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Thursday, November 5, 2026

WEATHER, p. 2

FRI: 68°F | 56°F Rain

SAT: 59°F | 46°F Cloudy

SUN: 56°F | 41°F Showers

Surveillance expansion on campus inspires debate

EVPT Shor announces MIT is no longer exploring AI capabilities in new security cameras

By Graham Schmidt

On a recent Tuesday evening, Marah Gubar, associate professor of literature, and Nancy Kanwisher, professor of cognitive neuroscience, chatted in Gubar's office. They were waiting for a stepladder. In order to reach campus security cameras, which are typically installed a few feet above head height, they needed a lift.

A friend swung by to drop the ladder off, and they set out in search of surveillance. Gubar spied an inconspicuous camera in the corner of a large door frame. As Kanwisher climbed up and began applying stickered gemstones, googly eyes, and ribbon, MIT President Sally Kornbluth walked past. Gubar waved and offered her a bendable, googly-eyed rubber figure.

"Is this symbolism?" Kornbluth asked, smiling and tucking the figure away in her bag.

It was. Since August, Gubar and four other tenured professors have been leading field trips around campus to bedazzle cameras. The project, accompanied by a satirical article in the September/October issue of the Faculty Newsletter (FNL), is a protest against the installation of new AI-capable security cameras on campus in the last year.

In an interview with *The Tech*, Gubar said that the bedazzling is "aimed at raising awareness about the major change that just got imposed on our campus without any meaningful consultation with the MIT community."

"We figured the cameras should be made visible," Gubar added.

The campaign to add new cameras, which began in November 2025 and was previously covered by *The Tech* in April, cost more than $3 million and brought more than 500 additional cameras to campus. In a presentation given by Executive Vice President and Treasurer (EVPT) Glen Shor at the May faculty meeting, Shor said that MIT also conducted a limited trial, involving 25 cameras, of software from AI security company ambient.ai, which had concluded by then. The expansion of campus security was meant "to close key gaps in coverage that became apparent during recent investigations" into crime on campus, according to a FAQ page on the EVPT website.

The day after their encounter in the hallway, Gubar, Kanwisher, and Kornbluth were in the same room once again for the October faculty meeting, where Shor announced a "pause" on the analysis of deploying AI capabilities. And on Oct. 27, Shor made that update public on the EVPT website, stating unequivocally that cameras on campus would continue to operate "with no AI, no audio recording, and no facial recognition," and that MIT would not explore these features in the future.

However, the new cameras remain, as does the broader debate about campus surveillance.

Cameras on campus

There are around 4,600 cameras on MIT campus, according to the EVPT FAQ. Most of these cameras monitor exterior locations, emergency phones, and critical infrastructure, like MIT's nuclear reactor.

The recent increase in the number of cameras has been concentrated in non-residential hallways, stairways, lobbies, and entrances. Cameras in these areas more than doubled in 2025, from fewer than 400 to more than 800, based on figures from Shor's presentation at the October faculty meeting.

Many faculty members, including the authors of the FNL article, first learned about the expansion in campus monitoring from *The Tech*'s reporting. Shor addressed questions about these changes at the May faculty meeting, where a few faculty members expressed a variety of concerns, including about data security and lack of consultation with MIT professors who are experts on AI.

Marzyeh Ghassemi, an associate professor at CSAIL who studies social bias in machine learning, is one

Cameras, Page 16



GRAHAM SCHMIDT—THE TECH

A camera in the Infinite bedazzled on a trip led by Catherine D'Ignazio. October 2026.

MIT GSU passes first ever strike authorization vote

This is the GSU's latest move to get MIT to budge on bargaining priorities

By Jada Ogueh
NEWS EDITOR

Out of 1,708 ballots, 92.5% of members of MIT's Graduate Student Union (GSU) voted yes to authorize a strike on Oct. 22. During a strike, graduate workers and fellows would be expected to stop all work and "not cross the picket line."

After six months of bargaining and 15 sessions with MIT, seven articles (5, 7, 10, 13, 14, 19, and 25) have reached a tentative agreement, while the majority remains in limbo or has been closed. However, central issues to the GSU's campaign — union shop, establishing a three-year contract, wages, healthcare, and protections for international workers — remain at a standstill with the Institute.

The GSU launched their first-ever Strike Authorization Vote on Monday, Oct. 19, at a meeting in 10-250 at 5:30 p.m. Shortly after, voting opened at 6 p.m.

According to an email sent by the UE 256 Bargaining and Grievance Committee, a YES vote shows dissatisfaction with MIT's current offer, readiness to escalate if necessary, and negotiation leverage.

Despite the overwhelming support for a strike, one will not actually take place until the last-chance practice picket on Thursday, Oct. 29. This, according to the committee, would allow graduate students to "accordingly prepare for striking" and provide MIT with a "last-chance opportunity to bring a fair agreement."

If it takes place, the strike will end after a contract ratification vote.

Undergraduates have also begun organizing to support graduate workers. A coalition called Students on Strike have begun circulating a petition urging students to not attend classes to "the greatest extent possible" if the GSU or SEIU 32BJ, the labor union encompassing MIT Facilities workers, go on strike. As of time of original publication on Oct. 23, over 600 undergraduates had signed.

11/05 IN SHORT

The last day to add half-term subjects offered in the second half of term is Friday, Nov. 4.

The last day to change grading on half-term subjects offered in the second half of term from credit to listener is Friday, Nov. 4.

MIThenge is on Tuesday, Nov. 10 from 4:10 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Veterans Day is on Wednesday, Nov. 11.

Drop Date is Wednesday, Nov. 18.

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MIT Facilities workers authorize strike

It is the first vote on MIT campus in almost two decades



LEVY LE—THE TECH

MIT Facilities workers part of the 32BJ SEIU union raise their hands to vote to authorize a strike. The strike authorization vote, held in Killian Court, passed Tuesday, October 27, 2026.

By Jada Ogueh
NEWS EDITOR

The MIT Facilities workers' first strike authorization vote since 2008 passed with a majority vote on Killian Court at 3:30 p.m. on Oct. 27.

After months of negotiations with no resolution on wage increases, cheaper healthcare, and protections for immigrant workers, about 600 MIT Facilities workers representing 32BJ SEIU joined the Graduate Student Union in a potential strike.

32BJ members at MIT work in a wide range of essential jobs, including as custodians, desk attendants, groundskeepers, maintenance mechanics and skilled tradespeople such as electricians and plumbers, at over 200 buildings belonging to MIT.

The two unions held a joint "Last Chance" practice picket from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Oct. 29 on 48 Mass Ave. According to 32BJ SEIU, the picket will help practice logistics beforehand and demonstrate to the administration what could happen soon if they do not "move at the bargaining table." In doing so, the union hopes this would encourage MIT to bargain "fair" contracts and avoid any strike altogether.

32BJ SEIU also had a bargaining session with the Institute on Oct. 29.

BOSTON BOOKS

Michael Lewis and Geraldine Brooks open the one-day festival for book lovers. **ARTS, p. 6**

ANOTHER ONE

MIT's cross country teams win more NEWMAC titles. **SPORTS, p. 11**

AI DISCOVERS DRUGS

Exploring how AI models redefine drug discovery. **SCIENCE, p. 13**



FALLFEST IS HERE

SEB's annual celebration gathers friends and family to Kresge Lawn. **NEWS, p. 4**

SCIENCE OF AGING

Boston longevity week ran through the first week of October. **SCIENCE, p. 12**

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WEATHER WEATHER WEATHER WEATHER

Today
Rain Showers.
72°F
22°C
Wind Speed: 10–15 mph.
Gusts: 30 mph.
Direction: SW.

Tonight
Rain.
64°F
18°C
Wind Speed: 5–10 mph.
Gusts: 25 mph.
Direction: SW.

Friday
Heavy Rain.
68°F 56°
20°C | 13°C
Wind Speed: 0–5 mph.
Gusts: 15 mph.
Direction: S.

Saturday
Cloudy.
59°F 46°
15°C | 8°C
Wind Speed: 5–10 mph.
Gusts: 20 mph.
Direction: NE.

Sunday
Rain Showers.
56°F 41°
13°C | 5°C
Wind Speed: 10–15 mph.
Gusts: 30 mph.
Direction: NW.

Rainy stretch ahead

By Conrad Straden
CHIEF METEOROLOGIST

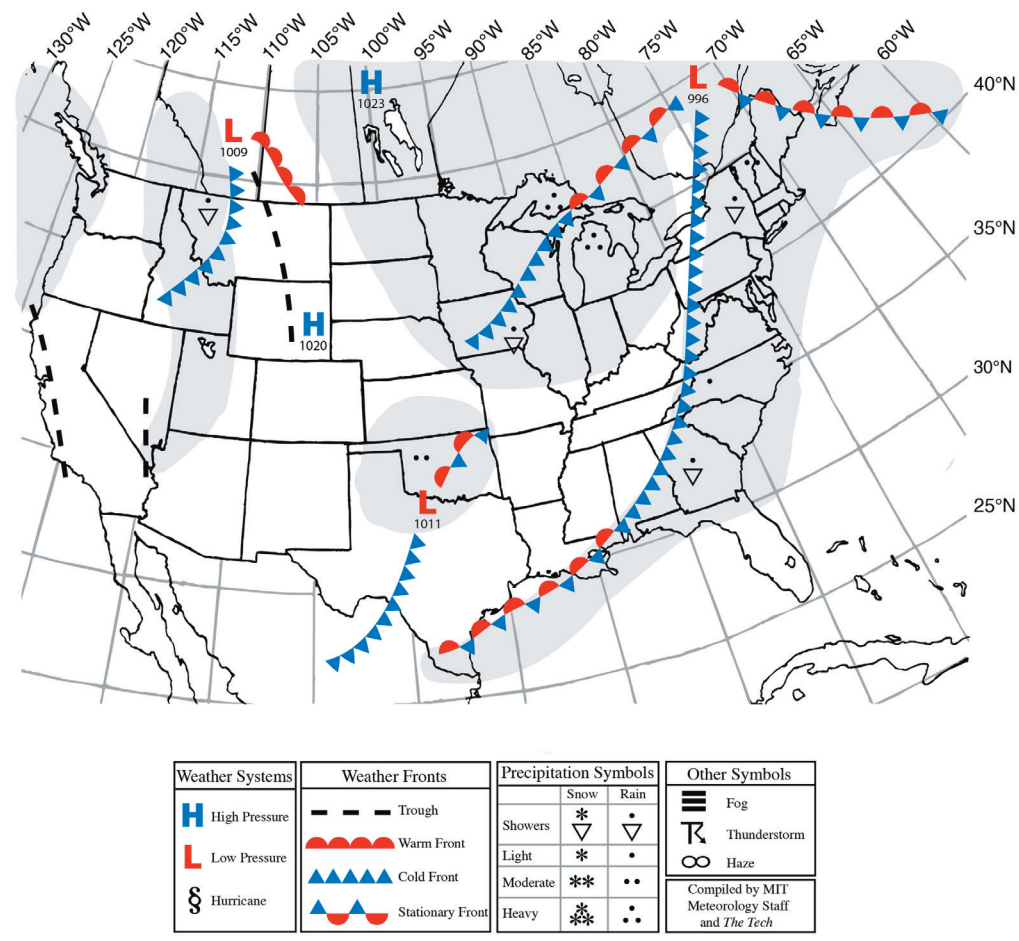
After some unusually warm temperatures this week, we are headed for a more unsettled pattern from today through the end of the weekend. Today will be cloudy, with a small bit of rain expected between 3 and 4 p.m. This is the beginning of a larger, more complex system moving through this weekend.

Starting with the bigger picture, a low pressure will move through Ontario and Quebec today, with part of it splitting off and lagging behind. A cold front extending southward from the original low will crawl into the northeast on Friday, pulling lots of moisture northward from the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic. Meanwhile, the cut-off low that split from the main system will dig southward into Michigan before ejecting to the east into New England on Saturday, forming a new low-pressure system with the moisture from the cold front.

What this means for Boston is heavy rain starting Thursday night that will last through much of the day on Friday. With the deep moisture tap, the rain is expected to be more convective in nature, leading to localized heavier rain cells as well as on-and-off rain throughout the day. The chance for a rumble of thunder cannot be ruled out. The rain should clear out by late Saturday morning, with the day remaining mostly dry. As the low-pressure system reorganizes itself, rain will fill back in across New England from Saturday night through Sunday morning.

All said and done, we are expected to receive one to two inches of some much-needed rain, given how little it rained in October. Temperatures are also expected to steadily cool off with the passage of this multi-day system, starting in the upper 60s on Friday and ending in the lower 50s on Sunday. The good news is that sunshine is expected all of next week, with temperatures returning to normal for this time of year.

To the right is the synoptic chart for 1 p.m. EST today, Thursday, Nov. 5.



Solution to Halloween 2026

from page 14

1 S	A	2 L	E	3 M	■	4 B	A	T	■	5 B	L	A	6 C	K
A	■	A	■	7 O	R	A	■	■	8 T	■	■	■	O	■
9 T	E	N	■	U	■	10 S	11 C	A	R	E	■	■	R	■
U	■	T	■	S	■	12 E	H	■	I	■	13 C	14 A	N	E
15 R	E	E	S	E	16 S	■	17 R	O	C	18 K	■	S	■	■
D	■	R	■	■	C	■	I	■	19 K	I	T	K	A	20 T
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29 D	A	30 B	■	I	■	31 A	S	E	■	32 D	S	■	■	S
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38 B	E	E	■	N	■	■	A	■	39 T	O	■	40 S	I	N
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Stata's Hot Tap & Go meals supplement originals

Campus Dining, UA, and DormCon ramp up efforts to make food more accessible

By Qiyun Chen

The announcement of a Hot Tap & Go station in Stata Center on Oct. 15 follows a series of increased food initiatives since the arrival of Andrew Mankus, Senior Director of Campus Dining.

Before arriving at MIT, Mankus was Director of Residential Dining Operations at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, which is one of the top ranked schools for campus food, according to several national rankings.

Current food initiatives

From student feedback and surveys, Mankus said he identified two main grievances from students: the lack of dining options in central campus during academic hours and an excess of unused food swipes due to the inconvenience of going to dining halls, which are concentrated on the west side of campus.

The main hindrance in implementing increased food options in central campus, said Mankus, is kitchen capacity.

"The only capacity that we have over there for kitchen equipment is in [the] Forbes Family Café," Mankus explained. "And that regular location is busy because we have a global bowl station, which is extremely popular [due to its] $8.50 bowls."

Working with the MIT Dormitory Council (DormCon) and the Undergraduate Association (UA), Mankus has since conducted several food initiatives centered towards additional food options near central campus.

The first pilot program, now discontinued, was Baker Dining Hall's Grab and Go lunches last school year. Students could use their meal swipes in the morning to grab lunch for later in the day. The solution offered a temporary reprieve from the inability to use a dining swipe for lunch while in central campus.

