

Class of 2026 sent off with calls to curiosity, care

Su: "Run toward the hardest problems and trust your engineer's instinct"

By Vivian Hir and Geoffrey Enwere
SENIOR EDITORS

On Thursday, May 28, MIT graduates gathered on Killian Court to participate in the annual OneMIT Commencement Ceremony. This year, the Institute awarded diplomas to 1,165 undergraduates and 2,817 graduate students. The guest speaker was Lisa T. Su '90 SM '91 PhD '94, the CEO of Advanced Micro Devices (AMD), a major chip design firm.

The ceremony opened at Killian Court at 3 p.m. with the Class of 1976 alumni parade, MIT Corporation Chair Mark P. Gorenberg '76's opening remarks, and an invocation delivered by Institute Chaplain Thea Keith-Lucas. After the a cappella group Chorollaris's rendition of the national anthem and two school songs "In Praise of MIT" and "Take Me Back to Tech," 2026 Commencement speaker Su arrived on stage.

Overall, the AMD CEO advised graduates to pursue the hardest problems and collectively use AI responsibly. Reflecting on her time at MIT, from taking introductory circuits and electronics to repeating countless fabrication experiments during her PhD, Su appreciated how the Institute taught her to solve difficult problems and think like an engineer.

A turning point, Su highlighted, was her UROP experience in X-ray lithography, which sparked a deep interest in semiconductors. Although most of her experiments didn't work, she was fascinated by the technological power of these small and delicate wafers.

Her interest in semiconductors led her to pursue a PhD in electrical engineering at MIT under Professor Dimitri Antoniadis. Su credits her PhD experience for teaching her how to apply MIT's motto of *mens et manus*, meaning "mind and hand," in her research and professional career.

After receiving her PhD, Su joined IBM at age 25. A piece of advice that Su strongly remembers from her IBM mentor was to "run toward the hardest problems." Su explained to graduates that the hardest problems offered valuable lessons about one's capabilities.

She cited becoming CEO of AMD as an example, sharing that she was interested in reshaping and transforming the troubled company, even though some of her mentors thought the CEO position was risky.

"But for me, this was my dream job," Su said.

To pivot the company towards success, Su made a long-term bet on high-performance computing, as she saw great potential in this field. When Su became chief executive of AMD in 2014, the company's market capitalization was under \$3 billion. Today, it is valued at more than \$750 billion.

Su then transitioned to the topic of recent advances in AI. For Su, what makes AI unlike past technology trends like the internet is its capacity to accelerate "discovery in every field." However, her positive remarks on AI elicited a few noticeable jeers from the audience, mirroring similar reactions for other commencement speakers discussing AI like former Google CEO Eric Schmidt.

Although Su is optimistic about AI, she underscored the importance of people being responsible for AI's impact and future. She emphasized that everyone is responsible for AI technologies because they require people's "sense of purpose" and judgment.

Su concluded her speech with gratitude, stating that she has been "very lucky" in her career. Still, she added that while luck is a factor in success, "the best people find ways to make their luck."

"Run toward the hardest [problems]. And trust your engineer's instinct. That is how you make your luck," she concluded.

In contrast to Su's inspirational speech, the two student speakers, Graduate Student Council (GSC) president Teddy Warner and undergraduate Class of 2026 president Heba Hussein, grounded the graduates with a sober reflection on the pressures facing higher education and the wider world.

Warner, who served as the GSC's 71st and 72nd president, congratulated graduates on joining MIT's network of more than 150,000 alumni and on contributions spanning science, technology, business, and the arts, as well as teaching, public policy, and service. He did not shy from the difficulties of recent years, citing threats to research funding, the "increasing automation of thought," and harm to the rights of international students seeking to study in the US without fear of unlawful detention.

"We have the responsibility to generate, disseminate, and preserve knowledge in service of the world's greatest challenges," Warner said, stressing that such problems cannot be solved without global cooperation.



AMD CEO Lisa Su '90, SM '91, PhD '94 delivers the commencement speech at the 2026 OneMIT Commencement Ceremony on Thursday, May 28.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GRETCHEN ERTL

He urged the class to apply the cooperative, interdisciplinary skills honed at MIT toward positive change.

The recent challenges Warner cited, such as federal research funding cuts and the targeting of international students, have also been highlighted by the MIT Graduate Student Union (GSU). Earlier in the day, the MIT Graduate Student Union (GSU) held a rally outside Lobby 7 at 1 p.m., demanding the MIT administration to stop delaying contract negotiations. Over a hundred people attended the rally, holding picket signs and chanting phrases like "MIT workers won't wait" and "MIT works because we do."

