WELCOME ALL TO FAMILY WEEKEND!

MIT's Oldest and Largest Newspaper

thetech.com

The Tech
Established 1881

WEATHER, p. 2
FRI: 56°F | 34°F Sunny
SAT: 60°F | 35°F Sunny
SUN: 64°F | 39°F Sunny

Volume 146, Number 17

Thursday, October 22, 2026

Beantown Taqueria to close for renovations

MIT is suing Beantown for failing to vacate the property by June 30, 2026

By Grace Zhang
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Beantown Taqueria will officially close its storefront at 245 Massachusetts Avenue at the end of this month, with no concrete plans to return. The restaurant will offer special deals, such as its all-day $2 tacos on Taco Tuesdays, throughout October.

The fast-casual restaurant's departure follows Cambridge Pizza's closure this past June, with both businesses leaving due to renovations to install a loading dock, ramps, and an elevator, and to make the property ADA compliant. MIT first informed Beantown of the planned construction on Feb. 5, 2025; subsequently, the restaurant announced its closing the following May.

However, the Institute "fell behind" on its plans, according to general manager Hugo Mendez, and the delayed renovations — which finally began in summer 2026 — allowed Beantown to remain open for another year.

This time, Beantown's departure appears to be final. Public records obtained by *The Tech* reveal that the MIT Investment Management Company (MITIMCo) is suing Beantown Taqueria for failing to vacate the property by a June 30, 2026 deadline. MITIMCo claims that Beantown, which operates on a month-to-month rental basis, owes $7,452.88 in unpaid rent and related charges.

According to court records, defendant and property tenant Fawwaz Mohammed Aburubayah requested a jury trial, which is scheduled for Nov. 5 at the Cambridge District Court. *The Tech* requested comments from lawyers and representatives for Aburubayah and MITIMCo. Neither has responded as of the publication of this article.

Beantown, Page 2



LEVY LE—THE TECH

The Beantown Taqueria storefront on 245 Massachusetts Avenue. The restaurant is being sued by MITIMCo for not meeting their deadline to vacate by Tuesday, June 30, 2026.

MIT's endowment rises in 2026 fiscal year

MIT endowment rises 6.7% to $29.2 billion, but changes in federal policy in store for next year

By Hana Sousa

The MIT endowment grew by 6.7% (now totaling $29.2 billion excluding pledges), according to the Report of Treasurer released by the Office of the Vice President for Finance at MIT on Oct. 2. The report also mentions a 10.3% return on endowment return for the 2026 fiscal year that ended on June 30, which is below the 15.5% median return for U.S. college and university endowments last year, as reported by Cambridge Associates.

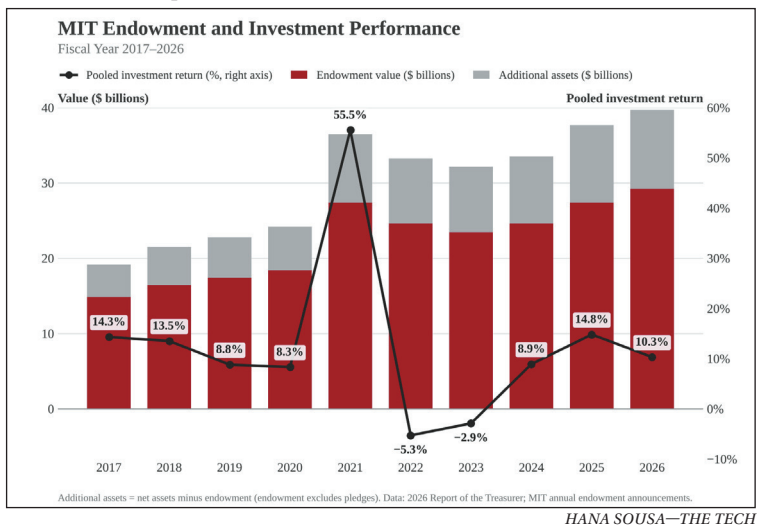
The numbers

The MIT endowment, which is among the top ten largest in the U.S., is central to the Institute operations: distributions of investment income and gains, principally from MIT's endowment, provided about 40% of total campus revenues in 2026. About 80% of these funds are restricted to specific purposes, such as professorships, scholarships, fellowships, and research.

In a statement to *The Tech*, the MIT Executive Vice President and Treasurer Glen Shor, who authored the Treasurer Report, said that "even with robust philanthropic support and fiscal rigor, federal policy changes threaten" MIT's ability to sustain the impact and affordability for which the Institute is known.

Philanthropic contributions totaled $715.1 million, $110.8 million above the prior five-year average. Much of that support, together with endowment returns, goes to financial aid.

In the 2025–2026 academic year, MIT financial aid policy for undergraduates was updated so that families with annual incomes below $200,000 pay no tuition, while those with income below $100,000 pay no tuition, room, or board. As a result, 88% of the Class of 2026 graduated debt-free.



HANA SOUSA—THE TECH

MIT endowment value, additional assets, and pooled investment returns for the fiscal years of 2017 to 2026.

This new policy decreased the undergraduate net degree tuition revenue by $4.0 million, or 3.5%. However, there are no plans to "retreat on MIT's financial aid policies," Shor said, affirming MIT's commitment to "foundational investments in their students" despite significant budget challenges.

Financial pressures

In July 2025, the Trump Administration announced a raise on the endowment tax rate from 1.4% to 8% for universities with endowments exceeding $2 million per student. In anticipation of this increase that will take effect on the 2027 fiscal year, MIT has adopted a three-part strategy to reduce $300 million in costs: increasing revenue, reducing costs, and "rebalancing." Consequently, this year's expenses grew well below the 3.4% U.S. inflation rate. Salary and wage costs rose 0.9%, or $19.7 million, to $2.11 billion, while spending on supplies and services rose 0.6%, or $8.6 million, to $1.37 billion.

In September 2026, MIT announced changes to retirement income benefits. Currently, 401(k) contributions are matched by MIT up to 5%. After Jan. 1, 2027, the maximum 401(k) contribution will be 3%. Since these contributions are pulled from the campus budget, this decrease will alleviate the pressures on it. From a separate pension fund, MIT will provide an Enhanced Pension Benefit that corresponds to 2.5% of eligible pay. The new contribution rates will add up to a minimum of 10.5% of eligible pay.

According to Shor, MIT is currently implementing the budget solutions outlined in this strategy, while also hosting additional presentations to faculty, students, and staff at the time. He stated that "most will be completed by fiscal 2027, while others will — as planned — be carried out on a longer timeline."

Major losses on campus, such as the recent reorganization of the MIT Libraries, staff layoffs in different departments across campus, and a 20% drop on new graduate

Endowment, Page 12

10/22 IN SHORT

MIT Family Weekend starts on Friday, Oct. 23 and concludes on Saturday, Oct. 24.

The first day of class for half-term subjects offered in the second half of term is Monday, Oct. 26.

Second quarter Physical Education & Wellness classes begin on Monday, Oct. 26.

Attend MIT's Generative AI Impact Consortium at Kresge Auditorium on Thursday, Oct. 29.

Student Event Board's annual FallFest is from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 30.

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

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MIT announces "MIT for America" program

The initiative is focused on problem-solving, AI literacy, innovation, and STEM

By Lauren Adler

In a letter to the MIT community on Oct. 6, President Sally Kornbluth announced the launch of MIT for America, a broader effort consolidating existing Institute efforts to increase access to STEM education across the United States.

Cynthia Breazeal, Professor of Media Arts and Sciences and the Benesse Professor of Research in Education, and Eric Klopfer, director of the Scheller Teacher Education Program and the Education Arcade at MIT, are the initiative's faculty co-directors.

"The motivation for the program is deeply connected to MIT's mission of educating 'students in science, technology, and other areas of scholarship that will best serve the nation and the world in the 21st century,'" they wrote in a joint statement to *The Tech*.

The initiative's three main pillars reflect that goal: "Mathematical Thinking & Problem Solving," "Learn, Live & Work with AI," and "Design, Make, & Innovate." The focus areas were selected based on statistics on the state of education in the country. Under "Why it matters now," the website lists how 53% of U.S. high schools offer AP Calculus, 6% of high school students have the chance to take computer science, and 39% of U.S. undergraduate students attend community colleges.

To address these gaps, members of the MIT community, including established outreach programs, faculty, and students, will contribute to the effort. "UROPs and grad students are already involved in creating curriculum and tools and helping with programs in math, AI literacy, and making," Breazeal and Klopfer said.

The initiative has already begun developing and testing programs. One early example is the MIT for America: Calculus Program, developed with MIT students and high schools nationwide. It combines on-site summer calculus intensives with academic-year tutoring and mentoring and will continue expanding throughout the fall.

Looking ahead, Breazeal and Klopfer said they hope to expand student involvement on campus to support more students and teachers off campus.

MY SPONGE HOME
What is life like in Simmons Hall? **CAMPUS LIFE, p. 3**

SICK AT MIT
Once you fall sick, you fall behind. **CAMPUS LIFE, p. 4**

A SENSATION
Centuries-old tale of sisters comes to the big screen. **ARTS, p. 5**



HEAD OF THE CHARLES
Boston's famed race brings traffic to the Charles River. **SPORTS, p. 6**

SHINY PUMPKINS
Learning the MIT way to make a pumpkin patch. **SCIENCE, p. 9**

SECTIONS
News 1
Campus Life 3
Arts 5
Sports 6
Science 8
Entertainment . . . 11

WEATHER WEATHER

Today
Partly Cloudy.
62°F
30°C
Wind Speed: 10–15 mph.
Gusts: 30 mph.
Direction: N.

Tonight
Partly Cloudy.
41°F 5°C
Wind Speed: 5–10 mph.
Gusts: 25 mph.
Direction: N.

Friday
Sunny.
56°F 34°
13°C | 1°C
Wind Speed: 5–10 mph.
Gusts: 25 mph.
Direction: N.

Saturday
Sunny.
60°F 35°
16°C | 2°C
Wind Speed: 0–5 mph.
Gusts: 10 mph.
Direction: W.

Sunday
Sunny.
64°F 39°
18°C | 4°C
Wind Speed: 0–5 mph.
Gusts: 10 mph.
Direction: SW.

Crisp weather for Family Weekend and lots of sunshine next week

By Conrad Straden
CHIEF METEOROLOGIST

Today and tomorrow, we will continue to deal with elevated northerly winds from the storm offshore. Yesterday, the National Hurricane Center classified the storm as Subtropical Storm Josephine, and it is expected to pass about 150 miles to the southeast of Nantucket today. You might wonder what a subtropical storm is and how it is any different from a tropical storm: Josephine possesses some tropical characteristics, such as getting energy from warm ocean waters, as well as non-tropical features like a lack of symmetry and broad windfield. Additionally, the storm gets energy from the clash between cold and warm air masses, which is a distinctly subtropical feature. What makes a nor'easter different from both of these is a connection to a frontal boundary, which is the reason why the nor'easter last month was not classified as subtropical.

