

MIT Biology

# Undergraduate Celebration 2025

Honoring  
Graduating Seniors &  
Award Recipients

May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025





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# Graduating Seniors by Course

## Course 7

Abdalla, Amina  
Carretero Chavez,  
Willow  
Chen, Eric  
Gray, Ryan  
Gupta, Akshay  
Haug, Sofia  
Huang, Jonathan  
Koe, Ian  
Krusell, Alexander  
Lee, Katelyn  
Liu, Winona  
Liu, Zixuan  
Metcalf, Liza  
Mikulevica, Anna  
Nair, Jyotsna  
Oladipo, Morayo  
Oteng-Bediako,  
Kate  
Park, Edward  
Purvis, Michaela  
Tapia, Benicio  
Whyte, Rachel  
Workeneh, Isias  
Wu, April  
Wu, Michelle  
Yang, Grace

## Course 5-7

Anderson, Jaden  
Ball, Em Kae  
Boykin, Alexis  
Galiana, Sofia  
Gul, Sebnem  
Lian, Josh  
Longe, Effaima  
Romero Cruz,  
Denisse  
Wang, Leon  
Zhou, Qiyang

## Course 6-7

Balogun, Ishaq  
Barnouw, Natalie  
Cazares Torres, Jose  
Angel  
Clark, Keanu  
Greer, Alexander  
Hernandez, Maria  
Hir, Vivian  
Ho, Wilson  
Kuze, Nanako Mary  
Kwabi-Addo, David  
Lafontant-Joseph,  
Olivier  
Laiba, Rudiba  
Lee, Emma  
Lee, Olivia  
Liu, Jessie  
Lu, Kate  
Ma, Larissa  
Mariangel, Gabriela  
Erin  
Nguyen, Franklin  
Ozkan, Lara  
Schueppert, Amelia  
Shyamal, Ananth  
Sun, Esme  
Suufi, Mohamed  
Volkova, Alexandra  
Yinka-Banjo, Victory  
Zou, Alvin

# Award Recipients 2024–2025

## Biology Undergraduate Awards

### John L. Asinari Award

For outstanding research in the field of life sciences.

**Amina Abdalla, '25**

Course 7

### Gene Brown Prize

For outstanding academic scholarship and demonstrated excellence as a teaching assistant.

**Danny Yang, '26**

Course 7

### Susan Hockfield Prize in Life Sciences

For a third-year MIT undergraduate student in any area of the life sciences who has demonstrated both exceptional performance and promise for graduate study and research.

**Larissa Ma, '26**

Course 6-7

### Ned Holt Prize

For demonstrated excellence in scholarship as well as service to the Biology Department and the MIT community.

**Sofia Galiana, '25**

Course 5-7

**Anna Mikulevica, '25**

Course 7

### Salvador E. Luria Prize

For outstanding scholarship and research of publication quality.

**Kate Lu, '25**

Course 6-7

### Merck Prize

For outstanding research and academic performance in biophysical or bioinformatics sciences.

**Nikitha Thoduguli, '27**

Course 6-7

### Whitehead Prize

For demonstrating outstanding promise for a career in biological research through academic scholarship as well as contributions to research and the MIT community.

**Isaac Lock, '25**

Course 20

## Additional Award:

### Barry Goldwater Scholarship & Excellence Award

**Alex Tang '26**

Course 5-7



# Award Recipients 2024–2025

## Course 5 Undergraduate Awards

### Research Award

For outstanding contributions in the area of research.

**Alexis Boykin '25**

Course 5-7

**Sebnem Gul '25**

Course 5-7

### Academic Achievement Award

For outstanding scholarship.

**Sebnem Gul '25**

Course 5-7

**Denisse Romero Cruz '25**

Course 5-7

**Leon Wang '25**

Course 5-7

**Qiyang Zhou '25**

Course 5-7

### Alpha Chi Sigma

For outstanding achievement in scholarship, research and service to the department.

**Josh Lian '25**

Course 5-7

### ACS Inorganic Chemistry Award

For excellence in Inorganic Chemistry.

**Josh Lian '25**

Course 5-7

### ACS Organic Chemistry Award

For excellence in Organic Chemistry.