Currently, Campus Dining is running another program: a pop-up in Lobby 4 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on weekdays. Local vendors, on an alternating schedule, sell a bowl and a drink for $10 that students can purchase with dining dollars. As of Oct. 15, a Tap & Go was also implemented for hot food at the Stata Center. Students can use their meal swipes to receive a bowl with a mixture of vegetables, carbs, and a choice between plant-friendly or regular protein. The menu rotates weekly.

UA president Mariam Abdelbarr '27 said that the dining programs continuing beyond "pilot mode" are more sustainable and have high participation. Stata's Tap & Go now serves an average of 175 meals per day, including both cold and hot food options, with more than 400 different students using the program a week.

Future projections

Campus Dining looks into usage data and patterns to determine current dining hall hours. Mankus explained that the schedule works around the set academic period and athletic schedules, noting when there are higher usages of the dining halls. Late night dining is only open Sunday through Thursday, as data shows that Fridays and Saturdays are the slowest days, and only available at Simmons and Maseeh Halls.

Currently, dining halls are closed from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., a period of time that may become another expanded food option. The decision-makers are taking into account how frequented the locations would be. Abdelbarr added that the UA is also having similar discussions with Campus Dining about IAP hours.



LEVY LE—THE TECH

Stata opens a new Hot Tap & Go station, expanding its offerings to students. Wednesday, November 4, 2026.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARIAM ABDELBARR

Students pick through food items at a UA grocery giveaway on Saturday, October 3, 2026.

Campus Dining also wants to make sure residential and hot retail foods are aligned with current trends so students enjoy the food they are offered.

"Food fatigue is a real thing on college campuses, no matter where you are," Mankus said. "There are only so many different recipes that you can make over 16 weeks, right? So that's almost the most difficult thing: keeping menus fresh so students don't get bored of them."

Mankus added that Campus Dining has collaborated with multiple MIT offices to create the Campus Dining Roadmap, a long-term strategic plan to better understand how to give students better access to food.

Campus Dining also meets with DormCon dining chairs biweekly, and these dining chairs meet weekly with chefs in their respective dorm dining halls. Modifications on menus are then determined based on student feedback and needs.

Mankus encourages students to submit feedback to foodstuff@mit.edu. He added that DormCon also sends annual survey forms that run directly to Campus Dining. Mankus believes this collaboration between students and Campus Dining is critical to their success.

"A good dining program is one where you listen to students and any feedback goes both ways," Mankus added.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARIAM ABDELBARR

UA President Mariam Abdelbarr helps coordinate the grocery giveaway on Saturday, January 10, 2026.

Additional outreach

Last year, the UA reinstated their Food Security Committee, an effort to ensure that every student is able to access the food they need.

"Food insecurity is the lack or inadequate access to food on campus or anywhere," Food Security Committee Chair Adam Gardner '27 said. "So that means not knowing where your next meal is going to come from, not having enough food, not having enough money or enough time to cook."

To respond to these problems on a short-term basis, the UA sets aside a budget for grocery and food giveaways. Gardner explained that at these giveaways, the UA shows students ways to get food through MIT if they feel like they don't have adequate access.

A form collecting data about attendees of the October grocery giveaway gathered 82 student responses. 37 students indicated that they were on an MIT meal plan and 45 students indicated that they were not on an MIT meal plan, implying that students both on and off meal plans were attending the event and in desire of the free resources offered at the grocery giveaway.

Both Gardner and Abdelbarr mentioned that attendance of students at the giveaways far outnumbered the amount of food they could offer.

"I think it shows that there's a need for it," Abdelbarr said. "However, there was a bit of a disconnect between administration and the grocery giveaways we were doing from our own funding. So this year, something I've been focusing on is finding a way to make things more formalized.

Creating a more institutionalized process will ensure that the initiative remains consistent and available for more students who have a need for it, she said, but the administrators at the Support, Wellbeing, and Belonging office want to see more statistics on attendance.

The UA is also working on creating a more digestible way to break down all the different features in Campus Dining, such as TechCASH, so students have a better grasp of how they can utilize the elements offered for dining. They have also nominated an undergraduate student to meet with DormCon's Dining Chairs to give and receive feedback to bolster areas of dining where it is needed. Students can also send feedback to the UA to ua-officers@mit.edu.

Multicultural Greek Council gains seat on UA Council

Though under the FSILG umbrella, the MGC previously lacked UA representation

By Caden Betz

The Undergraduate Association (UA) Council voted to grant the Multicultural Greek Council (MGC) a voting seat at their meeting on Oct. 21.

The UA Council serves as the legislative branch of the Undergraduate Association. According to their website, the council "votes on proposals for funding, approves appointees, amends the bylaws, and makes decisions on behalf of the undergraduate body."

With the addition of an MGC voting member, there are now 20 representatives on the UA Council. The others include 11 dormitory representatives, four Interfraternity Council (IFC) representatives, three Panhellenic Association (Panhel) representatives, one Living Group Council (LGC) representative, and one off-campus representative.

The MGC is a council of eight historically Black and Latinx Greek-lettered organizations.

Members of these organizations include students from MIT and other schools in the Cambridge and Boston area, like Wellesley College and Harvard University.

At MIT, although the MGC exists under the umbrella of Fraternities, Sororities, and Independent Living Groups (FSILG), it is independent from IFC, Panhel, and LGC. Thus, while the MGC must go through the same administrative processes as other FSILGs, it previously had no representation in the UA. The other groups did, which prompted the MGC to submit a petition for a seat on the UA Council.

The MGC was invited to speak at a UA council meeting, and it was represented by MIT senior Peyton Bryant '27, executive board member of the Lambda Nu chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha. Despite having a small population, the MGC, Bryant said, represents a "distinct constituency" with a unique set of needs, which necessitates voting power.

While concerns were raised about how MGC member organizations include students from other schools, Bryant confirmed that representatives on the UA Council would always be MIT students. She added that most programming, although sometimes serving students from beyond the Institute, ultimately occurs on campus and is MIT-led.

In an interview after the unanimous vote, Bryant emphasized the MGC's commitment to service.

"All eight organizations try to contribute positively to the MIT community. Even if you do not belong to the cultural community, you can engage with our public events," Bryant said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF PEYTON BRYANT

Members from different fraternities and sororities within the MGC. The MGC was granted a voting seat in the UA during a meeting on Wednesday, October 21, 2026.

Students enjoy free food and music at FallFest 2026

Wait times, which used to be a pain point, were significantly improved

By Anand George

The MIT Student Events Board (SEB) hosted FallFest 2026 from 3 to 6 p.m. on Oct. 30. Hundreds of students on Kresge Lawn enjoyed free food, student booths, and live music.

Dining options at the event included a food truck that offered a variety of soups run by Pennypacker's, a family-run business in Boston, as well as a booth set up by BRED, with food inspired by Caribbean and Creole flavors.

The Chinese Students Club, Latte Lab, Kappa Alpha Theta sorority, MIT Farm, Roadkill Buffet, and Borderline all hosted student booths at the event, offering students a wide range of activities, conversations, and many snacks.

Evan Zhang '28 enjoyed his time at FallFest. After finishing his classes for the day, he "saw food, nice festivities, and a couple of [his] friends" on Kresge Lawn, and was excited to be part of the event. Zhang found the line at Pennypacker's too long, so he ended up going to BRED's booth, where he enjoyed the cornbread and pasta.

The long lines for food seemed to be a common complaint across FallFest attendees, though the wait times were significantly improved from last year.

Terry Kim G, the founder of Latte Lab, said the organization participated in FallFest for a second year because they wanted "to create a space where people [could] meet and experience new drinks." Latte Lab offered three variations of hojicha, a traditional Japanese roasted green tea, with the maple brown sugar hojicha a particular hit amongst the event's attendees.

SEB's next Institute-wide event is Tech Twinkles, which will be held in early December.



LEVY LE—THE TECH

Students compete in a pumpkin pie eating contest for FallFest outside the Stud on Friday, Oct. 30, 2026.



LEVY LE—THE TECH

Students get face paint at a booth for FallFest, hosted in Kresge Lawn on Friday, Oct. 30, 2026.

Hundreds attend second annual UROP mixer

The event connects undergraduates with research mentors and projects

By Caden Betz

Hundreds of students, faculty, and research mentors gathered in the Statton Student Center on Wednesday, Oct. 28 for the 2026 Institute-wide UROP mixer. Presented by the Provost's and Chancellor's offices, the event gave students the opportunity to explore their research passions and UROP mentors a pathway to recruit members for their projects.

According to a list provided to attendees at the entrance, 138 groups attended the event. In addition to research groups, Institute programs like MISTI also had booths. Organizers provided boba, candy, and other treats, and students also received MIT tote bags.

This is the second year of the mixer's existence. The event was slightly different compared to last year, one key change being that all presenters were at the mixer at the same time, rather than being separated into two cohorts.

The mixer attracted labs from a wide variety of fields, with categories including Life Sciences; Biotech & Health; AI & Machine Learning; Robotics; Climate, Energy, & Environment; Physics & Math; and Arts, Communications, & Media. UROPs were organized within the building by category.

Fourth-year PhD student Katharina Krstic is working on making hydrogen energy technology cheaper by creating more stable and conductive membranes. She was excited by how enthusiastic the attendees were and enjoyed the opportunity to be able to share her research. In her words, the mixer is a "great piece of infrastructure to train the next generation of scientists and help research be accelerated."

Postdoc Jane Lodwick is researching a secretion system that is assembled by an intracellular bacteria. "I like the format that they're doing this year," Lodwick said, explaining that this year's mixer was more dynamic than the last.

The mixer was especially beneficial for groups looking to recruit undergraduate students with specific skills. Moshe Poliak, a fifth-year PhD student in Brain and Cognitive Sciences (Course 9), is researching if people formulate sentences the same way in different languages. The mixer provided him with a way to "attract students who speak in a language that's not English, who will be able to join the project, learn how to do research, how to conduct psychology studies, and also contribute their expertise to their language."

The mixer provided a wide-ranging showcase of projects for undergrads, particularly first-years and people with no UROP experience. Kyra McPherson '30 was interested in a bioengineering projectv, and she said, overall, "there's a lot of good stuff."

Kyle Zheng '30 spoke with mentors about research regarding international politics and supply chains. He wants to do a UROP over IAP, so being able to speak directly with the team members was a unique advantage the mixer provided. He noted that "the website online that was sent out was pretty organized where it showed different terms that a specific UROP was being offered."

Ahmad Zawahreh '30 was able to find a UROP related to climate systems that he said he would follow up with. He hadn't heard of the project before the mixer.

While many were able to find projects that aligned with their interests, not every student found a project that spoke to them. There were a few attendees who said they didn't see a UROP in their intended field. Nina Shadrin '30 was looking for a lab working in either particle physics or artistic design but couldn't find any. "I feel like I'm gonna have a better time looking online, personally," she said.

Associate Dean for Experiential Learning and Director of UROP Kate Weishaar noted that while the mixer had many opportunities for students, it was far from a full representation of what MIT has to offer.

"The mixer is just a fraction of the many UROPs that are available. So look on ELX, cold email faculty and grad students, and talk to your friends about all the cool work they're doing because there's so much out there," Weishaar said. She also encouraged students who talked to mentors at the mixer to follow up on their conversations with an email.

The vast majority of MIT students participate in UROPs, according to the Office of the Provost. Given the powerful demand for UROPs, for IAP and spring 2027, the Provost's Office has committed to funding up to 500 new paid UROPS.

"This event truly embodies mens et manus — students eager to make discoveries, advance foundational research, and tackle real-world challenges," Provost Anantha Chandrakasan said. "UROPs are an invaluable part of the MIT undergraduate experience."



CADEN BETZ—THE TECH

Students network with potential research advisors at the second annual UROP mixer in La Sala on Wednesday, October 28, 2026.

Volume VVV, Number NNNN

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Harvard GAASA remembers Nolan Wells

Prof. Brooks: "We demand a full, transparent, vigorous investigation by the DoJ"

By Jaden Chizuruoke May
News Staff Writer

Community members and students from local universities like Tufts, MIT, and Wellesley College attended a memorial in honor of the late Nolan Xavier Wells on the steps of Harvard University's Widener Library on Oct. 12 from 3 to 4 p.m.

The memorial, organized by Harvard's Generational African American Student Association (GAASA), sought to both commemorate Wells's life and to "demand accountability" regarding the circumstances of his death, according to an Instagram post advertising the event.

Background on the case

18-year-old Nolan Wells was found deceased on July 6, 2026, just two days after going missing on a boat trip to Horn Island, Miss. Wells departed with friends on a boat bound for the island on the morning of July 4, but did not return with them the following day. According to GPS data released by the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, the boat arrived back on the mainland at 5:44 p.m. However, according to the Jackson County Sheriff's office, Wells's mother was only notified of her son's disappearance roughly five hours later at 11 p.m.

While a statement given by the sheriff on July 6 declared that there was "no foul play" involved in Wells's death, discontent with that summary has grown both online and on the ground during the months since. Group photos trending on social media featuring Wells and an official photo provided to CNN by the Jackson County Sheriff's department have portrayed Wells as the only Black individual present, which has been taken in tandem with Mississippi's extensive and difficult history of racial violence to suggest a potential racial element at play in the case.

A second, widely held point of concern revolves around the cause of Wells's death. As of now, a grand jury has declared Wells's death an "accidental drowning," but critics have pointed out the declaration's conflict with the latest autopsy reports which label the cause of death as "undetermined." The facts surrounding the cause of death have been largely disputed by Wells's family, their legal representatives, civil rights organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and federal lawmakers, but as of now, no one has been indicted in the case.



Jaden Chizuruoke May—The Tech

Harvard Kennedy School Professor Cornell William Brooks speaks to the crowd at the Nolan Wells memorial outside Harvard University's Widener Library on Monday, October 12, 2026.

Memorial remarks

Harlie Williams, a junior at Harvard and GAASA's political action chair, opened the memorial at Widener Library. She asked the crowd how long it would take for the name Nolan Wells to fade from headlines and the call for accountability to persist when the public's attention "moves elsewhere."

Within the audience, many held hand-written or printed signs with messages like "Say his name" and "Black boys matter." Williams asserted that one of the most impactful actions one could take to ensure Wells's death stayed at the forefront of popular conversation was to pay attention.

"The history of Black freedom is in part the history of people who refused to look away," she said. "Today, we are called to carry that tradition forward. [Nolan Wells's] family deserves answers. And the pursuit of those answers must continue."

In addition to GAASA representatives, other leaders from Harvard's Black organizations also shared the stage. Ethan Ristu, the president of the Harvard Black Men's Forum, highlighted the significance of Wells's life and underscored his death as merely the latest tragedy in an ongoing legacy of racial violence against Black people in the United States.

"We're seeing again the same pattern unfurl," said Ristu, referring to the controversy surrounding Wells's cause of death.

He went on to mention Kendrick Johnson, a 17-year-old Black boy who was found dead inside a rolled-up gymnasium mat at a Georgia high school in 2013. Ristu parallelled the tragedy with Wells' case, claiming that while it "may never be known" what really happened to Wells, there was "more that could be done" to find out.

"And while there is evidence that Nolan had comported his life with the utmost dignity and respect and care," said Ristu, "it is unfortunate that he and his loved ones have not been afforded that same dignity and care regarding the circumstances of his death."