As we head into Family Weekend, the highs will be running in the upper 50s and low 60s, with morning lows in the 30s. Dewpoints are expected to be low, meaning the air will have a cool autumn crisp to it. Additionally, the peak of fall foliage is approaching in Boston, with it likely occurring in the next week or so. As we approach the end of daylight saving time on Nov. 1, we're losing daylight fast — nearly three minutes every day.

Students frustrated with closure of Beantown

Beantown, from Page 1

Possibilities for relocation

Mendez hinted that Beantown's delay in moving out was because it has not secured a new location, as Aburubayah was hoping MIT would help the small business relocate. However, the Institute didn't have any available spaces, and Beantown is still "scrambling trying to find a place," said Mendez.

Although Mendez would prefer to remain near MIT, high rent makes such a scenario unlikely. For example, he inquired about moving into the vacant property at the Albany Street and Massachusetts Avenue intersection that previously housed Oath Pizza.

"The rent itself, it's $20,000 a month," Mendez said. "You would have to be making around $2 million in sales per year for rent to be 10% of that, which is a high ask. It's more than twice what we do in a year here.

Another option for Beantown's future is to continue operating from their food truck. Mendez said that he hopes a private property owner will allow Beantown to set up their food truck at a parking lot near the MIT campus, allowing the business to continue serving their loyal customers.

A potential avenue for doing so is the MIT food truck program, which brings food trucks to the Kendall/MIT Open Space to serve lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. every Wednesday.

"It's a possibility," Mendez acknowledged. "We can serve the whole menu out of the food truck."

Community responses

News of Beantown's closure has been met with sadness and anger from students and alumni. Many respondents to *The Tech*'s survey said they visited the restaurant at least once a week, drawn by its $2 taco deal and late hours.

"It is deeply unfortunate," Sam Gordon '18 wrote. "Beantown was a staple of late night food, especially when powering through a pset and realizing everything else was closed."

In light of Beantown and Cambridge Pizza's closures, MIT community members also pointed to a broader decline in affordable non-dining-hall food options open late at night, particularly ones that take TechCASH as payment.

"The southern side of Mass Ave is really losing its charm," Michelle Su '29 remarked. "Maybe this means our student orgs should more frequently cater from local restaurants instead of Chipotle and such for events."

Beyond its food offerings, Beantown also served as a place for community members to socialize. Students reminisced about Taco Tuesdays with their class and project teams, grabbing food together after playing board games like *Blood on the Clocktower*, and even waiting out a Random Hall fire alarm there during a snowstorm.

Beantown's popularity within the MIT community shaped Mendez's experience, too. He said he feels "blessed" to have gotten to know generations of students who have frequented Beantown since it opened in 2012, adding that he has "learned a lot from serving this beautiful community that's the MIT students."

"We're hoping that we can come back somehow, and revitalize [Beantown] to keep building our memories" with the MIT community, Mendez said.

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should say grammar



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CHLOE'S RAMBLINGS

Sponge talk

What living in the ugliest building in the United States looks like

By Chloe Weng

What do sponges, ducks, and dinosaurs have in common? I have no idea either — ask the ancestors of MIT Simmons Hall, and they might know. Or ask Steven Holl, the architect whose name existed as a constant murmur among Simmons freshmen during the first week. Simmons Hall, my dorm, was the winner of Architectural Uprising's international 2025 Aesthetic Atrocity Award. You might ask: why is your room shaped like a trapezoid? Why do your shelves have holes in them? Because of the great Steven Holl.

In honor of the Simmons board installing music in the B elevator (instead of actually fixing the problem of it stopping on the eighth floor or the broken first floor button's light), I've decided to write my first Tech article on my favorite things about Simmons after living here for a month.

The elevators!

The strange thing about the Simmons elevators is not entirely the elevators themselves, but where they lead to — or don't. The entire building is divided into three blocks: A, B, and C. Floors 2, 5, and 6 are the only floors that are continuous among the blocks — otherwise, you can't take certain elevators to certain sections. As a resident of B Tower (floors 8, 9, and 10 of the B section), I have to go up the elevator of said tower — widely known as "Belevator" — on my journey up.



CHLOE WENG—THE TECH

The Belevator's very visible music speaker.

The A elevator ("Aelevator"), for some reason, does not connect to the public first floor, so we have to share our Belevator with many A block residents. For this reason, and the fact that I live on the tenth floor, Belevator takes about five years to transport me anywhere I want to go. Belevator is the reason I rely on MIT time. Belevator is the overcommitted friend who accidentally sleeps in and never shows up to lecture.

Before the room reassignment process, I was in 3C — C block on the third floor — so I needed the C elevator ("Celevator") to go up. In contrast to Belevator, Celevator doesn't dangerously creak on its way up, and it's devoid of music. Plus, it is much more efficient than Belevator. Celevator is still young and spry.

I don't think I've ever been in Aelevator before, except once to sneak into an A Tower study break, but it exists too.

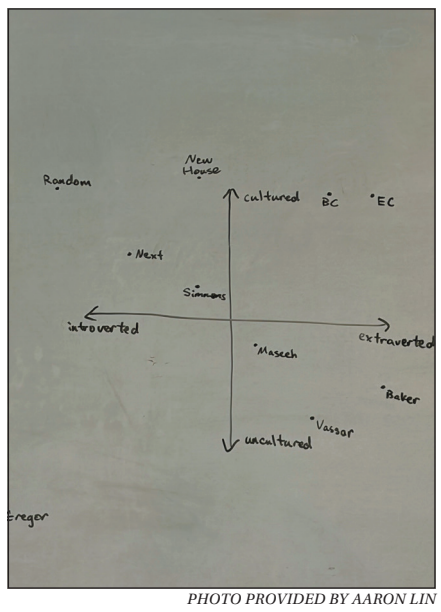


PHOTO PROVIDED BY AARON LIN

Our graph ranking all the MIT undergraduate dorms.

The windows!

The running joke here is that Simmons residents have more windows in their room than friends. My room has eighteen (do I have more than eighteen friends?), and I've heard of other rooms having as many as forty. The actual funny part is that each window has its own mini curtain. You want some privacy? Draw the curtains eighteen times.

The windows are actually not that weird — we get it Steven, you wanted your building to have many holes. It's the fact that inside the building, people want to add miscellaneous holes everywhere too, from our elevator ceilings to the lights in the dining hall. We are a sponge, inside and out.



CHLOE WENG—THE TECH

The totoro I chalked in my room.

The walls!

Pro: The walls are concrete. This means they are free to decorate with our signature chalk! I chalked a Totoro on my curvy wall, and I have plans to fill the rest of it up later, including the second curvy wall in our bathroom.

Each of the lounges has its own chalk mural, and the 7A lounge's is my favorite, with stunning art of all my favorite Studio Ghibli films. In the inner corner of the lounge, there is written wisdom like "you need to MIT less and self care more," which is its own form of art.

Con: The walls are curvy. The curviness is cute and quirky, until your room is the one with the curvy wall obstructing half of your otherwise perfectly rectangular room.

On my room reassignment form, I specifically put no curvy walls as my number one important feature for my new room, and sadly, that was not granted to me. (A hallway bathroom was my second most important, and that was somehow denied as well.) In my room, the wall also obstructs part of our floor light, which caused us to buy a floor lamp because our room became so dark at night. (Even more sadly, it's a forced triple.)



CHLOE WENG—THE TECH

Studio Ghibli mural in the Simmons 7A lounge.

Even with the one con, I can appreciate a good curvy wall every now and then. In addition to having my favorite art, the 7A lounge walls are also the coolest — it makes the place look like a cavern.

The people!

Around half of my friends I talk to on a day-to-day basis are from Simmons. Not to say that I hate all non-Simmons people; I think the people I have met at Simmons are the people I would naturally be drawn to — chill, on the introverted side, but still willing to do weird things together.

I do have to concede we're lacking a bit of culture compared to many of the other dorms (East Campus, Random Hall, Burton-Connor). Nonetheless, every day that I don't have lab or club meetings late in the evening, I come to the 7A lounge because there's nobody else I'd rather study with. After an hour or two, it becomes more like "studying": creating graphs to rank all the dorms, or complaining about our course workload. It might sound sentimental, but I look forward to being distracted in the Simmons lounge every day.

Like many other freshmen, it feels like everything in my life is changing in an instant, blurred and rushed from the firehose that MIT is. It's always a relief on my walk back from the Student Center after my classes when I see Simmons in all its spongelike glory — it gives normalcy to the routine, and maybe, at least in a few months, a sense of home.

BRANDY'S BREADCRUMBS

Being sick @ MIT for a week sucks

Forget about freshman flu, let me tell you about sophomore sickness

By Brandy Romine

Who dun it?

Note to reader: Please enjoy a short, dramatic retelling of when I first became sick.

Characters

BRANDY, a girl with a banana for an immune system

UNIDENTIFIED VIRUS, which strikes a murder attempt on Brandy

Scene 1. *The Tech* Office.

On Sept. 15 at 9 p.m., Brandy meets with her classmates to practice a play scene for their theater class. Her character, Virgil, attempts to make a makeshift bomb. Little did she know, there was a ticking time bomb inside of her. After a speedy rehearsal, she makes the long trek back to her dorm as 0:00 grows nearer.

Scene 2. New House.

Brandy diligently works on her Chinese homework in a floor lounge. Tick… The characters begin to blur out of focus. Tick… The room feels a little hotter than before. Tick… She lifts her hand to her burning forehead.

Boom!

UNIDENTIFIED VIRUS

(*As an aside*) Mwahahahaha.

BRANDY

(*Shuts the laptop closed*) I should sleep…

Scene 3. Dorm Room.

It is early in the morning. Brandy wakes up in bed, startled. She flings her Snoopy blanket to the side, profusely sweating, and stumbles out the room. The world dizzies around her.

BRANDY

What's happening…

Unidentified Virus looms behind.

[Fade out]

The four stages of sickness

Denial: Initially, I didn't believe I had gotten sick. My classmates were dropping like flies, but maybe I had just wrapped myself in my blanket too tightly that night. Right?

Anger: Not long after, I developed the "canon event" of a sore throat. Noooo. I chugged as much water as I could, hoping, pleading, *begging* that it would suddenly disappear. Unfortunately, the soreness remained, while my trips to the bathroom increased tenfold… What a cruel world.

Depression: My condition only worsened, as I pulled out every symptom "trick" from the magician's hat: fever, headache, runny nose, congestion, coughing, and hearing loss. I only wished for the weekend to come faster.

Bargaining: On Thursday, one of my professors noticed "violent coughs" from students in class and suggested two options: Stay home, or at least wear a mask. To go or to not go to school? That is the question.

Although I made it through Friday, I couldn't foresee myself getting any better by the next week. Skipping school is a bad idea, right? Whatever, it's fine. From Sept. 21 to 25, I did not attend a single day of class.

Acceptance: Acceptance? There was none. Instead, I cycled through a series of anger, depression, and bargaining. Having tested negative for the flu and COVID-19, I was diagnosed with a "flu-adjacent virus." The days blurred by as I attempted to sleep away my misery, only to be interrupted by bouts of coughs. I ate only because I knew I had to; I didn't feel hunger, only pain. It's brutal out here.