Hussein, who led the undergraduate class for four years, centered her remarks around a personal story. Through MIT's Global Teaching Labs program, she had spent time in India teaching students in rural communities while also visiting family members displaced from Sudan. The experience, she said, captured a tension familiar to many of her classmates: holding "competing

realities at once: excitement about the possibilities ahead and concern about the challenges facing the world around us."

Even so, Hussein said that the Class of 2026 never stopped showing care for one another, whether through staying up to help friends debug code at 2 a.m., turning out for community events during the most overwhelming weeks, or lighting up the dance floor at freshman formal so thoroughly that the speakers caught on fire. She closed by urging graduates to carry that care forward: "For our work, for each other, and for the people far beyond MIT whose lives are connected by what we choose to do."

After Hussein delivered her salute, MIT President Sally Kornbluth closed out the ceremony by giving her charge to the graduates, spotlighting two values she said defined the Institute: excellence and curiosity. Kornbluth also warned that a decline in federal support for basic science threatened future discoveries. Opening with what she called "a serious case of humility," Kornbluth said she had drawn her

speech from the collective wisdom of alumni, nearly all of whom credit their MIT experience as life-changing. She tied the Institute's culture of merit to its lack of legacy or donor admissions — a commitment, she said, to "potential over pedigree." Furthermore, she framed excellence as self-discipline, not self-regard, quoting Walt Whitman on the willingness to surrender ideas when evidence runs against them.

Curiosity, which Kornbluth called the Institute's "intellectual rocket fuel," is the path to the breakthroughs that turn deadly cancers into treatable conditions, advance fusion energy, and improve food production. "Science is curiosity on a mission," she said, but cautioned that the payoff from basic research can take decades and that US investment in such work is now in sharp decline, a trend she warned would choke off future cures and shrink the supply of future scientists. Kornbluth closed on a third value beyond the two on the banners in Lobby 7: "the commitment to always act ethically, with integrity, and with consideration for our fellow human beings."

6/11 IN SHORT

Fall pre-registration is due on Friday, June 12.

September SB and advanced degree applications are due on Friday, June 12.

The 2026 Edward M. Scolnick Prize Lecture in Neuroscience will take place on Tuesday, June 16 at 4 p.m. in Building 46.

Juneteenth will be observed on Friday, June 19.

The Independence Day holiday will be observed on Friday, July 3.

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WORDS OF WISDOM

CEO Lisa Su addresses the graduating MIT class. **NEWS, p. 1**

BLAST FROM SPACE

Meteor collision with Earth heard over East Boston. **SCIENCE, p. 3**

RESEARCH FOR WOMEN

Conference convenes to discuss research in women's health. **SCIENCE, p. 3**

FUN

Start the day with xkcd comics. **ENTERTAINMENT, p. 4**

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Does everyone research women's health?

The inaugural Emerging Researchers in Women's Health Symposium showcases the diversity of women's health research and of the researchers themselves to drive change in a historically overlooked field

By **Chelsy Goodwill**
SCIENCE STAFF WRITER

"EVERYONE RESEARCHES WOMEN'S HEALTH." In the weeks leading up to early May, these four words were printed in large white letters against a black background on poster boards throughout MIT.

May 12, 2026 marked the Institute's inaugural Emerging Researchers in Women's Health Symposium in the Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research Public Galleries. The symposium was organized by Katelyn Howard '26, who recently graduated from MIT with a B.S. in chemistry and biology, and her research mentor Elizabeth LaCroix.

The bold visuals publicizing the event highlighted an important feature: the diversity of women's health research and of the researchers themselves. From computer scientists to chemical engineers, undergraduate researchers to postdoctoral fellows, the event brought together nine presenters who used their diverse academic backgrounds and passions to progress the under-researched field of women's health. *The Tech* spoke with three speakers during the event.

Annette Vega '28 is a rising junior conducting research in Polina Anikeeva's Bioelectronics Group, whose work focuses on a poorly understood phenomenon: the biological signals that control contractions during pregnancy and labor. Her poster detailed two complementary devices that were tested in mice to investigate the role of muscular, hormonal, and neural signaling in contractions. The first device induces contractions via light-based input, while the second induces and records contractions via electrical signals from a microelectrode array molded to the surface of the uterus. Drawing from her experience as a mechanical engineering student, Vega cited her education for having taught her "a more systematic way of approaching problems," seeing challenges like this as a "system with inputs and outputs."

