

Green Building Tetris hack returns after 10 years

The hackers spent four months redesigning the system for Campus Preview Weekend

By Jada Ogueh and Jaden Chizuruoke May
NEWS STAFF WRITERS

If you wandered onto the east side of campus the night of April 18, you likely saw giant Tetris blocks cascading down the 153 colored windows of the 21-story Green Building. A “holy grail” of a hack when it was first performed in 2012, the Tetris hackers — some new and old — spent four months redesigning the system from scratch in time for Campus Preview Weekend (CPW) 2026.

“It’s the kind of hack you hear about even before you get to MIT,” said one hacker. The hackers played Bad Apple before the Tetris game, running on an impressive 30 frames per second compared to 10–15 in 2012. The Green Building also lit up with the Sean Collier Memorial ribbon, remembering

the MIT police officer killed in the Boston Marathon bombings, the Boston Marathon ribbon, and an Earth Day illustration.

While the Green Building no longer holds the title for largest screen Tetris has been played on, the original hack has inspired many other attempts, including the 460-LED display on Philadelphia’s Cira Centre building in 2014.

Costing around \$30,000, the hack was mainly fundraised by generous alumni donors and required upwards of 2,000 working hours, according to the organizers. About 30 individuals helped with the manual labor of assembling the modules, but the core engineering and design rested on the shoulders of just eight people.

“Among the core group, there were at least three classes dropped for this project,” one of the hackers said.

“There were two-week stretches where a few members on the team didn’t sleep at all.”

The return of Tetris Green Building Hack after a 10-year hiatus has roused a significant amount of attention both on campus and on social media, resolidifying its place among the Institute’s staple hacks.

The Tech interviewed three of the hackers involved in the project’s completion. Their names have been kept anonymous upon request.

Same dream, new goals

At the start of January 2026, the hackers set a hard deadline for CPW, with engineering beginning in November 2025. “We could have pushed it off, but we wanted to show the prefrash how cool and fun MIT is,” they said.

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JOJO PLACIDES—THE TECH
A view of the Green Building Tetris Hack from across the Charles River on Friday, April 17, 2026.

MIT Spokes will bike 75 days to teach in rural towns

The seven-person cohort will hold STEM workshops from Washington D.C. to San Francisco

By Samuel Yuan
NEWS EDITOR

This summer, under the red rocks of Utah, you can expect to spot a group of MIT students cycling en route on a 4,000 mile trip west.

Now in their 12th year, MIT Spokes plans to once again embark on a cross-country bike trip from Washington, D.C. to San Francisco this June, stopping along the way to hold STEM workshops for children in rural America. The seven-person cohort will spend 75 days along a route that weaves through nine states and crosses the Rocky Mountains.

Sarah Schmitt ’28, a member of the 2025 Spokes team, shared that some of the highlights from last year’s trip included visiting all of Utah’s “Mighty 5” national parks and biking on Nevada’s U.S. Route 50, dubbed the “Loneliest Road in America.”

“From seeing the most amazing shooting stars in Capitol Reef to doing

the same colorful hikes in Bryce Canyon I did with my family over a decade ago, it was such a treat to see landscapes I have grown up with my whole life in a whole new light,” Schmitt said.

She added that passing through Nevada, her home state, was particularly “special” because she got to “give back to her local community” and “share her old home with new friends.”

“Biking the ‘Loneliest Road in America’ with a truly wonderful team of individuals was not lonely in the slightest,” Schmitt said.

Beyond cycling, teaching is one of the main priorities for Spokes. The club’s core mission is to “bridge the gap in STEM education” among “rural, low-income, and underserved communities across the country.” According to a 2025 report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, issues like low broadband availability and high teacher turnover in rural America

create systemic challenges for students’ “technical literacy” and STEM development.

On each trip, MIT Spokes runs a series of hands-on workshops — in churches, libraries, juvenile detention centers, and summer camps across the country — on everything from electric motors to chemistry. Over the years, their outreach has allowed them to “build connections” in areas where “access is difficult.” They are also supported by Stanford Spokes, a counterpart club that bikes the opposite way from San Francisco to D.C. and also holds STEM workshops.

“Between Stanford and MIT Spokes over the last decade or so, I can confidently say that we have brought STEM to thousands of kids in small town and rural America,” Schmitt said.

Moreover, Schmitt noted that while the science demonstrations on 3D printing, chemistry, and physics were

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PHOTO COURTESY OF MIT SPOKES
Members of MIT Spokes gathered in front of a sign in Colorado during one of their previous cross-country trips.

MIT List Visual Arts Center celebrates 40 years

The museum is housed in the Wiesner Building designed by architect I. M. Pei ’40

By Samuel Yuan
NEWS EDITOR

The List Visual Arts Center, MIT’s contemporary art museum, marked the beginning of its 40th anniversary celebrations on Friday, April 10. For four decades, the Center has curated and maintained public displays of modern art on campus.

Nestled on the east side of campus adjacent to the Media Lab, the List Center is housed in the modernist Wiesner Building (E15), which was designed by renowned architect I. M. Pei ’40 and opened in 1985.

But the Center’s reach extends far beyond the walls of the Wiesner Building. Much of the public art maintained by the museum, from Olafur Eliasson’s Northwest Passage (the rings hanging from the ceiling



LEVY LE—THE TECH
Signage outside one of the entrances to the List Visual Arts Center in the Wiesner Building (E15). The List Center celebrated its 40th anniversary on Friday, April 10, 2026.

of the Lisa T. Su Building) to Sanford Biggers’s Madrigal (the sculpture outside the Linde Music Building) is scattered across campus.

“The List Center threads art through all 168 acres of campus,” said Chris Hoodlet, communications manager at the List. “Its galleries are free and open to the public. Its Student Lending Art Program loans approximately 700 works annually to MIT students, making art part of everyday student life.”

As part of the 40 year celebrations, the museum held a series of performance and reception events on April 10 and 11, alongside the launch of a new exhibition dubbed *Performing Conditions*. The gallery delves into issues of work, debt, and labor and will run until Aug. 2.

“Our year-long celebration connects our community of stu-

dents, faculty, artists, and art lovers to 40 years of art on campus, with an eye to the next 40,” List Center director Paul C. Ha said.

Since its founding, the List Center has also gained recognition in the broader world of modern art. The Center’s first director, Kathy Halbreich, later went on to serve as the associate director of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. Moreover, the Center has represented the United States at the Venice Biennale three times.

On why the List Center focuses exclusively on contemporary art, as opposed to a broader range of periods like many other university art museums, Hoodlet explained that this focus aligns with MIT’s “innovative” mission.

List Visual Arts Center, Page 2

04/30 IN SHORT

Pre-registration for Fall 2026 begins on Friday, May 1.

Theses for June doctoral degrees are due on Friday, May 1.

Theses for all non-doctoral June degrees are due on Friday, May 8.

The SpringFest concert, headlined by Ravyn Lenae, is on Saturday, May 2 from 6:30 p.m. to 10:15 p.m. at the Johnson Ice Rink.

The last day of classes is Tuesday, May 12.

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

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MY FIRST SAB

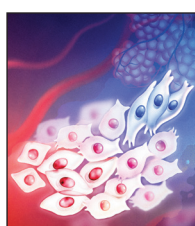
Variations of the Asian buffet experience. **CAMPUS LIFE, p. 4**

TRUE-CRIME STORY SET IN UK

Patrick Radden Keefe presents his new book at WBUR CitySpace. **ARTS, p. 7**

BLANK STREET DEEP DIVE

Measuring matcha. **CAMPUS LIFE, p. 6**



AWAKENING CANCER CELLS

Inflammation linked to metastatic relapse. **SCIENCE, p. 10**

NOT NORMAL

A new action-comedy by the creator of *John Wick*. **ARTS, p. 8**

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The hackers were in it “for the love of the game”

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Novelty was another motivation. “You don’t usually get to do a personal project that involves mass production,” the hackers noted.

The hackers also expressed that team members coming from a variety



PHOTO PROVIDED BY DAKA EJILEMELE

After more than a decade, hackers revive the Green Building Tetris Hack in time for students to see over Campus Preview Week-end. Saturday, April 18, 2026.

of class years and courses was not due to an intentional recruiting effort, but instead an organic combination of people in it “for the love of the game.”

While the old modules had an impressive shelf life given the gap in technological advancement in 2012 to 2026 — some functional as late as 2017 — this year’s hackers wanted to approach the redesign more intentionally. Degradation caused by factors such as corrosion on the printed circuit boards due to window conden-

sation, yellowed plastic, and hot glue losing its adhesion necessitated a new design that would last at least ten years, which posed the majority of the build challenges.

“The goal of this is for Tetris and the Green Building to be able to keep being run even after we graduate,” one hacker said. “What we’re bringing to the table is more robust hardware.”

“This is hands down the hardest project I’ve ever done,” another hacker stressed. “We ran into an endless number of problems.” They added that correspondence with the original hackers was the first step to figuring out how to solve their problems.

The hackers also invested time into designing an efficient production process for the modules that would be installed in each of the windows of the building. This modularity posed a unique challenge in terms of scale. “If it takes one minute to assemble something on each module, just that one minute task stretches out into 2.5 hours of work across the entire quantity. And then, if you’re making something that works 99% of the time, across 153 units, you’re still gonna see one to two failures,” they explained.

Logistical issues regarding tariffs and shipping were a pain point; in addition, considerations like waterproofing, heat management, and software bugs prompted a great deal of trial and error. “If we were to do it again, and we had more time, I would have spent twice the amount of time testing, so that we wouldn’t have current weird issues, underperforming modules, and other kinks,” one hacker said.

The hackers also commented on the differences between this year’s modules and the ones from 2012.

“The old module is very simple. A circuit board goes in an aluminum enclosure, glass goes on top, and that’s it. Ours has a lot more individual parts, which took a lot more work to assemble,” they said.

Despite this, the team highlighted technological advancements that made their work easier. “There were no good 3D printers in 2012. Those guys were hand assembling those boards. They got even less sleep than we did,” they said. This year’s organizers were able to order pre-made circuit boards and laser-cut glass from China.