Post-sickness-ish clarity

At MIT, or any college really, sickness spreads like wildfire. I hear about classmates getting sick all the time, but they usually still go to class. It's better to get attendance points for being "physically there" even if you're not "mentally there." Perhaps they miss a day or two. But a week? Only a crazy person would…

And as that crazy person, I have a few insights to share:

1. You are (likely) not immune

I thought the "freshman flu" was called "freshman flu" because mostly freshmen would get sick during "those times of the year" (flu seasons). After all, they were still adjusting to all of the germs in a new college environment. As a freshman, I had survived two bouts of the freshman flu. Surely, as a sophomore, I couldn't get sick again… I was quickly proven wrong. And to date, I have (allegedly) passed my illness to at least three individuals.

2. Medications can be helpful

As a lazy-leaning person, I tend to "tough out" my illnesses rather than treating them. Fortunately, my super-duper friends came to the rescue as my local "drug dealers." I now present to you my drugs (medications/remedies) tier list:

S tier

- *Homemade cinnamon pear broth*: generously gifted to me by a friend; filled my stomach and soothed my throat, 11/10.
- *Tylenol*: holy crap, this actually made the constant head throbbing go away.

A tier

- No A's at MIT :(

B tier

- *Robitussin (day/night cough syrup)*: very yucky, reminded me of when I was sick as a child.

C tier

- *Eye drops*: I somehow got a bacterial eye infection, and to my dismay, could not get a full drop in my eyes for the life of me.

D tier

- *Ricola cough drops*: I swear I coughed more after eating one.
- *Corcidin HBP (pills)*: these pills are FAT and I almost choked twice and died.

*Results are a bit skewed in the sense that I sometimes forget to take my meds regularly and on time.



BRANDY ROMINE—THE TECH

A tier list of the medications/remedies I used with mildly accurate picture representations.

3. Minimize outside (touching grass) time

As a student studying computer science, I totally already do this, right?

On the Friday of the week I got sick, I went to Concord Market to buy ingredients for a club recruitment event. I tried to make milk bread! It turned out a bit too dense, and I ended up not being able to attend due to being very sick and getting my sickly germs all over it and having lost my voice.

On Saturday, I went to the Johnson Ice Rink for HackMIT. I pulled out also due to being sick but still wanted to visit my friends who were participating (and grab free food and merch, such as the iconic hoodie I've yet to stop wearing since then). However, I had to become mute due to completely losing my voice from yapping too much the day before.



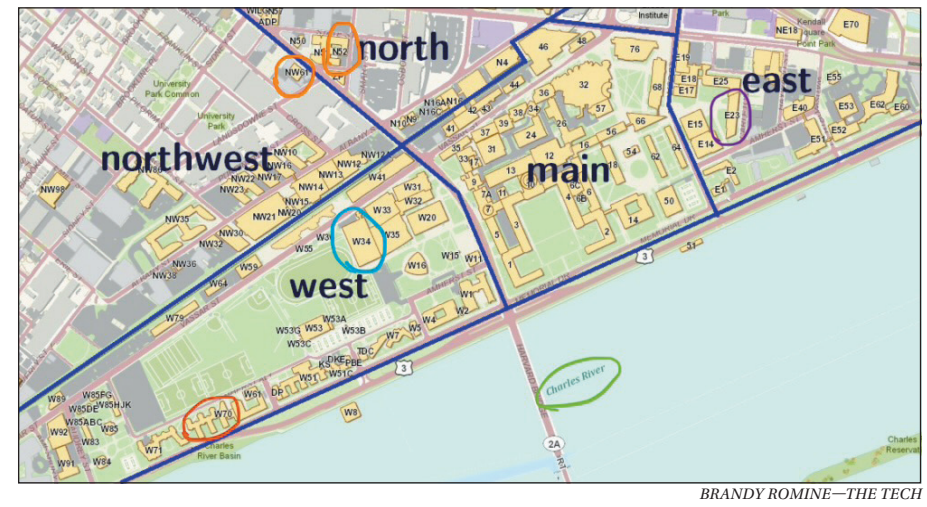
BRANDY ROMINE—THE TECH

This is actually bread I made last year for Thanksgiving, but I used the same recipe.

The next week, I dragged myself to MIT Health from my dorm not once, but twice!! It was a treacherous journey, lasting for about two to three hours total from New House and back. The second time, I had to trek to CVS Health (Central side, unfortunately) afterward to pick up my eyedrops.

That Friday, I popped into the Johnson Ice Rink, once again, for the career fair in my fancy blue… you guessed it, HackMIT hoodie. Who needs an elevator pitch when I can just say "Give me a job, or I'll cough on you" (for legal reasons, this is a joke). To nobody's surprise, I am still unemployed.

Finally, I thought it was a great idea to walk to campus several times in the rain during the Nor'easter (a storm along the east coast that brings a lot of rain and wind, sometimes snow, and did I mention rain?).



BRANDY ROMINE—THE TECH

A map of MIT's campus: New House (red); Random Hall and Building N52 (orange), which are seven minutes down the street from CVS Health; the Charles River (green); Johnson Ice Rink (blue), the host venue for HackMIT and the career fair; and MIT Health (purple).

All that to say, I probably should've stayed in bed and slept more times than not.

4. MIT Health is okay…

Honestly, especially for the flu and flu-ish things, MIT Health can't tell you to do much other than 1) drink water, 2) sleep, and 3) do drugs. But, they do have free yellow masks that are hands down better than the campus vending machines ones. Perhaps they also make being sick slightly less depressing, as yellow makes you think of happiness and sunshine and all things good!

5. But S3 comes through!

It feels weird to have to go on Zoom and plead with an adult at 10:30 in the morning that I'm sick to the point that I can't come to class. The first day, I had to explain my situation in detail, go over course policies, and chart out a plan of action. The second time, the staff member had no questions — I guess I looked and/or sounded really out of it — and just told me to CC her on emails requesting absence excuses, as I did before. The process was simple though.

6. You might want to read, like, actually *read*, the syllabus

Course policies might be more or less forgiving than you think in written text AND in practice. I had two problem sets due the week I missed classes but having no physical or mental capacity to finish them, I pleaded for extensions. Surprisingly, my professors/TAs were very understanding.

The syllabi for 6.1200 Mathematics for Computer Science and 18.C06 Linear Algebra and Optimization don't specifically address pset extensions, but if you were dealing with a "medical issue" affecting your ability to work, they would refer you to S3. So with S3 CC'd, I requested a two-day extension for 6.1200 and a one-day extension for 18.C06. I received an unlimited extension (though I was suggested to submit ASAP) and two-day extension, respectively.

For 21G.103 Chinese III, I had missed two quizzes. While the syllabus states quizzes cannot be made up, the policy isn't enforced. I was able to speedrun them (as well as three missed class sessions) during office hours.

I saved the most devious one for last: 6.1010 Fundamentals of Programming. Every week, there are two mandatory sections with check-ins, a pset, and a reading. The syllabus makes it sound like you can only receive extensions/excusals if you are on your deathbed, even with S3's help:

"With [S3's] support, we can consider additional extensions or alternative arrangements, but **generally only for serious situations that are impacting you for more than one week.**"

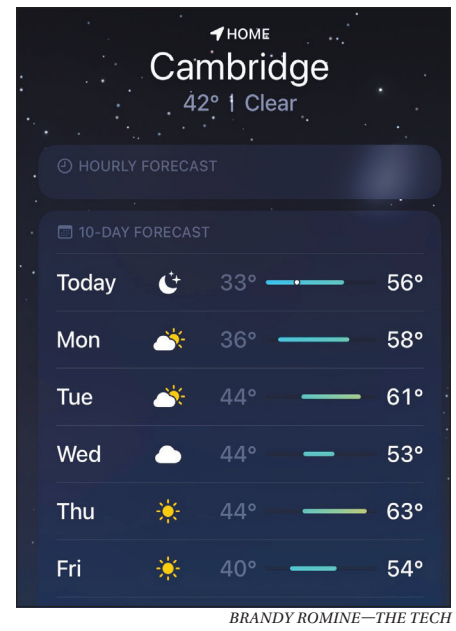
"In the case of serious extenuating personal circumstances (**not minor illnesses…**), late checkoffs **may** be considered for full credit by emailing 6.101-personal@mit.edu with written support from a Dean at [S3]."

"[T]he only accommodations… considered for [readings or recitations] is for **serious personal or medical issues lasting more than a week**… (in either case, we need a supportive note from S3). **Please do not email us, nor S3, for one-off situations that cause you to miss a recitation**; if you… **feel unwell**…, it is fine to miss the occasional recitation."

With the amount of class time I missed, I wasn't able to catch up and ultimately ended up dropping the class.

The finale

Now, a little over a month later, I am still (technically) sick and wearing the goofy HackMIT hoodie; all my symptoms have died off except the lingering cough. In fact, my cough has been worsening as the weather has become increasingly chilly.



BRANDY ROMINE—THE TECH

The daily forecast for Oct. 18–23 in Cambridge. Brrr.

In terms of whether it was worth missing school or not… probably? I don't exactly regret it, but it was quite painful to face the repercussions. There are ways in which I can never fully academically recover from having missed so much school. But, I know if I did go to class, I would have been barely functioning.

In any case, always prioritize what is best for your health and wellbeing. And sometimes, that means skipping classes and sleeping and chudding out for a week!

CONCERT REVIEW

Nelsons's BSO performs all-Rachmaninoff program with soloist Seong-Jin Cho

The orchestra performed Rachmaninoff's second symphony uncut

Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 2

Featuring Seong-Jin Cho

Boston Sympony Hall

Oct. 2, 2026

By Chloe Lee
ARTS EDITOR

Is Rachmaninoff one of the greats? The Boston Symphony Orchestra's (BSO's) all-Rachmaninoff program on Oct. 2 made a good case. Pairing *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* with his second symphony gave us two sides of the composer: a brilliant pianist-showman and a symphonist with a gift for long, aching melodies. The weekend was also reminiscent of Rachmaninoff's history with the BSO, as his 1909 US tour included a BSO appearance that marked his debuts as both conductor and soloist.

The concert began with the rhapsody, Rachmaninoff's last piece for piano and orchestra. Written in the summer of 1934, the composer previously played it with the BSO under Serge Koussevitzky on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day of 1937. Its 24 variations riff on Nicolo Paganini's Caprice No. 24 for solo violin.

Seong-Jin Cho on the BSO's Steinway piano demonstrated immense control in his musicianship. Despite the ring that accompanies Symphony Hall, he articulated each note distinctly. Cho achieved a remarkable dynamic range on the piano; his approach to quieter passages drew the audience to join what seemed to be a private conversation between the soloist and orchestra. In the softest passages, however, his blending with the orchestra seemed to be more difficult, and the delicate balance occasionally felt fragile rather than seamless. In the brisk Variations XV and XX through XII, Cho stayed composed, every move seemingly calculated, every run placed exactly where he meant it. His interpretation of the famous 18th variation was paced beautifully and was undoubtedly memorable to the audience, who broke the silence between Variations XVIII and XIX with hushed murmurs of approval.

Rachmaninoff's approach to the rhapsody is less about each variation of Paganini's Caprice No. 24 than about the legacy of Paganini, a quintessential Romantic virtuoso who bewitched audiences with superhuman technique and gaudy showmanship. Rachmaninoff was retelling Paganini's music as acrobatics in the rhapsody, and Cho made it look easy.