Vega speculated that understanding uterine innervation, or the distribution and stimulation of nerves in the uterus, can help predict potential effects of procedures

like hysterectomies on a patient's cognitive health. A 2018 study on rats published in *Endocrinology* revealed that those who underwent a hysterectomy — the surgical removal of the uterus — while retaining their ovaries experienced adverse effects on their working memory.

"For me, women's health is one of the most important things that you can work on."

"The rats still had very significant cognitive defects, which means that the lack of the uterus impacted brain chemistry somehow," Vega said.

While these devices are currently being used in mice, Vega hopes this research will lead to the development of wearable monitoring devices for human patients.

"We can start to use these devices to understand contractions and eventually create a device that can be used in actual pregnant patients," Vega envisioned. "Instead of having something internal, we can have something external that would record contractions, and from that information on contractions, see if the pregnancy is going as it should."

Francisco Gomez Rivas-Vazquez '28, an undergraduate majoring in chemical engineering and researching in MIT's Edelman Lab, and Shaniel Bowen, a postdoctoral fellow in the lab, chose to address the striking lack of research into women's sexual health by modeling the clitoris.

In a multi-institutional study, clinicians took MRI images from 134 patients, 53% being Black women and 47% being white women. Then, researchers segmented MRI images into layers and stacked these layers to create 3D anatomical models.

"Typically, when you scroll through an MRI, you ... naturally build a 3D model [in your head], understanding which direction you're moving and how the anatomy shifts. So here, it's like physically translating that," Gomez Rivas-Vazquez said.

The researchers then used shape analysis, an established method in orthopedic

and brain research, in this new application, Bowen explained. Specifically, this method quantifies and compares both the position and the dimensions of patients' clitoris complexes across different ages. Bowen hopes that their models can be used to educate medical students, better equipping them to repair this organ "if it becomes injured during surgery or ... childbirth."

"I believe sexual health of women-identifying individuals has been very stigmatized, and the underrepresentation of black women in clinical research was a big deal to me," Bowen said. "So I saw a personal investment reason to do this kind of research, especially applying engineering approaches to innovate the space, and together getting these kinds of results that haven't really been described before."

Many different kinds of researchers are needed to fill in the gaps in knowledge that affect the health of 50% of the population — women.

Hara Moraitaki '26, who recently graduated from MIT with a B.S. in computer science and engineering (Course 6) and completed a UROP in the Institute's Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (CSAIL), is working to reduce the diagnostic delay for endometriosis. Endometriosis is a complex gynecological disorder that can cause chronic pain, infertility, and reduced quality of life. Despite affecting 5–10% of women of reproductive age, a lack of early detection tools has produced, on average, a 6- to 11-year delay in diagnosis from the onset of symptoms. That is, most women with endometriosis are not diagnosed until 43.7 years of age, Moraitaki's study found.

Moraitaki combined electronic health records and self-reported data from the period-tracking mobile app Clue to build machine learning models that predict whether a woman may have endometriosis. While the model was highly successful in distin-

guishing endometriosis patients from controls, it struggled to differentiate between endometriosis and other gynecological disorders with overlapping symptoms, such as polyendocrine metabolic ovarian syndrome (PMOS) or uterine fibroids.

Given these results, Moraitaki suggested that conformal prediction could be applied to the model's outputs. This means producing a shortlist of possible conditions the patient is likely to have, with a statistical guarantee that the real diagnosis is somewhere on that list. With this approach, a new feature could be added to apps like Clue to flag patients, encouraging them to seek medical attention sooner.

"For example," she explained, "we are 95% confident you have either endometriosis or [PMOS]."

Moraitaki reflected on the importance of computer science in the field of women's health. "Course 6 can be the toolbox for whatever problem you feel passionate about," she said. "For me, women's health is one of the most important things that you can work on."

Moraitaki plans to continue this research through a Master's of Engineering in electrical engineering and computer science.

From mechanical, chemical, and electrical engineers to chemists, biologists, and computer scientists, the variety of people behind this year's Emerging Researchers in Women's Health Symposium demonstrates that everyone researches women's health, or at least budding academics from many different fields. Given that the group was overwhelmingly undergraduate, for many of them, this is just the start of a research journey that will train them, in their unique areas of expertise, to continue to answer outstanding questions. Many different kinds of researchers are needed to fill in the gaps in knowledge that affect the health of 50% of the population — women.