When it came to the actual installation, the team had to consider another, sometimes overlooked, factor: the occupants of the building themselves. “In every single module we included an outlet splitter so the modules wouldn’t be taking up people’s outlets,” the team explained. “We also added a snooze button so people can turn off the lights for an hour.”

The hackers also intend to set a system that will enable regular upkeep for the hardware.

A national sensation

This year’s Tetris hack’s debut brought in a wave of viewers, both in person and on social media. Hundreds of prefrish and current MIT students came out on the night of the hack’s reveal to try their hand at the massive puzzle, and crowds only grew as the spectacle turned heads from all the way across the Charles River.

“With the amount of time and work that we put into this, seeing it at the end of the day is very rewarding,” one hacker said. “Seeing the reactions from other people and how much joy it’s bringing is even better.”

Videos and pictures of the hack’s completion were seen trending on platforms like Instagram, Facebook,

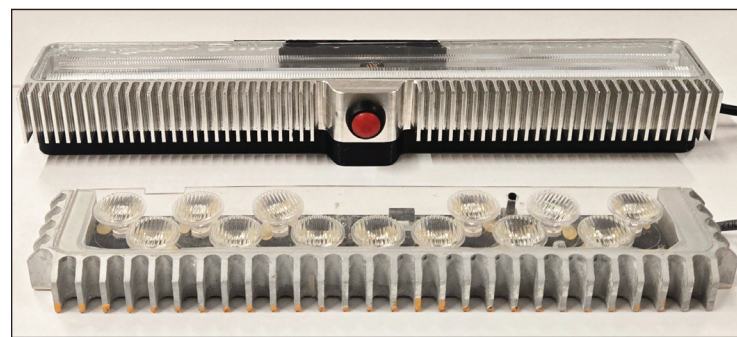


PHOTO COURTESY OF TETRIS HACK ORGANIZERS

A comparative view of the new 2026 (top) and old 2012 (bottom) lighting modules used for the Green Building Tetris Hack.

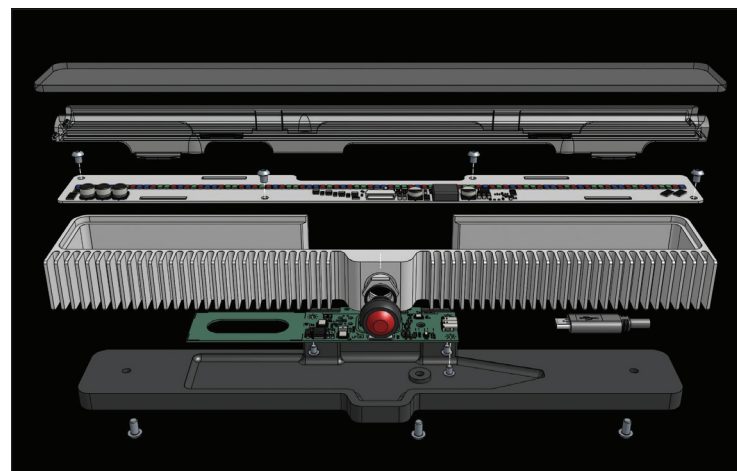


PHOTO COURTESY OF TETRIS HACK ORGANIZERS

An exploded view of a new lighting module used in the 2026 Green Building Tetris Hack.

LinkedIn, and Reddit, garnering thousands of views within just one week. The Boston Globe also covered the event.

When asked about the future manifestations of the hack, the team said the hack was “definitely” returning next year, potentially showcasing Breakout or Snake.

The team said they hope the hack will inspire future MIT stu-

dents to keep engineering big projects. “To be able to show people what MIT is about, and to make a statement that we still do big hacks, is important.”

“Hopefully, some of those people who played Tetris, when they are here, they’ll say, ‘I have this crazy idea. And if [these hackers] did that in four months, a lot is possible,’” they said.

Bikers face 4,000 miles ahead

Spokes, from Page 1

interesting for many kids, it was often Spokes members “showing interest” and “believing” in them that resulted in truly lasting curiosity.

“My most memorable student didn’t even show interest in our science, but when I noticed her doodling in her notebook during my talk, I realized she was an artist, just like me,” Schmitt recalled. “When I asked her about her drawings in between activities, and shared some of mine, her energy and engagement changed instantly.”

For Tatiana Vassiliev ’26, a member of this year’s Spokes team, the trek is both a chance to teach STEM and work on a personal milestone.

“I have been teaching STEM since middle school, and I love doing hard and awesome things. Spokes felt like the natural extension of both,” Vassiliev said. “It allowed me to expand my mission of spreading STEM education across the country, while also

representing the epitome of an adventurous senior trip.”

The Spokes team also expressed that they were “excited to engage with an extremely wide range of people” through staying with different strangers matched by Warmshowers, an app that connects cyclists with hosts.

Still, despite the careful route planning, trips into the backcountry are ultimately challenging and unpredictable. During last year’s trip, Schmitt suffered anaphylaxis (a severe allergic reaction) in rural northern Nevada, over 60 miles away from the nearest hospital. She was forced to use an EpiPen for the first time and was taken to the hospital by the team’s support van.

“We had to coordinate using the van to take me to the hospital, while also supporting the biking team with no towns or resources in between the day’s start and end points,” she said. “We ended up figuring it out, but it just goes to show how flexible and

creative you have to be for trips like this.”

Yet Schmitt added that “once you come around the corner, see the next bit of beautiful scenery, and meet your teammates at the end of the ride, you forget the bad parts very quickly.”

Funding for the Spokes trip — which covers renting a minivan that tracks the group, housing, workshop materials, and bicycles that “can withstand the intensity of the trip” — mainly comes from sponsors and crowdfunding. This year’s MIT crowdfund campaign has raised \$16,229 from 146 donors towards a \$20,000 goal so far.

On her feelings regarding the upcoming trip, Vassiliev said that she wants to prove to herself that she can do something “seriously hard.”

“Biking for 4,000 miles sounds daunting now,” Vassiliev said. “But I know that in August, I will be so proud of myself and the team for the youth we have inspired, the miles we have biked, and the memories we made.”

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New Kendall/MIT station entrance opens

The newly renovated Kendall/MIT outbound T station entrance opened Monday, April 20, after closing June 10, 2024.

Serving the Red Line toward Central, Harvard, and Alewife, the new headhouse replaces a temporary entrance located under Google’s Cambridge office.

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority wrote in a statement that the new entrance features “a new glass enclosure with renovated stairs, an escalator, and an additional elevator accessible from the street level.”

The headhouse was renovated and funded by BXP — a business real estate investment firm that has redeveloped over a dozen office buildings in Kendall Square — in coordination with the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority. The renovation cost was about \$17 million.

The upgrade comes as development continues in Kendall Square, alongside the opening of Eastern Edge Food Hall and MIT’s billion-dollar Kendall Common project.

—Samuel Yuan

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EXTRA ORDINARY

An ode to the SAB

super asian buffet / sketchy asian buffet / sus asian buffet / sad asian buffet

By Susan Hong

My first SAB was named New King's Buffet. The things that stand out most in my memory are the colors: the green trimming along the windows, the large sign. The curling script that spelled out the name of the restaurant, a dark yellow. The bright red-orange of the crab that my parents would wait anxiously for the restaurant staff to restock; the floppy, watery sticks of white flesh that they heaped onto my plate after they had cracked the legs open with their bare hands and the tines of a fork. The thick, oily browns of kung pao chicken, stir-fried beef, floury noodles flavored with only soy sauce and MSG. The machine-piped flowers on those chunks of frosted white cake, glowing with vibrant blues, greens, and reds. Red fish laid over white rice, sliced so thin it always looked pink, and then drowned in creamy white mayonnaise. The bright orange and pink and brown of the little cake squares that sat in orderly rows, covered with a thick layer of oily cream and then a sheen of translucent jelly; the way they tasted exactly like their colors: sickly orange and plasticky strawberry and coffee so sweet it scratched the edges of my throat as it went down. The cubes of strawberry jello — a wobbling, translucent red.

At best, the food was mediocre; at worst, each bite was a dangerous gamble with food poisoning.

I loved it.

There was something magical about this infinite stream of food, not quite the feasts my grandmothers would cook for me back in Taiwan; not quite the aggressively sauced meat that Applebee's served by the ounce. The four members of my family would step into the darkly lit dining room of New King's Buffet and reemerge transformed by the copious amounts of shellfish and soy sauce in our stomachs: petty arguments settled, our worries temporarily forgotten. Or, at least, that's how it felt to me.

Inside, the real world shrank. We had paid our \$15 for dinner, and now, the only thing that mattered was making the most out of the money we had already spent. It was a game. Not just a physical one — how much you could cram into your empty stomach — but also a strategic one. What foods to start with, so you wouldn't fill up too soon. Which foods to avoid completely — fried chicken was frowned upon; fried rice was a hard no.

But good things never last. In 2020, New King's Buffet shut down, weakened by the slow, steady erosion of its customer base that began with the birth of Makoto — a newer, mildly-pricier SAB in the area with a fancier-sounding name — and finally felled by the swift attack of the coronavirus. Today, in its place, a Panda Express stands — serving a fraction of the same food with none of the freedom, the unbridled joy.

It wasn't until after I arrived at college that I realized this wasn't an experience unique to my childhood. That many

Super Asian Buffet, because a SAB is indeed a buffet that is super Asian, but also an Asian buffet that is super, in the same way that a supermarket is a market that is super.

of my friends, Asian and otherwise, had their own version of New King's Buffet back home — their own SAB, a term that I coined maybe 30 minutes ago.

Super Asian Buffet, because a SAB is indeed a buffet that is super Asian, but also an Asian buffet that is super, in the same way that a supermarket is a market that is super. In the same way that we call someone superhuman when they seem so powerful they can't possibly just be human.

Sketchy Asian Buffet. Sus Asian Buffet. Because, really, how do they serve that

much seafood at such low prices? (Potentially) Shitty Asian Buffet, because, again, how do they serve that much seafood at such low prices?

