Did COVID vaccine mandates slow the spread of COVID on college campuses? A new study says yes. AI-generated articles are already spreading dubious claims about pesticides. How do we stop this troubling development before it distorts the public’s already tenuous understanding of agriculture? A growing chorus of activist groups and reporters claims that biotech crops and pesticides can’t help developing countries feed their hungry populations. Let’s take a critical look at the latest version of this spurious argument.

**Podcast:**

**Video:**

Join hosts Dr. Liza Dunn and GLP contributor Cameron English on episode 237 of Science Facts and Fallacies as they break down these latest news stories:

- **Did COVID vaccine mandates reduce infection rates among college students?**

Mandating COVID shots on college campuses helped reduce the spread of SARS-CoV-2, according to a recent study conducted by researchers at Ohio State University. “Once the requirements were in place, we saw on average a 100% decrease in virus in saliva and up to 12,000% increase in antibody levels to block its spread,” the paper’s lead author said in a press release. While the research confirmed that vaccination did indeed slow the spread of COVID at certain points in the pandemic, it also showed that omicron continued to spread across campuses after mandates were in place. How do we make sense of the study’s results?

- **Viewpoint: ‘Garbage in, garbage out’ — How AI is already skewing news coverage of complicated science issues like the safety of glyphosate**

An AI-generated story recently claimed that “the agriculture department” had banned glyphosate after evidence emerged that the weedkiller causes cancer. The truth was much more nuanced. The regulation applied to all pesticides, but only in a single region of northeast India, and it had nothing to do with glyphosate or cancer. It’s a helpful illustration of how easily unscientific claims can emerge and circulate online.

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Viewpoint: Anti-biotech activists claim Gates Foundation-supported plan to embrace crop biotechnology and modernize African agriculture is failing

Jacobin Magazine recently published a terribly misleading story about a nonprofit project designed to give farmers in developing countries access to biotech seeds and other modern agricultural tools. Efforts to promote these technologies are not philanthropic, Jacobin alleged, because they stimulate “systematic dependencies,” where smallholder farmers come to rely on costly seeds, fertilizers and pesticides they can’t afford over the long term. The article was full of critical scientific errors, omissions and other mistakes that undermined its thesis.

Dr. Liza Dunn is a medical toxicologist and the medical affairs lead at Bayer Crop Science. Follow her on X @DrLizaMD

Cameron J. English is the director of bio-sciences at the American Council on Science and Health. Visit his website and follow him on X @camjenglish