For his single encore, Cho played Tchaikovsky's *The Seasons*, Op. 37a: "October: Autumn Song," a fitting selection given Tchaikovsky's pertinence in Russian Romanticism and role in Rachmaninoff's life as a hero and mentor.

Following a precise start, the program took the audience back twenty years to Rachmaninoff's lengthy second symphony. The symphony let the BSO open up, and their sound was alluring, warm, and full. Intonation in a long Romantic symphony tests stamina, and brass sections generally have a habit of creeping sharp as the players get tired. However, the BSO brass stayed steady from the opening movement through the finale, and the grand choral passages rang without strain. The clarinet solo in the third movement ("Adagio") was gorgeous. It is one of the great melodies in the orchestral repertoire, and its performance was beautiful. The solo violin was just as lovely, its sound resonant and clear even against the large orchestra, maintaining its voice and never getting swallowed.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HILARY SCOTT

Seong-Jin Cho performs Rachmaninoff with Andris Nelsons and the BSO.

The Second Symphony was performed uncut, though notably without a repeat after the exposition in the first movement. Early in the piece's history, many cuts were made as conductors believed the symphony was far too long and repetitive to be played in full. The BSO's performance honored Rachmaninoff, who had once expressed his disdain for cuts to his conductor friend Eugene Ormandy: "It is like cutting a piece out of my heart."

When the orchestra stood to take its bow, something else caught the eye. Many musicians wore a red rose pinned to their concert black, like a barrette or boutonniere. Before the concert, volunteers were handing out roses outside Symphony Hall in a campaign to keep their conductor on the podium. Nelsons himself wore one.

The program was also a hopeful performance early in the season. The orchestra sounded impressively unified under Nelsons's conducting, and the roses were a reminder of how much this ensemble and its audience care about Nelsons. This season, the orchestra plans to complete its Mahler symphony cycle, and also has Beethoven piano concertos with Lang Lang, works by Strauss, and both Stravinsky ballets on the calendar. A strong performance early in the season like this concert builds momentum for a memorable year.

MOVIE REVIEW

New 'Sense and Sensibility' adaptation poorly translates its source material

The newest adaptation of 'Sense and Sensibility' has its merits, but fundamentally misrepresents the novel

★★☆☆☆

Sense and Sensibility

Directed by Georgia Oakley

Starring Daisy Edgar-Jones and Esmé Creed-Miles

Rated PG

Now Playing

By Rebecca Showalter Enamorado
ARTS STAFF WRITER

Jane Austen began writing over 200 years ago, but her novels still have a profound impact on popular culture. Although Austen's work did not attain wide acclaim at the time of its publication, it is clear now that Austen achieved something truly remarkable. Barely out of her teens, Austen became one of the first writers of the modern novel, and centuries later, she remains one of the best the world has ever seen.

In recent years, Jane Austen's novels have been adapted and reinvented over and over again, the latest being the new film *Sense and Sensibility* (2026) directed by Georgia Oakley.

Published anonymously in 1811, *Sense and Sensibility* was Jane Austen's first novel. It tells the story of the Dashwood sisters, Elinor and Marianne, after the death of their father leaves them dependent on the generosity and whims of their neighbors and indifferent relatives. Marianne, a product of Romantic sensibility, dangerously follows her passions wherever they take her, while Elinor demonstrates immense strength in the face of heartbreak and impossible circumstances.

Sense and Sensibility has only become more relevant since Austen wrote it. Lord David Cecil, former president of the Jane Austen Society, said that the novel "illuminates a fundamental problem of human conduct." More than a romance, the novel is an investigation of how humans should conduct themselves in this world. Our social media and AI-saturated culture is filled with performance and empty aesthetic. For us, integrity and sincerity are as, if not more, elusive than it was in Austen's time, and the ability to recognize integrity is as crucial a problem as ever.

Sense and Sensibility, then, is a worthy subject for film adaptation. Does the 2026 film successfully translate the story to the screen? Well, no.

This is by no means the fault of the actors. The characters are imbued with their distinctly Austen vibrancy: Esmé Creed-Miles is as vivid and arresting as the romantic Marianne, Daisy Edgar-Jones faithfully represents the turmoil and passion beneath Elinor's self-possession, and Fiona Shaw steals every scene she is in as the hilarious Mrs. Jennings. Especially impressive is Ceara Coveney's portrayal of the insincerity and masked cruelty of Lucy Steele.

But more importantly, as an adaptation of a story, the film falls short. Film adaptations of books must necessarily make compromises and cuts, and the work of carving out the heart of a story to transplant it intact from one medium to another is precarious. Revisions to the story are often necessary, but the revisions made in the 2026 film undermine the story, leaving it mutilated rather than translated.

The history of Edward Ferrars and Lucy Steele is altered in the film, presumably to present Edward in a better light, but the result is a serious mangling of Edward's character. An issue with adapting *Sense and Sensibility* is that Edward, out of a desire not to mislead Elinor, avoids her for most of the book, which is behavior that doesn't satisfy the expectations for a romance film. The film has attempted to solve this problem by rewriting Edward's backstory and adding scenes with him that consequentially call his integrity into question, undermining him as a character.

The worst changes, though, involve Marianne and Colonel Brandon. Marianne's powerful journey, rendered crystal clear in the 1995 film, emerges muddled in the 2026 adaptation. Nothing demonstrates this fact as painfully well as the duel scene.

The film fabricates this scene in order for Marianne to discover that Colonel Brandon, despite her previous beliefs, does in fact possess a great deal of sensibility. Though this is true of Colonel Brandon in the novel, it is beside the point. In the novel, Marianne comes to love Brandon not because she has realized that he has sensibility; that would mean she has learned nothing from her entanglement with Willoughby. Rather, Marianne comes to love Brandon because she recognizes him as a man of integrity, where before, she confused Willoughby's sensibility for integrity. Marianne's journey has produced in her an ability to discern between the two.

The Marianne of the 2026 film, however, doesn't seem to have learned much of anything. In her last conversation with Colonel Brandon, she confesses that her sickness has led her to much reflection and to the conclusion that second attachments are indeed possible. This is a sad diminishment of the Marianne of the novel, who comes out of her sickness with a serious reflection on her conduct and the harm it has wrought on herself and those she loves; this Marianne has determined not to abandon her sensibility, but to govern it. The Marianne of *Sense and Sensibility* has none of this newfound self-possession.

The issues that arise in this film are unsurprising for our day and age. The film lingers too much on the secondary issues of the novel at the expense of its core questions: how to conduct yourself in a world that is often treacherous, and how to maintain and recognize integrity. The film has no universal foundation to remain culturally relevant for the next few years, but Jane Austen's novel will no doubt continue to astound us with its cutting and compassionate analysis of human nature for many more centuries.

DO YOU LIKE DOODLING DURING CLASS? ARE YOUR PSETS COVERED WITH DRAWINGS? IF SO, BECOME A TECH ILLUSTRATOR!

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Freshman Sabine Smith makes history with MIT Volleyball

Smith is the first MIT player to earn AVCA DIII Women's Player of the Week

By Lauren Adler

On Oct. 6, Sabine Smith '30 of Park City, Utah, became the first MIT volleyball player in history to win the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) Division III Women's Player of the Week award. She has not even been on campus for a full semester, yet her career stats at the Institute are already hard to match.

Smith chose MIT for one main reason: balance. As a high-level player, she wanted to keep excelling in volleyball while also being challenged academically. In the classroom, Smith plans to pursue Earth, Atmospheric, and Planetary Sciences (Course 12).

Joining a storied athletics program like the Engineers can bring a lot of pressure, especially for an outside hitter like Smith, who plays a pivotal, high-contributing role. She felt that pressure early in the season but found two ways to manage the intimidation of stepping into such a prominent role as a freshman. Smith says team chemistry helped her excel despite the pressure. Ultimately, it comes down to trust.

"The fact that people want to give you the ball, they want to put you on the court, and maybe they even want to set you on game point in a fifth set. The fact that people are wanting those things out of you means simply that they believe in you, and so allowing that to enable me and my confidence has been the biggest thing," she said.

The team's momentum continues to build, and as of time of publication, they now rank No. 1 in the latest NCAA Division III Women's Volleyball Power Index (NPI), based on games through Oct. 14. From the outside, the pressure may seem to be mounting, but the team remains confident in its hard work and consistent results.

"Towards the end of the season, we'll just continue to get better, and other teams will continue to get better, and we're gonna be a team that's gonna be hard to beat," Smith said.

The Engineers are 5–2 in conference play after falling to Springfield College and No. 25 Babson College in consecutive games on Oct. 17 and Oct. 20. The Engineers look forward to facing NEWMAC teams Wellesley, the US Coast Guard Academy, Smith College, and Clark University in regular-season games in the next few weeks before the conference tournament opens on Nov. 10.

"I am honestly just looking forward to playing some good volleyball," Smith said.

MIT competes in 2026 Head of the Charles Regatta

MIT Crew shows strong performance in the largest regatta in the world

By Tina Gao

The 61st annual Head of the Charles Regatta, the largest three-day rowing regatta in the world, took place from Oct. 16 to Oct. 18. Every year, the regatta draws nearly 400,000 spectators and 12,000 rowers from more than 32 countries. The course starts at the Boston University DeWolfe Boathouse and runs three miles upstream, finishing near Christian Herter Park in Allston.

Between 6:20 a.m. practices, conditioning workouts, and running their home course, the MIT Crew teams prepared well, and the cold and windy weather did not deter the rowers from racing nor the spectators from watching. Family, friends, and alumni of MIT Crew cheered from the bridges as the shells went past, especially at the notorious 90-degree turn at Weeks Footbridge.

MIT Crew had seven entries on Saturday.

The A entry in the Women's Club Fours placed 27th and the B entry placed 38th.

Men's Lightweight 2V placed 10th in Men's Club Eights. Men's Varsity Lightweight Coach Will Oliver-Milchman was proud of coxswain Anna Kim '30's steering and their overall performance.

"They essentially matched our best performance in this event," Oliver-Milchman said.

The A entry in the Women's Club Eights placed 12th and the B entry placed 30th.

While Avery Reischer-Craft '27 and Jiwoo Oh '30 placed 10th overall in the Women's Championship Doubles, they were first among the six collegiate entries and secured gold in this event for the first time in MIT history. Ava Thigpen '29 and Elizabeth Paolella '30 came in 4th among the collegiate entries.

The MIT Rowing Club sent two entries on Saturday. Their men's eight placed 26th in the Men's Club Eights. Their women's eight placed 38th in the Women's Club Eights.

The pleasant weather on Sunday drew even more spectators to the river, so the sponsor booths were brimming with visitors. The atmosphere was especially lively near the finish line, where ringing cowbells and cheers greeted the boats as they passed under Eliot Bridge.

MIT had six entries on Sunday.

The A entry placed 7th and the B entry placed 11th in the Women's Lightweight Fours.

The Women's Lightweight Eights placed 6th.

After being passed by Dartmouth in a thrilling struggle near Eliot Bridge, the Men's Lightweight Eights placed 8th.