Sad Asian Buffet, because maybe, it's a reminder of whatever childhood magic I no longer possess, now that I'm old enough to check myself into a hotel and drink and gamble and a whole list of other things that the magical doors of 21 unlock for you. Because, even as I ramble on about how wonderful New King's Buffet was — the spell it could cast on my elementary-schooler brain — do I really remember how it was back then? Do I still know how it felt to be seven years old; to push open the glass doors and step into the clouds of hibachi smoke, to hear my parents ask the waiters for a table for four; to parade along the rows of glistening meats and vegetables slick with oil, empty plate clutched in my fingers like Pandora's Box?

When I went home for spring break, my family and I went to Makoto. The prices had grown, but so had the variety of food. They had sashimi now, and steamed oysters, and both steamed and deep-fried crab. And yet, as much as I wanted to convince myself that it was the same, it really wasn't.

For starters, my parents are vegetarian now, which meant that the only things they could fill their plates with were veggie stir-fried noodles, steamed broccoli, and oil-soaked tempura. And because they no longer felt the need to peel crab for us, because they know my sister and I are old enough to figure out the geometry of a crab leg — to find the softest part of the shell, calculate the best angle to stab a fork into it — and because my sister never liked crab enough to invest the effort required to extricate the meat, I was the only one piling crab legs onto my plate. As my dad speared a floppy carrot with his fork, my mom started on an orange, and my sister declared she was full, I pried open the spiny shells alone, pulling out the soft

Maybe the story I'm telling is just a shell, the powdery remains of a crab leg heaped on my dad's empty plate.

swathes of meat and letting the salty juices leave sticky traces across my palm.

"Let's never come here again," someone said after the meal — I don't remember who, but definitely not me. The food had not been perfect. The sashimi was warm and slightly grainy, the crab legs tiny and waterlogged, the oysters flavorless despite the faint brushing of black bean sauce across their tops. In a past life, I would've loved it regardless. But now, I found myself nodding along as everybody agreed to choose another restaurant next time, even though it felt like a betrayal. Maybe it was the maturing of my taste buds, or the vague awareness of things like calories and sodium levels and blood sugar that social media had imposed onto me. Maybe I just wasn't feeling well that day. Or maybe it was because, even as I was sitting there with my family, I felt strangely alone. Like I was the only one truly living the SAB experience.

Maybe the story I'm telling is just a shell, the powdery remains of a crab leg heaped on my dad's empty plate. Maybe, being three times her age, I no longer have the right to tap into the mind of seven-year-old Susan, to write like I understand her — because maybe, I don't. Not anymore.

Stupid Asian Buffet, because the amount of food there is really stupid, and maybe everyone who goes there is a little bit stupid, because it can't possibly be good for you — or maybe because you make stupid decisions, like getting a fifth plate when you could barely finish your fourth. Satisfying Asian Buffet, because how could anyone walk into a palace of infinite food of infinite varieties and not come out satisfied?

Susan's Asian Buffet, maybe, if we're being self-indulgent, but, again, this is

not something that just belongs to me. Over the years, I've exchanged the same stories with my friends from different cities: stories of Asian parents scolding us for plates filled with too many carbohydrates, of stuffing ourselves to the point of throwing up, of favorite dishes and least favorite dishes — because somehow, even thousands of miles apart, every SAB somehow manages to serve some permutation of the exact same foods.

And so, today, on our way back to campus from a retreat, we decided to go to a SAB. I let myself forget about the strangeness of my spring break SAB visit; how the familiarity felt foreign. Finding one was easy enough; navigating through the suburban traffic lights of Malden, Mass. to get there was somewhat harder.

The Flaming Grill Buffet was different than I'd imagined. Instead of the booths that graced the SABs of my hometown, it was lined with almost industrial-seeming rows of folding tables and wooden chairs. The ceiling was lit up with strips of neon blue, and the dishes of food were organized in disjoint strips across the middle instead of snaking around the room like they did at home. But when we sat down and the waiter approached us with the same water cups as they had at New King's Buffet and at Makoto — the clear, blue ones; bumpy on the outside, smooth on the inside; inscribed with "Coca-Cola" in curving white letters — I knew that everything was the same.

But different, too, because here I was, with people who have never seen me cry over a botched piano performance, but who have seen me learn the ukulele in two months and then perform it (badly) on stage. People who have never seen me do a cartwheel, who have never watched me play in a tennis match, but have seen me running down the Infinite whenever I'm late for class. People who have never sang the entire first act of the *Jekyll and Hyde* musical with me from end to end, but who have cooked 30-person meals with me, who have sat with me through infinite hours of movies and stupid TV shows, who have watched me stay up until sunrise working through some problem set.

Different, because this restaurant didn't have the crab legs that defined my SAB experience back home, but they did have raw oysters, which I first tried at Viale down Mass Ave for \$1 each and then immediately fell in love with. Different, but the same, because there I was again, heaping seafood onto my plate: stacks of oysters, splotches of cocktail sauce, the occasional wedge of lemon. The same, but different, because there was a voice that urged everyone to load up on the seafood, to stop wasting their stomachs on fried bread and rice, but this time, it was my voice, and not my mom's. Different, because then we laughed about it, and all went on eating the things we wanted to anyway. The same, because I kept snapping pictures of each plate that I ate, but different, because I stopped when I wanted to, not when I had to. The same, because I decided to end my meal with the red jello — like I always did — but different, because we all agreed that it wouldn't be right for me to not have one *final* oyster, would it? The same, because the waiter came over and asked us if we were done — in Chinese — but dif-

Different, because a SAB isn't going anywhere during your meal, but MIT never stops for anyone.

ferent, because the person she asked was me, and not my dad. Different, because maybe we hadn't actually "defeated" the buffet — cost them more than they cost us — but the same, because we walked out dazed and stuffed and happy.

Different, but the same, because I was reminded of why I first fell in love with the SAB. Because you can take all the time you want, deciding if you want to spend the rest of your stomach space on the cheesy mussels or the ones soaked in sweet-sour

sauce; if you want to have a slice of the chocolate cake or the vanilla one. There appear to be infinite options, but really, as long as you pace yourself, you can try at least a little bit of everything that you want before making a decision. There is no ticking clock, no time bomb. There is no reason to decide now, because the SAB will still be there in five minutes, in ten. Because the bright-red glazed fish and slightly burnt chicken skewers probably won't disappear — and even if they do, they'll be refilled soon. There's no need to worry about them running out; about other SAB-enjoyers stealing the whole tray. A SAB meal is never a competition. It is a shared experience.

As my time at MIT slowly crawls to an end, it's hard to think about all the things I haven't tried. Because I've been burnt out, or because I forgot to log a deadline into my Google Calendar, or because I didn't pass a resume screen — or because I simply didn't have time.

The same, because you come in as a freshman, or as a hungry diner, and everything looks bright and shiny and appealing. The chicken glazed with sticky orange sauce, or the golden sesame balls still hot from the fryer; a club for that thing you've always wanted to try, a lab exploring the one idea that keeps you awake at night.

Different, because a SAB isn't going anywhere during your meal, but MIT never stops for anyone. This is something I'm still struggling to come to terms with. Did I meet all of the people that I was destined to meet, experience all the things

Does it really matter what you've missed out on if, in the end, you're happy?

that I would've wanted to do? Or did one of the countless mistakes I've made accidentally sever the red string that would've led me to a subject I was truly passionate about, an activity that could've become the backbone of my life? At the end of the day, did I do MIT *right*?

Different, but the same, because something might seem like the *right* way to do a SAB. Seafood, beef, no carbohydrates. Four plates, filled to the brim, minimum. But is there really a right way? Is there really a rule? Does it really matter what you've missed out on if, in the end, you're happy?

Different, because I went to Flaming Grill Buffet today, instead of King's Buffet, or Makoto. Different, because I can tell people I live in Boston and they know exactly where that is; because I don't have to spend five minutes explaining that no, I'm not from the nation's capital, but from the state with the same name; that no, *my* Vancouver is in Washington, not Canada.

Different, because I am now 21, not seven. Because I have now been to four countries, instead of two. Because instead of six states, I have now been to 19. Because I have wandered through a city at 2 a.m., because I have performed surgery on a mouse's brain, because I have been to a bar. Because even though I never dream in Chinese anymore, I've started to speak it to myself in my head because I know how much it matters. Because people continue to shift in and out of my life, even as they stay in my mind, my habits, the way I think. Because I am starting to understand who I am not, even if I still don't understand who I am.

The same, because wherever I am — Boston or Vancouver, SAB or MIT — I'll always be trying to figure out how to live in a way that makes me happy. Different, because my definition of happiness continues to change every day, but the same, because I'll never stop trying to figure it out. And because, at least for now, I think the SAB is going to keep its place in my heart.

Today, as I made my way through my fourth plate of oysters, it was easy to forget that I'd ever been unhappy. And I thought they were pretty good oysters too — bigger than the ones at Viale; soft and fresh-tasting, with a slight hint of the sea.

SENIOR SIDE NOTES

For the love of the game

On work and what drives us

By Kanna Pichappan
CAMPUS LIFE STAFF WRITER

“The master in the art of living makes little distinction between his work and his play, his labor and his leisure, his mind and his body, his education and his recreation. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence at whatever he does, leaving others to decide whether he is working or playing.” — Lawrence Pearsall Jacks

What would it mean to actually live like that?

This quote moves me because it points toward something I’ve been trying to articulate for a while: the idea of doing things for the love of the game. Not for money, not for prestige, not for anyone’s approval — but for a genuine love of the work itself. The kind where the doing itself is the point, and where the work done well is its own reward.

The phrase ‘love of the game’ is often employed in the context of sports, used to describe the player who plays for enjoyment, with no reward sought beyond the act of

playing itself. I think it applies just as well to the games of life.