Jaden Chizuruoke May—The Tech

A woman and her daughter hold up homemade signs during the community memorial for Nolan Wells outside Harvard University's Widener Library on Monday, October 12, 2026.

It was not only students speaking. Harvard Kennedy School Professor and former president of the NAACP Cornell William Brooks followed Ristu's speech. Brooks began by grounding his words from the perspective of a father with two sons.

Brooks likened Wells to a first-year student at Harvard. "Nolan Wells was 18 years old, about the same age as many of you," he said. "He was someone filled with the possibilities of youth, the aspirations of a young man on the cusp of life."

During his speech, Brooks defended the many questions pertaining to Wells' death. "These are reasonable, rational questions," he claimed. "It is immoral not to answer those questions." Quoting Frederick Douglass, Brooks shunned those who suggested otherwise, comparing such people to "men who want crops without plowing the ground, people who want rain without thunder and lightning."

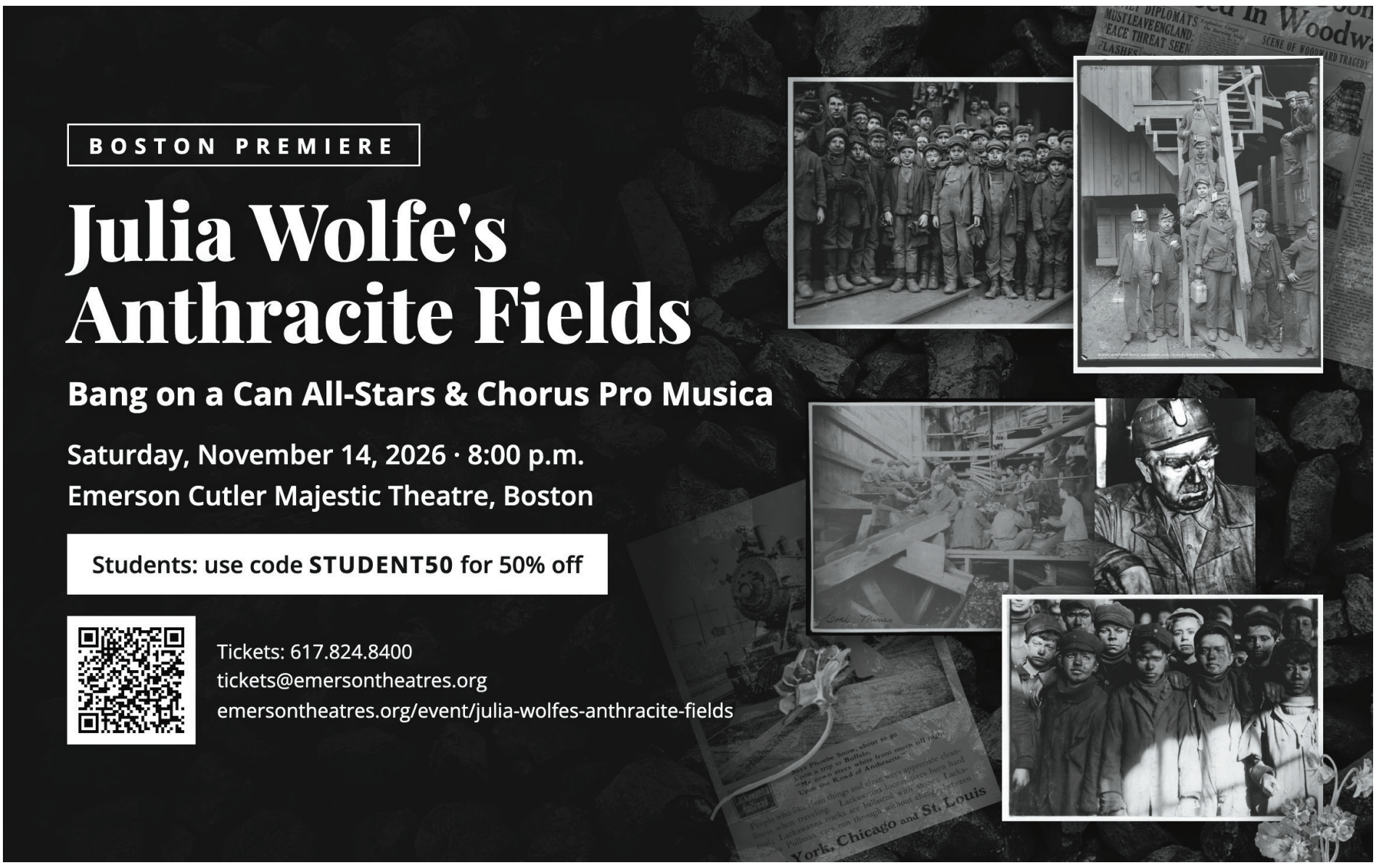
Dre'Shon Jackson, the president of Harvard's Black Student Association, began a call and response following the conclusion of Brooks's speech. Jackson called out the words "We stand," and was met by a loud and invigorating response seconds later that boomed, "For Nolan Wells."

Ending the official memorial was Sandra Smith Johnson, the vice president of GAASA. She began her remarks by reading an excerpt from Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail," drawing a comparison between King's rhetoric regarding the "underlying causes" of racial violence with how she believed members of the community ought to look at Wells's case.

"Dr. King challenged the same system that called Nolan Wells's waterless lungs a drowning, Kendrick Johnson's rolled-up vertical body an accident, Emmet Till's mutilation deserving, and the knee on George Floyd's neck unintentional," Johnson said.

Johnson pushed against the idea of sitting "idly within the gates of our institutions," encouraging the crowd of students and community members to recognize the atrocities which occur beyond university limits. To close, Johnson, alongside the other organizers, pointed to a resource document they wrote detailing how to drive the investigation of Wells's case forward.

"Thank you for joining us today and being present," concluded Johnson. "Rest in peace, Nolan Xavier Wells."



RESTAURANT REVIEW

Broken Cup Teahouse imports a relaxing, tea-forward experience into Kendall Square

For a special occasion, it's hard to find a more transporting daytime spot nearby

★★★★½

Broken Cup Teahouse

Tea, $$$

245 Main Street, Cambridge, MA 02139

Thursday to Friday
10:30 a.m.–6 p.m.

Saturday to Sunday
11 a.m.–12:30 p.m.,
1 p.m.–2:30 p.m.,
3 p.m.–4:30 p.m.

By Graham Schmidt

Broken Cup Teahouse, a new tea room in Kendall Square, takes its name from a story about the Buddhist teacher Ajahn Chah. One clever disciple, in the middle of a lesson on detachment and the impermanence of all things, interrupts Chah to ask, "But what about your favorite teacup — the one you always use?" The teacher smiles and explains: "In my mind, the cup is already broken. Making my peace with its fate, I can savor every sip."

It's a potent metaphor for running a small business, and Broken Cup is about as small as a business can get. Taking up a couple hundred square feet in the middle of a twelfth-floor Kendall Square co-working space, the tea room has no doors, no ceiling, and, by my calculations, roughly two-and-a-half walls.

Finding it can be more puzzling than a zen koan. To get there, my fellow tea taster and I navigated three sets of doors, two elevators, an iPad kiosk, and a doorbell. We swapped our shoes for clean felt slippers and scooched up to our shin-height table on a pair of round leather seat cushions (Broken Cup, which can accommodate up to five private parties at once, also has regular table seating). Office workers peered in as they hustled out to lunch.

Although the space is not totally private, it felt cozy, especially after our tea host, the only employee on shift, put on quiet jazz and gave us a moment to consider the menu. Broken Cup offers 20 single-origin teas, each of which can be served either in a conventional pot or gongfu style, in which tea is repeatedly flash-brewed in a small, lidded bowl, called a gaiwan. More gongfu teahouses are scheduled to open in Cambridge soon, but right now, Broken Cup is the only one.

We opted for a house selection of three oolong teas served gongfu style (the "tea adventure for two"). After receiving a quick intro to technique, we brewed at our own pace for the rest of our hour-and-a-half session. We also received a small box of tea snacks, including passionfruit white chocolates, roasted almonds, honey dates, sponge cake, and a standout shortbread, which is baked by Cafe Soupcon for Broken Cup Teahouse with their Dark Honey Black Tea, and encrusted with dried osmanthus flowers.

Our tea host suggested that we pay attention to the three distinct attributes of tea: aroma, flavor, and body. The teas we tried were exceptional on each count. We chose the "light" selection, and the lightest oolong we tried, the light-jade Orchid Dew Baozhong, smelled like fresh-cut flowers. It layered fruit-floral crispness over a classic grassy matcha flavor — not too grassy, our tea master told us, because it was blended with creamier leaves harvested a few days later.

The Honey Orchid was a more traditional oolong, darker and more oxidized. Hints of roasted peaches and apples hid behind a lovely tea flavor, clear in the nose and on the tongue. My favorite was the Swann's Way, an oolong that was aged for almost 30 years, origin and cultivar unknown. My companion — a former professional chef — immediately noticed the rich body, oily and almost like coffee. We sat for a couple of minutes trying to decide what, exactly, it tasted like. Although we gave up, it was so good that I bought a bag for myself.

The quality is no accident. Broken Cup's owner, Yin Guan, regularly travels to East Asia to connect with individual tea makers. Guan holds a masters in Buddhist studies, and started Broken Cup as a pop-up teahouse in 2022, holding tea events and classes at venues around Boston. The tea room itself was carved out of unused space in the Cambridge Innovation Center. During the pandemic, the room was left empty, and the Center never regained the bandwidth to find a full-time use for it. After holding some pop-ups in the space, Guan asked if she could open a long-term tea house in the space. She inherited the furniture and brought her own teaware, which is beautiful and, unlike the titular cup, entirely intact.

It's hard to ignore Broken Cup's unusual setting, but it's also hard not to find it charming, like a friend's hobby room that's been tidied up for company. It's filled with solid wood and warm light, patterned plant pots and piles of books. Week-old birthday balloons to celebrate the tea room's first anniversary still hang in the far corner. While we sipped and chatted, our tea host quietly weighed and bagged tea for online sale, and filled up an extra pot from a spigot hooked up to five-gallon water jugs that were sitting on the floor. Once the tea started kicking in, I felt more relaxed than I could have imagined was possible on the top floor of a Kendall Square office building.

Although I found myself smiling the whole five-minute walk back to campus from Broken Cup, most students will not find it very accessible. Besides the labyrinthine entrance, it costs $15 just to reserve a private table (though a communal table is free to book). Our service for two ran $82, not counting tip. For a special occasion, however, it's hard to find a more transporting daytime spot in Kendall Square. Broken Cup also sells many of its delicious teas at reasonable — if upscale — prices, both in person and online.


ch's MLB Ch

By The Tech Sports staff

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Lewis's 'Blockers: Rebels in the Deep State' attempts to reclaim the narrative

Michael Lewis opened Boston Book Festival with a talk about his new book

By Daria Ashikhmina

Every year in October, the Boston Book Festival (BBF) returns to the public with its signature open-to-all, one-day festival, where Bostonians can discover new authors and get their hands on the hottest releases of the year. As an opening event this year, the BBF featured a conversation between two acclaimed authors — Michael Lewis and Geraldine Brooks — about Lewis's then-upcoming nonfiction bestseller *Blockers: Rebels in the Deep State*. Audience members got the chance to listen to this conversation in person and gained insight on Lewis's perspective on how concerns about the federal employment narrative pushed him to the topic of *Blockers*.

I discovered Lewis's brilliance as a writer when I read his acclaimed debut memoir, *Liar's Poker*, that described his days in Wall Street as a young trader in the 80s and his ultimate disappointment with the industry and decision to leave. His ability to narrate otherwise boring topics, like corporate laddering and trading work practices by defining personalities and highlighting scenical imagery captivated readers and complexified the narrative. As BBF's opening speaker described it, "He makes us care about things we did not know we cared about."

Lewis's memoir was written not just as a personal narrative but also as an evaluation of trading culture and its drive for materialistic ambitions, masculinity, and overconfidence. The book played a role in creating the public's view of Wall Street, an image that persists even today in the stereotype of "finance bros."

More than thirty years after publishing *Liar's Poker* and having authored more than twenty books, such as *The Big Short* and *The Moneyball*, Lewis, famous for his coverage of behavioral finance, is now turning to analyze the federal government and its employees. *Blockers* describes his interviews with former federal employees who were fired by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) during the beginning of the second Trump administration.

Two years after the 2024 election, it seems that the American public struggles to remember the first months of the current administration and the actions taken by then a strong union between Trump and Elon Musk. Like many of Lewis's other books, *Blockers* "makes us care about things we did not know we cared about" by exploring how the administration's treatment of civil service employees has affected and will continue to affect American politics for years to come.

During his talk, Lewis described how DOGE, a team of twenty-something recent graduates and dropouts (whom he called "Musk-rats"), with no experience in politics or federal work, was given tremendous power to make government spending "more efficient" by firing employees: over 120,000 in five months. These people — including wildfire scientists, health researchers, educators, and security guards — were considered as having worthless positions, and were later described by Musk as "blockers." The story made headlines as a blatant overreach of presidential power and an attempt to turn nonpartisan agencies like the IRS, NASA, and the Environmental Protection Agency into loyalist servants.

Lewis, however, believes that most news coverage did not provide sufficient emphasis on the tragedy of the cuts. "We are in the middle of the narrative war," he said.

In Lewis's eyes, his goal as an author, famous for creating striking narratives out of personal stories, is reclaiming the narrative on behalf of the public service workers who were pushed out by the federal power with unprecedented disrespect.

The conversation ended on a note of hope for American politics. Lewis said the bond of credibility between the American public and federal agencies is broken: the data published by agencies today is hard to consider credible given the influence of the presidential office, and their decisions are often politically charged in the president's favor. Yet, thousands of blockers — pillars of non-partisan service — are still here. If the narrative of respect towards civil service prevails and endures after an administration that only values sole employee loyalty, we will have a chance to rebuild the institutions of acclaim for unbiased science and independent agency.

"The people who are in this book will lead us back out of it," Lewis said.

Nataly Aukar squares up with the patriarchy

While headlining *Stand Up Comedy Live!* on Oct. 17, the Lebanese comedian enthralled a mixed-gender audience with witty bits about her upbringing, her mother, and her marriage

By Veronika Moroz
SCIENCE EDITOR

As a proud alumnus of the MIT IAP Stand Up Comedy class, I'd say I care more about being funny than the average MIT student. That's why when I saw the posters for Oct. 17's *Stand Up Comedy Live!* in Kresge Auditorium, I knew I had to go.

Stand Up Comedy Live! is a semesterly comedy show funded by the de Florez Fund for Humor. The fund was established by Peter de Florez '38 in 1988 and is now administered by the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences. (Note: in past years, *The Tech* has received De Florez funding for its satire issue.) The show is free and open to everyone in the MIT community. Unfortunately, this semester's performance occurred on a Saturday night during midterm season, so Kresge was only half-full, with mostly adults and graduate students in attendance.