The 1V Men's Heavyweight boat finished 5th in the Men's Collegiate Eights. The 2V Men's Heavyweight boat finished 18th, the highest of all the B boats, in the Men's Collegiate Eights.

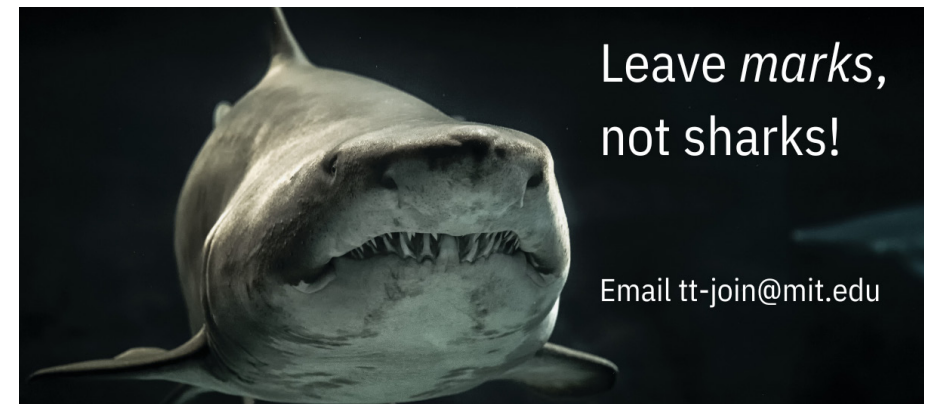
Coach Evan Thews-Wassell was extremely proud of these eights.

"We are on the right track to be competitive with the teams we will need to beat to earn a spot at the IRA national championship in the spring," he said.



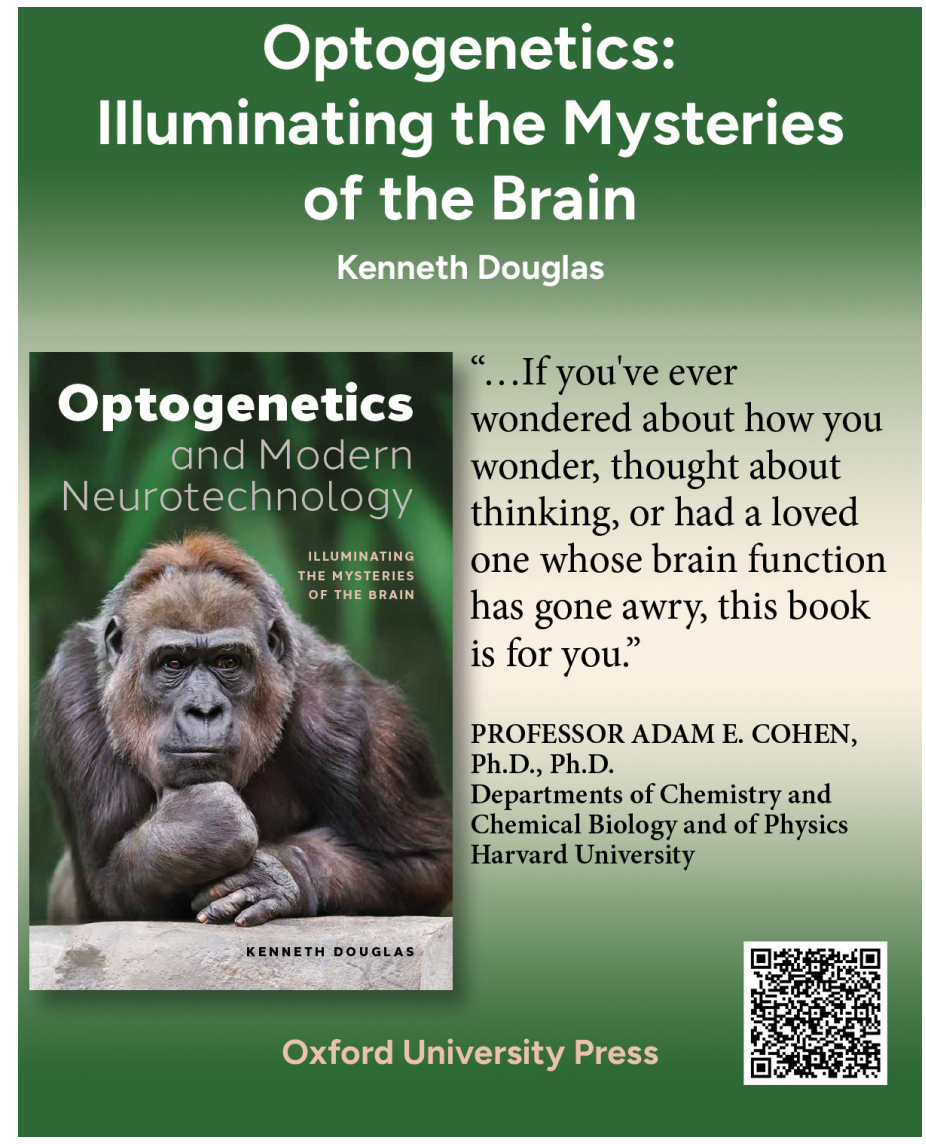
PHOTO COURTESY OF MIT ATHLETICS

The MIT Rowing Club competes in the Women's Club Eights at the 2026 Head of the Charles Regatta, starting from Boston University's DeWolfe Boathouse on Saturday, Oct. 17, 2026.









SPORTS BLITZ

By Daina August

Men's Crew
Head of the Kevin (Oct. 10)
- *Lightweight 8*: 17th, 35th, 81st
- *Heavyweight 8*: 22nd, 54th

Head of the Charles (Oct. 17-18)
- *Lightweight Club 8*: 10th
- *Lightweight 8*: 8th
- *Heavyweight Collegiate 8*: 5th, 18th

Women's Crew
Head of the Charles (Oct. 17-18)
- *Lightweight Doubles*: 10th, 13th (Collegiate 1st, 4th)
- *Lightweight 4*: 7th, 11th
- *Lightweight 8*: 6th
- *Openweight 4*: 27th, 28th
- *Openweight 8*: 12th, 30th

Men's Cross Country
Connecticut College Invitational (Oct. 17)
- *White 8k*: 1st of 33
- *Blue 8k*: 1st of 26

Women's Cross Country
Connecticut College Invitational (Oct. 17)
- *White 6k*: 43rd, 50th, 55th, 96th (no team score)
- *Blue 6k*: 4th of 28

Field Hockey
Oct. 6: Win against Babson College, 1-0
Oct. 10: Win against Salve Regina, 2-0
Oct. 14: Overtime win against Western New England University, 5-4
Oct. 17: Win against Wheaton College, 3-1

Football
Oct. 17: Win against US Coast Guard Academy, 42-21

Rifle
Oct. 17: Win against University of Rhode Island, 4508-4407
Oct. 17: Win against John Jay College, 4508-4302

Sailing
Oct. 10-11: Open ACC Round 1B, 3rd of 18
Oct. 10-11: Stu Nelson Trophy, 3rd of 16
Oct 17-18: Women's Atlantic Coast Championship, 12th of 18
Oct 17-18: Captain Hurst Trophy, 16th of 18
Oct. 17: Savin Hill Invite, 9th of 16

Men's Soccer
Oct. 7: Win against US Coast Guard Academy, 3-2
Oct. 10: Tie against Babson College, 1-1
Oct. 15: Win against Fitchburg State, 4-1
Oct. 17: Loss against Wheaton College, 0-2

Women's Soccer
Oct. 7: Win against Salve Regina, 1-0
Oct. 10: Win against Springfield College, 6-0
Oct. 14: Win against Clark University, 5-0
Oct. 17: Win against Babson College, 2-0

Women's Tennis
New England Women's Intercollegiate Tennis Tournament (Oct. 9-11)
- *A bracket*: Sophia Yang '29/Claire Zhou '30 Semifinals, Katie Driscoll '29/Rayna Li '29/
- Anastasia Samets '27 Semifinals, Chloe Zeng '28/Carley Chen '29 5th
- *B bracket*: Anselma Petrie '28/Michelle Ge '30/Nishi Gandra '27 Semifinals

ITA Cup (Oct. 15-18)
- *East Bracket*: Yang/Zhou Round of 16
- *Consolation Bracket*: Yang/Zhou Finalists (match uncontested)

Women's Volleyball
Oct. 6: Win against Salve Regina, 3-0
Oct. 9: Win against Mount Holyoke College, 3-0
Oct. 13: Win against Emerson College, 3-0
Oct. 17: Loss against Springfield College, 1-3

Men's Water Polo
Oct. 10: Loss against Brown University, 12-15
Oct. 11: Loss against Harvard University, 13-21

Harvard Open (October 17-18)
Loss against Biola University, 10-11
Win against UC Merced, 9-7
Win against Connecticut College: 14-5
Loss against Pomona-Pitzer, 11-18

Battle of the beavers

MIT delivers Babson its first NEWMAC regular-sesason loss since 2015

By Lauren Adler

Babson women's field hockey had not lost a NEWMAC regular-season game since 2015 until Tuesday night at Jack Barry Field, when Senior Audrey Oh rebounded a deflected shot on goal by teammate Janie Thomas '27, slipping past Babson's defense to put the Engineers up 1-0.

The Babson Beavers tried to respond late in the game, taking four shots on MIT goalie Alexa Ninos '29 in the fourth quarter, but were unsuccessful, leaving the Engineers up 1-0.

MIT field hockey has had a great season thus far since welcoming a new head coach, Megan Caveny, in April 2026. Caveny is a Vassar College alumna (also an NCAA DIII member), where she was team captain during her collegiate field hockey career. In addition to her on-field experience, she brings coaching experience as associate head coach at Tufts University during their run as the 2024 National Runner-Up and 2025 National Champion.

The Engineers moved to 7-0 in conference play after a 2-0 win over NEWMAC opponent Salve Regina on Saturday, Oct. 10. The Engineers remain the only undefeated team in the NEWMAC this season, with four more conference games to play against Wheaton College, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Smith College, and Wellesley College later this month.





Have something to say?
Write **opinion** for *The Tech*!
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Collaboration: The cornerstone of innovation

The MIT Future Fest is the result of collective action to enhance our understanding of the world around us

By Chloe Yang and Alyssa Yu

How do we know an ocean we cannot see, hear, or listen to?

From Sept. 30 to Oct. 4, MIT Future Fest set out to answer these questions and many more. One element of the five-day science festival was the *Crochet Coral Reef* exhibit. As part of a wider project, sisters Margaret and Christine Wertheim filled the MIT Museum *OCEANS* exhibit with loops of yarn representing models of hyperbolic geometry. The sisters designed pieces as grand as the *Coral Forest* and as tiny as *Pod Worlds*. One forest was made of plastic, exploring the threats of an imperishable future. Another, designed by Professor of Computer Science Erik Demaine and his father, Angelika and Barton Weller Artist-in-Residence Martin Demaine, was made entirely out of paper.

