What was your first visit to MIT like? (Or, if you haven't visited: what's your favorite event, program, or place at your current school?)

Waking up at 4:00AM1 to visit a school i hate.

It was 4:00AM, my typical summer bedtime2. And instead of going to sleep, an alarm was blaring besides my bed3. To drive down to do a college tour, against my will. At a school I despised. That I would end up committing too less than a year later. That school, of course, was MIT.

But first, we need to back up to my prestige-college hating villain origin story. I have lived on one street my entire life: Princeton Road. For some reason, the housing developers in my cursed portion of suburbia decided it would be a fun idea to name all the streets after famous universities. Like, I still primarily associate Cornell as the road that turns into my subdivision, not the Ivy League School in New York. The developers totally passed up on an opportunity to come up with anything [more](https://www.google.com/maps/place/Baggins+Ct,+San+Jose,+CA+95121/@37.2986921,-121.8197086,578m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m6!3m5!1s0x808e327c6fd3272b:0x7b0f3ea7d4947135!8m2!3d37.2988302!4d-121.8182544!16s%2Fg%2F1v1slg37?entry=ttu) [creative](https://www.google.com/maps/place/5611+My+Way,+Kingwood+Area,+TX+77339/@30.0838427,-95.1975877,17z/data=!4m15!1m8!3m7!1s0x864752e5e6e5d5bb:0xe397772363ffdf7c!2sN+Kingwood+Forest+Dr,+Houston,+TX+77339!3b1!8m2!3d30.0858944!4d-95.1941598!16s%2Fg%2F1tjhy19x!3m5!1s0x864752e620a763bf:0x65842db3f5f0573b!8m2!3d30.0836359!4d-95.1953729!16s%2Fg%2F11c11qwtw6?entry=ttu).

That being said, this meant I learned about the world of college at a probably young age4. And I didn’t like it that much – the fact that an institution can become so engrained in our culture that it has movies, books, subdivisions, etc. named and based around them rubbed me the wrong way. As I grew up further, the obsession surrounding these schools for others only increased. Friends would wear Harvard and Stanford shirts to my Elementary school’s college spirit wear day6. I would not participate. Everyone seemed to put so much emphasis on why the name of a fancy school mattered, and I failed to grasp why that name was so important to be held in high regard (and, in many respects, I still do)

I would also be remiss to not comment on my parents’ role in fostering this distaste for so-called elite institutions. While many of my friends I’ve made since comMITting have shared that they felt parental pressure to get into one of these schools, in my case it was the exact opposite – I had to actively convince my dad into letting me apply. Not that he didn’t think I could get in, but that he did not believe MIT was a good fit for me. Nor did I – I have gone on record countless times that it was only after Campus Preview Weekend (CPW), that I fell in love with the school. But, with that being said, let’s get back to that fateful morning at 4am.

I was partaking in the FIRST Robotics Dean’s List Summit in New Hampshire, for the 10 Dean’s List Award winners each year from FIRST Tech Challenge, and the FIRST Robotics Competition. MIT has a strong connection with the [FIRST program](https://mitadmissions.org/blogs/entry/a-brief-history-of-2-007-the-course-that-inspired-first-robotics/#:~:text=What%20I%20didn't%20know,in%20mechanical%20engineering%20at%20MIT.) (8 of the 20 overall Dean’s List Winners are now part of the MIT class of ’28), and so in typical MIT fashion, had us all drive down to get to learn more about the school.

Needless to say, I wasn’t the most enthusiastic to be waking up at my bedtime to visit a school, I was ***absolutely certain***7 I would never apply to. This is the point in the blog where I could say the cliché “nonetheless I went in with an open mind and magically fell in love with MIT”. Unfortunately for narrative structure, 4:00AM in the morning is too early (or late, typically) for me to have an open mind. I expected that I would be bored out of my mind, while everyone else oohed and awed at a school I had no plans to attend.

Fortunately for my future college endeavors, the tour guide let me know that MIT had cats in its dorms. This changed everything8. There was also a neat hawk in Killian Court that I took photo of.

A bird on a pole

Description automatically generated

Overall, the tour seemed like a pretty average college tour. MIT has clubs. MIT has dorms. And in fact, as I was told, I would even learn some things should I choose to attend MIT.

There was one thing that the (extended) MIT tour showed me – the abundance of opportunities it offers. Between UROPs, 45 makerspaces, and hundreds of interesting classes, and should I attend, I would never run out of things to do. I was shown the passion of the educators when I finally properly learned how to solder an [Aurora Beaveralis](https://edgerton.mit.edu/beaveralis). I was shown collaborative education in Metropolis where we laser cut coasters. These experiences showed me that MIT wasn’t the stuck-up prestigious school that only cared about it’s name. I was shown a community of passionate learners, all with unique talents who could improve the world with their knowledge.

While the visit opened me up to the possibility of applying to MIT, my warming up to the school took more time. It happened through reading the countless blogs, watching the i3 videos (especially of East Campus), at which point, I realized MIT was a place where I would fit in. Not because of its prestige, but because of its community. This was fully solidified later during Campus Preview Weekend (for a future blog!) when I was sure that MIT was the school for me. Not because of its reputation, but for it’s passion towards learning, and it’s close knit community. And because it gave me more financial aid than my alternatives :).

As much as I am now grateful for that visit that convinced me to apply to MIT, I know I would have ended up okay either. Prestige still isn’t why I choose to go to this school. In fact it is what I like least about it. To those searching for colleges, find the one that fits your vibe. The fancy piece of paper you get at the end is nice, but only if along the way you grow and change, in the school that’s right for you. For me, that school happened to be MIT (maybe).