The first game: vocation

To the extent we get to choose our vocation — and I recognize that’s a real privilege [1] — I think there’s something powerful about orienting that choice around one question: What could I do just because I love doing it? For me, the answer has slowly come into focus around mental health and empowering individuals: understanding

There’s a broader game, too — the strange, unique, and wondrous phenomenon of being alive. How do we win this one?

how people live inside their own heads, where the sense of self resides, what shapes

identity, and how much of who we are exists in relation to others rather than as individuals. It’s why, when I arrived at college, I found myself drawn to the Brain & Cognitive Sciences and Anthropology departments — places where I could ask questions about our mind from both life science and social science perspectives, respectively. They were fields I wanted to study for the sake of the subjects themselves.

I find myself most at ease when I’m helping others. That, to me, is worth waking up for. As I move on from undergrad, I hope to pursue work at that intersection — questions about the life we live inside our heads, paired with a commitment to helping people live better within it.

The second game: life itself

There’s a broader game, too — the strange, unique, and wondrous phenomenon of being alive. How do we win this one?

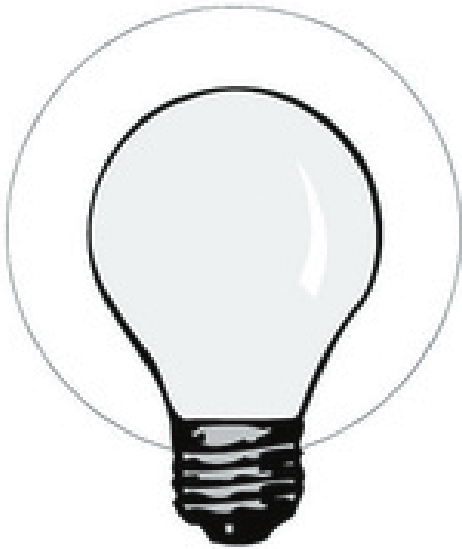
While I can only speculate, it seems like the less I ruminate over myself — what I have, what I lack, what I want, what did or didn’t happen to me — the better I feel. The

more I turn outward, toward other people, friendship, and service, the more fulfilled and at ease I find myself. The afternoons I’ve spent actually sitting with someone having a difficult day feel tremendously better spent than those I’ve spent solely on myself. Interestingly, this has been most evident to me on my harder days: when I’m feeling down, I’ve found that helping others — more than most other things — has the potential to help me feel better.

A standard worth holding

When I look back at my life one day, I hope I can feel that my choices and conduct were driven by something authentic. To that end, I strive to craft a life that I can live for genuine love of the game.

[1] It is important to recognize that being able to play for the love of the game is a privileged position to be in — one contingent on financial resources, circumstances aligning in our favor, and more. To the extent we are able to make this a possibility for ourselves, I hope we can craft lives we live for the love of the game itself.



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FROSH FILES

Call a boomer

Connecting boomers and zoomers together

By Shelly Yang
CAMPUS LIFE EDITOR

On the intersection between Commonwealth Avenue and St. Mary's Street sits Pavement Coffeehouse. More than two years ago, I used to frequent this spot. I was attending a summer camp in the area, and it was where I often got breakfast for the weekend. After leaving camp, I never thought I'd be in Boston again, until I got into MIT.

It's hard to miss the installment: it sits in a bright yellow box labeled "CALL A BOOMER," as if it were calling for you to slow down and pick up the phone.

But even then, I didn't think I'd visit this coffeeshop, let alone this Pavement Coffeehouse ever again. While it left fond

memories, it was out of the way from MIT's campus.

On a call with my mother, she told me about the installment of a payphone outside this very café; established by Matter Neuroscience, the goal of this project is to connect the boomer generation (ranging from 62–80 years old) and zoomer generation (ranging from 14–29 years old) together. In this current era, the digital divide leaves many people feeling isolated. Matter Neuroscience is a group that aims to increase happiness across all generations — they believe that bridging this gap requires people to talk to and connect with one another.

Since the phone is on Boston University's campus, it's targeted toward college students — vaguely in the zoomer generation — and is wired to a nursing home. It's hard to miss the installment: it sits in a bright yellow box labeled "CALL A BOOMER," as if it were calling for you to slow down and pick up the phone. Payphones are a technology that is being left behind, which I think is symbolic of our generation feeling less connected; I really appreciated Matter Neuroscience's choice of making users physically be at the site, rather than just calling with a mobile de-

vice, since it makes the action of calling more intentional.

Perhaps this next part only applies to me, but what I found especially cool is that the phone is connected to a care home in Reno, Nev. — my hometown. I didn't think my city was very well-known: after all, when people think of Nevada (if they even do), they tend to think of Las Vegas, not Reno. Apparently, another variable (besides age) was political orientation: one liberal, the other conservative. The political spectrum has become much more polarized — perhaps as a consequence of the digital divide — and that's another gap this project is trying to bridge.

When I went to call, it went to voicemail, but I'm still glad I went. This installation was only up for a month, and I didn't know if they would continue the project. But besides that, I got to leave the MIT bubble a little since it was off campus. I thought the culture at Boston University was not much different: people seemed to be rushing to their next planned activity, and barely anyone stopped to look at the payphone. Nonetheless, I hope that by the time it was up, at least a few people slowed down and made time in their lives to reconnect with those who matter to them most.



SHELLY YANG—THE TECH

A "Call a Boomer" payphone installed on Boston University's campus by Matter Neuroscience. April 2026.

ALOR'S LORE

An unrigorous investigation into food chain consistency

Is Blank Street consistent? Let's find out!

By Alor Sahoo
SENIOR EDITOR

The inspiration

A while back, I applied for something and wrote the following essay (details tweaked):

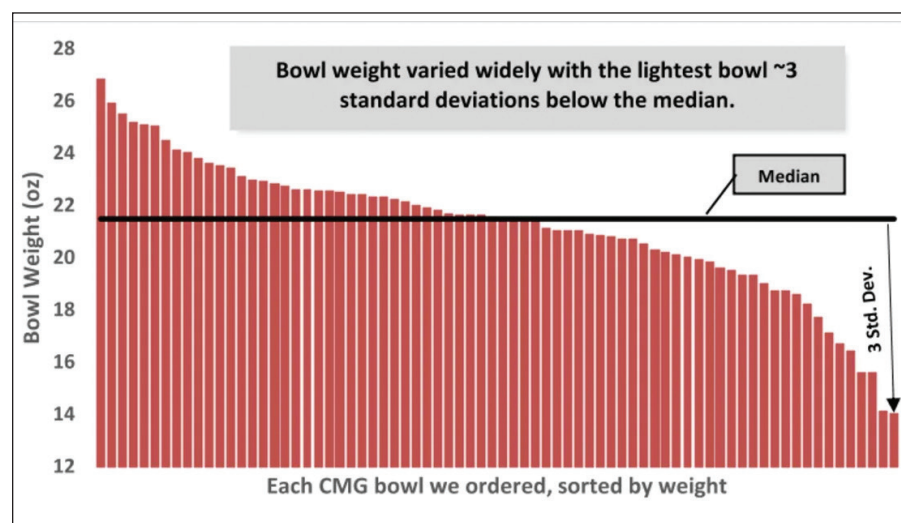
Prompt: You get \$6,767 to do something that isn't meant to make profit. What would you do with it and why?

I'm a Beli power-user (top 1% in SF this January, mind you) but it has a structural weakness. This restaurant-focused social media platform has a feedback loop: you click on a restaurant, see the most popular dish with "n" recommendations, order it because it's popular, and post a Beli review with the picture. The next person sees that same dish with "n+1" recommendations and is even more likely to order it. This incentivizes people to play it safe within a restaurant, especially lone diners who can't order "family style" and try everything out.

My \$6,767 would go towards the unscalable alternative: an elusive, diverse network of food critics who are focused on culinary coverage instead of parroting existing consensus. Contributors order both the iconic staples and the less popular items, the ones that look out of place. They'd write up unpretentious field notes: Who was this dish for? Is it a hidden gem? Is everything good, or just the staples? Is the food worse when it's crowded, or near closing?

When a platform like Beli amplifies only certain dishes, it risks flattening entire cuisines into a few "best dishes" in people's minds. Rather than ranking restaurants against each other for rankings' sake, this project would create a publicly available, dish-by-dish counter-archive that treats restaurants as independent systems. Some are more fault-tolerant, with quality distributed across a menu. Others concentrate their reputation into a single mind-blowing dish. People deserve to know which restaurants are which.

Still, there's something weirdly impressive about going to Chipotle over and over and over again. In my infinite boredom, I thought about what the Boston version of this would be.



ALOR SAHOO—THE TECH

Exhibit 1: Consistency of portion sizes remains an opportunity for CMG (Source: Wells Fargo Securities, LLC).

A summary and further thoughts

When we talk about the quality of a restaurant, we almost always mean how it is on average. The mean or median. For example, on Beli, if your friends have been to a specific place, it'll show you a composite "Friend Score," but it won't directly display any measure of spread. No range. No interquartile range. No standard deviation. Have we forgotten descriptive statistics? I understand that they don't want to clog up their interface, but still.

Of course, if your friends haven't been to said restaurant, you're slightly more screwed. Part of the answer, I argue, is simply collecting more data: multiple people, multiple times of day, ordering multiple things each time. I want to be able to search for good hash browns near me. I want to be able to search for restaurants that have good non-spicy options. I want to be able to find places that are gluten-friendly without being totally gluten-free. And I want to be able to do all of that without having to be plugged into the world of "foodtok" and food review newsletters.

In the world of food quality data, my hero is Zachary Fadem, who went to a bunch of Chipotles in Manhattan to prove that there was substantial variance in weight (controlling for everything else). See Exhibit 1.

I'm not going to pretend that Chipotle, of all things, is the gourmet cuisine that people research on Beli beforehand. Still, there's something weirdly impressive about going to Chipotle over and over and over again. In my infinite boredom, I thought about what the Boston version of this would be. Would it be to go to Dunkin' repeatedly? Or a bunch of 'Tattes? Maybe

Filter out the ice. Weigh out the matcha. Rinse and repeat.