In October, the headliner was Nataly Aukar, whom Vulture named one of "The Comedians You Should and Will Know of 2025." The daughter of a Lebanese women's rights activist, Aukar was born and raised in Lebanon and moved to New York after graduating college to pursue standup full-time and "represent her country." From one of her earliest jokes, where she described responding to her now-husband's marriage proposal by asking if he'd gotten her mother's approval first, Aukar spoke with deadpan matter-of-factness about growing up in a country where women are legally lesser citizens than men.

That's not to say that any story Aukar told — including those referencing her experiences as a war refugee — was too serious to chuckle at. Her sharp sense of humor and casual demeanor made her seem less like a professional performer and more like your older sister in blue jeans and a brown cardigan, who majored in Media and Communications at the American University of Beirut.

To summarize Aukar's set: men are weird, her mother is awesome, and women, especially Lebanese women, do *not* have it easy.

I am not from the Middle East, but the Arab attendees I interviewed found her act relatable. Some, like George Barakat, came to the show specifically because of Aukar's background. "The person that was performing is Lebanese, and we're all Lebanese," Barakat said.

Attendee Dr. Dimitri Saad PD, who was raised in Lebanon, particularly appreciated the jokes about growing up in a war-torn country. In her set, Aukar compared her reaction to hearing fireworks to that of her German husband. "He [doesn't] go, 'Are we sure these are fireworks? Check the news!'" Aukar said.

Saad estimated that roughly half the audience was of Arab descent. "Usually people tend to come together when there's a Middle Eastern artist, and it gives us feelings of connection and community," he said.

Aukar made it clear that she loves her country, so gender roles, not Lebanon, were the butt of the joke. Early into her set, Aukar poked fun at the idea that her husband is supposed to be her family. "My mom is my family," she exclaimed, drawing laughter from the audience. "I'm not saying that my husband will leave me for a younger, prettier version of me, but I just *know* my mom won't."

Ah yes, her husband. Though Aukar snuck in several jibes at men in general, the one she married took most of the hit. Over the course of the set, she roasted his wool allergy, pain tolerance and panicked response to getting a "man flu." By contrast, Aukar lives with debilitating endometriosis, a disease that affects one in ten women. Each month, as she puts it, "your uterus explodes," leaving her in so much pain she can barely get out of bed.

"If you don't know what endometriosis is, neither do doctors," Aukar said. Then, tucking her long hair behind her ear in a mockingly feminine voice, she added, "But it's okay, it's not that bad, guys. Because only *women* get it."

This spitfire attitude is a big part of Aukar's signature style, punctuated by snappy punchlines, expletives, gestures, and upon occasion, impressions of human speech that sound like adults in Peanuts cartoons. Smart and snarky, her self-aware humor fits an MIT audience without even trying.

Aukar's set continued for about an hour, stopping only when an organizer reminded her to wrap it up. And so she did, bookending the night with another bit about the most important person in her life, her mother. As a daughter myself, I can only approve.

THEATER REVIEW

'All the Devils are Here' features a bone-chilling performance from Patrick Page

In his new one-man show, Patrick Page performs the haunting monologues and scenes from Shakespeare's most notorious villains

★★★★☆

All the Devils are Here: How Shakespeare Invented the Villain

Created and performed by Patrick Page

Directed by Simon Godwin

ArtsEmerson

Oct. 28 – Nov. 1

By Rebecca Showalter Enamorado
ARTS STAFF WRITER

We hold high expectations for the villains of our shows, movies, and books. They must be complex, believable, interesting, and entertaining. But where do these expectations come from? Patrick Page argues that they originate from William Shakespeare.

In the 15th and 16th centuries, morality plays, a type of allegorical drama, were flourishing across Europe. These plays often featured a vice character: a stock character representing an agent of the Devil that tempts the main character into evil. Shakespeare, who began writing in the late 16th century, challenged this popular depiction of evil. Shakespeare was interested in the insidiousness of evil, how it slips quietly into the hearts of men and corrodes them slowly from the inside into something unrecognizable. As such, Shakespeare's villains are unlike any others that came before them — because Shakespeare's villains are human.

This remarkable fact is what Page aims to celebrate in his award-winning one-man show, *All the Devils are Here: How Shakespeare Invented the Villain*. Throughout the show, Page tracks the evolution of Shakespeare's villains from the somewhat conventional Richard III and Aaron the Moor to the unsettlingly realistic Claudius and Macbeth. With humorous commentary and precise analysis, Page guides the audience through the theme of evil in Shakespeare's works.

Page, who won a Grammy for his portrayal of Hades in *Hadestown* on Broadway, is an associate artist with both The Old Globe in San Diego and the Shakespeare Theater Company, where he has starred as King Lear, Prospero, Macbeth, and many others. Here, he once again returns to his element to reveal the fascinating ways Shakespeare exposed the depths of human evil over 400 years ago.

Page created an arresting theatrical experience, assembled with the most frightening and haunting scenes of the Shakespearean canon. His stage presence is magnetic, his voice is exquisite, and his brilliant acting of Shakespeare is born from a precise and nuanced analysis of the Bard's most complicated characters. Page's ability to effortlessly switch from character to character in a single scene through mere changes in posture and tone is especially incredible.

The entire show is acted brilliantly, but a few scenes stand out. There is something particularly haunting about Page's performance of Claudius in the prayer scene taken from *Hamlet*. Page renders Claudius's heart-rending grief and shame with beautiful clarity, and the staging, though simple, is powerful.

Page's portrayal of the scene between Iago and Othello is yet another tour de force and an example of his remarkable ability to switch characters in the space of a breath. Page's portrayal of Iago as a sociopath is both smart and frightening. In this notorious scene of deception, with none of the legwork of the previous acts of *Othello* to help him, Page somehow manages to communicate both Iago's chillingly dispassionate cunning to the audience while also maintaining the believability of Othello's inability to detect Iago's evil.

The show, understandably, devotes the most focus to Lord and Lady Macbeth and their tragic descent into evil. Page captures the character's turmoil and fear in all of these scenes, but his performance is especially gut-wrenching and terrifying for Macbeth's lines "Glamis hath murdered sleep." The staging and the lighting in this scene thrust the audience into Macbeth's newly horrifying world, where the night is hideous and the monster is himself.

Page finishes his Shakespearean tour through the horrors that wreak havoc on the human soul with Shakespeare's last play; Prospero, fittingly, bids the audience farewell with the speech that narrates his decision to choose forgiveness over villainy and embrace his own mortality. With this faint beacon of hope, Page's harrowing and brilliant journey through the villains of Shakespeare ends, and the audience is left to ponder what may be lurking in their own souls.

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CONCERT REVIEW

BSO's 'The Nutcracker' and 'Eugene Onegin' previews January Tchaikovsky festival

Hilary Hahn and Seth Parker Woods also presented Simon's 'Double Concerto Suite'

Tchaikovsky's Polonaise from *Eugene Onegin*, Simon's Double Concerto Suite, Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*: Act II

Conducted by Andris Nelson

Featuring Hilary Hahn and Seth Parker Woods

Boston Symphony Hall

Oct. 17, 2026

By Chloe Lee
ARTS EDITOR

It has long been debated whether theatrical repertoire, such as opera and ballet, can suffice as standalone listening experiences. The Boston Symphony Orchestra's (BSO's) program from last weekend made a convincing case that, lest no other composer, Tchaikovsky can. On Oct. 17, the BSO performed two contrasting pieces from Tchaikovsky's theatrical repertoire, "Polonaise" from *Eugene Onegin* and *The Nutcracker*, Act II, with Carlos Simon's *Double Concerto Suite* sandwiched between them.

Under Andris Nelsons's thoughtful conducting, the BSO opened with a bright and triumphant performance of the "Polonaise." The opera is quite different from the "typical Tchaikovsky": one might expect the soaring melodies of *Swan Lake* or his roaring symphonies, but Tchaikovsky knew that an opera must serve its story. The "Polonaise" reflects an intent to convey Pushkin's novel in verse *Eugene Onegin*, which portrays rather ordinary people and their common concerns in contrast to other Russian operas that celebrate some grand heroic. The BSO's performance was lighthearted and regal, an accurate depiction of the brilliant Polonaise scene that introduces the party scene of a rich social world.

Carlos Simon's *Double Concerto Suite* was commendable. Simon, a highly acclaimed modern composer, addressed the audience from the stage beforehand, describing the massive undertaking of writing for Hilary Hahn and Seth Parker Woods. The performance itself was solid. The initial movements of Simon's composition evidently drew on Vivaldi and Bach; the sound was highly reminiscent of Baroque passacaglias for violin and cello. However, it didn't resonate as especially unique, and the extended passages with solo violin and cello in octaves felt unconvincing.

The latter portion of the composition, inspired by the Delta blues, was distinct and brilliant. It's unclear what prompted such a sudden change in style, but it came at the perfect time. Throughout, Hahn and Woods's performances were excellent. Hahn's famous pristine, singing sound rang out clearly. Woods set a great foundation and anchor for the solo parts, maintaining a high level of technical skill. Unfortunately, Symphony Hall has always dampened the lower register, and this weekend was no exception; the cello in its lower register often got lost within the BSO's accompaniment.

The second half of the program brought the second act of Tchaikovsky's beloved *Nutcracker* to Symphony Hall. Clarity and quality were at a very high caliber. The Divertissement offered precision and excitement, especially during the brisk "Trepak" (Russian Dance) and "Tea" (Chinese Dance), where the strings played in impressive unison and the winds floated above the orchestra beautifully. In "Waltz of the Flowers," the brass sat in a distinct layer above the rest of the orchestra, producing a rich, intriguing sound. The "Pas de deux," as it always is with its heartfelt melody, was deeply emotional. Nevertheless, the BSO truly distinguished themselves during "Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy." Only the first few stands of each string section performed the movement, highlighting the breathtaking performance of the celesta, which carefully emulated the delicate nature of Tchaikovsky's composition. The performance was stellar and left the audience wanting to hear Act I.

During the standing ovation, the audience roared for principal harpist Jessica Zhou. After an extended ovation with multiple curtain calls for Nelsons, the conductor spoke from the podium, underscoring the power of music and the heart it brings to a divided world. This weekend's program wraps up Nelsons's fall residency with promising anticipation. The BSO's next concert cycle features Tchaikovsky's six numbered symphonies and his opera *The Queen of Spades*. It was almost as if this weekend's program was a sample, inviting us into what next year has in store.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HILARY SCOTT/BSO

Hilary Hahn (left), composer Carlos Simon (center), and Seth Parker Woods (right) bow after a BSO performance of Double Concerto Suite at Boston Symphony Hall on



PHOTO COURTESY OF HILARY SCOTT/BSO

BSO Music Director Andris Nelsons conducts Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker at Boston Symphony Hall on Saturday, October 17, 2026.

Latin American games recreate childhoods

CAFE, APR, and CASA helped students take a break in the Wellbeing Lab

By Hana Sousa
NEWS STAFF WRITER

From the outside, MIT students seem to have dedicated their entire lives to problem-solving and innovating, from solving triple integrals and prototyping a nuclear reactor in their garage to harvesting drinking water from air. However, they were also once kids, playing hopscotch or Mikado with friends.

On Oct. 17, the Central American and Caribbean Friendship & Engagement (CAFE), Association of Puerto Rican Students (APR), and Cuban American Student Association (CASA) helped students feel like children again. The Wellbeing Lab (W20-308) was divided into eight islands: six for traditional Central American and Caribbean board games, one for prizes, and one for beef, cheese, and chicken *empanadas*.

Sebastian Aravelo '27, treasurer of CAFE, shared that the club is committed to organizing at least one event per semester with the Wellbeing Lab. Aravelo appreciated the collaboration, not only for the convenient space, but also for the financial support through the Weekends@MIT fund.

For each game played, students gained points that were later converted into tickets for a raffle of plushies, a Lego set, an instant camera, and a power bank. The goal was to encourage students to try all the games. Closest to the entrance was Tripa Chuca, a Salvadoran drawing game for connecting pairs of numbers. The students started with the lowest number, and if they drew a line above one that was already drawn, they lost the round. The play then passed to the next student, who connected the following number. The last player standing won. (I never managed to win.) Tripa Chuca may be simple, but it takes strategy to draw lines that challenge others without trapping yourself.

At other tables, students played dominoes, *Palitos Chinos* (Mikado), and the card game cassino. On the floor, some students played *Jackses*, the Costa Rican version of knucklebones, where the player tosses a ball in the air and has to scoop up pieces from the ground before the ball bounces. In the middle of the room, a grid of rectangles was outlined on the ground with tape, inviting players to alternate jumps on one foot or two. As a Brazilian, I would call it *amarelinha* (little yellow), while Aida Mitroi '30 would recognize it by the Romanian name, *șotron*. At this event, however, *rayuela* was the Spanish word used to refer to this game, known in the U.S. as hopscotch.

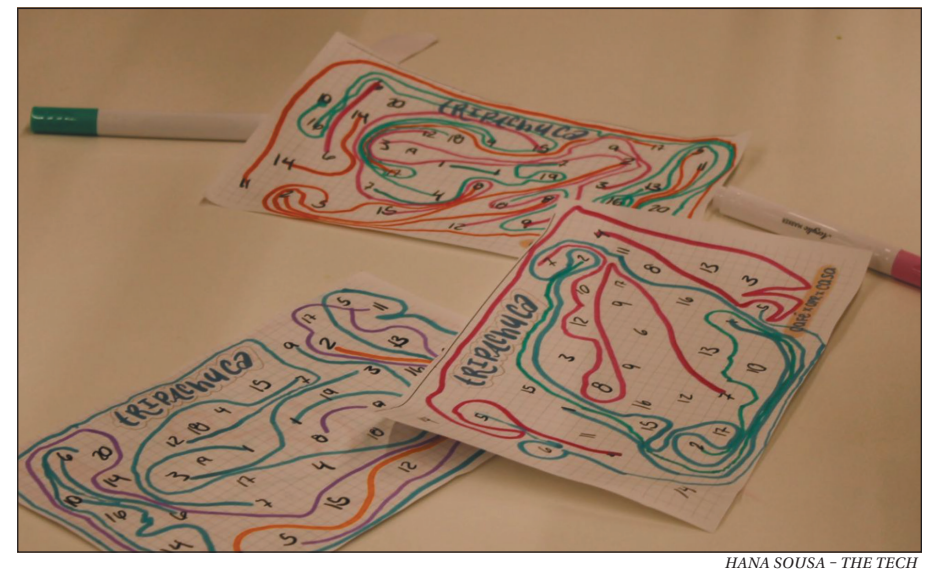
Mitroi, who won one of the prizes, described the game night atmosphere as very warm. The games reminded her of her childhood in Romania, where she played similar versions with slightly different rules alongside her mom. Her favorite part of the event was that "the games we played seemed to have no specific cultural roots."

The event was also enjoyable for the organizers, who carefully selected the games to represent Latin America and, more importantly, take students back to their childhood. Kristel Acuña '27 was proud of the collaboration that made the event possible: "We had the perfect mix of Central American, Puerto Rican, and Cuban food and traditional games that made us all feel close to home."

The president of CAFE, Avril Cruz '28, explained that midterms week hindered the brainstorming and game selection process. Nevertheless, the event turned out to be a success.