Katelyn Howard '26, the organizer of the Emerging Researchers in Women's Health Symposium, has previously written science articles for The Tech. She was not involved in the reporting, writing, or editing of this article.

Meteor causes sonic boom over East Boston

Many New Englanders were startled by a meteor breaking the sound barrier on May 30, likening the noise to an explosion over their heads

By **Malakhi Beyah and Daina August**
SCIENCE STAFF WRITERS

Early in the afternoon on May 30, people in Boston and surrounding areas of greater New England as far away as Rhode Island were startled by what sounded like a large explosion. The noise sounded as if "someone dropped a box or broke down a bedframe," recalled Esther Jung '28.

"These [magnetic meteorites] are within reach of a 100' length of rope dangled off of a boat. In case anyone is interested in such factoids."

For MIT graduates and commencement volunteers still on campus, the sound could have easily been mistaken for the sounds of summer move out. But as people across Massachusetts took to social media to ask if others had heard the same sound, it became increasingly clear that this noise was not caused by a box, a bomb, or a tree falling on a house. While there was a passing storm system, meteorologists didn't see signs of thunder and

lightning on satellite data. Some people also reported shaking, but there was no evidence of seismic activity either. Later that evening, NASA announced that the sound heard was a sonic boom produced by a meteor exploding over northeastern Massachusetts.

Where did the meteor come from, and how did it get here?

The origins of the meteor have yet to be confirmed; however, a 2024 study by an international team of astronomers found that about the vast majority of meteors are created by asteroid collisions in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter. More specifically, the study found that 80% of meteors come from only three families of asteroids in the asteroid belt, giving the fragments that end up on Earth very similar material compositions.

Assuming the same is true for our most recent cosmic visitor, scientists may have a good idea of what to look for if they try to locate the meteorites in Cape Cod. Namely, the three aforementioned asteroid families are made up of considerably magnetic materials, leading NASA to report that "these [magnetic meteorites] are within reach of a 100' length of rope dangled off of a boat. In case anyone is interested in such factoids." As of writing, no one has reported recovering any meteorites from Cape Cod with this method.

The meteor was originally as massive as a mid-sized African elephant; intense friction with the air in the atmosphere whittled it down to the mass of a small grand piano.

That same NASA report estimated that the meteor weighed 5,600 kilograms upon reaching Earth, with about 10% of that mass surviving as meteorites when it reached the Cape. (Meteors are reclassified as meteorites when they reach the Earth's surface.) To illustrate, the meteor was originally as massive as a mid-sized African elephant; intense friction with the air in the atmosphere whittled it down to the mass of a small grand piano. (Compared to other meteors that Earth has encountered, this one was relatively small. Tunguska, which caused the most massive meteor blast in recorded history after striking Russia in 1908, is estimated to have weighed 3–5 billion kilograms).

As many New Englanders discovered on May 30, the meteor's interaction with Earth's

atmosphere did a lot more than reduce its mass by 90%. On June 3, NASA deduced that the meteor travelled through the atmosphere at over 18 kilometers per second (over 40,000 miles per hour). Objects travelling at high speeds end up putting immense pressure on the air in front of it. Once an object's speed exceeds the speed of sound (about 0.34 kilometers per second, or 768 miles per hour, in dry air at 68°F), the rapid buildup of pressure in front of the object results in a single shockwave, which can be heard as a thunderous "sonic boom."

Sonic booms are far from a recent phenomenon; in fact, humans have been developing aircraft capable of breaking the sound barrier for decades. The first supersonic aircraft, the Bell X-1 of the United States Air Force, took flight in 1947 and achieved a top speed 1.06 times faster than sound. Planes have become considerably faster since the Bell X-1 (in 2004, NASA's unmanned X-43 plane traveled at 9.6 times the speed of sound), but most commercial flights today travel slightly slower than the speed of sound to avoid noise disruptions for people living below those flights' paths.

Unfortunately for many New Englanders, the May 30 meteor had no such reservations. It soared through the air at over 52 times the speed of sound, resulting in the explosive boom heard all across the region.