Some minor issues

Weighing matcha in front of baristas seemed strange; therefore, we had to conduct our incredibly niche and strange measuring outside the café, including:

At a table at Harvard's Smith Campus Center

On a slab of cement (?) outside the Charles/MGH T station

On another slab of cement (or bench) outside North Station

We also spilled some matcha and had to rinse out our cocktail shaker many times. The wind also threw off some of our measurements. Plus, we can't be completely sure if there was any variation in matcha concentration, since I didn't bring a spectrophotometer. Maybe next time. Unfortunately, by matcha #4 or so, we got a bit tired of iced matcha in general.

The results

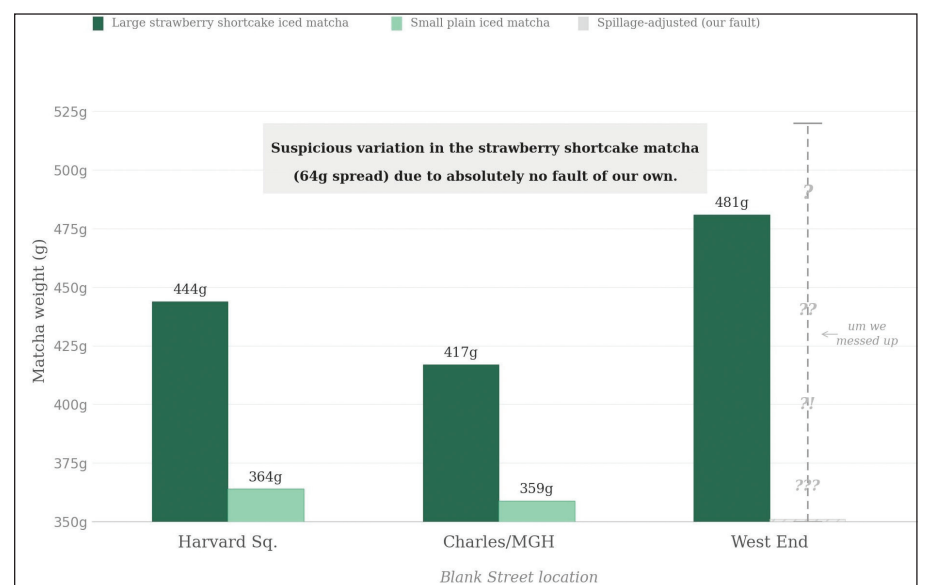
Here, I've graphed the results of our five data points. See the (other) Exhibit 1.

What's the point of this? Your sample size is way too small!

The results are kind of obvious: simple, plain matchas are more consistent than complex, flavored ones. Larges are almost always better than smalls, dollar per gram. Some baristas (very, very slightly) overpour and some (very, very slightly) underpour.

Flour? And order the same thing over and over again? And not get bored?

I eventually settled on Blank Street. It's consistent enough, and there's a decent number of them throughout Boston, New York, London, and so on. Plus, I really wanted to get matcha instead of something solid. Chipotle bowls are so heterogeneous — matcha is simple. If you weigh it, you know exactly what you're going to get. And so, after randomly tweeting about it and roping in



ALOR SAHOO—THE TECH

Exhibit 1: Consistency of portion sizes remains an opportunity for Blank Street Coffee (Source: Some rather jobless individuals).

a friend, we embarked on our journey. The process was simple: bring a cocktail shaker and a scale. Go to a bunch of Blank Streets.

But more importantly, I got to simultaneously catch up with friends and matchamox. What's not to love?

Bestselling author Patrick Radden Keefe presents 'London Falling' at WBUR CitySpace

Keefe discusses wealth, crime, and corruption in London's underworld

Patrick Radden Keefe

London Falling

WBUR CitySpace, Boston

April 21, 2026

By Vivian Hir
SENIOR EDITOR

On April 21, bestselling author Patrick Radden Keefe presented his new true-crime book *London Falling* at WBUR CitySpace in Boston. Todd Mundt, Senior Managing Editor of WBUR's *Here & Now*, moderated the discussion. Keefe is known for his investigative reporting of crime and corruption for *The New Yorker*, with his experience ranging from Mexican drug cartels to Chinatown's notorious smugglers. He is also the author of six books, including *Empire of Pain* and *Say Nothing*. Keefe has also received many awards for his work, notably the National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction and the Orwell Prize for Political Writing.

London Falling is about the unexpected death of Zac Brettler, a 19-year-old who jumped off a balcony of a luxury tower near the Thames River in the early morning of Nov. 29, 2019. When his parents Rachele and Matthew Brettler investigate his past, they learn that he had a fictitious alter ego called Zac Ismailov, a son of a Russian oligarch. Under this identity, Zac becomes

value system of a city where that would be the kind of motivational avatar that he [Zac] was going for?" Keefe asked. By writing a book, Keefe hoped that he could tell a "broader and deeper story" about the reinvention of London and the people of London.

From his interviews with the Brettlers and Zac's former classmates, Keefe found that Zac's obsession with wealth came from being surrounded by rich classmates in his private school, many of whom were the children of Russian oligarchs. Although Zac grew up in a middle-upper class family, the wealth he saw at his school far exceeded his own. He also liked telling lies about himself at school, especially ones about his family's wealth. These aspects influenced him to create the alter ego of Zac Ismailov, which he used when he introduced himself to Mark Foley, a Chelsea Football Club manager at an art gallery event. Believing Zac Brettler to be Zac Ismailov, Foley then connected him to Shamji because Brettler wanted to invest in real estate properties. From there, Shamji introduced Brettler to Sharma.

While the book centers on the events that led to Zac's sudden death, Keefe stated that his book is also a commentary on the long-term repercussions of London's financial deregulation and the investor visa program. Although these policies enabled London to transform from a dying manufacturing city to a global financial center, Keefe highlighted that they have resulted in money laundering and foreign crime.

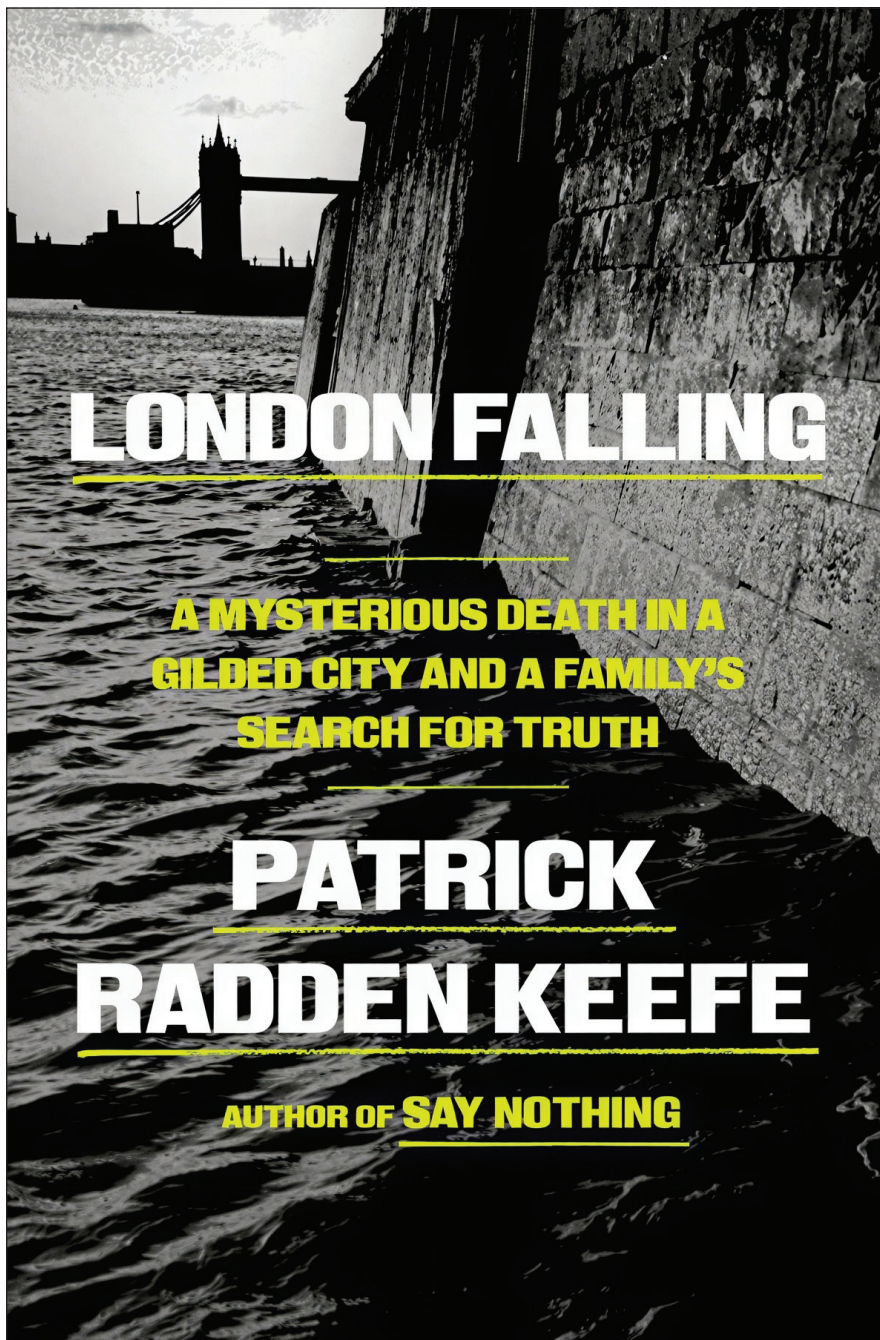


PHOTO COURTESY OF DOUBLEDAY BOOKS

The cover of Patrick Radden Keefe's latest bestselling novel, 'London Falling.'



PHOTO COURTESY OF MILENA FERNSELER/WBUR

Patrick Radden Keefe (left) talks about his new novel, 'London Falling,' at a WBUR CitySpace event on Tuesday, April 21, 2026.

acquainted with Akbar Shamji, a deceitful businessman, and Verinder Sharma, a violent gangster who goes by Indian Dave. Shamji and Sharma were at the apartment right before Zac's death, making them prime suspects in the investigation.

