often think of the character Pari (played by Vijay) in the 2012 Tamil film *Nanban*, which I first watched when I was in middle school. The movie follows three friends at a high-pressure engineering college, contrasting a rigid academic system against Pari's philosophy of curiosity, kindness, and love of learning. While his peers and college environment are consumed by the "rat race" of exams and competitions, Pari saw the classroom not as a hurdle, but as a playground. He treated the daily act of attending a lecture with the genuine thrill that today, we are going to learn something new. (Another one of my favorite quotes of Pari is "This is a college, not a pressure cooker," a philosophy which can be applied to life as well.)

Beyond the classroom, this sense of heightened presence can manifest in a variety of ways: exchanging a smile with a stranger while waiting for the elevator, laughing at Cambridge's unpredictable rain schedule, complimenting a classmate's new glasses, picking up a dropped water bottle for someone, noticing the newly bloomed flowers, smell of the rain, or breeze on our face on the walk we make daily to campus. In addition to being "nice" things to do, they also strike me as proof of life. By living this way, I feel a heightened sense of connection to others and to the world around me, which gives me a sign of actually being alive during the day.

The metric of agency

The second metric is autonomy — the degree to which we feel in control of our time.

One thing MIT has taught me is that the art of leaning into this metric lies in thoughtfully choosing commitments that are meaningful: places where we want to invest and contribute our time, rather than places where we feel like our time is taken away from us.

Oftentimes, however, there are tasks that we aren't thrilled about, like administrative responsibilities and scheduling logistics. In these cases, our language becomes saturated with the phrase "I have to." *I have to go to lab. I have to be at this meeting. I have to finish this pset.* When we speak this way, we frame our lives as a series of cages we've been locked into. That said, hopefully, these commitments stem from volitional choices that at least enable something we want in the future. In these cases, recognizing that and reframing "I have to" as "I get to" or "I am doing X because it enables me to do Y later" can subtly return authorship to how our days are written.

Getting more out of the same 16 waking hours

To me, the "more life" that the quote refers to isn't an extra hour added to the 24-hour clock. It is experiencing more vitality and meaning in the same 16 waking hours we already have — to not only have a beating heart, but also to actually feel alive.

What do I aspire for that to look like for me?

On the same walk I make every day to class, I can marvel at the cherry blossoms in front of Baker. I can say hi to the little kids of faculty and staff who frequent the Banana Lounge as I make myself a cup of tea. I can take the time and care to select classes, research projects, and organizations that feel meaningful to me — so that I know my time is going somewhere valuable, leading my hours to feel contributed rather than merely expended.

In some ways, the art of feeling alive is truly inhabiting the hours we live in — a sense of presence and agency can stretch those hours wide.

FROSH FILES

I got stuck in London for two days

Two flight cancellations, two delays, one undelay, and another delay later…

By Shelly Yang
CAMPUS LIFE EDITOR

After spending most of January in Kigali, Rwanda, I was scheduled to fly back to Boston over the weekend. During that time, I knew there would be a huge snowstorm in Boston, which sounds typical of New England winter weather. What I didn't know, however, was this snowstorm spanned over the East Coast and would wreak havoc in the area.

My connection was in London, and after one flight cancellation, I thought I would just stay in the Heathrow airport overnight. Not the most fun, but doable.

When I went to get my travel itinerary, however, I was told that my flight was canceled again and pushed back another day, meaning that I would have to spend two nights at the airport. But I think the airline didn't allow that, since they promptly booked me a nearby hotel.

SHELLY YANG—THE TECH

The London Eye on Sunday, Jan. 25, 2026.

Hence, I was thrust into London, knowing no one and having no plan.

I have never been to London, nor the UK, for that matter. But I knew I probably wouldn't get to come back for a while. Besides, I couldn't see myself sitting in the hotel for *two whole days* when I had a chance to see a whole new city. I knew I had to make the most of the time I got, so I got a strong urge to tour as many main attractions as I could. I felt like if I didn't, I would've failed by letting an opportunity fly away.

Immediately, I panicked and asked my friend for help on how to navigate Central London, since it was about an hour and a half from the hotel where I was staying. I had zero idea how any of the public transit worked, did not have any pounds, and on top of that, probably did not have a credit card that worked internationally. All I had was me, my crippling sense of disorientation, and Google Maps to guide me forward.

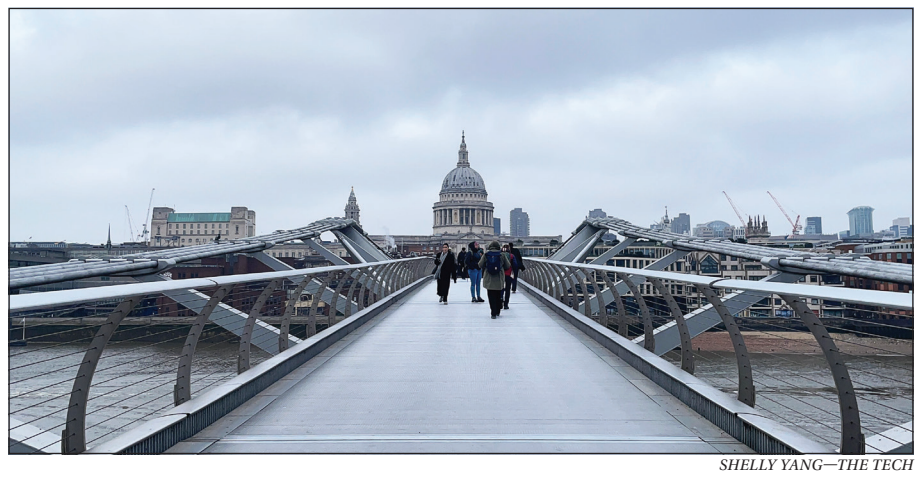
I tried to take a bus, which was when I confirmed that I did, in fact, not have any working currency. Luckily, the driver was kind enough to let me in anyway. On the way to my next stop, I had enough time to do a little bit of research; I figured out that I could get a day pass to take any line of public transportation an unlimited number of times, which would solve the problem of figuring out how to get to Central London.

I still didn't know my exact route and couldn't find the Oxford Tube (where Google Maps suggested to go), so I took the Metropolitan line instead. I thought I took the wrong route at first, since I was heading perpendicularly from where I needed to go. However, a lady was kind enough to help me navigate, and we chatted in the metro the whole time. Though I think her suggested path took an extra hour longer than it would've through the Oxford Tube, it was nice to slow down a little bit. At the time, I still felt a lot of adrenaline and felt like I needed to tour as many places as possible with the limited amount of time I had; I forgot the point of travel was to actually *enjoy* myself while there, so the conversation was a good reminder.

SHELLY YANG—THE TECH

Buckingham Palace on Sunday, Jan. 25, 2026.