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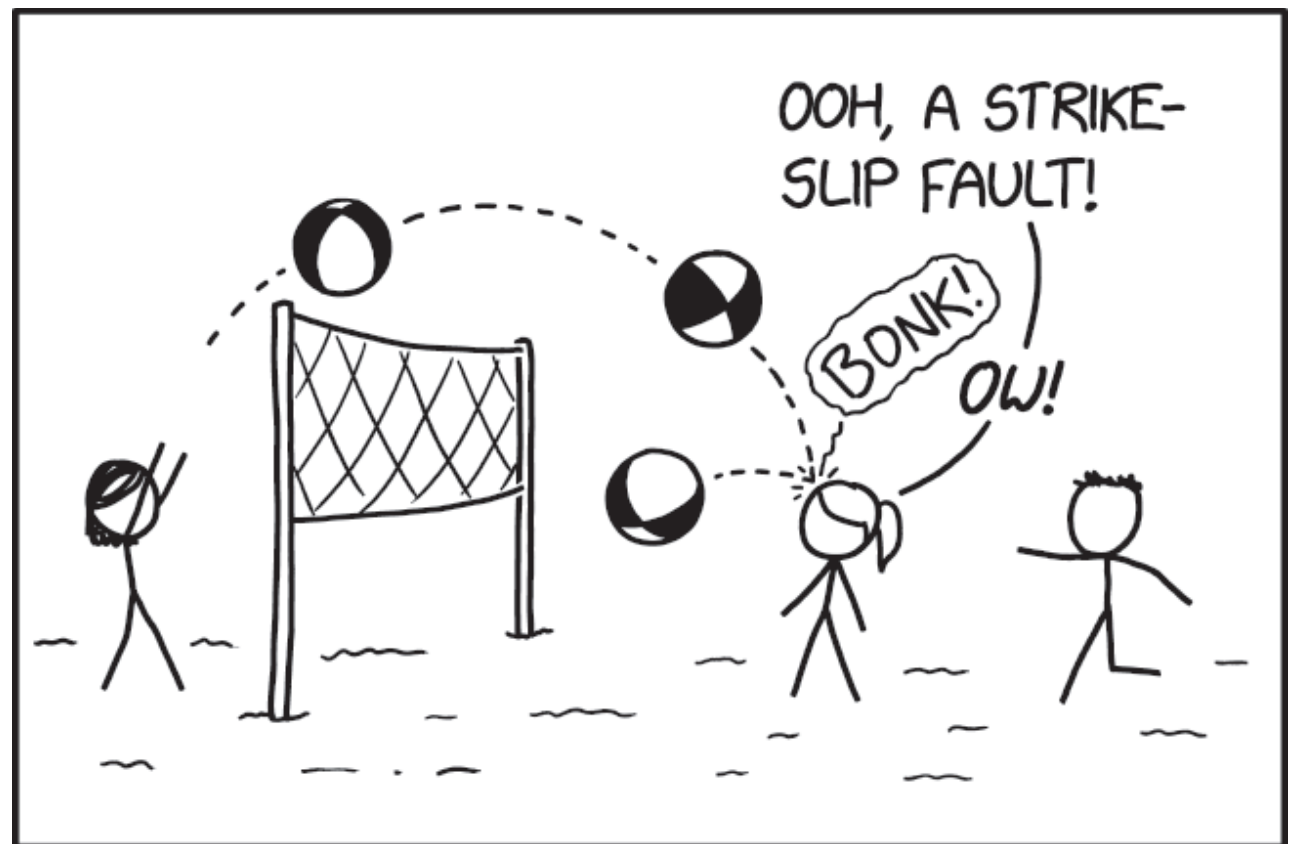
[1752] Interplanetary Experience

WHERE TO GO ON EARTH TO GET THE INTERPLANETARY EXPLORER EXPERIENCE

- PLUTO, MOON (NIGHT) — MT. EVEREST AT NIGHT
- MERCURY (NIGHT) — MT. EVEREST AT NIGHT
- MOON (DAY) — MT. EVEREST AT NOON UNDER A TANNING LAMP
- MERCURY (DAY) — A LAVA FLOW ON A VOLCANO AT NOON
- VENUS — A HEAT-SHRINK WETSUIT IN A BLAST FURNACE
- MARS — MT. EVEREST AT SUNSET
- TITAN — WAIST-DEEP IN AN OUTGASSING SIBERIAN SWAMP
- JUPITER-NEPTUNE — JUMPING FROM A HIGH-ALTITUDE BALLOON OVER AN ANTARCTIC OCEAN WINTER STORM