Although Keefe wrote a long-form article about Zac Brettler for *The New Yorker* in 2024, he wanted to write a book, feeling that there was more to the story than just Zac's death. One lingering question Keefe had from his reporting was how societal and political changes to London gave rise to Zac's desire to become the son of a Russian oligarch. "What is it about the

"There is a sort of element of dodginess to all this, and I think on some level, a kind of desperate awareness on the part of British authorities," Keefe said. "What we do is service unsavory foreign money."

In regard to the process of writing *London Falling*, Keefe described it as a "hairball" because of the story's complex and complicated nature. Initially, Keefe found the process to be hard because of the "overwhelming" amount of information. Despite this, what helped him the most was devoting all his attention to crafting the story, such as with exposition and character development. One writing

method that Keefe likes to employ in his work is guiding the reader through "little detours" so that the reader understands the background and characters before giving the "revelation" in the latter half of the novel.

Keefe then returned to discussing major ideas in the book, specifically the Metropolitan Police's inattentive investigation of Zac's death and the lack of accountability. In the end, Zac's death was ruled as a suicide; Shamji and Sharma did not receive a sentence. However, Keefe's detailed analysis of the evidence suggests otherwise. Keefe believes that the Metropolitan Police ruled Zac's death as a suicide rather than murder because the case did not neatly fit in either category, making it a difficult case.

"I think there's a bit of a sense of, 'We've got [to] churn here. There's triage,'" Keefe said. "We can't spend too much more time trying to get to the bottom of this exotic conundrum."

Besides talking about the book's themes, Keefe also reflected upon his unique experience as a reporter for *London Falling*. One major challenge Keefe experienced when writing the book was including information that was uncom-

fortable for the Brettlers because some family secrets and personal details regarding Zac were in the book. Keefe's rationale for including these parts was that he wasn't writing the book for the Brettlers, but rather for the readers and the truth.

"I was able to persuade them that in a book that's all about lies, it was important that if we are going to do this, we have to do it in a way that's kind of bracingly true," Keefe said.

Despite the difficult conversations, Keefe appreciated his collaboration with the Brettlers, calling it a "privilege" to work with them. One thing about the Brettlers that stood out to Keefe was their ability to live "full lives" despite the death of their son, as they regularly meet with family and travel together.

When Keefe asked the Brettlers how they do this, they cited the experiences of their father. Both of their fathers were Holocaust survivors who lost their entire family to the Holocaust. As teenagers, they moved to the UK to restart their lives. Keefe was deeply moved by their story, saying, "The Brettlers have this unbelievable ability to keep going and live joyously in the face of catastrophic loss."

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SPORTS ARTS LIFE FEATURES NEWS OPINION ENTERTAINMENT WEATHER SCIENCE

Bob Odenkirk and Derek Kolstad on 'Normal'

From small town secrets to big screen violence

By Katelin Zhao

Normal — funny, mysterious, and brutal. In this brand-new action-comedy, Ulysses (Bob Odenkirk), the substitute sheriff in town, tries to distance himself from the town's suspicious occurrences. However, after investigating a botched bank robbery, the town's secrets and his past threaten to catch up with him.

As the creator of the *John Wick* and *Nobody* franchises, writer and producer Derek Kolstad is no stranger to action. In *Normal*, he explores this genre through a personal lens. The real John Wick — Kolstad's grandfather — lived in Mazomania, Wisconsin. Kolstad described the small town as a place "where you go downtown, and it was a bunch of empty storefronts,"

like relics just fighting for survival. Kolstad's inspiration is well-reflected in the unassuming town of Normal, Minnesota: a moody, cool-toned, and gloomy atmosphere that quickly transforms from tranquil to terrifying.

Ulysses joins the likes of John Wick, Saul Goodman, and Hutch Mansell as a character exploring his identity, a topic central to many projects of both Kolstad and Odenkirk. As tensions build and the dark side of Normal surfaces, Ulysses must make a move and reconcile with his own identity.

Throughout the 96-minute runtime, audiences can expect a rollercoaster of emotions that amplify each other, rooted in the blend of comedy and action. Reflecting on a few of their favorite comedic

scenes, Odenkirk and Kolstad unanimously championed scenes in which violence is pivotal.

"An action fight is about three to five minutes. It's about the length of a sketch, and it kind of has a journey like a sketch, and it hopefully has clever moments within it," Odenkirk said.

To balance farcical humor with shocking violence, Odenkirk explained that he builds tension to make a joke, adding that it must be deliberate and well-placed to connect to the material and further the narrative. Through situational comedy and witty dialogue, *Normal* whips between humor and havoc, making audiences laugh and gasp in the same breath.

Odenkirk noted that, at times, director Ben Wheatley took *Normal* to the levels of

"a horror film" reminiscent of genre classics like *Final Destination*, which was also acknowledged by Kolstad. Relying mostly on practical action with stunts performed by Odenkirk himself, the violence is grounded and visceral, eliciting jaw drops and chills among viewers.

Normal explores the nuance of "normalcy," a concept familiar to all of us. "There is no such thing as normal, you know? And that's not necessarily a bad thing," Kolstad said.

Ultimately, *Normal* is a love letter to the film medium — an independent movie imbued with intentionality and artistry, revisiting film's capacity to induce raw emotions and echo the complexities of the human experience.

Normal is now playing in theaters.

CONCERT REVIEW

A collage of Baroque dances and celebrations

Jonathan Cohen and the H+H society perform various Baroque suites and opera excerpts

By Luke Kim
ARTS STAFF WRITER

Handel's Coronation Anthem No.1, Zadok the Priest and Water Music, Suite No.1, selections from Lully's *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, Bach's Contrapuncti 1, 4, and 7 from *die Kunst der Fuge* and Brandenburg Concerto No.1 in F Major, selections from Rameau's suite of instrumental dances and overtures

**Handel and Haydn Society
Conducted by Jonathan Cohen with Anthony Trecek-King conducting the Youth Chorus
Boston Symphony Hall
April 12, 2026**

On April 12, the Handel and Haydn Society returned from an unusually long silence with an afternoon of royal pageantry, court dances, and polished playing, but the program's identity proved more elusive than its execution. Although nominally centered on Handel's *Water Music*, the concert ultimately felt less like a showcase of a single major work and more like a curated collage of Baroque pieces loosely tied to themes of dance and celebration.

The opening *Zadok the Priest* was led by Anthony Trecek-King, who conducted the H+H Youth Chorus as part of their Chorale Festival. Considering the ensemble consisted of high school singers, the performance was impressive. The chorus blended well with the orchestra, and the anthem's grandeur and jubilation resonated throughout the hall. Performing in such an environment is no small feat, and one hopes many of these young musicians will continue their choral journeys.

As a *comédie-ballet*, Lully's *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* offered the program's first clear link to dance music. A highlight of this piece was the contrast of each movement, ranging from the French overture to the Chaconne. Though Cohen mainly conducted, the harpsichord was conducted by associate conductor Ian Watson, a sensible choice that supported the performance's balance. Nevertheless, as a historically informed performance group, incorporating the historically documented conducting style of using a large baton would have added an extra layer of

theatrical authenticity. Given the suite's brief duration, this visual element could have made the performance even more engaging.

The three excerpts from Bach's *Art of Fugue* were string orchestral arrangements with the bass part doubling the cellos. The ensemble displayed strong internal communication and cohesion, resulting in a polished and enjoyable performance. Still, the contrapuntal clarity might have been better executed with a harpsichord or string quartet arrangement. Additionally, Cohen's decision to add *basso continuo* on the harpsichord was puzzling because it felt like an unnecessary intervention, especially considering Bach's original concept for the *Art of Fugue*. These excerpts as a whole also felt out of place for this concert, given that they are pure abstract fugues that were unrelated to the main theme of the day.

Handel's *Water Music* is an orchestral masterpiece, but also a remarkable achievement for the horn repertoire. Among the various pieces presented, this was the most successful due to both the consistency and the soloist-orchestra balance. The horn players navigated demanding parts with remarkable ease, even in the more challenging higher registers. Elsewhere, the suite was shaped with care: the famous "Air" carried a regal elegance, and the "Bourrée" was light and playful, and the outer movements conveyed their fitting grandeur.

The prominence of horns continued into the second half in Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 1. Unfortunately, some of the problems from last year's perfor-

mance persisted as the horns overpowered the rest of the orchestra, particularly in the first movement. Balance improved in the second movement, especially in the dialogue between solo violin and oboe, and was further refined in the third movement. The final movement, with its unconventional ritornello structure incorporating minuets, trios, and a polonaise, provided the clearest link to the concert's dance theme. In addition, the horn soloists excelled in the virtuosic trio sections, evoking the atmosphere of an 18th-century court.

The program concluded with selections from Rameau's operas and opéra-ballets, reflecting the evolution of French Baroque music roughly 60 years after Lully. When heard beside Lully, Rameau's overtures and chaconnes revealed just how far French Baroque style had evolved. The tambourine stood out, achieving an ideal balance between percussion and orchestra. It was surprising, however, that the well-known *Danse des Sauvages* from *Les Indes galantes* was omitted, as its Rondeau form would have aligned perfectly with the concert's thematic premise.

Overall, H+H's performances were consistently strong and highly enjoyable on an individual level. However, the overarching theme, either framed as dance or celebration music, was unconvincing. Some works were explicitly meant for dancing, while others merely adopted dance forms and a few bore little connection to either concept. Still, these concerns are minor when weighed against the pleasure of an afternoon filled with high-quality performances.

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By Opinion Writer
STAFF REPORTER

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A brighter future for the people of Africa: MIT Africa Innovate Conference pushes new plans for uplifting the African continent

MIT Sloan celebrated its 15th annual Africa Innovate Conference in February, drawing in students and professionals from across the African diaspora to discuss how they can help their home continent

By **Malakhi Beyah**
ASSOCIATE SCIENCE EDITOR

On Feb. 27 and 28, professionals from across the African diaspora gathered in MIT's Sloan School for the 15th annual Africa Innovate Conference. Attendees were greeted with vibrant displays of African-owned enterprises, a spread of flavorful African cuisine, and crowds of people determined to better the African continent.