I first saw Buckingham Palace! It was kind of surreal that I was actually touring London. I basically just walked around, exchanged money, and ate for the first time in multiple hours (since I didn't eat breakfast on the plane, oops). I saw Westminster Abbey, which was closed only on Sunday (guess what day it was…), Big Ben, and rode the London Eye for the view. I then took a cruise from Westminster Pier to Tower Pier, which took me under some famous bridges (Millenium, London, and Tower).



SHELLY YANG—THE TECH

Millennium Bridge on Monday, Jan. 26, 2026.

The next day, I toured spots I wanted to see closer, so I went to the Tower of London, walked across the Tower Bridge, saw Borough Market (which is closed only on Mondays… guess what day it was…), and went into a restaurant that looked good. I crossed the Millenium Bridge and ran into St. Paul's Cathedral before heading to the British Museum.

Then, I went to Chinatown! I walked around a bit before settling on dinner and a bubble tea place. I ultimately decided on Molly Tea, since there wasn't as long of a line. I was delighted because I didn't have to wait an hour in line like I had to in the newly-opened spot in Boston Chinatown. I then visited Piccadilly Circus, known for its neon lights, and headed home afterwards, collapsing into bed immediately.

Two flight cancellations, two delays, one undelay, and another delay later… I finally got back to campus. This trip was definitely the craziest one I've ever been on, but it also taught me how to deal with a lot of travel inconveniences. First, I was solo-tripping with no preparation beforehand, which was initially terrifying. However, I was really lucky to have gotten stuck in London of all places, because there was no language barrier, and it was relatively safe. Also, the public transportation is *very* well done, and pretty much all the tourist sites are within walking distance from one another. I would definitely love to visit again and tour the UK in general, though in less of a time crunch. But for now, I'll have to wait for my next adventure.

SHELLY YANG—THE TECH

Westminster Abbey on Sunday, Jan. 25, 2026.

‘The Emperor of Gladness’: an intimate portrait of hope and darkness in hardscrabble New England

Ocean Vuong tells the intimate story of two immigrants in Connecticut searching for hope

★★★★★

The Emperor of Gladness

Ocean Vuong

Penguin Press

May 13, 2025

By Rebecca Showalter Enamorado

“It’s beautiful here, even the ghosts agree.”

With those words, Ocean Vuong transports readers to East Gladness, a fictional forgotten town at the edge of Connecticut. It is 2009, and the opioid crisis has torn through New England, leaving thousands to die before the CDC even calls it an epidemic. Countless more are left haunted, including 19-year-old Hai, who stands at the edge of a bridge in East Gladness, ready to jump.

He is stopped by Grazina, an elderly Lithuanian woman who is experiencing early signs of dementia. Disregarded by her children and beginning to lose track of the present, Grazina offers Hai a place to stay if he takes care of her. The two begin a friendship that anchors them against the tides that rise around them.

To provide for the two of them, Hai finds a job at HomeMarket, a fast-food restaurant that imitates Thanksgiving-style home-cooked meals. Here, Vuong introduces readers to an array of unforgettable characters. Their stories are inconsequential and mundane to the rest of the world, but Vuong paints their lives with a brilliance reserved for the heroes of epic poems.

At HomeMarket, Hai reconnects with his cousin Sony as he begins to reapproach the past that drove him to the bridge. Vuong writes, “The hardest thing in the world is to live only once,” and we see his characters struggle to do just that as they dream, plan, and grieve in the edges of reality and sanity in East Gladness.

We get to know HomeMarket’s manager, BJ, an aspiring wrestler buoyed by her dreams; Maureen, a cashier wrestling with grief; Wayne, a coworker fighting for his honor and some extra cash; and Sony, a boy obsessed with the Civil War and his missing war hero father. Meanwhile, at his new home, Hai walks with Grazina through her labyrinth of memories, trying to keep her grounded.

In the beautiful and arresting language of his poetry, Ocean Vuong weaves a story in a voice that is both unflinchingly honest and lovingly tender. Vuong reveals his ability to write a longer form of fiction that is all at once gut-wrenching, soothing, and at times, unexpectedly hilarious. He has the singular ability to carefully balance grief, hope, and humor in a tone that uniquely belongs to him.

One of the many strengths of *The Emperor of Gladness* is its richly wrought setting. East Gladness is haunting, somehow rendered to be both mythical and undeniably real. Reading about this town on the outskirts of civilization feels like a memory; the experience is a mixture of reality, dream, and imagination.

The most impactful part of *The Emperor of Gladness* is its characters. The details of their lives are commonplace, and their hardships and joys are the sorts of things you have heard about countless times before. They are among the endless tragedies on the news that lose their meaning amidst the overwhelming onslaught. In Vuong’s writing, however, these everyday sorrows and simple delights, events our society has become desensitized to, regain a fiery vibrance. Vuong’s writing will break your heart and make you laugh out loud at anecdotes that you would have labeled as insignificant before. You will come out, like these characters, wounded but hopeful.

Thousands of people like Hai died unnoticed in the early 2000s from an epidemic that was then unnamed. But in Ocean Vuong’s new novel, Hai lives a searingly bright life in a story that is unforgettable.

Hadelich and Weiss chart an American road trip at MIT’s Thomas Tull Concert Hall

The duo performed music ranging from Charles Ives to Carlos Simon as part of the BSO’s “E Pluribus Unum” festival

By Chloe Lee
ARTS EDITOR

Ives’s Sonata No. 4, Hartke’s *Netsuke*, Roumain’s “Filter,” Simon’s *Serenade*, Adams’s *Road Movies*, Copland’s “Nocturne,” “Ukulele Serenade,” “Hoe-Down,” Beach’s *Romance*

Augustin Hadelich, violin and Orion Weiss, piano

Thomas Tull Concert Hall

Feb. 1, 2026

Acclaimed violinist Augustin Hadelich was born in Italy to German parents. He came to the United States two decades ago to study at the Juilliard School and never left. Hadelich’s biography is somewhat of an introduction for the recital he and pianist Orion Weiss brought to MIT’s Thomas Tull Concert Hall on Feb. 1 as part of the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s month-long “E Pluribus Unum: From Many, One” festival celebrating the 250th anniversary of American democracy. The program, mirroring the duo’s 2024 Warner Classics Erato album *American Road Trip*, asked what American music sounds like; predictably and beautifully, the duo found that it sounded like many things simultaneously.

The evening opened with Charles Ives’s Sonata No. 4, subtitled “Children’s Day at the Camp Meeting.” In his writing, Ives includes many contradictions. For example, hymn tunes repeatedly sound fractured and reassembled. Hadelich and Weiss caught these shifting phrases naturally, moving through the sonata’s wild turns without suppressing its deliberate roughness. Listeners familiar with the gospel hymns included in the score could recognize these subtle tunes, and those who did not could still feel a tension between familiarity and novelty.

