

Xin He, Class of 2009

I hail from the nearby town of Newton, Massachusetts. I suppose I would attribute my interest in science to endless reruns of “The Magic School Bus” and “Bill Nye, the Science Guy.” Perhaps more seriously though, I remember the joy of building simple machines in middle school science class. Meanwhile, I grunted through research reports on seemingly obscure cellular organelles. In high school, however, that switched completely – the kinematics of physics were incomprehensible, while gene mutations in biology became intriguing. I realized my interests lie in biology, not physics.

Through high school, my experiences and conversations with teachers have drawn me more to biology, medicine, and related research. Meanwhile, I have felt pressured to answer questions like, what specific area of biology intrigues me the most? Do I plan on attending medical school? Would I research in academia or industry? Desire to answer these questions compelled me to enroll in this seminar. Similarly, the ability to develop my biological research interests in a stimulating atmosphere like the one at MIT, was what appealed to me about this institution. Partaking in this community has given me countless opportunities to broaden my knowledge of existing research areas, by taking classes like this seminar, and meeting scientists like the ones we did. This is not to say in the least that I have undergone any life-changing revelations and know what I want to do with my life. In fact, just the opposite is the case – I have become more conflicted, because I have realized my interests lie in even more fields of research than I was aware of before. But perhaps opening my eyes to what is out there is precisely what I should take away from this course.

Aside from their intriguing scientific research, our speakers’ personal career stories were insightful and inspiring as well. As a whole, their journeys certainly cannot be drawn with perfectly straight lines. Then mine need not either; I do not need to know precisely what I want to do for the rest of my life right now. Perhaps, as Dr. Fenske encourages, I should simply take every opportunity and turn in my life as they come. Perhaps if I just work hard, fortune will smile on me, as Dr. Kwong believes. And perhaps, in the end, I will be able to do what all our speakers have advised us to do: find and follow my bliss.