> **I don't filter anyone out. Now we filter everyone in. It's all about the people.**

Although these showcases highlighted MIT as a hub of innovation and discovery, they were not purely for the fun of the exhibition. In May 2026, MIT President Sally Kornbluth announced that MIT had experienced a decline of over 20% in research activity funded by the federal government. At a time when universities are being targeted, MIT Future Fest can be seen as an opportunity to build public support and long-term investment in scientific research.

Interwoven throughout the events at Future Fest was the need for collective action among artists, scientists, and technologists. In her talk, Apollo Program Professor of Astronautics Dava Newman SM '89 Ph.D. '92 spoke on this collective action, explaining that scientists identify promising signs of life on distant planets, while artists help us envision what these planets may look like. In order to reach its full potential, science also needs good communicators and storytellers.

"I don't filter anyone out," Newman said. "Now we filter everyone in. It's all about the people."

Deeper into the MIT Museum, explorers experienced the museum's new *OCEANS* season. *Sensing Oceans*, which opened in late September, moves between science, technology and art: underwater sensing equipment and autonomous vehicles are part of researchers' effort to translate an environment largely beyond direct human perception. One of the exhibition's main attractions is the premiere of Marshmallow Laser Feast's *Seeing Echoes in the Mind of the Whale*, an immersive video experience based on deep listening and oceanic research that explores the senses of three whale species.

How can we protect our planet, and with that, future generations?

This was the center of a conversation between Newman and artist and Tufts University Professor of the Practice Mary Ellen Strom. Named "Humanity Becoming Interplanetary," this event promoted the idea that, to become great stewards of earth, we must look to space for answers.

"We're at our best [when we are] looking out, searching out," Newman remarked, discussing the colonization of exoplanets. She explained that out of the 6,000 exoplanets we know exist, 24 are quite similar to Earth. Future human settlement on exoplanets can increase humanity's chances of survival by reducing our dependence on a single planet.

Referring to planetary travel, Newman noted, "This is the dream. This is the philosophy" only attainable through "spontaneous cooperation." To help realize this vision, Newman's lab invented the BioSuit, a skintight spacesuit that applies pressure directly to the body instead of enclosing the astronaut in a separate pressurized shell.

In the same vein, each panelist at the "The Next 250 Years" shared their own vision for improving humanity's future. Moderated by Managing Director at Link Ventures John Werner and CSAIL director Daniela Rus, this event featured short conversations with 12 industry leaders, who projected optimism on the possibilities humankind can unlock.

Philip Johnston, CEO of Starcloud — a space technology start-up building AI data centers in orbit around Earth — promoted a vision of space data centers. Johnston believes that space is the best way to upscale computation due to the abundance of solar energy and stable thermal environment in space.

David Kong '01 SM '04 PD '08 Ph.D, the director of the Media Lab's Community Biotechnology Initiative, discussed ways to make biotechnology more accessible to the general public. These initiatives can empower the broader community to collectively solve global challenges and accelerate scientific progress.

Lauren Witte, the program coordinator for MIT DesignX, an innovation hub based in MAD, spoke about her experience volunteering at Future Fest: "It's exciting to see everyone come experience what the MET Warehouse is meant to be — a space for design and creativity and collaboration, not just within MIT, but in the surrounding community as well."

MIT Museum Director Michael John Gorman cited the enthusiasm of the faculty as a big reason for the success of this event, stating that they "shared this idea that it's an important time for the university to engage outward."



CONRAD STRADEN—THE TECH

The Adaptive Archipelago, designed by Daniel Sundlin and Skylar Tibbits, is a prototype for sustainable floating cities that was showcased at MIT Future Fest. Friday, Oct. 9, 2026.

Ultimately, Future Fest's own organization embodies this principle of collaboration. The result of a joint effort between the MIT Museum, the MIT Technology Review, and MIT Morningside Academy for Design (MAD), Future Fest featured the opening of the MET Warehouse, which is the new home of MIT's Department of Architecture and Planning.

Future Fest places people at the center of scientific exploration, as opposed to treating them as bystanders. "There are many conferences around the world about future and future tech, and so on, but where else can you actually go into the labs, explore what's going on, and actually have people creating things during the festival?" Gorman asked. "I think that's very special."

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Co-design in action: A deep dive into MIT Assistive Technology Club

From wheelchair modifications to a camera-based rideshare finder, the co-designer is the center of the design process

By Jojo Placides
SCIENCE STAFF WRITER

Imagine this: You have low vision, and have just requested a ride home. Amidst blaring city sounds, your phone blurts out, "Your driver has arrived," and your rideshare is only a few feet away. Unfortunately, identifying the right car isn't always easy, and there's a serious risk that you'll slip, fall, or get injured.

MIT students designed CurbToCar to solve exactly this problem. The app uses object detection and continuous audio cues to safely guide its user towards their ride, and it has over 3,500 downloads on the App Store, with reviews praising its accuracy and intuitive interface.

CurbToCar is one of many projects built not only *for* but *with* those with disabilities as part of the MIT Assistive Technology Club (AT@MIT).

AT@MIT started out as MIT's Assistive Technology Hackathon (ATHack) in 2014, but ended during COVID. It was brought back as a new Edgerton Center build team in fall 2023; today, the club consists of over 60 students grouped into eight teams.

At the beginning of the semester, AT@MIT reaches out to the community, looking for disabled members who are interested in talking about their challenges. That person becomes a co-designer, someone who works with the build team to shape the product instead of just receiving it.

"The goal of any project is to build something that the co-designer can take home and will tangibly improve some aspect of life, big or small," AT@MIT co-president Tage Mehta '28 told *The Tech*.

Whether in-person or online, getting to know the co-designer and their expectations is an integral first step.

"Sometimes they come with a drawing that they've made," said Abbas Darwich '28, an AT@MIT member who is currently working on a foot-controlled PlayStation 5 game controller for a Ukrainian veteran who lost his arm and three fingers. "As the engineers, our job is to say what's feasible and create a list of the must-haves in the design. Then we go and design it."

Ben Lou G, a Physics PhD student at MIT who was one of the three co-founders of AT@MIT and served as its vice president as an undergraduate, is the co-designer for two projects, each designed to fit one of his needs in his everyday life.

First, Lou, who is wheelchair-bound, needed a modification to his wheelchair to easily switch between its computer and tray without requiring much physical exertion. His range of motion is very limited due to his muscular atrophy, making common tasks in his everyday life difficult.

The team knew that they needed to design a device that Lou could control with minimal physical effort and would uniquely fit his setup. However, it should not impact him going through doorways, nor should it make him stray far from his current mobility habits. After constructing a manual prototype to investigate the mechanics of the device, as well as an automated prototype that uses a joystick, the team came up with a final design which was shown at AT@MIT's Spring 2026 Final Project Showcase.

Second, as a physics researcher, Lou spends a lot of time writing equations for papers using the formatting language LaTeX, which is another difficult task due to his limited finger mobility. To address this, the team created an AI-enabled speech-to-text system for LaTeX, seamlessly integrated into Overleaf. This was also shown at the aforementioned final project showcase.

Another project focused on designing a cane stabilizer for a co-designer whose fibromyalgia and hemiparesis forces her to use a cane in her day-to-day life. Cane stabilizers in the market are too bulky and obstructive for convenient day-to-day use, so the co-designer needed a more compact and lightweight external attachment that would stabilize the cane. The AT@MIT team went through numerous prototypes before deciding on a cane that uses a string and motor mechanism, so that it can stand on its own with the press of a button.

"You might be a semi-expert in engineering," Mehta explained, "but the co-designer is the expert in what they need, so they're really a core part of our build team."

In the case of CurbToCar, two tech-savvy adults with limited vision needed a way to find their drivers whenever they requested a rideshare. On paper, the app seemed to work flawlessly: it would identify the car's make, model, license plate, and provide spatial sound cues to guide them toward the driver.

However, the app lacked the "high accuracy and reliability in order for someone to use our app," said Mehta. Realizing this, the team used a model trained on traffic camera footage to improve their car identification program.

On the foot-controlled game controller, Darwich reflected that the project gave him an opportunity to improve his technical skills.

"Our design was initially very complicated and involved a microcontroller and a lot of different sensors and peripherals, but upon further research this semester, we were able to find some off-the-shelf products that would vastly simplify our engineering approach," he said. "That's one of the important lessons that being a part of AT@MIT has taught me: to keep things simple."

The engineering behind designing tools for people with disabilities is more complex than many realize. Part of that is because at AT@MIT, the design and engineering process directly involve the people the project is for. From ideation to prototype to final product, the whole design process is informed and guided by people who will directly benefit from this work, helping bridge the gap between life-changing technology and its users.

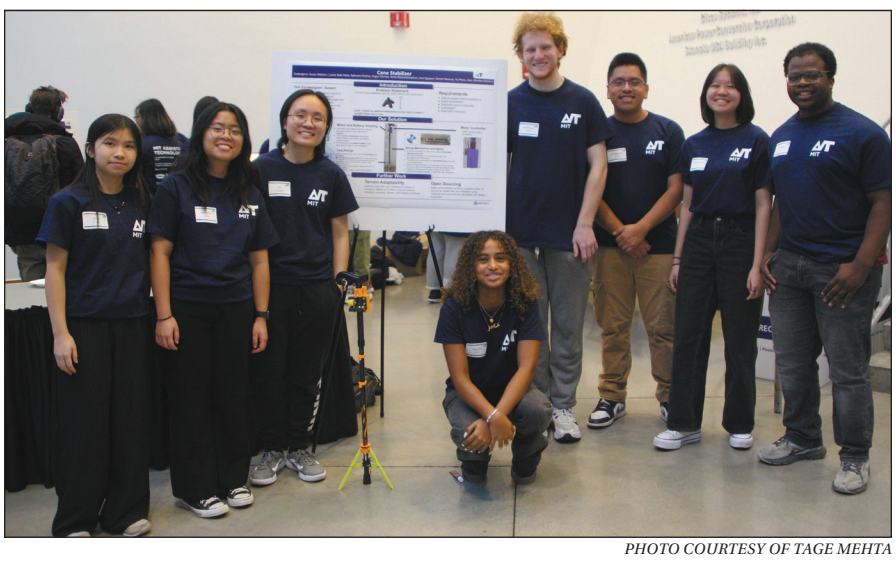


PHOTO COURTESY OF TAGE MEHTA

A team from AT@MIT showcases their cane stabilizer project at the club's Spring 2026 final showcase in the Stata Center on Friday, May 8, 2026.

Physics, fluids, and frits

The science and significance of the 25th Great Glass Pumpkin Patch

By Doyeon Myeong, Jieruei Chang
SCIENCE STAFF WRITERS

On Oct. 24, 2,000 pumpkins will sprout from the lawn of Kresge Oval. Their bodies will be plump and vividly colored, and their stems will curl in whimsical spirals. They will be made entirely out of glass.

This is MIT's Great Glass Pumpkin Patch, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. The 2,000 pumpkins sold in the pumpkin patch were created in MIT's own Glass Lab, hidden underground beneath the Infinite Corridor. Bringing them to life requires an interplay of fluid dynamics and physics, chemistry and materials science, and a good sense of creativity.

In the lab, students and instructors create a vibrant and close-knit community. Together, they shape their passion into beautiful artwork, offering students a refreshing break from rigorous lectures and coursework.