Following Ives was Aaron Copland’s two miniatures, the Roaring Twenties-flavored “Ukulele Serenade” (1926) and the 1942 “Hoe-Down” from *Rodeo*, which became the evening’s most instantly crowd-pleasing moments. Dubbed the “Dean of American Composers,” Copland was a city boy imagining the Wild West when he wrote the piece. Hadelich and Weiss played both selections with infectious energy. The “Hoe-Down” in particular burst with joy that left the audience grinning.

The program’s centerpiece, John Adams’s *Road Movies*, lived up to its title. The three-movement work, “Relaxed Groove,” “Meditative,” and “40% Swing,” is Adams’s most cinematically American composition, creating open highways and a particular restlessness of motion for its own sake. Whatever minimalism underlied his writing hid under sheer momentum. Hadelich and Weiss’s dynamic accents fell precisely where they should, and the piece evoked an “American Dream” that was delivered with full conviction.

On the other hand, Stephen Hartke’s six-movement *Netsuke* left the audience wondering. The work functions as a sort of Japanese pictures-at-an-exhibition, and several listeners in the hall were visibly consulting the program notes throughout. Hartke’s writing for the duo was brilliant, and Hadelich and Weiss gave it everything they had. However, the piece ran long and achieved its conclusion before its actual ending.

The evening’s most electrifying moment belonged to Daniel Bernard Roumain’s “Filter” for solo violin, a bluesy, rock-inflected homage to Jimi Hendrix. Hadelich brought the full house to its feet with a virtuosic performance that wrung sounds from an acoustic violin that had no business coming from one. The rendition led to a well-earned standing ovation of the evening. After “Filter” was Carlos Simon’s “Serenade,” receiving its world premiere as a BSO commission. Simon is the BSO’s composer-in-residence and an Atlanta native. Although the piece was excellent, it felt mild by comparison to the adventurousness surrounding it. Nevertheless, the programming of this piece supported its merit.

The program closed like it began, going back to the late 19th century. Amy Beach’s *Romance* served as a kind of exhalation after a long journey. The expanse between Ives’s opening hymns and Beach’s closing tenderness made sense, like a completed road trip. The encore, “Black Gypsy” by Eddie South, was a bright ending from two musicians who clearly love American music.

The BSO offers a splendid rendition of Bruckner alongside a convincing American premiere of Salonen's Horn concerto

Esa-Pekka Salonen guest conducts the orchestra with soloist Stefan Dohr

Boccherini/Berio's *Ritirata notturna di Madrid*, Salonen's Horn Concerto, Bruckner's Symphony No. 4

Boston Symphony Orchestra

Conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen with Stefan Dohr on solo Horn

Boston Symphony Hall

Feb. 12–14, 2026

By Luke Kim
ARTS STAFF WRITER

From Feb. 12 to Feb. 14, the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) hosted guest conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen and soloist Stefan Dohr, principal horn player of the Berlin Philharmonic. This concert is the second time Salonen has collaborated with the BSO, with the first being in 2012. Since Salonen is a prolific composer himself, his concerts often include his own compositions, a trend which held true for this concert.

The opening work of the program was Berio's orchestration of "Ritirata" from Musica notturna delle strade di Madrid by Boccherini. Berio's version is published as *Quattro versioni originali della "Ritirata notturna di Madrid."* As can be assumed from the title, the orchestration is a theme and variation of the original orchestration, but with a twist: Berio superimposes the four different versions of Bocherini's original work. While the four instrumentations are mainly the same, as Berio himself noted, there are slight harmonic clashes between the versions. These nuances are conveyed well, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra appropriately played along with the lightness of the mood.

Salonen's horn concerto officially premiered last year, with this concert being its American premiere. Reminiscent of the past, the concerto was a product of top-tier craftsmanship, conveying Salonen's unique bond with the horn. The unifying motif element between the movements was convincingly and aptly placed. While Salonen wrote that some melodies represented fleeting moments, they were all crystal clear in each movement. Part of the opening theme for Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 12 appeared in the first movement, Bruckner's horn opening calls were taken up by multiple horns in the second movement, and the horn figures in the Trio of Beethoven's Symphony No. 3 (Eroica) Scherzo appeared in the third movement.

Another crucial reason for the concerto's appeal was its unpretentiousness. Salonen seems to have aimed for a concerto that the audience could reasonably follow and appreciate. The second movement, Adagio, had a serene quality that created a calm sense of reflection. Salonen's writing hit the mark: the entrance of the horn call created an overwhelming sense of blessedness. The third movement balanced tension and activity, with microtonal figures of the strings instruments perfectly establishing a sense of eeriness. This aspect juxtaposed well with the exciting nature of the movement's introduction, the horn taking center stage at the final moment.

Dohr performed this difficult concerto without any sign of struggle. The fast and high figures at the climax of the concerto were awe-inspiring. He beautifully navigated the whole concerto with thoughtfulness and finesse, blending into and emerging from the orchestra at well-judged moments. The various solo sections doubled with the orchestra could not have been smoother.

The second half of the evening was dedicated to Bruckner's fourth symphony. As with all of Bruckner's symphonies, there is an issue of which version to use. The fourth is one of the least controversial, and Salonen picked this conventional choice. The first movement began with a positive note with the clearest and the most precise brass section performance from the BSO this season. Another beautiful aspect of the orchestra's playing was their clear distinction and emphasis of the Bruckner rhythm. Their dynamic control was also precise, and one could clearly see Salonen's intentions.

The second movement contains one of the most beautiful melodies that Bruckner ever composed. The sonority-filled theme was played exquisitely by the cellos. Other important sections were carefully managed by Salonen, who kept firm control of the rhythm, allowing the melody to feel processional yet not funereal. The most satisfying moment came with the surreal viola countermelody against the flute melody section, building up to the first climax to convey the architectural buildup Bruckner intended.

The scherzo/trio third movement followed a relatively standard tempo and interpretation. The horn calls were precise, and the gradual increase in volume and grandeur did not go unnoticed. Especially as the Scherzo returns, the orchestra executed a convincing ending of the movement. The *Ländler* Trio section was well-judged, providing a good contrast and a relaxed atmosphere without lagging.

The Finale is probably the most complex movement of the four. Its mood was set up by the triumphant return of an E-flat major horn call. Salonen then introduced and emphasized each theme from the other movements. While maintaining consistency, Salonen also overcorrected slightly each time the second theme returned. Although the scores called only for *a tempo*, in these scenarios the orchestra took the tempo a notch faster than at the beginning. This decision did not greatly hinder enjoyment of the music.

Overall, the BSO delivered a special performance. It is not common, even for a top-notch orchestra, to deliver this level of excellence, and it was good to bear witness.

Previewing MIT Baseball in Coach Morris's first year

Morris returns to MIT with championship conviction, eying the program's first conference title since 2019

By Matthew Barnett
SPORTS EDITOR

After a late-season run to the NEWMAC Championship game last year, MIT Baseball is turning a new page following longtime head coach Andy Barlow's retirement after 22 years at the helm. Barlow departs as the winningest baseball coach in school history, notching a 421–321–3 record after nearly a quarter century with the team. Now, the reins pass to Chris Morris, the 7th head coach of MIT Baseball.