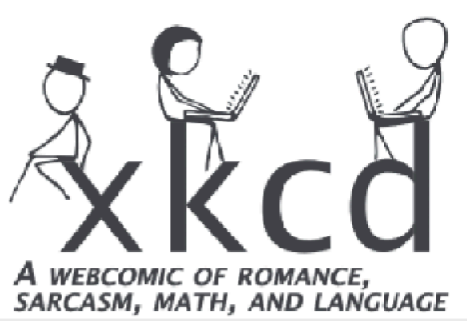
But instead of hitting the ocean, you should land in an overheating hot tub on a sinking cruise ship, sending it crashing through the floor into the burning engine room as the ship goes under.

[3021] Seismologists



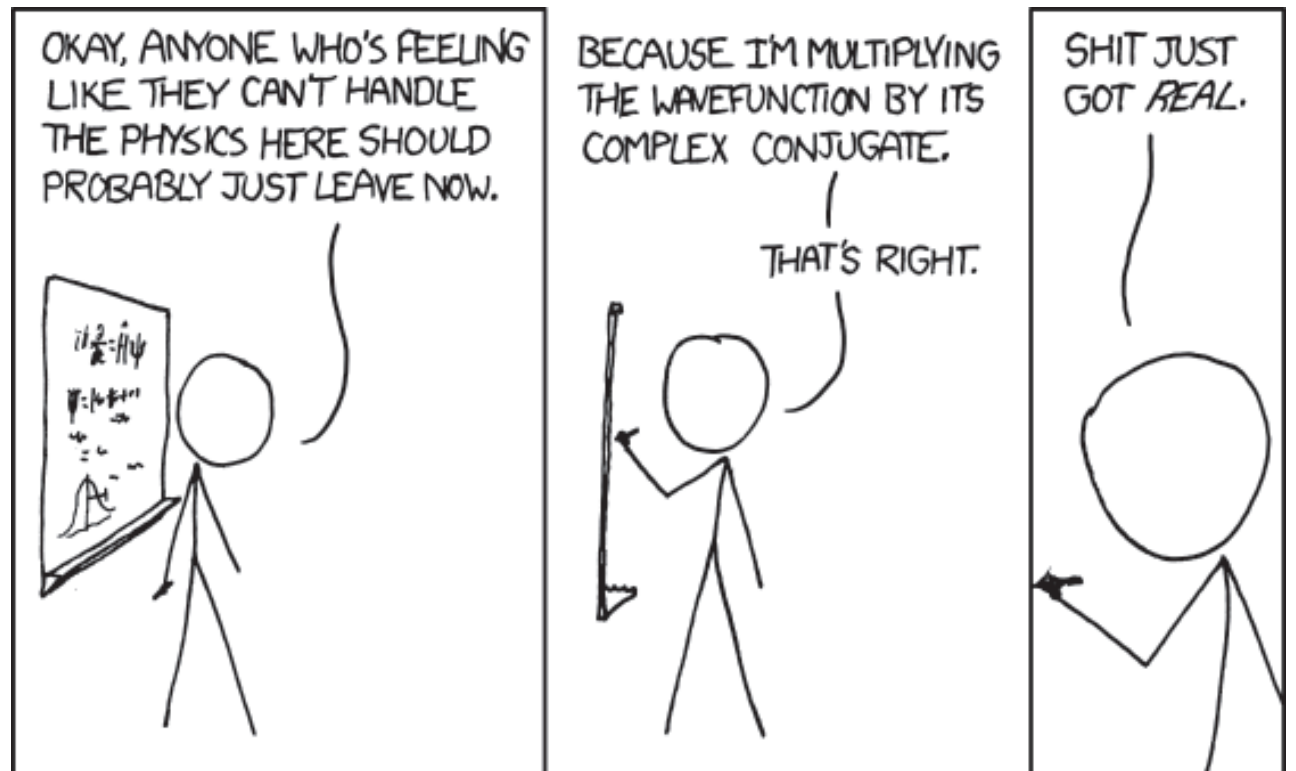
WHY SEISMOLOGISTS ARE BAD AT BEACH BALL VOLLEYBALL

And even when they're not distracted, they usually get kicked out for illegal under-the-net 'subduction spikes'.



by Randall Munroe

[849] Complex Conjugate



Fun fact: if you say this every time a professor does something to a complex-number equation that drops the imaginary part, they'll eventually move the class to another room and tell everyone else except you.