The Africa Innovate Conference is an event hosted by the student-led Africa Business Club (ABC), which dedicates itself to giving African students and allies "the necessary exposure, resources, and support to drive change on the continent," according to its website. ABC initiated the conference as a way for students and industry leaders to commit to driving Africa's technological progress, matching business proposals with investment opportunities and holding evocative discussions about the African diaspora supporting continental Africans. This year's conference featured the theme of "building systems for shared prosperity."

Hundreds of participants assembled for two days of creative ideation and entrepreneurial action at the conference, eager to share how their ideas and prospective business ventures would lead to a brighter future for the people of Africa.

Hackathon participants chart paths for improving life in Africa

The main event of the conference was its hackathon, in which participants were given two days to fully plan a technology-based system that would serve people in African countries. At the end of the two days, teams met in a Sloan lecture hall to present their business proposals — projects ranging from agricultural and educational assistance to legal tools and fraud claim protection — in front of a panel of judges.

The Tech interviewed one of the teams, comprised of Ajibola Ajani '29, Ericsson Ansah-Antwi '29, and Xerco Tchouankeu '29, shortly after they finished their presentation.

The first-year undergraduates developed an agricultural logistics app called AgriMarket, which was designed to streamline the purchase and sale of crops between African farmers, contractors, and customers. The app would also use artificial intelligence to optimize farming schedules.

Ajani enjoyed the experience of programming and refining the app, even though the hackathon was on a tight 24-hour timeframe that conflicted with classes. "It was definitely a new opportunity, trying to figure out how to actually get the app to be functional [and] to fix the inevitable problems that came up during development," he said.

Preparing the app was only part of the job: the team also had to navigate creating their pitch and implementation plan for the judges within those 24 hours. "The hackathon helped [me] get a better perspective on time management and preparing for business pitches," Ajani added.

Tchouankeu discussed the learning curve involved with competing in the hackathon. The computer science classes that he and his teammates had taken during their first year at MIT did not necessarily prepare them for presenting their app and explaining its nuances in a real-world context to judges, which they described as the hardest part of the competition.

"I think our idea was good, [but] we weren't ready for the way they wanted us to

present," Tchouankeu explained. "The focus was more on the business side, like marketing, and we thought it was a hackathon in a technical aspect."

In the end, the AgriMarket team appreciated the experience of competing in the hackathon, sharing that they gained valuable skills they would not have learned from their standard classes. "It's good to have these kinds of alternative hackathons," Ansah-Antwi said. "It's very important to [be able to] express the things you're building."

A look at AfriLex, the winners of the hackathon

The Tech also interviewed the winning team, composed of Harvard Law School student Tupalishe Mulwafu, Wacuka Ngata '27, and Saron Yohannes '29. The team developed AfriLex, a system designed to help legal firms and courts more efficiently navigate African nations' often disorganized legal infrastructure. The proposal won the team \$5,000 for their cause.

Mulwafu, a practicing lawyer in Malawi, explained that the motivation for AfriLex was personal for her. "[In Africa], cases are not uploaded consistently, [and] we don't have any AI tools to help you filter through the cases to get what you want," she said. "So it's something that has always been at the back of my mind; I wish we had a more efficient system."

When Mulwafu later took a Sloan course at MIT, she gained the inspiration to turn her frustrations into action. As the hackathon approached, she partnered with current Institute undergraduates Ngata and Yohannes to refine the idea into AfriLex.

To improve African countries' legal systems, the team's plan started with the high courts, where clerks would upload their cases into a database for a learning model to analyze. The model would use the outcomes of those cases to keep track of overturned laws and other nuances, which are often overlooked in African countries' current legal practices.

"We also want an online website for lawyers to be able to do their research with that updated information instead of having to contact people for updated regulations," Yohannes explained.

Ngata further explained how the AfriLex team plans to use the prize money they received for their winning proposal. "We are going to proceed with a pilot in Malawi," she said. "We've already targeted which higher court we want to go with, and now we're just going to try and get in contact with two clerks to see how it goes."

The three women looked back fondly on the process of developing and unveiling AfriLex. Ngata particularly appreciated their team dynamic. "We jibed really well, and we just did what we were passionate about, had fun with it, and, before we knew it, we all realized we were pretty serious about it," she recalled.

For Yohannes, winning the competition gave her the confidence to take the project further. "The judges' faith in the idea [was] very uplifting," she commented. "So after ending the competition, we were like, 'We want to do this; we want to make it real.'"

Improving African infrastructure amidst political instability

While teams were presenting their hackathon ideas, attendees were able to watch and engage in a series of panel discussions a few floors below. One of them, "Futuristic Urban Infrastructure & Policymaking," explored how Africa's current technological structure

can be expanded and improved. Various industry experts, as diverse in profession as they were in African backgrounds, gave their insight into the shortcomings of Africa's current technological infrastructure and the systemic ways those issues can be addressed.

"So after ending the competition, we were like, 'We want to do this; we want to make it real.'"

Idah Z. Pswarayi-Riddihough, the former Global Director for Digital Solutions in the Digital Vice Presidency at the World Bank, discussed the fundamental challenges Africa faces when it comes to technological progress. Namely, she pointed to African governments' inability to responsibly handle infrastructure. Unclear directives surrounding who is responsible for building infrastructure, as well as excessive red tape surrounding infrastructure development, leads to a destructive lack of holistic planning.

"So you will have a road that goes north to south," she offered as an example. "But beyond that, nobody can tell you when it's going to be built [or] what's going to be built."

The confusion around infrastructure projects like those has ripple effects, Pswarayi-Riddihough explained. If, for instance, a government sought to boost economic development in part by helping farmers increase their yield, the initiative would be futile without roads for farmers to travel on.

Pswarayi-Riddihough also touched on the role of corruption in hindering African countries' technological progress. As she described, the mechanisms through which corrupt leaders maintain power consequently disempower the general population and prevent meaningful progress. For example, many African governments have shown resistance toward digitalization and artificial intelligence because of the transparency such developments would bring; they disregard the possibility that those advancements may make progress much more efficient in their countries.

Entrepreneur and investor Bunmi Adokore offered a strategy to navigate achieving progress with African politics. He broke down the delicate balance involved with infrastructure projects with African governments, explaining the infeasibility of pushing change through the government overnight and the complications around having an infrastructure project drag on through different administrations with varying agendas. The best approach, in his opinion, was focusing on shorter-term products instead of complex, years-long projects. This way, African countries would experience incremental progress without being hindered by political graft.

"Let's know who we are, let's know what our societies are, and let's not be handicapped by that," Adokore stated. "Let's rise in spite of those, and let's figure those as parameters in equations that we can solve."

Pan-Africanism and the need to give back

In one of the last talks of the conference, African Olympiad Academy Co-Founder Gaidi Faraj discussed the leadership role of the African diaspora in an increasingly globalized world.

Faraj recounted how his time working in Tanzania transformed the way he viewed many of African countries' shortcomings. "There's not a malaria problem, there's not a healthcare problem, there's not a housing problem," he explained, "there's just engineering problems. There seem to be a ton of engineering problems with engineering solutions across Africa." With this insight, he helped found the African Olympiad Academy to foster problem-solving and engineering skills in the continent's youth.

"Let's know who we are, let's know what our societies are, and let's not be handicapped by that."

Students in Africa often lack the resources to fix the continent's problems on their own, Faraj noted; instead, with many of African heritage fortunate enough to benefit from established institutions abroad, they should consider their responsibility of giving back to their home countries. This concept is one of the cornerstones of Pan-Africanism, the idea that the African diaspora should be united in promoting the success of all Africans.

"What kind of lines are you willing to draw for yourself?" Faraj prompted the audience. "Where do you say, 'Yes, I'm willing to work ... for someone else, create more wealth for them, [and] strengthen their institutions?' [Where do you] say, 'I'm willing to walk away, to go back and build institutions that lead to shared prosperity for the African continent?'"

Faraj argued that facilitating a network within the diaspora is fundamental for changing the way people view Africa as a whole. By maintaining the continuous flow of sustainable solutions for the continent, the African diaspora has the ability to bring prosperity that truly changes lives for continental Africans.

"It comes from you all," Faraj told the audience, "who are very highly respected because you've been successful in the diaspora, going back and being advocates and ambassadors for change on the continent."

[Where do you] say, 'I'm willing to walk away, to go back and build institutions that lead to shared prosperity for the African continent?'