Morris comes to MIT with 12 years of collegiate coaching experience. He was most recently the head baseball coach at his alma mater, Husson University, for the past six seasons. At Husson, Morris led the Eagles to five consecutive North Atlantic Conference (NAC) Championships and five consecutive NCAA Regional appearances. Under his tenure, the program had a 125–77 record, including a dominant 74–11 record in conference play. Before his head coaching job at Husson, Morris was an assistant at Brandeis (2018), MIT (2015–2018), and Husson (2014–2015).

What to expect from Coach Morris

Coach Morris returns to MIT with championship conviction, eying the program's first conference title since 2019. "The standard here is always going to be to win a NEWMAC title," he asserted.

To bridge his ambition to results, Coach Morris prioritizes fundamentals and a growth-oriented mindset. He views a championship as something that is accomplished through consistent effort. "It's what we're doing in the weight room. It's what we're doing in the offseason. It's our long, late nights in Rockwell," Morris said. "[Winning] is always going to be our standard and our goal."

Central to this vision is player development. "I want us to develop the correct way… to play the game the correct way. I want us to compete at a high level every day we step on the field," Morris said.

To get to where they need to be, Morris's expectations for his roster are simple: "Show up [on] the field every day, play hard, [and] compete to their best ability." When they do that, he said, "good things happen."

Drawing from his experience playing "a lot of really high-level baseball," Coach Morris aims to maintain the high caliber and intensity of play established under Coach Barlow while also integrating his unique nuances when approaching the game.

Coach Morris on this season's schedule

The Engineers have a challenging season of 34 games ahead of them, with Coach Morris facing many familiar faces from his past. MIT takes on Husson in a double header on March 21, and travels to Endicott on Apr. 1 and 23, facing the team that knocked Husson out of the NCAA Regionals in 2024.

When asked about facing his alma mater in his first year as MIT's head coach, Morris finds the matter a bit funny. Although Husson was "always on the schedule," Morris explained, he recounted a fun story. "Two years ago we came down here and scrimmaged in February with Coach [Barlow]," he said. "Right then, I was like, 'Coach, we gotta get on the schedule,' not knowing he was going to retire and we were going to switch seats."

Despite the matchup against his former program, Coach Morris's focus is drawn more to his in-conference NEWMAC games. "There's just so many good baseball programs [in the conference]," he noted. "I'm really excited about every one of those matchups because we have to play our best baseball every one of those games." Even with a handful of new coaches in the NEWMAC, specifically at Springfield and Emerson, the competition remains strong. "We're going to play a lot of great baseball teams with some great coaching staff," Morris said. "I think it's going to be really, really challenging, [but] that's what our guys want."

MIT is projected to finish 4th in the NEWMAC according to a preseason coaches poll.

On the lack of a home field

MIT's baseball field, Fran O'Brien Field, is currently undergoing renovations to convert the natural grass to a turf playing surface. Announced via a Housing and Residential Services email to students on Nov. 10, 2025, the field is projected to be unavailable until early April, essentially closing it for the duration of the season.

Because of this, the Engineers will play all of their games away from campus. Their designated home games will be played at various other venues in the Boston area, including Austin Preparatory School in Reading, UMass Lowell in Lowell, and Boston College, in Brighton.

When asked about the challenges of having zero true home games this season, Coach Morris emphasizes the opportunity it presents to the team. "[MIT students] love being challenged academically," he said. "Well, this is another challenge that we have to solve, and we like solving things at this school."

Morris explained that the team has put together a thorough plan to ensure that they're still succeeding in baseball and getting the reps and practice they need. "It is going to be much different than having your own home field, and the luxuries of being to walk 100 yards and be at your field," he stated, "[but] we're not going to shy away from that."

Despite having to travel for all of their games, Morris sees a silver lining. Getting away from campus will help students "separate a little bit" from their work and "lock in a little bit more" as they approach high-stake games and conference matchups.

Even with the lack of a home field, Morris says that MIT's mission does not change. "We're gonna go win a NEWMAC title," he said. "It's just going to be done [in] a lot of different places."

THREE QUESTIONS

Caught the start-up bug? Bob Langer has some advice

What one of MIT's most prolific founders wants young entrepreneurs to know

By Katelyn Howard

On Feb. 12, MIT hosted the second annual MIT Startup Career Fair. For students interested in building companies, it feels easier than ever to access the hard technical infrastructure to learn, and even to launch — doors into the start-up world seem to be multiplying. The tougher question, now, is how to walk through them without losing your footing. Because even from the lofty platform of an institution like MIT, starting a company is still a leap of faith.

David H. Koch Institute Professor Robert S. Langer ScD '74 is no stranger to this leap. Since joining MIT faculty in 1978, Langer has become a pioneer in drug delivery and tissue engineering, has produced over 1,000 patents, and has founded dozens of companies. And as the head of a lab that supports dozens of UROPs each semester, he is famously ever-willing to give advice to undergraduates that wish to follow in his footsteps. In this interview, Langer reflects on passion, failure, and the courage required to translate entrepreneurial ideas into lasting impact.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

The Tech: **In the wake of the second MIT Startup Career Fair, and in the context of MIT's broader focus on entrepreneurship, when do you think it actually makes sense for a young scientist to choose a start-up over a more traditional path?**

Langer: I think that one of the best things about being at a university, whether it's undergraduate or graduate, is learning fundamentals. I think that's the most important thing. That being said, getting a taste of things, including entrepreneurship, is good. Entrepreneurship is one of those things I've done, but I never did it until I was ten years into being a professor. If I wanted to enable patients to use my research, I learned that if I wasn't my own champion, nobody else would be. Then I had this passion to do those things.

> **And I think if you find a passion, whatever it is, that's the important thing.**

TT: **Do you worry that the excitement around start-ups today encourages premature commercialization of ideas or premature launch of young researchers out of academia?**

Langer: I think it's okay, and it could even be good, but there need to be ways to give people experience and mentorship at whatever stage they're at. You have to have coaches in sports; if you're starting a company, you have to have people and structures that can help you, give you advice, and help prevent you from making mistakes. I actually think it's okay to try and fail — people have failed throughout history. But what would be bad is to try and fail and then feel that because the failure was so painful, you'd never do it again.

TT: **That makes me think of the autobiographical piece you wrote last year for Annual Reviews, where you talk about how many of your early ideas were rejected initially. How did you feel when that was happening? And what advice would you give to a young scientist or entrepreneur who feels discouraged early on in their careers?**

Langer: I was lucky in the following way: when I was a postdoc, I worked with this man named [Dr.] Judah Folkman, who was a surgeon. He was a visionary guy. And what he did ended up leading to drugs [for cancer treatment] that affect millions, even hundreds of millions of people — that was my postdoctoral project. Seeing that helped me. I could see somebody else older than me going through it. And it made me feel well, okay, it happens.