"Glass blowing is a very process-oriented work, so I think it fits an engineering mindset," instructor Whitney Cornforth '01 said as he manipulated the molten glass, effortlessly shaping it while answering interview questions.

Cornforth's own journey with glass started as an MIT undergraduate studying Naval Architecture (Course 13 at the time). It's not directly relevant, he admitted. However, engineering and glassblowing are surprisingly similar: there is a goal, and by working backwards with well-defined steps, a process can be designed to achieve that goal.

The process of growing a glass pumpkin begins with a gather - a volume of honey-like viscous glass drawn from a crucible - on the end of a long and hollow metal blowpipe. The gather's temperature reaches about 2,160°F, at which point the glass is still hard enough to not collapse under its own weight but still molten enough to be molded into shape.

To imbue the pumpkins with vibrant hues, the gather is rolled in little glass fragments called frit. Each frit has a different color based on the different transition metals incorporated into the glasses while creating it. For example, red frit has copper ions, and golden frit is colored by the chromium incorporated into the silica during its formation process.

The gather is stamped into a star-shaped mold to form the ridges. At this point, it looks somewhat like a deflated basketball. The next step is to give the pumpkin its plumpness. Air is blown into the end of the pipe, applying pneumatic pressure and pushing the inner wall of the glass outwards. Traditionally, this air was blown by mouth, but during the pandemic in 2021, the Glass Lab built a compressed air system to automatically blow air down the pipe. While this approach might be more sanitary and at times more convenient, it is not a perfect replacement.

"MIT students love to mechanize everything," Cornforth quipped.

But humans can be much more flexible and adaptable than a compressed-air machine. "Good luck replicating every job on the computer. I can ask Alfonso 1,000 different things today," Cornforth said. He rattled off various methods of blowing air down pipes: short bursts, long sustained heaves. "He can do them all."

"Alfonso" is Alfonso Parra Rubio, a PhD candidate at the MIT Center for Bits and Atoms, as well as Cornforth's glassblowing assistant for the day. While Cornforth was blowing the body of the pumpkin, Rubio had been hard at work putting together the pumpkin stem.

For the stem, a tiny amount of physics knowledge comes in handy. By varying the heating profile of the stem, different parts of the glass can be given different material working properties. The part of the stem that will attach to the body needs to be hot in order to expand and bulge outwards, while the long and thin part of the stem needs to be relatively cool to remain structurally stable.

Cornforth and Rubio married the body and stem together. As it cooled, the stem was quickly twirled into shape, giving the pumpkin its characteristic fantastical tendrils.

As a final flourish, Cornforth used an oxygen-poor flame to heat the stem, which had previously been rolled in frit. In order to burn, the flame pulled the oxygen atoms from metal oxides in the glass. Stripped of their oxygen atoms, the metals formed tiny metallic crystals on the glass surface, creating a brilliant golden luster.

The pumpkin was put in the annealing oven to cool. Fluid dynamics had shaped it, transition-metal chemistry had colored it, and thermodynamics had solidified it. But maybe the point of the Glass Lab is not just the science.

"It's a high-stakes environment where things can go wrong, and you need to problem-solve on the fly, and be able to express ideas and receive them," said Cornforth.

The Glass Lab helps provide a temporary respite from academic courseloads and take MIT students' minds off of work. Glassblowing is "an activity that forces you to give your entire attention," said Conforth.

Of course, the point is also to make art, to let human creativity shape objects in real life. "Why a pumpkin?" Cornforth asked. "I think it's because it does something that we don't expect glass to do."

Not everything needs to be practical, Cornforth said, even if it is created with strong scientific principles. "People love to ask the question: what does it do? Maybe the thing it does is to make people smile."



JIERUEI CHANG—THE TECH

Whitney Cornforth '01 and Alfonso Parra Rubio MS '21 blow a glass pumpkin in MIT's Glass Lab.

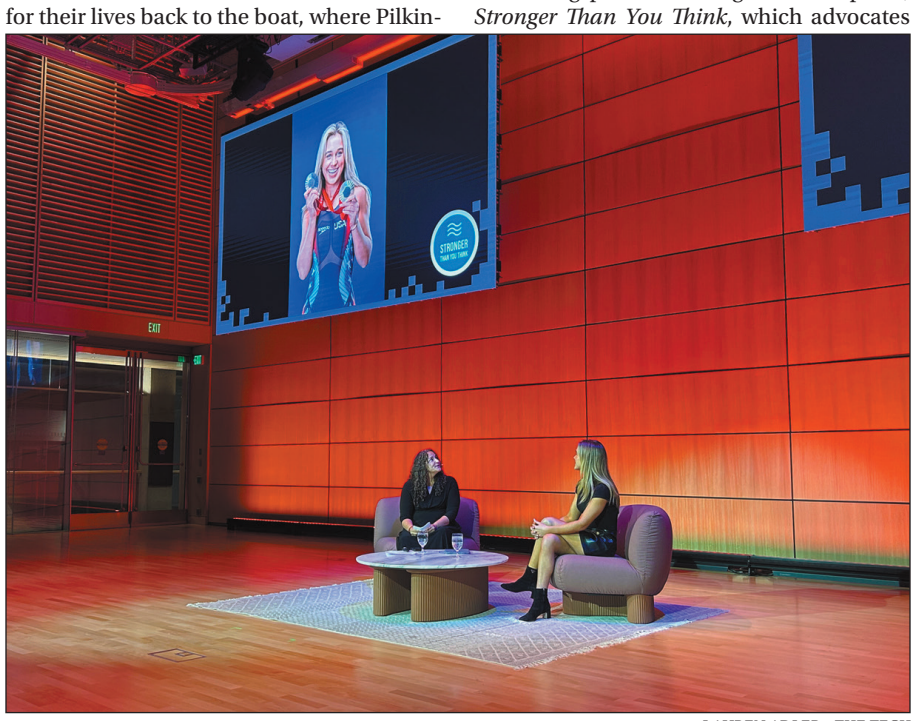
The science of bouncing back

How Ali Truwit used cognitive science and psychology to go from shark attack to Paralympic medalist

By Lauren Adler

In 2023, Alexandra "Ali" Truwit graduated from Yale University as a student-athlete with a double major in Cognitive Science and Behavioral Economics and a five-year plan. She had a job lined up at McKinsey & Company, and she planned to attend Harvard Business School through its deferred-enrollment MBA program. Two days after earning her diploma, Truwit went on a celebratory trip to the Turks and Caicos Islands with her fellow Yale swimming teammate and close friend, Sophie Pilkinton. They were swimming side-by-side and snorkeling in the Caribbean Sea, as they had done countless times before, when a shark attacked Truwit's leg. They called for help, but no one came. Truwit and Pilkinton swam for their lives back to the boat, where Pilkinton — now a medical resident at Vanderbilt University — applied a tourniquet and saved Truwit's life. Days later, on her 23rd birthday, Truwit underwent her third surgery of the week: a trans-tibial amputation.

On Oct. 14, 2026, Truwit joined Dr. Lauri Santos, professor of Yale University's most popular class ever, *Psychology and the Good Life*, and host of *The Happiness Lab* podcast, for a live taping at the Boston Museum of Science. The event marked the opening of the William and Charlotte Bloomberg Public Science Common, the museum's newly completed events venue. Their conversation focused on Truwit's recovery, the cognitive science and psychological strategies she used throughout the process, and her mission to turn her traumatic experience into something positive through her nonprofit, *Stronger Than You Think*, which advocates for prosthetic access, water safety, and equity in the Paralympics.



LAUREN ADLER—THE TECH

Professor Laurie Santos (left) and Ali Truwit, PLY (right) live tape an episode of 'The Happiness Lab' at the Boston Museum of Science on Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2026.

A new way forward

Practicing radical acceptance has been key to Truwit's journey. The practice involves accepting reality as it is and recognizing that what has happened cannot be changed. It doesn't mean ignoring what one has been through; it means acknowledging that it has already happened. Truwit described how this helped her stop fighting the reality of her injury and shift her focus to new possibilities that may await her in the future.

"I don't like what happened to me. I don't wish it happened to me. Though my reality is, it's happened to me. So either I stay angry, fight this reality, and keep myself stuck, or I radically accept that this is my reality," Truwit said. "In doing so, I open myself up to new paths, new futures, [and] new opportunities."

She also noted how important "holding the dialectic" has been in the process: recognizing that deep grief and pain can coexist with genuine gratitude and joy. "I really tried to cling to those glimmers of hope and joy, and realize that both of those can exist at the same time. And if I make room for both of them to exist, this will grow, and I will have those moments of joy," Truwit said.

A little over a year after the shark attack, Truwit competed for Team USA at the 2024 Paris Paralympic Games, winning two silver medals in S10 Swimming. From the outside, Truwit's recovery seemed smooth and rapid; on the inside, though, nothing could have been further from the truth.

"The actual science of recovery involves backtracking, and it's slow," Santos said after Truwit described her first return to the water following her amputation. The former Division I swimmer had begun by dipping just her toe into her backyard pool, wearing a floatie around her waist. She and her family weren't sure how she would respond to returning to the water — a place she had once loved, but also the site of the traumatic attack.

Next, Santos and Truwit discussed distanced self-talk: using second- or third-person phrasing to ease cognitive burden and emotional reactivity. The concept is closely linked to a growth mindset — the belief that one's current situation isn't permanent and can change. Examples include "You're being too hard on yourself, Ali," or adding "yet" to a statement: "I'm not where I want to be... yet." Truwit used this skill to ground herself during difficult moments, reminding herself that progress is possible even when the present feels especially challenging.

Using purpose to bounce back stronger

Santos ended the conversation by turning to the current chapter of Truwit's story: her work with her nonprofit, *Stronger Than You Think*, which has pledged and donated $1.3 million dollars, donated over 50 prosthetics to girls and women; directed $650,000 to Paralympic athletes; and offered thousands of hours of swimming lessons to youth. Santos introduced the concept of Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), distinct from Post-Traumatic Stress: the idea that people can experience positive psychological changes and find new purpose after severe adversity. Truwit has experienced this through giving back, and her advocacy reflects a broader, science-backed theory: altruistic, action-oriented work for others can significantly support emotional recovery.

Looking ahead, Truwit is focused on expanding her nonprofit's reach and impact while setting her sights on making Team USA for the second time at the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. She knows there is no guarantee the journey will be easy, but she has built a repertoire of science-backed skills to help her stay resilient day-to-day. Truwit shared her personal motto, "permission to feel, intention to reset" — a reminder to give herself space to experience negative emotions while also making a plan grounded in active hope to begin again and plan forward-moving action.

"I'm stronger than I think, and I hope that for all of us," Truwit said. "I think we have so much more capacity within us than we might ever realize, and if we open our minds to it, we surprise ourselves."

Are you a tetris ninja?