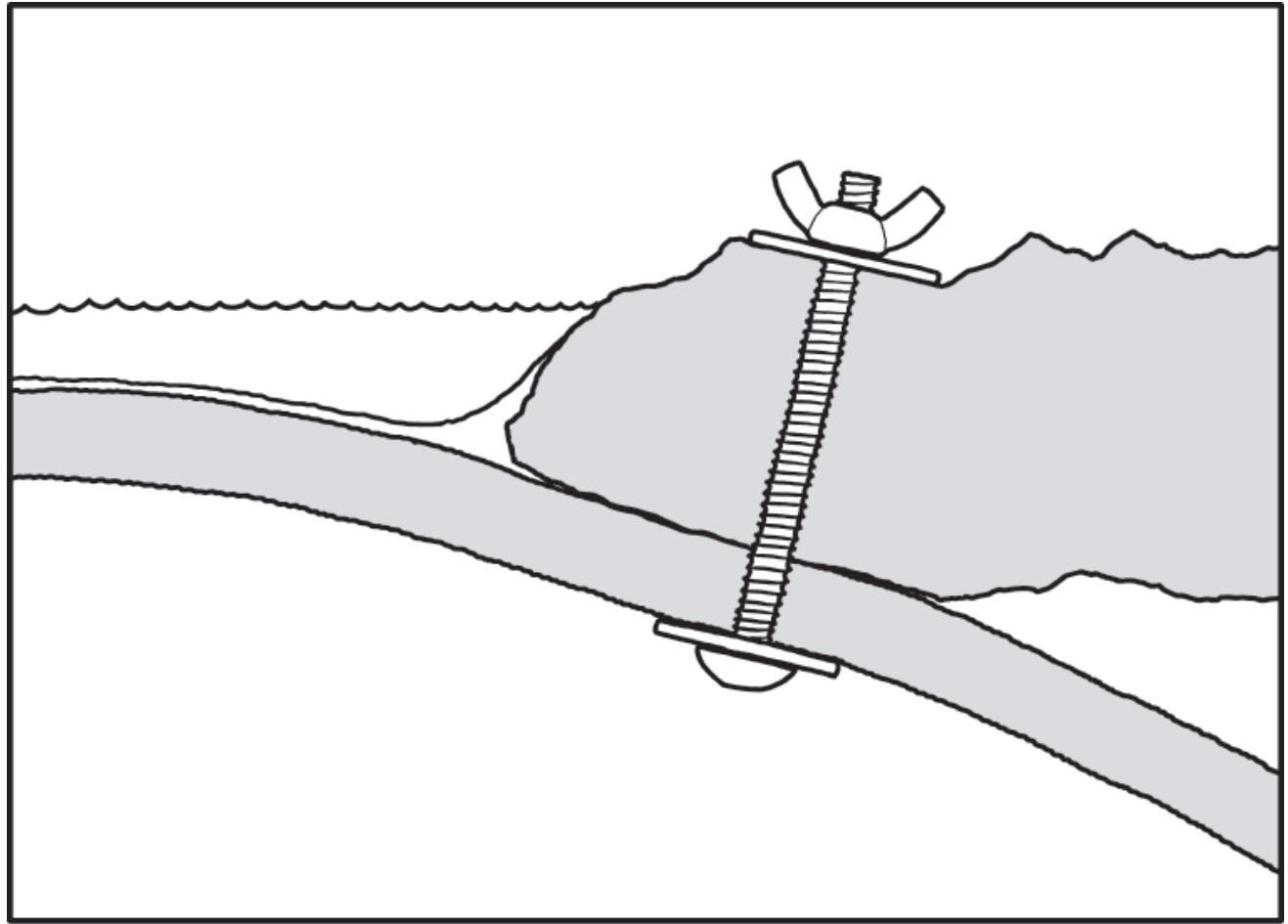
Faraj's talk was representative of the broader theme surrounding this year's Africa Innovate Conference. From students' elaborate business proposals to experts' discussions of implementing real-world solutions, the event demonstrated the potential people have to induce real change for the African continent, creating the infrastructure for Africans all over the world to prosper together. It offered hope that, with a concerted effort, the African diaspora can truly succeed in "building systems for shared prosperity."

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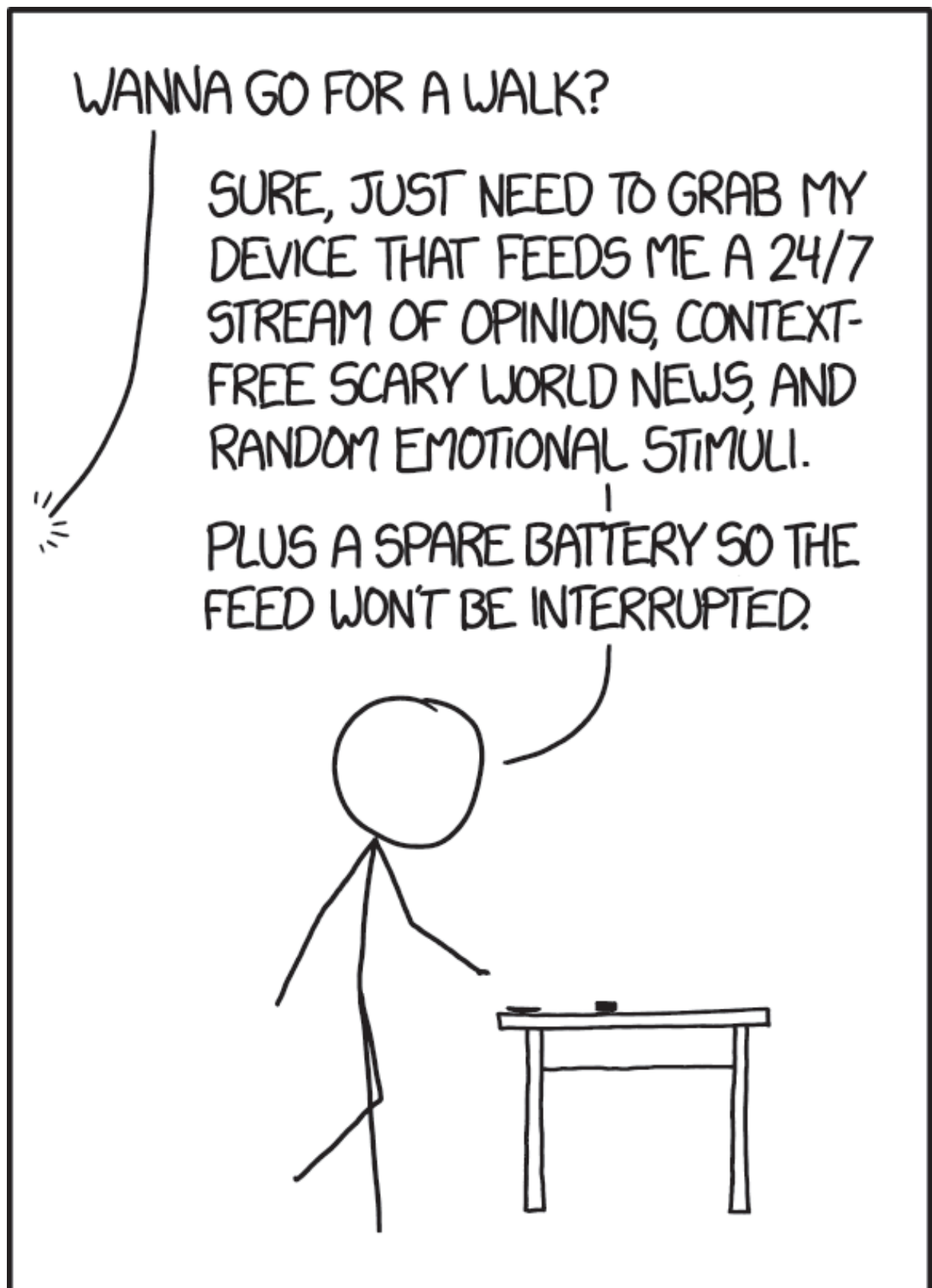
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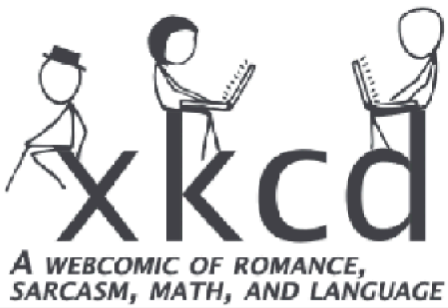
GOOD NEWS: GEOPHYSICISTS ARE *FINALLY* INSTALLING EARTH'S REQUIRED ANTI-SUBDUCTION ANCHOR BOLTS.

The biggest expense was installing the mantle ducts to keep the carbonate-silicate cycle operating.

[1802] Phone



[*disables social networking accounts*] [*social isolation! increases*] [*Wait, why does this ALSO feel bad?]



by Randall Munroe

1,016 admitted students attend CPW 2026

Events included Tetris on Green Building and Caltech, MIT mascot wedding

By Samuel Yuan
NEWS EDITOR

1,016 admitted students visited campus from April 16 to 19 for Campus Preview Weekend (CPW) 2026, according to Admissions Department communications director Chris Peterson SM '13.

CPW, MIT's signature admitted students event spanning 3.14 days, is when many admitted high school seniors decide if they want to call Cambridge home for the next four years. Since 2007, around 1,000 prospective students have attended CPW each year.

Throughout the weekend, pre-frosh were able to attend performances, activities, and workshops from a selection of around 700 events run by volunteers from clubs, dorms, and Fraternities, Sororities, and Independent Living Groups (FSILGs).

Prospective students were each paired with a current student host, and were housed on and off campus in residence halls and FSILGs.

Events during this CPW included a "wedding" between the Caltech and MIT beaver mascots at East Campus, chemistry jeopardy, hair dyeing, around a dozen separate "Grill and Chills," as well as the usual opening and closing shows and Midway club fair. A bouncy castle was also set up in front of Kresge Auditorium for the annual Greek Carnival.

While this year's CPW remained similar in structure to prior years, it notably marked the revival of the Green Building Tetris "hack," where pre-frosh and students were able to play Tetris on the 21-story Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences building. The LEDs were also used to play a pixelated version of the "Bad Apple" music video. Dubbed the "holy grail of hacks," this unofficial event was last organized at CPW 2012.

Other hacks at past CPWs include a banner draped over the engraved "Massachusetts" outside Lobby 7 so the inscription read "The Only Institute of Tech-

nology" in 2005, and a display of the stolen Caltech Fleming Cannon in 2006.

Lauren Rodriguez, senior assistant director for outreach in the Admissions Department and lead CPW coordinator, said that for

pre-frosh, the most valuable part of CPW is gaining a "fresh" perspective of the MIT community.

"There is a lot of information out there that tells admits who they think we are," Rodriguez said. "When they come to CPW,

they learn who we actually are: a vibrant, collaborative, welcoming group of people who want to make this a fun experience for everyone."

Admitted students must commit to a school by May 1.



LEVY LE—THE TECH

Admitted and current students alike gather on Kresge Lawn for activities throughout Campus Preview Weekend. Friday, April 17, 2026.

Leave marks,
not sharks!

Email tt-join@mit.edu

Capture the Moment

Join Photo at The Tech

tt-join@mit.edu



LATYR NIANG—THE TECH

The American Dream now cries at the pump while Trump controls the hose.