[In terms of advice for students], I'd say

> **Everybody told him his ideas were wrong, but he felt that anything was possible.**

it's good to talk to people, and it's good to not give up easily. People try and sometimes they fail. But I don't think it matters how many times you fail; it just matters if you succeed even once. It's better to ask big questions that can change the world than just do incremental stuff. It may not happen quickly. But it's better to shoot for really big things, and if you don't get exactly the top, you'll still do great. I would give advice like that.

Emmanuel J. Tellez and Daniel Gonzalez contributed to fact checking for this article.

Science journalist Michael Pollan talks about the science of consciousness at First Parish Church

Pollan: "How do you get from flesh — neural flesh — to subjective experience?"

By Vivian Hir
SENIOR EDITOR

How does one define consciousness? The answer depends on whom you ask. For a doctor, consciousness requires a person to stay awake and have a sense of awareness. For a writer, though, consciousness is an individual's interior experience.

Science journalist Michael Pollan tries to answer this large and complex question in his new book *A World Appears*. In the book, Pollan investigates consciousness in four ascending levels of complexity: sentience, feelings, thoughts, and self (self-awareness). By gaining a better understanding of consciousness, Pollan argues, readers can develop greater insights about themselves.

On Thursday, Feb. 26, Michael Pollan talked about his new book at First Parish Church in Cambridge. Joining Pollan in conversation was Louisa Thomas, a staff writer for *The New Yorker*. Pollan is the author of ten *New York Times* bestsellers, including *How to Change Your Mind* and *The Omnivore's Dilemma*.

Pollan began the talk by defining consciousness as a "subjective experience." He cited philosopher Thomas Nagel's 1974 essay, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?," which argued that consciousness is subjective and is not merely a physical experience. In the essay, Nagel asked readers to perform a thought experiment by imagining themselves navigating the world from a bat's point of view. Nagel chose the bat in his essay because the mammal is special for using echolocation. Although humans can try to imagine themselves as bats, Nagel argued that they can't truly know what it's like to be a bat, suggesting that consciousness has a subjective quality. "It's a kind of handy identifier of consciousness," Pollan said.

The study of consciousness is a relatively new field. Pollan called the field a "taboo" in the past because it was "too elusive," making it a "career killer." One example of these early challenges was Francis Crick and Christof Koch's work on "neural correlates," a term they coined in a 1990 paper to describe the brain activity necessary for experiences like consciousness. They also proposed that 40-hertz oscillations of electrical waves in the brain were a neuronal sign of consciousness. However, they were unable to identify these specific neural regions and justify why 40-hertz was the frequency. This problem showed that studying this subject was more complicated than expected. "How do you get from flesh — neural flesh — to subjective experience?" Pollan asked. "That's a huge gulf to cross."

In the process of writing *A World Appears*, Pollan learned a lot of things about consciousness that surprised him, such as the differing theories on thoughts versus feelings. Initially, scientists believed that the cortex governed consciousness, which meant that thoughts came before feelings. Beginning in the '90s, however, scientists including Mark Solms argued the opposite: feelings preceded thoughts and the upper brain stem was responsible for consciousness. Pollan stated that feelings include hunger and suffering, sensations that both humans and animals experience. "You have to realize that there are many creatures that are conscious," Pollan said.

Pollan also shared his experience of participating in an experiment about consciousness. The experiment focused on capturing the inner experience, a concept in which inner thoughts capture a person's consciousness. In the experiment, Pollan wore an earpiece that delivered random beeps five times a day. After he heard that beep, Pollan had to write down what he was thinking at the moment.

VIVIAN HIR—THE TECH

Author Michael Pollan speaks in conversation with Louisa Thomas at First Parish Church on Thursday Feb. 26, 2026.

Pollan admitted that he did not have "a single profound thought" during the experiment. For instance, Pollan was salting salmon for dinner when the beeper went off. "I just [thought], 'shit, I forgot the pepper,'" Pollan admitted, which made the audience laugh. Throughout the experiment, Pollan got to talk to psychology professor Russel Hurlburt about the experience. From these conversations, Pollan learned that only about 30 to 50% of people think in words; there are also visual thinkers and unsymbolized thought thinkers.

Besides being fascinated by the scientific research of consciousness, Pollan also appreciated the subject's interdisciplinary nature, as it integrates many different fields, including philosophy, neuroscience, and psychology. "This is one area where the humanities are respected in science, which is not often the case," Pollan said.

Although Pollan primarily interviewed scientists for the book, he also underscored the importance of thinking about consciousness not only from a scientific lens, but also from a humanities lens. Pollan was struck by the profoundness of psychologist William James's 1892 essay "The Stream of Consciousness," which approached the topic from a nuanced perspective which he didn't find in science. "There's no scientist you can query about that, and that's just not the way they are approaching the problem," Pollan explained.

He also found novelists like Marcel Proust to be a major source for learning about the qualitative dimension of consciousness. He asked the audience to picture a rose, stating that each person has a "different rose" in their mind because everyone has distinct associations and histories with a rose. As a result, this makes consciousness have a "familiarity" and "intimacy" that science cannot explain. "I felt it would not have done justice to the subject to stick with the science of consciousness," Pollan said.

Later in the talk, Pollan applied his understanding of consciousness to argue that AI is not conscious. He found human-AI relationships to be "alarming" and "dehumanizing," since he considered AI tools like ChatGPT to be "frictionless" and "sycophantic." Friction is important to human relationships because it helps people better understand themselves, according to Pollan. On the other hand, AI relationships prevent people from becoming emotionally attached to other people. Pollan acknowledged that even if he believes that AI is not conscious, his stance may not change anything because people will still think otherwise. "It's very hard to prove they are not conscious at a certain point," Pollan admitted.

Despite the book's focus on consciousness, Pollan pointed out that one of the greatest human experiences is the dissolution of the self, which often invokes a sense of wonder and awe. Experiences that lead to dissolving the self include being immersed in a work of art and practicing meditation. In Pollan's case, it came from attending a Zen retreat in a cave in New Mexico. For a few days, he was alone with no internet or electricity. Pollan noticed that his sense of self became more "permeable" and "softer" when he was alone because he was less focused on reinforcing his own sense of self.

Instead of thinking about consciousness as a problem to solve, Pollan thought more about how special it is. "It's a miracle that we do have this space, this private space of complete mental freedom," Pollan marveled. "What an amazing gift that is."

Give peas a chance (they could bring your community together)

Professor Kate Brown talks about her new book, 'Tiny Gardens Everywhere'

By Vaibhavi Addala
SCIENCE STAFF WRITER

On Wednesday, Feb. 18, the MIT Museum hosted a book talk for Professor Kate Brown's latest book, *Tiny Gardens Everywhere: The Past, Present, and Future of the Self-Provisioning City*. Brown, a professor in MIT's Science, Technology, and Society program, spoke briefly about the book before conversing with Harvard Graduate School of Design Professor Antoine Picon.