"It felt like a break from everything that was going on academically," Cruz said, adding that cultural organizations can easily get into the mindset of hosting events just for the sake of hosting events, to get more funds so they can make more events.

Cruz highlighted that this one was special. "It felt social, and so fun, even for the organizers."



HANA SOUSA – THE TECH

Players filled out Tripa Chuca game sheets during the Central American and Caribbean board game night hosted by CAFE, APR, and CASA in the Wellbeing Lab on Saturday, October 17, 2026.

RESTAURANT REVIEW

BRED Gourmet launches 'Work from BRED'

For $20, students can choose from two sliders or a sandwich

★★★★☆

BRED Gourmet

Caribbean/Cajun, $$

730 Main Street, Cambridge, MA 02139

Monday 11:30 a.m.–8 p.m.

Tuesday to Wednesday 11:30 a.m.–9 p.m.

Thursday to Friday 11:30 a.m.–10 p.m.

Saturday 4 p.m.–10 p.m.

Closed Sunday

By Jada Ogueh
NEWS EDITOR

BRED Gourmet, a Caribbean and Cajun-inspired restaurant serving "comfort food" as described by chef and owner Tambo Barrow, has recently launched "Work from BRED" to encourage "students, remote workers, and young professionals" to dine and study in the space.

Work from BRED

This new initiative is ordinarily $22 per person and discounted to $20 with a valid student ID, and it includes a choice of two sliders or a full-size sandwich with hand-cut fries and refillable coffee, tea, and fountain drinks.

I visited on Friday, Oct. 16 after classes from 5:10 p.m. to 7 p.m. to test out the menu, interview Barrow, and finish my essay for 21L.032 Afrofuturism, Magical Realism, and Other Otherwise Worlds.

I ordered the Buttermilk Fried Chicken and Jerk Chicken sliders with a side of sweet potato fries. The bun on both was very delicious and not too dense. The fried chicken was pretty good, although I would have liked it to be a tad more crispy. It was covered in a sweet tomato jam that elevated the taste. The jerk chicken was okay; it was a smidge dry and flavorwise wasn't too exciting, but the plantain was deliciously sweet and soft. The fries were nice but were a little soggy by the time I got to them. Overall, I enjoyed parts of the meal, but its portion was on the smaller side for $20. The bottomless drink options may compensate for that, but since I only got water to drink, I couldn't speak to that aspect.

The ambience of the location shines when the sun goes down; cozy table lights come out and the music provides a nice, chill vibe.

Barrow's story

In 2015, Barrow founded BRED Gourmet in the Lower Mills neighborhood of Dorchester, Boston. After quitting his insurance job, he pursued opening a restaurant with burgers and sandwiches despite no previous experience. The space he settled on was a former barbeque joint, and Barrow decided to repurpose the smoker for cooking burgers after almost selling it for $10,000.



JADA OGUEH—THE TECH

Buttermilk fried chicken and jerk chicken sliders with a side of sweet potato fries from an evening review of the Work from BRED special at BRED Gourmet on Friday, October 16, 2026.

"People noticed the difference in the flavor," he said in a sit-down interview with me.

After starting a location in Dry Dock Avenue in Seaport that didn't perform well, Barrow opened a new location in Kendall Square that took off after an interview with Good Morning America. The 730 Main Street location has been facing foot traffic issues. Originally, the building was patronized by members of the MIT community, but a 2024 deal between MIT and BioMed Realty emptied out the upstairs building. Since then, Barrow has been conducting grassroots marketing to draw in business.

Their new focus is college students, especially ones attending MIT and Harvard. This direction is what inspired Work from BRED — an attempt to make the space as inviting as possible. Work from BRED is still in its testing phase.

"We're not in the business of trying to be cheap with it," Barrow said when asked about the price, "but we want people to come here and actually get a meal that can fuel them to actually get work done."

Work from BRED runs from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., which is often the peak time for classes and extracurriculars. I am often in classes from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and have work from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. When pointing that out, Barrow did acknowledge the future possibility of extending the hours.

A new location in Faneuil Hall is set to open next month.

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Boylston Street's new upscale dim sum restaurant has its sparkling moments

Zhu offers an elevated take on Chinese classics, but I found it better suited to a corporate networking dinner than a spontaneous night out with friends

★★★★☆

Zhu

Chinese, $$$$

903 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02115

Monday to Thursday 11 a.m.–9 p.m.

Friday to Sunday 11 a.m.–9:30 p.m.

By Grace Zhang
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Go down Boylston Street, and you'll find the smallest Trader Joe's in the world and Boston's only lesbian bar. Sandwiched between them is Zhu, a new upscale Chinese restaurant that offers dim sum and other dishes from Jiangnan and Sichuan.

Beyond its unassuming iron doors, Zhu makes a grand first impression. Polished wood beams line the walls and ceiling, while a sweeping marble staircase evokes an eco-friendly luxury estate. Behind it is a dining space of marble tables and black walls, as well as an open kitchen that offers a glimpse of chefs preparing everything in-house.

Despite how my fellow wannabe student-critics and I were clearly dressed for the wrong tax bracket, staff in pristine suits and emerald-green ties — a nod to the bamboo motif behind the restaurant's name — greeted us warmly. They led us upstairs, where, in the bright daylight, the opulent setting felt a little wasted on a Sunday brunch.

This sentiment continued with the food, particularly as the classic pork xiaolongbao felt over-crafted. Each delicately pleated soup dumpling, from its light broth to its hand-minced filling, showed obvious care. Yet, I found myself craving a simple Chinatown dumpling crawl instead. However, Eric Wang '28, who joined me for the meal, found that the xiaolongbao transported him back to his village in China. Notably, Zhu itself was inspired by head chef Joanna Duan's mother's simple xiaolongbao shop in China.

Similarly, the not-so-aptly named "Mom's Home-Style Cauliflower" felt more like fine dining than a comfort meal. While the name might've conjured a heaping plate of fragrant cauliflower, the reality was a small dish of cauliflower stems (I could not tell you where the flowers went), with a lone slice of red pepper adding a pop of color in the center. As another friend put it, "If my mom made this cauliflower, I'd wonder how she had the time to do so." Despite its minimalist appearance, the dish had a slowly building heat, which Wang noted was nicely offset by the cold temperature of the cauliflower.

Next came the hot and sour seafood soup, a thicker broth that amounted to barely four spoonfuls between the three of us. Its unique consistency was similar to that of a soft-boiled egg yolk, fully coating the conch and vegetables. I choked on the delayed spicy kick, which earned me a few judgmental stares around the table. (I have the spice tolerance of a Victorian child.) Despite the pain, I did appreciate those few seconds of satisfaction before the heat hijacked my senses, and my less heat-sensitive tablemates quite enjoyed the balance of the spicy and sour notes.

The best small dish of the bunch was unanimously the crispy shrimp toast, served with a wasabi mayo sauce. The combination of the savory, golden-brown toast and buttery, melt-in-your-mouth shrimp came together to resemble a better lobster roll at a (thankfully) lower price point. What especially elevated the toast was the wasabi mayo sauce, which was surprisingly mild. If I came back in the future, I'd order this dish again.



GRACE ZHANG—THE TECH

The upstairs dining room of Zhu. Sunday, October 18, 2026.

I'd also like to try the apple char siu puff, which was unavailable during this meal. Zhu, which held its soft opening on Sept. 28, is still working out some kinks, and the full menu is expected to be available after the restaurant's grand opening in several weeks.

For our entrees, we had originally ordered the Sichuan spicy crispy chicken and the sweet-and-sour pork, but were prepared to enjoy only the former after the staff told us the pork was unavailable. We were pleasantly surprised by the lack of grease in the juicy yet flavorful chicken, and even more excited when the pork did arrive after all (on the house)!

I had never seen sweet-and-sour pork presented this way, with the meat shaped into giant gnocchi-like balls with a glossy glaze that made them resemble dessert puffs. Much of the pork was pure fat, so I could only taste the sauce. While Zhu avoided the common mistake of making the sauce too sweet, like some sort of cursed tanghulu, I must admit I like my sweet-and-sour pork to taste somewhat like pork, so I wasn't the biggest fan.

The brunch concluded with the lava custard xiaolongbao, which were nothing like the classic savory ones, besides their criminally small size — the wrapper was much thicker, almost resembling mochi, and the creamy custard (except for one incident) did not explode on first bite. My tablemates enjoyed the mochi texture; I did not, as the stubborn material clung to my teeth well after I was finished eating the dessert.

When the bill came, I braced for impact, but due to the complimentary pork, the total was lower than I thought (still $57 per person). Although I'm not sure if I'll ever pay for such an experience out of my own pocket, I'd still consider trying their full menu… so corporate dinners, here I come!

Women's Soccer eye fourth NEWMAC title

The team finished the regular season 17–2–1 in head coach Desmarais's 18th year

By Matthew Barnett
SPORTS EDITOR

After taking down Worcester Polytechnic Institute 4–0 on Oct. 31, MIT Women's Soccer wrapped up their 2026 regular season 17–2–1 (11–0 in the NEWMAC conference). In Martin Desmarais's 18th year as head coach, the team now looks ahead to the NEWMAC tournament, where they seek to secure their fourth consecutive title.

Regular season statistical leaders

Claire Zhang '30 led the Engineers in goals scored (11), followed closely by Arianna Doss '27 with ten and Andrea Cummings '29 with seven.

Doss led the team in assists (12). Ayla Sumer '27 and Skye Williams '28 tied for second in assists with four each.

Goalie Maddy Noll '28 started 16 games in goal and saved 90.2% of shots on goal (four goals allowed, 37 saves). Cassidy Jennings '27 made four starts in goal and recorded a save percentage of 66.7% (two goals allowed, four saves).

Regular season overview

Women's Soccer began their season on Sept. 1 against Gordon College at home, kicking off a stretch of seven straight non-conference games. In this stretch, the Engineers went 6–0–1, besting teams like Brandeis University and the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, while playing to a 0–0 draw against NYU.

Following this stretch, MIT took down their first NEWMAC opponent in Smith College, 5–1, to improve to 7–0–1. MIT then faced No. 5 Tufts at home, where they suffered their first loss of the season, falling 0–2 to the Jumbos. MIT rebounded from this loss by beating both Wellesley College and Coast Guard 5–0, improving to 9–1–1 heading into a much anticipated rematch against No. 1 WashU, the team that knocked the Engineers out of the NCAA tournament last year.

MIT picked up their second loss of the season to WashU by a score of 1–2, unable to equalize the game in the second half against the defending National Champions. After this loss, MIT rattled off eight straight wins against NEWMAC opponents to bring their win total to 17.

NEWMAC Tournament

MIT entered the NEWMAC Tournament as the one seed and defeated eight seed Springfield 3–0 on Nov. 3. MIT seeks to avoid their first loss to a NEWMAC opponent since 2023 (a 1–2 loss to Babson on Oct. 18, 2023).

Beyond the NEWMAC Tournament, the Engineers have greater aspirations in the NCAA Tournament, which kicks off on Nov. 14. MIT is looking to beat its program-best 2021 appearance in the Elite Eight.



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SPORTS BLITZ

By Daina August

Men's Basketball
Oct. 25: Loss against Boston College, 46–90

Men's Crew
Wormtown Chase Regatta (Oct. 24)
- *Collegiate Heavyweight 8:* 2nd, 7th, 14th

Women's Crew
Head of the Fish Regatta (Oct. 24)
Sunday, January 28th:
- *Openweight Novice 4:* 2nd
- *Openweight Collegiate 4:* 4th, 5th, 18th
- *Openweight Novice 8:* 6th
- *Openweight Collegiate 8:* 3rd
- *Openweight Collegiate 2V 8:* 7th, 12th

Tufts Halloween Race (Oct. 31)
- *Openweight Singles:* 2nd, 5th, 7th
- *Openweight Doubles:* 2nd, 3rd
- *Openweight 4:* 1st, 2nd
- *Openweight 8:* 1st, 3rd

Men's Cross Country
Oct. 31: 1st of 9

Women's Cross Country
Oct. 31: 1st of 12

Men's Fencing
The Big One Invitational (Nov. 1)
- *Men's Épée:* Corey Zhao '29 Gold, Zachary Gao '30 Bronze, Rishi Shiv '28 6th, Michael Sha '30 26th
- *Men's Foil:* Eric Min '30 Silver, Andy Zhang '27 Bronze, Yehong Jiang '28 24th, Michael Samuel '27 25th
- *Men's Saber:* Inkosi Brou '30 Bronze, Rohan Dalal '29 11th, Eric Wang '28 17th, Zachary Tong '28 34th

Women's Fencing
The Big One Invitational (Nov. 1)
- *Women's Épée:* Diana Martynova '30 Gold, Hannah Beaver '29 5th, Eugenie Cha '28 9th
- *Women's Foil:* Amber Peng '27 6th, Alison Wang '29 9th,
- *Women's Saber:* Lucy Zhang '30 17th

Field Hockey
Oct. 20: Win against Worcester Polytechnic, 3–1
Oct. 24: Win against Smith College, 2–1
Oct. 28: Overtime win against Roger Williams University, 3–2
Oct. 31: Loss against Wellesley, 0–1

Football
Oct. 24: Win against Salve Regina, 17–7
Oct. 31: Win against Maritime College, 21–14

Rifle
Oct. 25: Win against Schreiner University, 4506–3845
Oct. 25: Win against US Coast Guard Academy, 4506–4195

Sailing
Oct. 24–25: Open Atlantic Coast Championship, 6th of 18
Oct. 24–25: Oberg Trophy, 9th of 17
Oct. 31–Nov. 1: Schell Trophy, 10th of 18
Oct. 31–Nov. 1: Urn Trophy, 7th of 16
Oct. 31–Nov. 1: Nickerson Trophy, 12th of 17

Men's Soccer
Oct. 21: Win against Clark University, 3–0
Oct. 24: Win against Salve Regina, 1–0
Oct. 28: Win against Bridgewater State University, 4–0
Oct. 31: Loss against Emerson College, 1–3

Women's Soccer
Oct. 21: Win against Wheaton College, 4–0
Oct. 24: Win against Mount Holyoke College, 4–0
Oct. 28: Win against Emerson College, 3–0
Oct. 31: Win against Worcester Polytechnic Institute, 4–0

Men's Squash
Oct. 29: Win against Boston University, 9–0

Men's Swim and Dive
Oct. 23: Loss against Harvard, 60–236
Oct. 31: Win against Springfield College, 222–74

Women's Swim and Dive
Oct. 23: Loss against Harvard, 84–213
Oct. 23: Loss against Northeastern, 121–175
Oct. 31: Win against Springfield College, 241–58

Women's Volleyball
Oct. 20: Loss against Babson College, 1–3
Oct. 23: Win against Williams College, 3–1
Oct. 24: Win against Middlebury College, 3–0
Oct. 24: Loss against Tufts University, 1–3
Oct. 27: Win against Wellesley College, 3–0
Oct. 30: Win against Lasell University, 3–0
Oct. 31: Win against US Coast Guard Academy, 3–1

Men's Water Polo
Oct. 31: Loss against Brown, 7–12
Nov. 1: Loss against Harvard, 11–21

A run streak: MIT XC wins another NEWMAC title

No. 9 Women extend title run to 19, No. 10 men to 28

By Lauren Adler
SPORTS STAFF WRITER

Winning a conference title is a hard thing to make seem like "old news", but that's exactly what the MIT Women's & Men's Cross Country teams have managed to accomplish time and time again. The NEWMAC Cross Country Championships were held on Oct. 31 at Smith College in Northampton, Mass.