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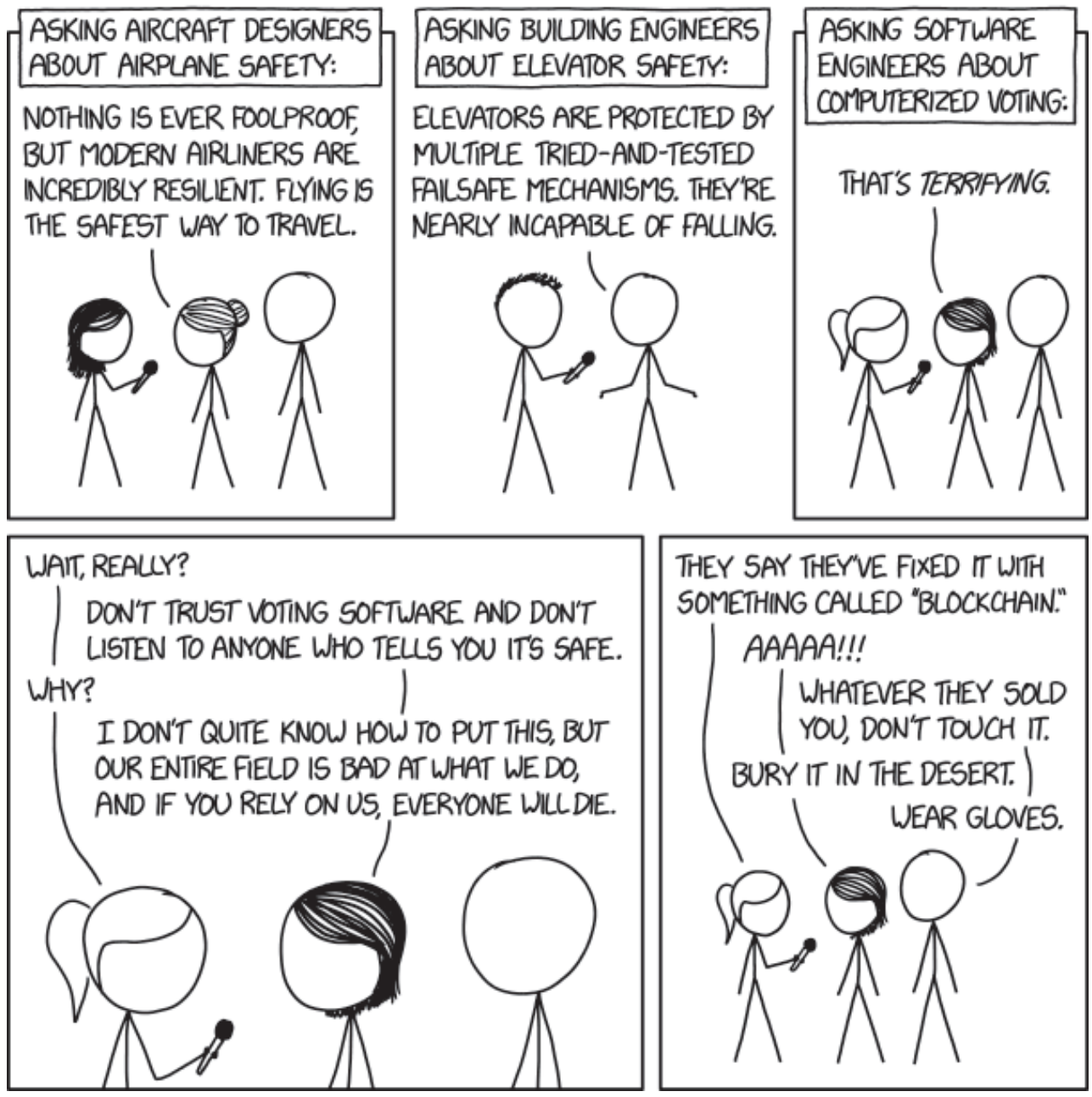
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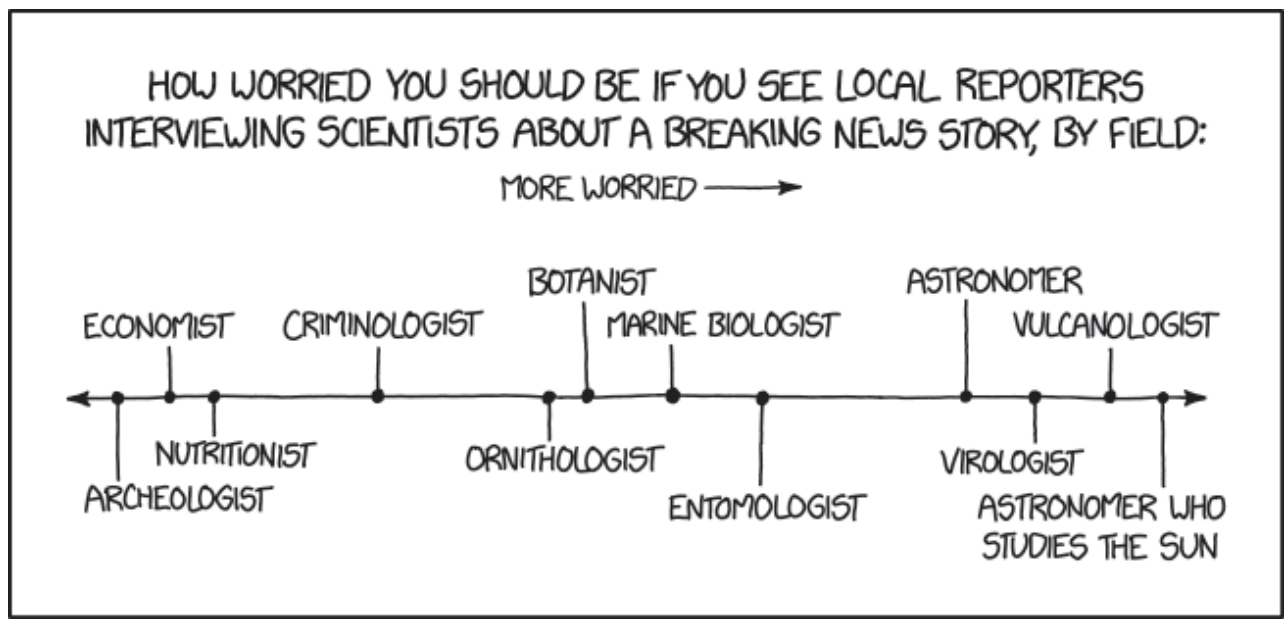
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[2030] Voting Software



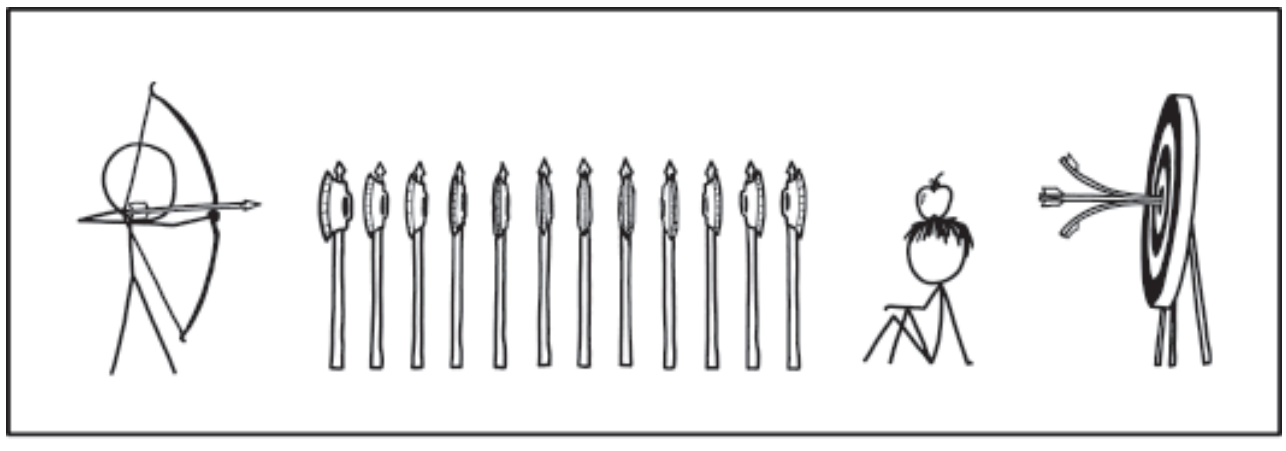
There are lots of very smart people doing fascinating work on cryptographic voting protocols. We should be funding and encouraging them, and doing all our elections with paper ballots until everyone currently working in that field has retired.

[1895] Worrying Scientist Interviews



They always try to explain that they're called 'solar physicists', but the reporters interrupt with "NEVER MIND THAT, TELL US WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE SUN!

[3288] Archery Feat



Update: I would not have embarked on this powerscaling venture if I'd known how thoroughly Mark Twain was going to roast me.

xkcd
A WEBCOMIC OF ROMANCE, SARCASM, MATH, AND LANGUAGE

by Randall Munroe

Endowment growth below peer schools

Endowment, from Page 1

student enrollment, were not cited on the 2026 Treasurer Report. Asked about the Libraries adjustment, Shor explained that the document is a "high-level account of Institute financial performance in a given fiscal year," and doesn't describe "all fiscal dynamics occurring or planned during that year". He added that "there are no plans for further reductions to the Library services."

A different perspective

The MIT Graduate Student Union (GSU) has emerged as a vocal opponent to the budget changes. GSU Financial Secretary Jo Hall G believes that these decisions reflect the administration's priority to "protect the Institute's maximum possible growth" over the needs of the workers that keep the Institute running.

They argue that the Treasurer Report's rhetoric gives the impression that the current financial situation is satisfactory, but under new tax rates, "MIT will be hard-pressed to make ends meet."

"This is simply untrue," Hall said. "MIT has already demonstrated this year that they can post nine-figure growth while treating the expected loss of income from the new tax as part of its FY2026 financial assessment."

According to the Office of the Executive Vice President and Treasurer, 80% of MIT endowment and its resulting income are restricted by state regulations and donor restrictions. About half of the endowment is in donor-restricted funds, which are regulated by the Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act. This requires that MIT does not spend more money than the inflation-adjusted original amount and manage the funds transparently.

Hall also acknowledges the negative impacts of the new federal policies, but said that it "is deeply frustrating to hear MIT complain about hundred-million dollar impacts to their billion-dollar yearly profits while closing libraries and deadlocking its workers at the bargaining table."

Peers outpace MIT

The endowment and other assets are managed by the MIT Investment Management Company (MITIMCo), whose main goal is to generate high long-term investment returns for MIT. MIT's 10.3% endowment return this year trailed those of peers that have reported so far, including Stanford (31.7%), Harvard (27.1%), Penn (27.4%), and Princeton (23.7%). MIT also fell short of the 15.5% preliminary median for U.S. college and university endowments reported by Cambridge Associates. These high investment return figures were the largest since 2021, carried by gains from technology companies such as SpaceX and bets on artificial intelligence. As of time of publication, MITIMCo has not responded to *The Tech*'s request for comment.









CASSIE RICH—THE TECH

A Newton's cradle (titled "Cat's Cradle") composed of five inflatable balls hangs from the arch outside the Wiesner Building (E15) on Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2026. From left to right, the balls bear the logo of MIT, the lightning-bolt logo of East Campus, the mascot of Tetazoo (East Campus Third East), the mascot of Beast (East Campus Second East), and the mascot of Random Hall.