Over the course of her remarks and spirited conversation with Picon, Brown touted the multifaceted benefits of urban agriculture. She argued that growing food in abandoned or unused spots in and around cities can simultaneously feed communities and bring them closer together, contributing to positive economic, health, and social change.

To support her claim, she pointed to poor laborers who moved from the countryside to Berlin in the 19th and early 20th centuries to work in factories. These factory workers squatted illegally on lands at the outskirts of the city and planted gardens to supplement their diets. While the soil had been overfarmed and was initially "basically sand," the inhabitants collectively reclaimed it, using organic waste to make nutritious human-engineered soils. The result was a conversion of their lands from overfarmed slums to what Brown calls "green shantytowns," with thriving gardens and communal resources, such as a free kindergarten. The produce from these gardens not only supplemented the residents' diet, but also brought together a community that established what Brown calls "the sinews of a social welfare network."

PHOTO PROVIDED BY PROFESSOR KATE BROWN

Members of MIT Farm Club cultivating carrots in their rooftop garden in March 2026.

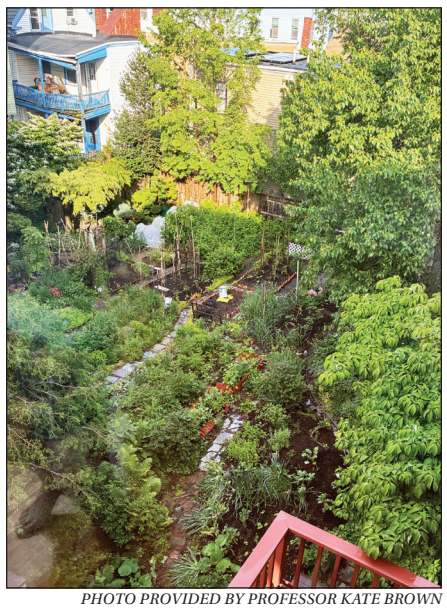


PHOTO PROVIDED BY PROFESSOR KATE BROWN

Professor Kate Brown's garden in Inman Square, March 2026.

She additionally cited the African American communities west of the Anacostia River in Washington, D.C., in the 19th and 20th centuries. Segregation forced these communities to move to the least desirable districts in Washington, D.C., leaving them to live on land that lacked sanitation, jobs, and infrastructure. However, the inhabitants kept tiny gardens and livestock, feeding them with the organic waste and garbage that was dumped in the area. Sharing their produce and meat meant they were even able to survive the Great Depression with high rates of home ownership and community, despite having poorer infrastructure and lower rates of traditional employment.

Brown herself has a lot of experience with urban gardening, which was one of her reasons for writing the book. In both *Tiny Gardens* and her talk, she detailed her time working on an urban farm in Amsterdam and cultivating gardens in American cities. As an example, she highlighted her garden in Inman Square — a densely populated area — which she currently shares with five others. The resulting produce, which ranges from greens to root vegetables, not only supplements her diet year-round, but has also, she claims, brought her closer to her neighbors.

Brown argues that this is exactly why urban gardening should be translated to mainstream American culture. At a time of rising loneliness, division, and isolation, and when between 11 and 27% of the American population lives in areas that can be classified as food deserts, she believes urban gardening could be a meaningful solution, simultaneously feeding people and making them less lonely and "susceptible… [to] the politics of fear."

But where will the space for these gardens come from? Brown visualizes using abandoned or unused spots when possible, but argues that urban gardening can be done in the smallest of spaces — and that new technologies, such as vertical farming, are not needed to solve the crisis. Instead, she believes that people simply need to adapt traditional gardening methods for varying conditions; as an example, she referenced her winter garden box, which is very small but still feeds her throughout the winter. If people do so in community gardens, she says, they "would be healthier and less lonely and isolated," and "we'd have greener, more comfortable, safer cities."

While she does acknowledge the many hurdles facing this idea, including municipal regulations and aesthetic guidelines, Brown suggests that people try not to be deterred by red tape. She mentioned a (presumably unsanctioned) food forest that she planted around a school in Washington, D.C., which "people loved," and suggests that residents "just start planting [in unused spaces]" without waiting for official permission. Often, she says, these gardens are not only accepted, but welcomed.

In fact, Brown believes that such practices can be directly applicable not only to our broader society, but even to the MIT community itself, where according to the 2023 Undergraduate Enrolled Student Survey, 13% of undergraduates go to bed hungry at least one night a week. To combat this, Brown suggested an increase in urban agriculture on MIT's campus — using greenhouses or self-sustaining cold frames during the winter — to help solve the problem. As of now, she herself has begun building a greenhouse on campus, but hopes to expand to other empty spaces in the future. Doing so would build on several MIT community farming efforts, including MIT Farm, the East Campus Community Garden, and garden plots for Ashdown residents.

Brown and other researchers have shown that communal gardening is an innately Mens et Manus (et Cor) activity with innumerable benefits. Perhaps, as she believes, practicing it in our own home really could bring us closer together.

As thousands are killed in Iran, MIT remains silent

MIT owes its Iranian students more than silence

By Anonymous

I want to tell you about two universities.

At Sharif University of Technology in Tehran, students returned to campus this week for the first time since January's massacres. They chanted over the names of the dead. At K. N. Toosi University, students trampled an image of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, an act that carries a prison sentence, possibly death. At the University of Tehran, students issued a statement: "We did not give our lives to compromise, nor to praise a murderous leader." Security forces attacked them. By Monday, students at more than a dozen universities across Tehran, Mashhad, and Isfahan had joined them. They knew what would happen. They went anyway.

At MIT, where Iranian students are part of our community, the administration has not said a word.

I am Iranian. I have family in Iran. For weeks in January, I could not reach them. I am not the only one. Some Iranian students at MIT still have not been able to confirm that their families are alive. This is not an abstraction for us. This is Tuesday.

Here is what has happened since December 28.

Nationwide protests erupted across Iran, the largest since the 1979 revolution. On January 8 and 9, under a near-total internet blackout, security forces opened fire on civilians. The Human Rights Activists News Agency has confirmed over 7,000 dead. Leaked internal government reports, cited by Time, The Guardian, and Iran International, place the figure above 30,000. Even Khamenei has acknowledged that "thousands" were killed. The United Nations Human Rights Council has called it the deadliest crackdown since the founding of the Islamic Republic. Amnesty International documented snipers on rooftops firing into crowds. On February 19, a senior regime official publicly confirmed that security forces delivered final shots to wounded protesters, an admission of extrajudicial execution from inside the system itself.