In cross country, the team with the lower score wins. The women's team completed the 6K race with just 19 points, well ahead of second-place Coast Guard (56 points) and third-place Smith College (84 points). The team was led by Liv Girand '27, who also claimed the individual NEWMAC title with a time of 22:17.6. Other MIT runners who contributed to the team score were Jordan Lacsamana '29, Jessica Meza '27, Megan Diulus '27, and Heather Jensen '27. They placed second, fourth, fifth, and seventh, respectively. Girand was named NEWMAC Athlete of the Year, becoming the 11th MIT runner to receive the honor. She will conclude her senior NEWMAC campaign as a four-time NEWMAC All-Conference honoree.

On the men's side, MIT won with 25 points. Although MIT did not claim the individual title, its five scoring runners — Renne Cooper '28, Nate Martinez '27, Luke Rupert '28, Owen Sondag '29, and Yichen Sun '27 — finished consecutively in third through seventh place. MIT's strength extended beyond its scoring runners: nearly half of the top 25 finishers in Saturday's race — 12 in total — were Engineers.

Both the women's and men's teams will now turn their attention to the NCAA Division III East Regional Championship, scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 14 and hosted by Bates College. The teams aim to secure berths in the 2026 Division III National Championship. The top-finishing team in each division at the regional championships will automatically qualify for the national championships.

Do you have a question for President Kornbluth?

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Inventing ELIZA: how the first chatbot transforms perceptions of AI

An author meeting with artist Peggy Weil — and the world's first chatbot

By Dora Woodruff

ELIZA begins every conversation in the exact same way: "HOW DO YOU DO. PLEASE TELL ME YOUR PROBLEM."

ELIZA isn't a person. It's the world's first chatbot, designed in the 1960s by MIT computer science professor Joseph Weizenbaum. On Oct. 22, ELIZA appeared on a laptop screen in the MIT Press Bookstore. Peggy Weil SM '82, an artist and a coauthor of the recently published book *Inventing Eliza: How the First Chatbot Shaped the Future of AI*, invited attendees to try out ELIZA for themselves at her author meeting.

One participant typed, "My problem is that I'm hungry."

"IS IT BECAUSE YOU ARE HUNGRY THAT YOU CAME TO ME," ELIZA responded.

"No."

"ARE YOU SAYING 'NO' JUST TO BE NEGATIVE"

The participant chuckled and typed, "No, I came to you to experience talking to you."

"YOU ARE BEING A BIT NEGATIVE"

Inventing Eliza is an interdisciplinary book with a team of eight authors, including cognitive scientist Jeff Shrager, literature professor Mark Marino, philosopher Peter Millican, and "software archaeologist" Arthur Schwarz. Weil stressed that the book is "multimedia." She opened a copy, pointing out the blocks of code — complete with detailed in-line comments — among the pages.

Inventing Eliza "isn't exactly light reading," she explained with a laugh. "You're not necessarily meant to read the book from beginning to end." She turned to a new page: another snippet of code, along with ELIZA's dialogue in large, red font. "Code as literature," she said.

Peggy Weil is a multidisciplinary artist and a member of the MIT Media Lab. Why is she fascinated by chatbots?

Perception and illusion

A throughline of Weil's art focuses on "perception and illusion." Her project *3D Wallpaper* (1976 and 2018) creates an illusion of depth on a flat surface. *Camera Obscura* (1978) shows the Empire State Building upside-down, a reference to the way our brains process visual information. *88 Cores*, which premiered in 2018 and takes viewers through 110,000 years of the Greenland Ice Sheet, focuses on our perception of time and our difficulties with processing immense timescales.

What do chatbots have to do with perception and illusion? It's the illusion of ELIZA as a human that intrigues Weil. She explained the ELIZA effect: a tendency to project human traits onto machines, even when the machines are quite basic.

Weizenbaum, ELIZA's developer, saw the ELIZA effect in action. "[His] own secretary would ask for privacy to talk to it!" Weil exclaimed, "As if it was human!"

One participant who tried out ELIZA at the event complained, "She's judging me!"

ELIZA is a rudimentary program, using around 420 lines of code to rephrase the user's replies into questions. When those 420 lines of code can't parse a user's response, ELIZA falls back on one of four hard-coded phrases: "I SEE," "HMM," "GO ON, PLEASE," and "PLEASE CONTINUE." Even so, ELIZA creates a surprisingly strong illusion of a conscious listener.

In the 1960s, the strength of the ELIZA effect took Weizenbaum by surprise. After he explained the "trick" to users, even showing them the code, they still seemed to experience a connection with it. He was deeply troubled as peers began suggesting using bots for therapy.

"The idea that [his] work would be… inserted in the most human of relationships was an… anathema to him," Weil said.

Weil is especially interested in how the interface of a chatbot affects the user's perception of the conversation.

"When younger people think of bots, they think of screens and phones, not pieces of paper being printed out," she said.

She directed attendees to findingeliza.org, a site created by the same team of eight authors. Across eight different user interfaces — from the original 1966 Teletype 33 interface to early 2000s instant messages to a modern ChatGPT interface — users can chat with the same original ELIZA. Weil invited the users to reflect on how these different interfaces affected the ELIZA experience. Did ELIZA in a Twitter comment feel more human than ELIZA in a 1960s terminal?

To understand chatbots, simplify them

As a young art student at Harvard, Weil had built a room-sized camera obscura: a dark chamber with a small hole that projects an image onto a surface, like a basic camera. She projected a large image of Harvard's church steeple onto the room's wall. Understanding the very basics of camera technology allowed her to gain a deeper understanding of visual perception.

Analogously, "thinking about an early, *hand-coded* AI is instructive for thinking about more complex, modern cases," she explained.

To understand ChatGPT, it is necessary to first understand "much more simplified chatbots." Modern chatbots can feel like magic tricks to users, but *Inventing Eliza* helps the reader peek under the technology's hood by examining its earliest forms.

Of course, ELIZA does not work the same way that modern LLMs do; it relies on hard-coded formulas and a predetermined set of trigger words, not vast datasets and machine learning. Even then, Weil sought to show her readers how similar the psychological effects on the user are. Whether we're chatting with ELIZA or Claude, our brains are imagining more than a machine.

ELIZA: A Rogerian therapist?

Weil encouraged listeners to reflect on ELIZA's ripple effects: how early design choices in primitive chatbots influence how chatbots are made and used today. She explained that Weizenbaum designed ELIZA with a specific style of therapy in mind: Rogerian, or person-centered, therapy.

In Rogerian therapy, developed by Carl Rogers in the 1940s, a therapist is meant to be empathetic, accepting, and nondirective. The therapist's goal is to listen without judgement, focus on the patient's present feelings and experiences, and help the patient feel seen. In Freudian therapy, by contrast, the therapist's role is to find patterns, explore unconscious belief systems, and examine childhood experiences. The therapist's style might be analytical and interpretive, rather than warm and personal.

Inspired by Rogerian therapy, ELIZA is designed to validate users' experiences and feelings, reflecting their own words back at them. Tell ELIZA "I feel depressed," and it responds: "TELL ME ABOUT SUCH FEELINGS." Tell it "My family doesn't understand me," and it responds: "YOUR FAMILY DOESN'T UNDERSTAND YOU."

Weil wonders: what if ELIZA had been modeled after other styles of therapy, like Freudian therapy? Would modern chatbots sound different? One attendee speculated: "Maybe they wouldn't be so sycophantic. Or maybe, they would tell you that you want to kill your father and marry your mother."

```
Welcome to
                EEEEEE  LL      IIII   ZZZZZZ   AAAAA
                EE      LL       II       ZZ   AA   AA
                EEEEE   LL       II     ZZZ    AAAAAAA
                EE      LL       II    ZZ      AA   AA
                EEEEEE  LLLLLL  IIII ZZZZZZ    AA   AA

  Eliza is a mock Rogerian psychotherapist.
  The original program was described by Joseph Weizenbaum in 1966.
  This implementation by Norbert Landsteiner 2005.


ELIZA: Is something troubling you ?
YOU:   Men are all alike.
ELIZA: What is the connection, do you suppose ?
YOU:   They're always bugging us about something or other.
ELIZA: Can you think of a specific example ?
YOU:   Well, my boyfriend made me come here.
ELIZA: Is it important to you that your boyfriend made you come here ?
YOU:   He says I'm depressed much of the time.
ELIZA: I am sorry to hear that you are depressed.
YOU:   It's true. I am unhappy.
ELIZA: Can you explain what made you unhappy ?
YOU:
```

PHOTO FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

A conversation with the ELIZA chatbot.

How do we push the longevity frontier?

The 2026 Biomarkers of Aging Conference previews the latest longevity research

By Karie Shen
PUBLISHER

For one week in early October, Boston became the center of the aging and longevity world.

Boston Longevity Week, a collaboration between Longevity Global and the Biomarkers of Aging Consortium that started in 2025, ran from Oct. 1–7, with additional events spilling into Oct. 11. Researchers, clinicians, investors, and entrepreneurs from all over the world mingled in a program that stretched from Harvard Medical School's campus to fitness wearable WHOOP's Kenmore Square headquarters. The week's highlights included the three-day Aging Research & Drug Discovery (ARDD) meeting, as well as the two-day Biomarkers of Aging Conference. In between came an AI hackathon, a biotech pitch night, TEDxBoston, and a good deal of networking.

The anchor of the week was the Biomarkers of Aging Conference, held Oct. 5–6 at Harvard Medical School's Joseph B. Martin Conference Center. A biomarker of aging is a measurable indicator of a person's biological age, or how well the body and cells are functioning, as opposed to the number of years a person has lived. The question at the heart of the conference is how to build standardized, clinically validated ways to measure aging and to ensure that longevity interventions can be tested and turned into safe, effective therapies. The first day of the conference covered fundamental and emerging research, from molecular detection platforms to immune aging and stem cells, while the second turned to clinical and translational work.

New this year were parallel tracks that took place alongside the main track. They included Replacement in Aging, Gerophysics, Brain Aging, and Reproductive Aging. The premise of the Replacement in Aging track on Monday was a provocative counterpoint to the biomarker work being presented next door: if tissues and organs wear out, perhaps the answer is to swap them out rather than just measure the decline. Professor George Church of Harvard and MIT opened with a keynote on de-aging medicine through multiplex genetics and organs. He described an aspiration of developing "enhanced organs" that could help people "live longer than the average."

Harvard Medical School's Dr. Alibek Moldakozhayev then presented findings on heterochronic transplantation, an approach where a tissue, organ, or cell population from a donor of one age is transplanted into a recipient of a different age. His research demonstrated that while transplanting old fat tissue into young hosts resulted in tissue rejuvenation, single organ transplants do not rejuvenate an entire host system. However, his research suggests that replacing many tissues at once, or replacing key ones, could be a successful longevity strategy.

Then came two talks from MIT professors, which pulled the track in very different directions. Professor Linda Griffith, a pioneer in tissue engineering, described her efforts to understand and slow the biological mechanisms of aging to prevent replacement. She opened by remarking that she was an outsider to the conversation around organ replacement, partially because she has endometriosis.

"Because I myself suffered lifelong, chronic inflammatory disease, I became fascinated with all this stuff about how inflammation causes aging," she told the room.

Her work includes developing liver-on-chips and fully patient-derived organoids that replace animal-derived models to study endometriosis. She pressed the case for human-based models because "a lot of the things that work in mice don't translate to humans."

MIT Media Lab Professor Hugh Herr M.S. '93 showed what replacement looks like when the replacement part is a machine. Herr is an amputee himself and a pioneer of advanced bionic prosthetics. He described advanced prostheses that integrate powered mechanics with signals from the user's body to help restore movement. His ideas emphasized letting the person supply the intent, while the machine translates that intent into action. Rather than using a traditional electrical stimulation, Herr's lab experiments with optogenetics, or using light to control muscle. Looking ahead, Herr predicted that wearable exoskeletons would become an ordinary sight on the streets of Cambridge and Boston.

Boston Longevity Week showed a field in transition, from big ideas to the hard work of validation, regulation, and clinical translation. Boston Longevity Week and the Biomarkers of Aging Consortium will be back in 2027. The challenge now is to turn longevity's boldest ideas into reality.

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The bonds shaping discovery: Five years of MoML

MIT's Molecular Machine Learning Conference explores how AI is transforming drug discovery

By Ananya Raghu & Anisha Raghu

On Oct. 14, researchers gathered around rows of posters at MIT's Koch Institute, drinking coffee and exchanging ideas amid the buzz of the crowd. By midmorning, the institute was alive with conversation.

This lively event marked MIT's fifth Molecular Machine Learning Conference (MoML). The conference, organized by the Institute's Abdul Latif Jameel Clinic for Machine Learning in Health, brings together researchers and industry leaders to explore the rapidly evolving intersection of artificial intelligence and drug discovery.

The conference honors the late Octavian-Eugen Ganea, an MIT researcher whose work brought together deep learning and the study of molecular structures. His research explored how AI could better understand the three-dimensional structures and interactions of molecules, questions that continue to shape the field today.

From AI models that uncover hidden drug-binding sites to tools that predict molecular interactions, the conference offered a glimpse into how advances in AI are opening new possibilities for understanding molecules and developing medicines.

From prediction to discovery

Where on a protein might a drug bind? Finding these tiny pockets is one of the many challenges in drug discovery.

At MoML, MIT PhD student Tally Portnoi '17, MEng '18 presented the zPocket model, which earned the conference's Best Paper Award. The model tackles what's known as blind pocket identification: finding potential binding sites on a protein without knowing where to look. Instead of building a model from scratch, Portnoi and her collaborators took advantage of recent developments in AI models that predict the structures of proteins and other molecules.

During their research, the team discovered that these models have learned much more than how to predict molecular structures.

"The structure prediction task actually is a really good pre-training task for teaching these models about molecular interactions," Portnoi explained.

Pre-training allows AI models to learn broadly useful patterns from one task before applying that knowledge to a more specialized problem. In this case, learning to predict molecular structures helps the models recognize how molecules interact, providing a foundation for identifying potential drug-binding.

Using this knowledge, the team developed zPocket to identify potential binding sites. They also designed a new benchmark, PocketWatch, to test how well pocket-finding models perform on unfamiliar proteins and challenging binding sites. On this benchmark, zPocket outperformed several existing methods, suggesting that the tool could be effective in helping researchers study protein function and develop drugs.

Making these models accessible, however, is only one part of the challenge. Translating them into scalable applications raises a different set of questions, a transition that Saro Passaro, co-founder of the AI-driven drug discovery company Boltz, has navigated firsthand.

