

Albany State Honors Student Nia Blunt Selected for Prestigious MIT Summer Research Program

Albany State University Senior Nia Blunt, A Forensic Science Major And Velma Fudge Grant Honors Program Scholar, Was Selected For MIT Summer Research Program.

ALBANY, GA, UNITED STATES, August 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Albany State University](#) (ASU) senior Nia Blunt, a Forensic Science major and [Velma Fudge Grant Honors Program](#) scholar, was selected for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Summer Research Program (MSRP), one of the nation's premier undergraduate research opportunities. The Irmo, South Carolina, native spent the summer conducting biomedical research at MIT's Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research, gaining hands-on experience in cancer research and immunotherapy.

Blunt worked in MIT's Biological Engineering Department, where she conducted research focused on "Harnessing Targeted Immunoepitidomics to Expand Treatment-Induced Antigen Detection in NRAS-Mutant Melanoma." Using a dual mass spectrometer workflow, Blunt worked to identify treatment-induced antigens in NRAS-mutant melanoma that could potentially serve as candidates for T-cell-



Nia Blunt



ASU C.W. Grant Student Union

directed immunotherapy.

Her research identified 95 treatment-induced peptides that were not detected through the standard workflow, with several showing potential as previously uncharacterized antigens. The experience gave Blunt the opportunity to apply advanced research techniques while working alongside members of the MIT research community.

For Blunt, however, the experience was about more than the research itself. It was an opportunity to grow as a scientist, expand her professional network, and gain confidence in her ability to contribute to a highly competitive research environment.



“One of my biggest takeaways from the program was to always ask questions and not be afraid to speak up when I don’t understand something. Being at MIT initially felt intimidating because I was surrounded by people who were so intelligent, but over time I realized that I am too, and I am here for a reason.”

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That realization represents an important part of Blunt’s journey at Albany State, where she has built an impressive record of academic achievement, leadership, research, and service. She is the 2026 Highest Ranking Senior and was also recognized as a Highest Ranking Student in 2025 and

2026. Her honors include the Strada Scholar Award, Dean’s Award, Devcon Scholar recognition, and Honors Program Scholar distinction.

Blunt is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, the Velma Fudge Grant Honors Program, and Women in Pre-Med. She has also contributed to the community through Feed the Valley, campus cleanup initiatives, and blood drives. In Spring 2025, she presented research at Albany State’s 13th Annual Undergraduate Research Symposium.

Blunt’s experience at MIT builds on research she began at ASU under the mentorship of Dr. Seong Seo in the Department of Natural Sciences’ chemistry program. During a semester-long

research project, she investigated the electrochemical behavior and reversibility of sodium permanganate (NaMnO_4) as a potential magnesium-based alternative to vanadium materials used in redox flow batteries for large-scale energy storage. As part of the project, Blunt prepared experimental solutions, conducted cyclic voltammetry experiments, analyzed electrochemical data, and evaluated the potential of novel materials for sustainable energy technologies.

The experience strengthened Blunt's technical research skills and helped shape her interest in interdisciplinary scientific research. It also provided an important foundation for her work at MIT, where she applied her growing research skills to a different area of study, cancer biology and immunotherapy. Through these experiences, Blunt has continued to explore how scientific discovery can address complex challenges and improve quality of life.

Blunt's success also reflects the opportunities available through ASU's Velma Fudge Grant Honors Program, which provides academically talented students with transformative experiences in undergraduate research, internships, leadership development, community engagement, and professional preparation.

The program encourages students to pursue experiences that extend learning beyond the classroom and prepare them for competitive graduate and professional opportunities. Blunt's participation in faculty-mentored research, the Undergraduate Research Symposium, and the MIT Summer Research Program reflects the program's emphasis on experiential learning and scholarly achievement.

"Nia's accomplishments reflect the kind of scholar Albany State is committed to developing. Her ability to excel academically, engage in meaningful research, and represent Albany State in a highly competitive national research environment demonstrates both her individual determination and the strength of the opportunities available to our students."

- Dr. Florence Lyons, Director of the Velma Fudge Grant Honors Program, Albany State University

Blunt credits her ASU professors and academic experiences with helping her develop the confidence and professional skills necessary to make the most of her MIT opportunity.

"Albany State prepared me for this experience through my professors and the programs I have been involved in. They taught me how to conduct myself professionally, network, communicate with others, and present myself confidently. ASU has also given me opportunities to step outside of my comfort zone, which has helped me become more confident in who I am as a student and as a future professional."

- Nia Blunt, Forensic Science Major, Albany State University

Blunt plans to pursue a medical degree and become a physician, combining clinical medicine with biomedical research. Her long-term goal is to contribute to research that improves health outcomes, particularly for underserved communities.

As Blunt prepares for her final year at ASU, her experience at MIT has given her more than another accomplishment for her resume. It has strengthened her confidence, expanded her research experience, and reinforced her belief that she has a place among the nation's leading scientists and researchers.

"ASU has put me in rooms and situations where I have been able to practice my professional skills and become more comfortable communicating with different people. Through my classes, professors, internships, research opportunities, and involvement on campus, I have learned to work with others, present myself professionally, and advocate for myself."

- Nia Blunt, Forensic Science Major, Albany State University

Blunt's journey demonstrates the impact of combining rigorous academics, faculty mentorship, undergraduate research, and experiential learning to prepare students for opportunities beyond the university. Her progression from conducting research at Albany State to contributing to cancer research at MIT represents not only an individual achievement, but also the possibilities that emerge when students are given the opportunity, support, and confidence to pursue them.

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