Tens of thousands have been arrested, including children. Many have been executed without due process. Human Rights Watch has documented mass enforced disappearances and coerced confessions broadcast on state television. Families across the country are now holding chehelom, the 40-day mourning tradition, and even these ceremonies are becoming sites of resistance: people dancing at funerals in defiance, chanting from rooftops. This week, universities reopened, and students in Iran are protesting again. These protests are happening at more than a dozen campuses across the country. These protests are happening under the shadow of a possible American military strike. These protests are happening under threat of arrest, expulsion, or worse. They are doing this knowing that their parents could be the ones mournfully dancing at their graves the day after.

I bring up the students in Iran not to draw a false equivalence. No one at MIT faces the risks those students face. That is exactly the point. We have every freedom to speak, and we have used none of it.

Nearly a million Iranians in diaspora took to the streets on February 14. NYU students held a vigil on the steps of the New York Public Library. Northeastern, blocks from here, held a solidarity rally in January. The Graduate Employees' Organization at UIUC issued a statement. The European Parliament, the UN Human Rights Council, Amnesty International, governments across the world, all have spoken.

MIT has not.

Institutions cannot respond to every crisis. I understand that, and this is not a demand that MIT take a foreign policy position. But when members of your own community cannot reach their families for weeks, when students in your hallways are grieving because they do not know if their loved ones are alive, that is not a foreign policy question. That is a question of whether you see the people in your own house. And even for those who have reached their families: the images coming out of Iran, bodies in hospital corridors, mass graves, children shot in the streets, are not things you see and recover from. The dead are not strangers to us. They are our people.

There are students at MIT who have been carrying this for almost two months, largely alone. Some sit next to you in lecture. Some TA your classes. They are doing it without any institutional acknowledgment that what they are going through is real.

Silence, in a case like this, is not neutrality. It is a decision.

What I am asking for is small relative to what is happening. A public statement from MIT acknowledging the scale of violence in Iran and its impact on our community. Direct support resources, counseling, academic flexibility, for students navigating weeks of severed family contact. This is not geopolitical commentary. This is what institutions do when their people are hurting.

And to the rest of the MIT community: if you know Iranian students, check in with them. If solidarity events happen on campus, show up. You do not need to understand the full politics of Iran to recognize that your classmate might be suffering.

Students in Iran are risking everything to stand up this week. We are being asked to do so much less.

The author has been granted anonymity due to safety concerns. The Tech *has independently verified the identity of the author.*

Open letter on TFUAP's changes to the science requirement

Despite other welcome changes, the proposal could hurt natural science education at MIT

By Sidarth Erat

Dear MIT community,

We have long benefitted from our Institute's commitment to giving students a broad background in science and technology to tackle the world's largest problems. Our General Institute Requirements (GIRs) have been an integral part of this commitment since our founding, and have served as an important signal to the outside world of the values of one of the world's foremost academic institutions.

However, in light of the recent task force proposal for the reform of the undergraduate syllabus, the authors fear that this commitment is being threatened at MIT. These changes include the end of Physics II: Electricity and Magnetism (8.02) as a requirement (other than for students with 8.01 credit) and increased flexibility with the chemistry and biology requirements (as few as six units of each will be required). The proposal would allow students to substitute biology and chemistry, in particular, with classes in computation and statistics. In addition, the committee has recommended the end of the Institute lab requirement and a shift toward faculty-mentored Undergraduate Research Opportunities (UROPs), which will have an outsized impact on the large labs where thousands of MIT students have received practical instruction in the natural sciences. We welcome a great number of the task force's changes, including restricting phone use in class and emphasizing teamwork-based classes, but cutting science from the required curriculum is not one of them. The reduction of the science breadth requirement alarms us because we feel it would inadvertently disincentivize exploratory learning and interdisciplinary thought in a way that goes against the spirit of this institution.

Especially during a tumultuous period in the history of American higher education that has seen universities around the nation struggle to maintain funding and independence, one must wonder why MIT is inflicting these drastic changes onto itself. By no means are we blind followers of tradition. We understand the popular perception of America's top universities as closed-off, stuffy places and have no intent to exacerbate it. We additionally acknowledge that technology has changed and so have the requirements to be STEM-literate, and that the GIRs should change accordingly. However, despite the value of computation and statistics, it is not clear to the authors why incorporating these topics into the undergraduate syllabus necessarily means less education in physics, biology, and chemistry. Indeed, based on a quick glance at public ASE data from the last few years, far more students arrive at MIT with a strong foundation in mathematics and computer science than in the natural sciences. To not require natural science courses, then, is to discourage students from pursuing an intellectual challenge. After all, the purpose of having GIRs in the first place is to ensure a common background for students who might otherwise not be incentivized to step out of their comfort zone.

We understand that the committee wanted to preserve the total number of GIR units to avoid reducing the amount of time students have for coursework in their major. This is a common concern among the student body as well: many undergraduates we talked to were opposed to an increase in the total number of GIR units because they feared this would cause a net increase in coursework. However, the committee itself discovered that the great majority of MIT graduates already take courses in computation and statistics, probability, or machine learning. Adding these onto the existing GIRs would not significantly increase students' typical course load, and we believe that this is a valid way to update MIT's GIRs.

Furthermore, the point of a university education is not simple skill acquisition. A university offers to its students something they cannot get from joining a coding bootcamp. There is tangible and measurable value in becoming affiliated with a range of disciplines and ways of thinking for people in all lines of work. We shall not dwell on the many merits of a broad education in the liberal arts, including the natural sciences. We would just be repeating what has already been said by myriad eloquent defenses written by scholars since the Renaissance. Could Ising models have been developed without intuition gained from the physics of magnetism? Could MIT's own Claude Shannon have motivated information theory without the microcanonical ensemble from thermodynamics?

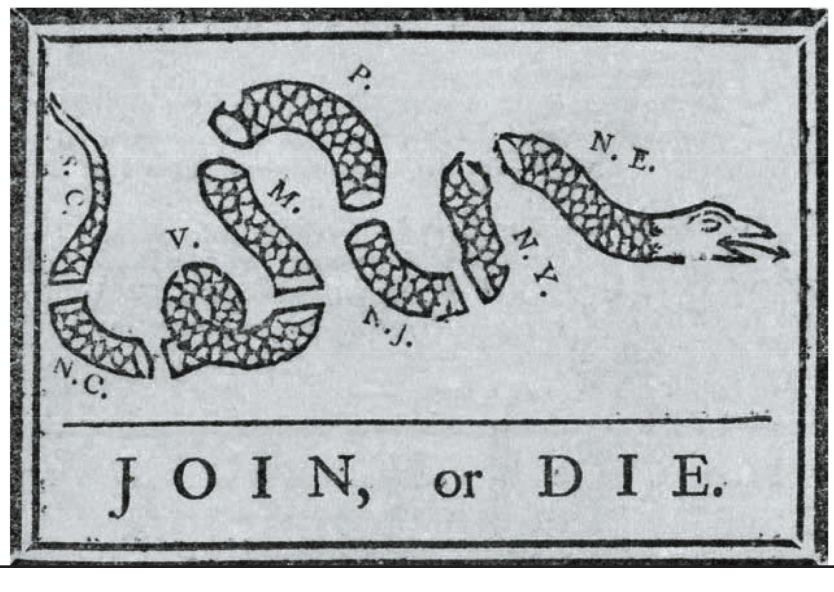
Despite the unfortunate implications of the proposed changes, we have seen an enheartening level of support for the natural sciences among both the student and faculty populations at MIT. We know from firsthand experience that many students, including many who aren't studying anything close to the natural sciences, benefited in their intellectual development from classes in these topics. We are hopeful that MIT will reconsider these changes so that students and faculty may better participate in our long tradition of far-reaching academic exploration and interdisciplinary problem-solving.