Born out of research at MIT's Jameel Clinic, the company began with Boltz-1, an open-source AI model designed to help researchers understand how molecules interact by predicting their three-dimensional structures. The model achieved accuracy approaching that of Google's AlphaFold 3. Its successor, Boltz-2, went a step further, predicting not only how molecules fit together, but also how strongly they bind, a crucial consideration in developing new drugs.

Training a model like Boltz-1 can cost around $150,000 to $200,000, Passaro estimated, a considerable expense for academic researchers. Developing larger models also requires substantial engineering work, from managing computational resources to scaling increasingly complex systems.

The move from academia to entrepreneurship has also changed how Passaro approaches research. He described Boltz's work today as more "goal-driven," with the team's priorities increasingly shaped by the needs of its biotechnology and pharmaceutical partners.

The questions AI can't yet answer

For all the progress in predicting molecular structures and interactions, a more fundamental challenge remains: understanding how these individual components work together to produce the complexity of life.

Institute Professor Phillip A. Sharp, a Nobel laureate whose discovery of RNA splicing transformed scientists' understanding of genes, emphasized that despite AI's growing role in biological research, the fundamental questions scientists seek to answer remain unchanged.

"Yes, it's accelerating what we can do, but it's not changing what we do," Sharp said.

While advances such as AlphaFold and Boltz have made it increasingly possible to predict molecular interactions and design drugs, identifying which biological targets to modify is still very difficult. For example, when trying to develop a new treatment for a disease, figuring out which proteins are involved and how they can be manipulated remains a much harder problem.

For Sharp, addressing that challenge requires moving beyond individual molecules toward a more integrated understanding of biological systems, including how proteins interact with DNA and RNA, how cells communicate with their neighbors, and how these relationships give rise to complex functions within the cell.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MIT JAMEEL CLINIC

Researchers attend a presentation at the eighth annual Machine Learning for Molecules (MoML) conference at MIT's Koch Institute, where scientists gathered to share advances at the intersection of artificial intelligence and molecular science. Wednesday, October 14, 2026.

Sharp also pointed to neuroscience as one of biology's most intriguing frontiers. Despite rapid advances in artificial intelligence, fundamental questions about how the brain processes information and gives rise to consciousness remain unanswered.

"We still have only primitive ideas as to how consciousness exists," he remarked.

As the founding director of MIT's McGovern Institute for Brain Research, Sharp has long recognized the potential of molecular approaches to neuroscience. He suggested that a deeper understanding of the brain could, in turn, reshape how machine learning itself works.

While the possibilities for AI in biology extend far beyond molecular modeling, researchers are also exploring how to make existing tools more useful. Portnoi, for instance, is particularly excited about AI agents that could help scientists tackle specific tasks throughout the drug development process.

"On the modeling side, there's still huge gaps in how we model protein-protein interactions and dynamic proteins and function," Portnoi said.

Whether the next breakthroughs come from new sources of data or model architectures, there's still plenty left to discover.

Beyond the science

For students hoping to enter this rapidly changing field, Portnoi had a simple piece of advice: stay curious, and don't be afraid to explore.

"There's a ton of different ways to make an impact," she said. From developing new algorithms to understanding biological problems and bringing discoveries into practice, healthcare and biotechnology need people with many different interests and skills.

Rather than following a particular path simply because its potential impact sounds exciting, Portnoi encouraged students to find work they genuinely enjoy doing.

"Learn as much as you can, but also learn what you like," Portnoi advised.

Hannes Stärk PhD '26, a founding scientist at Boltz, shared a similar perspective. Having been mentored by Ganea, Stärk recalled a piece of advice that has stayed with him. "Get as much feedback as possible from everyone," he recommended, while learning to recognize which feedback is worth taking.

Reflecting on his own journey, Stärk noted that becoming a researcher is about identifying problems to solve, not just learning how to solve them. Learning which problems are worth solving is a skill that he believes will matter even more as AI becomes increasingly capable of handling technical tasks.

Stärk also shared some of Ganea's own words, offering a glimpse into the humility with which he approached his work.

"We are all pretty small," Ganea once reflected. "There are very, very few discoveries that are extremely groundbreaking… but even then, it makes a lot of sense to kind of stay humble."

Five years on, MoML continues to bring together researchers pursuing ambitious questions, many of which may take years to answer. Amid the excitement of new models and scientific breakthroughs, Ganea's words offer a reminder that discovery is rarely the work of one person alone.



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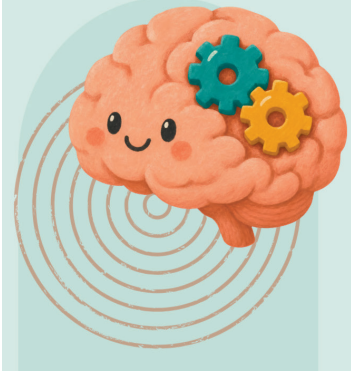
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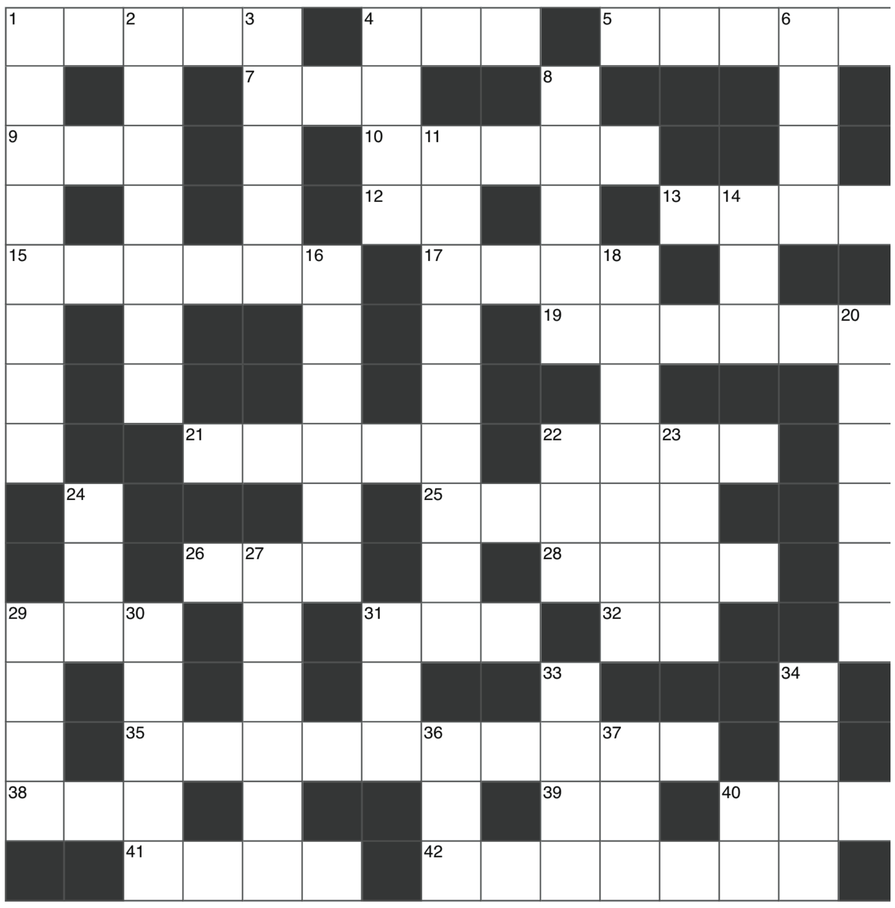


MIT: McGovern Institute, Cambridge, MA
MGH: Martinos Center, Charlestown, MA

For any questions please contact:
scanlab@MIT.edu
617-253-4029

Halloween 2026 by Mia L Rozenberg

Solution, page 2



Across:
1. Site of famous witch trials
4. Spooky winged mammal
5. Type of cat depicted in Halloween media
7. Rita ___, pop singer
9. Years in a decade
10. Jump
12. Canadian expression
13. Candy shape commonly seen in December
15. Popular peanut butter and chocolate candy
17. Dwayne Johnson nickname
19. Chocolate wafer candy with, often with two pieces
21. Trick or ____
22. Beware in March
25. Demi of the film Ghost
26. Street for a nightmare
28. A vampire's favorite place to bite
29. 2016 dance move
31. Advanced Standing Examination abbr.
32. Nintendo gaming console of 2000s
35. Friday the __________
38. Yellow and black costume
39. __ and fro
40. Seven are deadly
41. Herb burned to ward off spirits
42. ___ Pop, a lollipop with a chewy center

Down:
1. Day of the week for Halloween 2026
2. Jack-o'-______
3. Cat &
4. Opposite of acid
6. Candy _____
8. _____ or treat
11. The Nightmare Before _________
14. To inquire
16. Famous Halloween movie featuring Courtney Cox
18. Kind of spirits
20. What a raven might use to grab its prey
22. Charged particle
23. Course 6-3
24. Constrictor or neck accessory
27. Night of the ______ dead
29. Dull
30. Mark left by vampires
31. Creepy-crawly picnic invader
33. ____ the next
34. Type of French cheese
36. What a zombie might do to your brain
37. Little one trick-or-treating
40. Silicon

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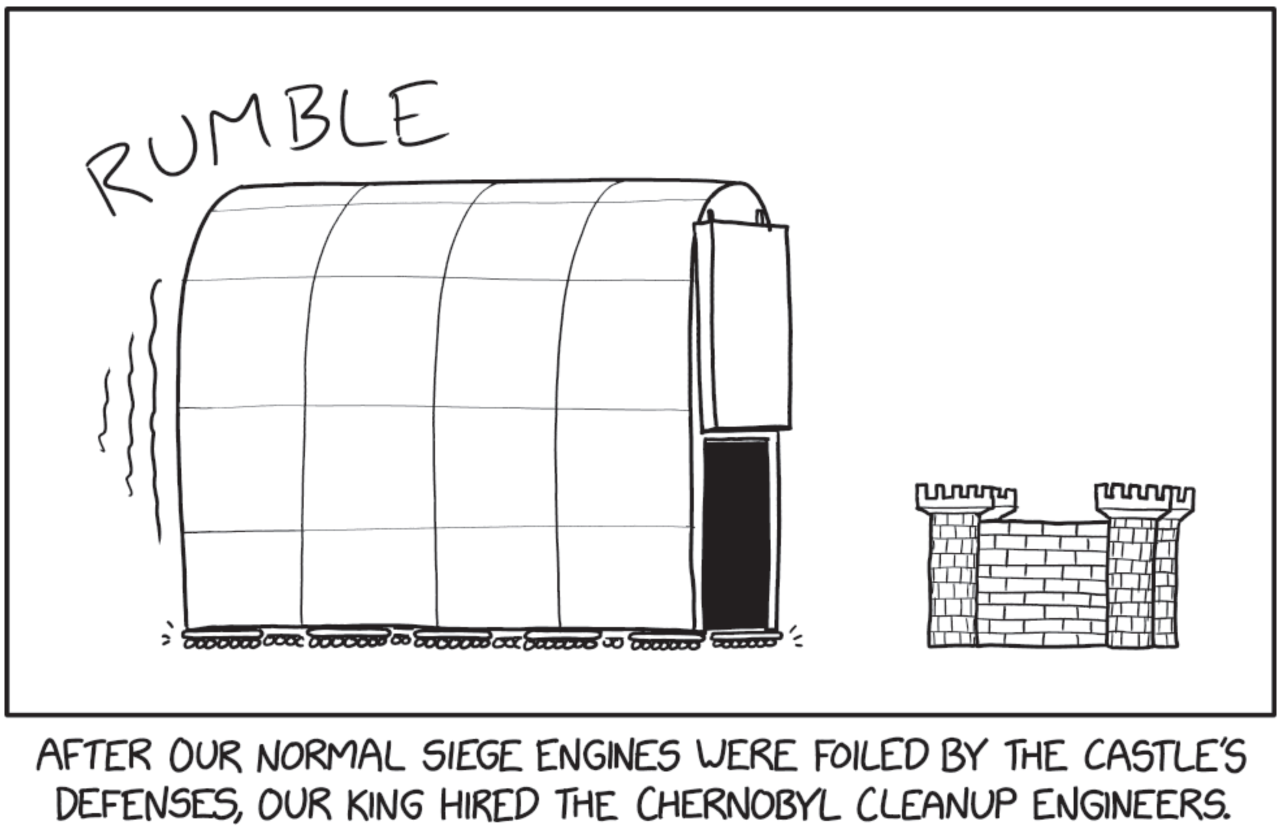
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xkcd — A WEBCOMIC OF ROMANCE, SARCASM, MATH, AND LANGUAGE