Signed,

Sidarth Erat, Serena An, Andrew Brahms, Jackson Dryg, Christopher Gilbert, Jacob Greene, Cordelia Hu, Anika Huang, Dania Hussein, Henry Jiang, Evin Liang, Calvin Macatantan, Ash, M., Marvin Mao, Ricardo Marin, Ruby Mykkanen, Khari Payne, Acadia Potts, Alexa Simao, Lila Shelton, Nadia Regalado Corsino, Chloe Tan, Tiger Zhang

Sidarth Erat is a first-year undergraduate student at MIT majoring in Course 8 (Physics) and Course 18 (Mathematics).

"Could MIT's own Claude Shannon have motivated information theory without the microcanonical ensemble from thermodynamics?"



OPINION POLICY

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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.

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Electronic submissions are encouraged and should be sent to tt-opinions@mit.edu. Hard copy submissions should be addressed to *The Tech*, P.O. Box 391529, Cambridge, Mass. 02139-7029, or sent by interdepartmental mail to Room W20-483. Electronic submissions will be prioritized over hard copy submissions. All submissions are due on Thursday two weeks before the date of publication (i.e. by the publication prior to the target publication).

Eastern Edge Food Hall opens in Kendall Square

Julce, partner of Everybody Gotta Eat vendor: "Money is secondary, passion is primary"

By Vivian Hir
SENIOR EDITOR

On Feb. 13, the Eastern Edge Food Hall officially opened in Kendall Square. Located on 290 Main St, next to the Kendall/MIT MBTA Red Line station, Eastern Edge is a first-floor occupant of Building E39. The 11,000 square-foot food hall can seat 275 guests and has nine food and drink vendors that include vegetarian fast food chain Clover and Caribbean grab-and-go vendor Chatty Patty. All vendors are local except for Bacaro Café & Bar, a Venetian-inspired cafe. Gather Group, a hospitality management company based in Alabama, operates and manages Eastern Edge.

Workers at Eastern Edge were optimistic about the opening of the food hall.

Jiho Ru, the General Manager of Eastern Edge, stated that the purpose of the food hall is to foster connection and build community in Cambridge. He also highlighted that Eastern Edge's environment is influenced by MIT's innovative atmosphere, given that MIT is near Eastern Edge. For Ru, what makes Eastern Edge special is that it is a "chef-driven company" instead of being driven by profit. "I really appreciate the people here; they are happy to be here," Ru said.

Frenel Julce, the partner of Southern-Caribbean soul food vendor Everybody Gotta Eat, is proud that Eastern Edge is the vendor's first physical location and new "official home." Founded in Cambridge, Everybody Gotta Eat holds large-scale community events that range from annual barbecues to cultural gatherings. His goal is to not only feed the community, but also to connect the community by sharing the Caribbean and Southern culture with others. "We put our heart into this," Julce said. "Money is secondary, passion is primary."

Dre Starling, a worker at Fuji Sushi, found the food hall's environment to be "welcoming" and "relaxing." "It's not your ordinary food hall," Starling said. He found the first week of business to be busy, with weekdays being busier than the weekends.

Jonas Beausejour, the owner of burger joint Juicy Jay's, said that he has received good reviews from customers and that the fried red snapper sandwich burger is popular. A Haitian-American, Beausejour aims to integrate Caribbean flavors into the burgers through house-made sauces and other ingredients. He added that Juicy Jay's is special for using fresh ingredients, as their burger meat is ground fresh everyday.

Customers also had positive comments about various aspects of Eastern Edge, from the food to the ambiance. Cambridge resident Giselle Arredondo liked the physical layout, especially the cozy seating and optimal lighting. "Time Out Market is dark, while Cambridgeside Galleria is very bright," Arredondo said. She also liked the varied food selection, such as the vegan and vegetarian options.

Chris Peterson SM '13, Director of Communications for MIT Admissions and Student Financial Services, liked the proximity of Eastern Edge to the MIT Admissions Office and the pho at Viet Citron. However, Peterson considers the food prices to be above his allowed budget. "Viet Citron is so good and having pho beneath my office is a dream and a nightmare," Peterson wrote.

Students, however, had mixed thoughts about the food hall, particularly the high price of the food.

"[The] ambiance is fine. But [the] food is so damn pricey," Gabriela Erin Mariangel '25 MEng '26 wrote. "Like, I'd rather eat Chipotle at that point."

VIVIAN HIR—THE TECH

People eat at Eastern Edge Food Hall in Kendall Square on Sunday, Feb. 22, 2026.

Mariangel plans to go to Eastern Edge at most twice a month in the future.

Aleksandra Kaminska '26 ate at Lone Star Taco Stand and was dissatisfied with the burrito's size, as she felt hungry after eating it. A burrito at Lone Star Taco Stand costs $14.00, while an equivalent at the neighboring Chipotle costs between $9.65 and $11.65, depending on the protein of choice. Kaminska does not intend to eat at Eastern Edge again.

Although Hana Sousa '27 also believes that the food is overpriced, she noted that the MIT dining plan is also expensive and "doesn't taste as good," making the food at Eastern Edge to be fine overall. High price aside, Sousa likes the food hall for the diverse global cuisines.

"Eastern Edge is a very cool place as one can meet friends with different tastes in food and everyone can [be] satisfied," Sousa wrote.

Vice Chancellor for Student Life Suzy Nelson to retire

On Feb. 26, Chancellor Melissa Nobles announced that MIT Vice Chancellor for Student Life Suzy Nelson will retire in the fall. Nelson started as MIT's vice president and dean for student life on Jul. 1, 2016, bringing experience from her time managing student affairs and residential life at Harvard College, Colgate University, Cornell University, and Syracuse University.

Nelson oversaw the renovation of New House and construction of New Vassar, reorganized student support organizations such as S^3 into the Division of Student Life (DSL), and expanded the Good Samaritan Amnesty policy, among other notable achievements.

In a statement to *The Tech*, Nelson shared her thoughts on retirement: "I will say it is an honor to work alongside the incredible DSL and MIT staff, heads of house, faculty, and — most notably — our students."

"I'm still actively engaged in leading the division, but I look forward to reflecting and celebrating in the coming months ahead. Until a successor is in place, I will continue supporting students' well-being and furthering DSL's important work," Nelson wrote.

—Jada Ogueh