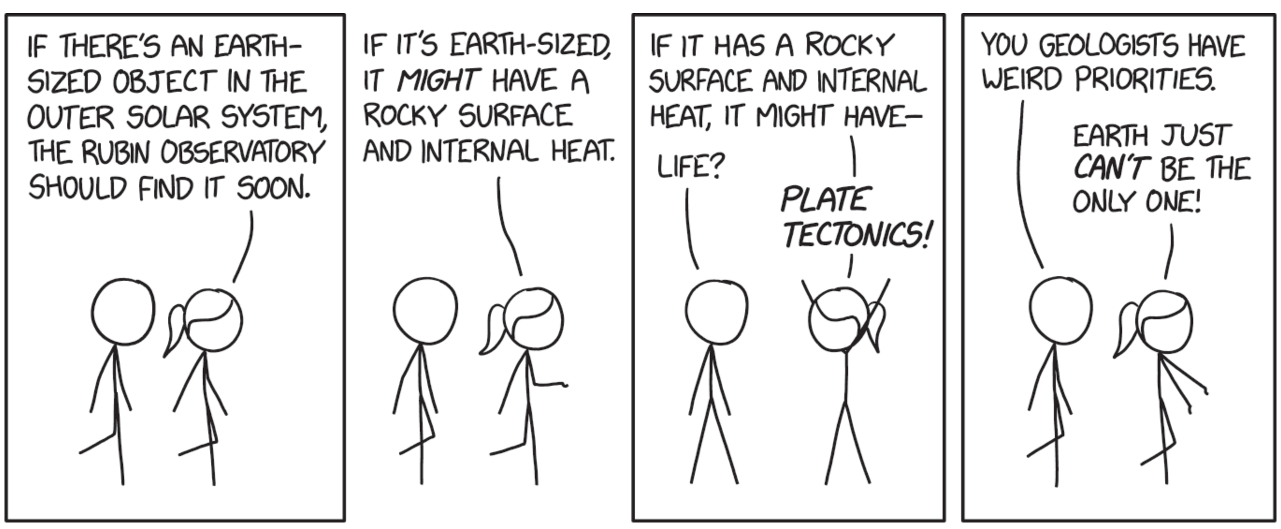
by Randall Munroe

[3316] Siege Engine



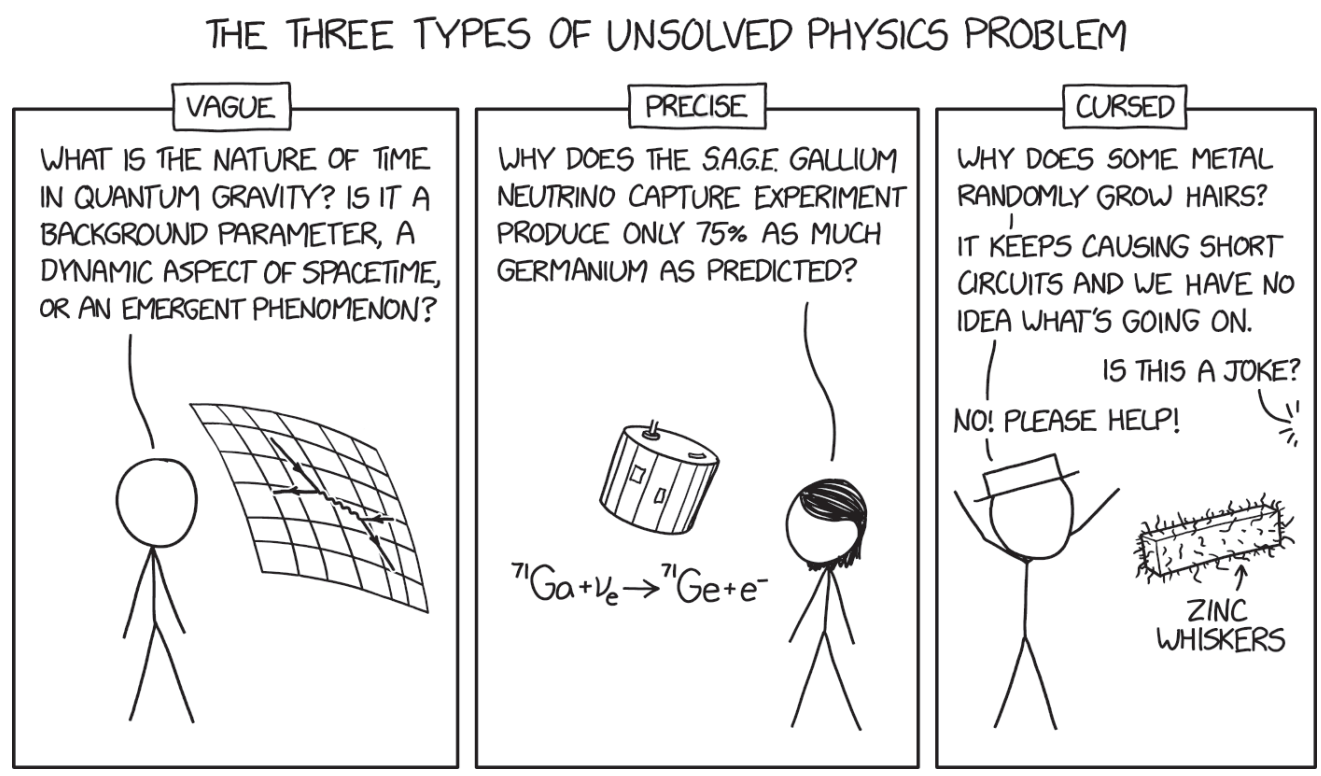
They initially thought the containment structure alone would be sufficient, but for good measure they decided to include the Elephant's Foot inside.

[3318] Earth Sized Planets



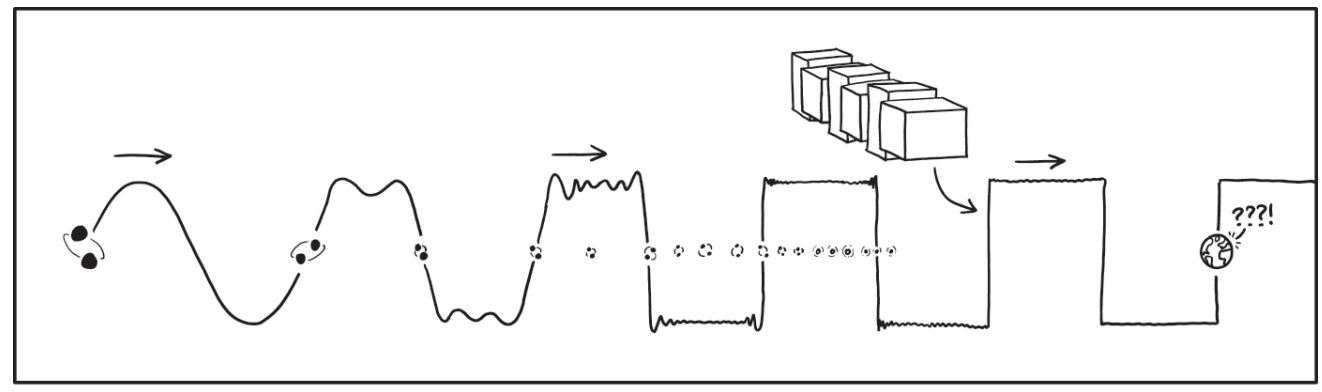
It probably has an icy mantle over the real silicate geology, but I'm hoping something weird happened to burn off most of the water like with Io.

[3115] Unsolved Physics Problems



'Tin pest' makes more sense to me. Tin just doesn't want to be locked down in a shape like that. I get it. But why would any metal want to grow hair??

[3317] Gravitational Square Wave



MY HOBBY: ARRANGING BINARY BLACK HOLES AND ROTATING NEUTRON STARS TO PRODUCE A GRAVITATIONAL SQUARE WAVE, AS A PRANK ON GRAVITATIONAL WAVE ASTRONOMERS

Depending on the energy deposition I can manage, it might also be a fun prank on the rest of the Earth.

[3320] House Majority



For the first time in history, it will be possible for a Democratic Senator from Kansas to see a programmable automatic digital computer.

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

by Randall Munroe

MIT Police protests zero-raise contract

MIT Police Association stationed a truck across from Family Weekend festivities

By Hana Sousa
NEWS STAFF WRITER

A billboard truck demanding a fair contract and pay for the MIT Police Association was stationed in front of Lobby 7 on Oct. 23, greeting attendees of MIT's annual Family Weekend. The truck also displayed the salaries and raises of key MIT executives, such as president Sally Kornbluth, executive vice president and treasurer Glen Shor, and police chief John DiFava.

Several members of the Police Association distributed flyers at the crosswalk in front of Lobby 7 to inform the MIT community of the contract details.

The flyers explained that after several rounds of negotiations with MIT, the university has offered a three-year contract with zero wage raise for the first year and no guarantees for adjustments on the following two years. They also claim that the contract MIT presented to the MIT Police Association "demonstrates a clear lack of respect for the men and women who protect the community every day," citing a 11% increase in healthcare costs by 2027 and a 16% average raise on MIT executives salaries since 2024 as reasons to take their message to the streets.

The act was organized to inform the MIT community about this ongoing dispute and its impact on officers and public safety. In compliance with MIT rules, the union's attorney notified the university 48 hours before its start.

In an email to *The Tech*, media consultant for the association Melissa Sullivan shared that the police officers have been working without a contract since July and remain understaffed.

The truck circled around the MIT campus on Massachusetts Avenue until 4 p.m. on Oct. 24.



LEVY LE—THE TECH

A mobile LED van outside of Lobby 7 displays imagery denouncing the Institute's treatment of the MIT Police and advocating for a better contract on Friday, October 23, 2026.

MIT alumna Magid inspires bedazzling

Cameras, from Page 1

such expert. At the May meeting, she pointed out that stored surveillance data can be subpoenaed, as MIT footage was in the aftermath of the Boston Marathon bombing, and that cloud-based security camera systems have been the targets of successful cyberattacks. MIT says that footage is retained for only 30 days, unless it is being reviewed, or keeping it is required by law. Contracting with a third-party company, however, could lead to video leaving Institute servers, according to Ghassemi.

In an interview with *The Tech*, Ghassemi again stressed these issues. She also voiced concerns about the decision-making process.

"We really need more information," she said, referring to the Institute's rationale for expanding camera coverage and testing AI. "I'd like to see some data support. This is MIT. Surely there's some data, right?"

After the May faculty meeting, the office of the EVPT established an advisory committee to consider the use of AI in reviewing footage and identifying safety hazards in real time. Ghassemi was invited to join. According to her, they met only once, on Aug. 25.

The committee was established only to advise, without any decision-making power. Its scope was also limited to the deployment of AI. Decisions about cameras are made by the Campus Safety Working Group, which includes members from the Provost's Office, Campus Planning, MIT police, and Information Services and Technology (IS&T).

Watching the watchers

Catherine D'Ignazio, an associate professor of urban science and planning, told *The Tech* that she lobbied to be part of the advisory committee. D'Ignazio studies the social and ethical implications of technology, focusing on data literacy and civic engagement. She has worked as a software developer and as an artist and designer, and holds an MFA from the Maine College of Art.

When she wasn't selected, D'Ignazio said, "I put my artist hat on, and recalled a project by an MIT alumna, Jill Magid."

In 2002, Magid applied adhesive rhinestones to CCTV cameras at the Amsterdam Police headquarters amid widespread discussion of surveillance in the wake of 9/11. Inspired by Magid's project, D'Ignazio, Gubar, and the other authors of the FNL article began their decorative excursions in August.

Bedazzling has become a near-weekly event for a small but growing group of participants who plan outings and share related news on an internal MIT email list. They decorate about seven or eight cameras per trip. Although some of the decorations have since been taken down, dozens of cameras around campus are now very hard to miss.

The project has started to gain visibility off campus, too. Local media outlets, including Cambridge Day, MassLive, and the Boston Globe, have reported on the project. New York Times reporter Natasha Singer, who covers technology in higher education, joined Gubar and Kanwisher after giving a talk at CSAIL, and posted about it on Bluesky.

D'Ignazio said the responses she has received have been largely positive. Students have joined her on several outings, including one who had previously bedazzled on her own.

She has also heard from some faculty members who were "very pro-surveillance cameras," she said.

"I don't know that any of us who are in the bedazzling crew would ever say we want no surveillance on campus. It's a way of starting the conversation that the administration did not give us a chance to have," D'Ignazio explained.

Yossi Sheffi, professor of engineering systems and director of the MIT Center for Transportation and Logistics (CTL), is pro-surveillance camera. The CTL has recently installed their own cameras, which are connected to the MIT surveillance system, and restricted card access to their offices, after two incidents in which protesters disrupted conferences in the Center.

Sheffi first learned about the new cameras after reaching out to MIT police last year in the aftermath of the Brown University shooting and the murder of MIT professor Nuno Loureiro. (MIT began adding new cameras last November, before the shootings.)

"I'm all for it," Sheffi told *The Tech*. "Privacy versus security — in my mind, security wins."

Sheffi believes that AI could be a useful part of the campus security system, although he had not heard about MIT's trial with ambient.ai. MIT does not "proactively monitor security footage on a real-time basis except in very limited circumstances," according to the EVPT website.

"But that's why AI is so good," Sheffi said. "Because it can."

Student voices

Strong feelings about campus surveillance are not limited to MIT faculty. Student groups have also publicly objected to the expansion of the MIT security net, and in particular to the possible use of AI.

In October, the MIT Undergraduate Association (UA) and the Graduate Student Council (GSC) passed a joint resolution on AI in security cameras. The UA and GSC called on MIT to provide justifications for the use of AI, to put forth transparent policies on data retention and sharing, and to establish a committee with real authority.

Eric Lu G, president of the GSC, said that he and other members of the GSC noticed the new cameras going up at the beginning of this year. But they became concerned after hearing that the Institute might start to use AI software.

Like some faculty members, the GSC has also been frustrated by the organizing process for the AI advisory committee. After a graduate student on the committee graduated, the GSC was asked to fill the empty seat. Before the council chose its nominee, however, the administration changed its mind and picked someone else. Only after Lu threatened to escalate was the GSC's representative allowed to join the committee.

AI surveillance has been the subject of recent picket-line chants, too. MIT's Graduate Student Union (GSU), which recently voted to authorize a strike, has been bargaining with MIT since April to replace its previous contract, which expired at the end of May. In some of its proposals, the GSU included language that would forbid MIT from using AI to monitor, evaluate, or discipline graduate student employees.

Daniel Shen G, the GSU campus chief steward, told *The Tech* that AI-enabled surveillance is an important issue for the union. "We remain quite concerned that MIT could use these technologies to discipline workers on the job site," he said. "We haven't seen a compelling reason as to why they need AI."

Gubar, who has served as a faculty advisor to students in past Committee on Discipline (COD) cases, also has concerns about the use of footage in student discipline. She recalled a troubling instance of video sharing between the MIT police and the Cambridge City Police in connection with a hack by an MIT student, for which the student was criminally charged. And in emails obtained through the discovery process and later shared with Gubar, MIT police were willing to pass along surveillance data unrelated to criminal behavior. In an email correspondence with Cambridge City Police officers, whose names were withheld by Gubar, an MIT police officer offered to share images of "individuals that have been active in protests on campus."

Over the summer, Gubar and the other authors of the FNL article also noticed changes to IS&T policy on security cameras. Previous language limiting the sharing of footage was relaxed, and a line barring the use of footage for disciplinary matters was removed.

These applications of surveillance, D'Ignazio says, contribute to a "climate of fear and repression right now on campus."

"I think there's a cost on the creative side," D'Ignazio added.



GRAHAM SCHMIDT—THE TECH

Marah Gubar (left) and Nancy Kanwisher (right) decorate a security camera in Building 4. October 2026.

Some students who have expressed support for the bedazzlers have told her that they are apprehensive about participating, even though D'Ignazio and her coauthors are careful not to interfere with the functioning of the cameras. When the students do join, they usually hand out fliers while the tenured faculty do the decorating.

The October faculty meeting

Tension over surveillance came to a head at the October faculty meeting. Shor was scheduled to provide an update on the Institute's security camera program, the last item on the agenda. But the debate started early, during the discussion period for the COD's annual report, when D'Ignazio requested clarification on the rules for camera footage in disciplinary cases.

Spirited discussion ensued, including a motion to add COD rules restricting the use of video evidence. Due to time limitations, those present agreed to postpone the conversation to the November faculty meeting.

That left time for Shor to present the Institute's latest position on security camera policy. After consulting with students, faculty, administrative staff, the MIT Corporation, and others in the community, Shor said, "We see that using AI would give rise to more complex issues."

Shor announced a "pause" on the Institute's analysis of AI-enabled surveillance at the meeting, which has now been extended indefinitely. But he also defended MIT's existing network of cameras.

He stressed that many in the community feel safer with more comprehensive surveillance coverage, and pointed out that cameras are an important tool for MIT police, which used surveillance footage in 240 of the 543 investigations they conducted in the last year. Shor also said that the rewording of IS&T policy was meant to transparently reflect current practice. The COD rules have contained no provisions banning recordings in disciplinary hearings since at least 2013, although their use is rare. Tamar Schapiro, professor of philosophy and the current COD chair, said at the meeting that there has only been one such case during her tenure.

The day after the meeting, in an email to graduate students, Lu called the pause "a positive step from the MIT administration." But he reiterated concerns about the decision-making process, and the continued relevance of the GSC's joint resolution with the UA.

Gubar was also cautiously optimistic. "I'm very pleased that, as a result of student and faculty push-back, they're at least hitting pause for now," she told *The Tech* soon after the October faculty meeting. "But I'm concerned about the future."