**Leon Wang '25**

Course 5-7

### Service Award

For significant contributions in the area of service to the chemistry department.

**Jaden Anderson '25**

Course 5-7

**Effaima Longe '25**

Course 5-7

## Award Recipients 2024–2025

### Biology students nominated for Phi Beta Kappa 2025

**Sebnem Gul '25**

Course 5-7

**Jonathan Huang '25**

Course 7

**Josh Lian '25**

Course 5-7

**Winona Liu '25**

Course 7

**Zixuan Liu '25**

Course 7

**Anna Mikulevica '25**

Course 7

**Jyotsna Nair '25**

Course 7

**Leon Wang '25**

Course 5-7

**Rachel Whyte '25**

Course 7

**Isias Workeneh '25**

Course 7

**Michelle Wu '25**

Course 7

**Grace Yang '25**

Course 7

**Qiyang Zhou '25**

Course 5-7

## Special Recognition

### Biology Undergraduate Research Symposium 2025 Participants

**Nupur Ballal**

**Sophia Cai**

**Jose Angel Cazares Torres**

**Sofia Galiana**

**Isaac Lock**

**Larissa Ma**

**Lara Ozkan**

**Michaela Purvis**

**Diya Ramesh**

**Esme Sun**

**Andrew Van Dusen**

**Victory Yinka-Banjo**

# Special Thanks

## Tutors 2024–2025

Amina Abdalla

Mahmoud Abdelmoneum

Emily Bautista

Bereket Birbo

Alexis Boykin

Kareena Caton

Minyi Chen

Hailey Harden

Chloe Hyun

Callie Karjane

Anna Kim

Katelyn Lee

Annie Lin

Jessie Liu

Rachel Nguyen

Morayo Oladipo

Anisha Parsan

Kannammai Pichappan

Leah Prizant

Diya Ramesh

Denisse Romero Cruz

Ananth Shyamal

Tiffany Stephens

Ayantu Tamene

Alex Tang

Zuri Vallery

Ria Verma

Jason Christopher Wang

Isias Workeneh

Naomi Zecharias

Clarence Zheng

Megan Zhu

Alvin Zou

## BEXEC 2024–2025

Sophia Cai

Iris Pang

Alex Tang

Michael Turmilov

## Department of Biology

Head of Department:

Amy Keating

Undergrad Officers:

Laurie Boyer

Adam Martin

Biology Education Office

Janice Chang

Joshua Stone



# Student Biographies



**Amina Abdalla** – Course 7

Amina Abdalla is from Austin, Texas. She majored in Biological Engineering and Biology, where she discovered a passion for microbiology, immunology, and infectious diseases research. Her senior thesis project in the Lemieux Lab at Mass General Hospital involved proteomic profiling of Lyme disease diagnostic specimens. Outside of coursework and research, Amina was a tutor through the MIT ESOL volunteering program and the Biology department. She was also involved in the Minority Association of Pre-Medical Students, National Society of Black Engineers, and the Black Women's Alliance. After graduation, Amina will attend medical school with plans to pursue a career as a physician-scientist.



**Jaden Anderson** – Course 5-7

Jaden Anderson was born in Alpharetta, Georgia and spent his time at MIT as a Chemistry and Biology major. Through this, he has become very passionate about research into various aspects of Biochemistry. He UROPed in the Nolan Lab, studying the uptake of ferric siderophores through their membrane receptors. Outside of lab and classes, Jaden has enjoyed being a part of various living communities within MIT, including Fenway House and 41W(EC). He has also enjoyed getting to study and do research internationally through programs like MISTI-Brasil and the MIT-Imperial Exchange, making lifelong memories in the process. After graduation, Jaden will pursue a PhD in Biochemistry at Georgia Tech.



**Em Kae Ball** – Course 5-7

Em is originally from Des Moines, Iowa. In addition to their Chemistry and Biology major, they completed a music minor at MIT, finding a love for songwriting and arranging for their a capella group, the MIT Centrifuges. Most of Em's time outside of academics was spent competing for MIT's Track and Field team, throwing discus, shot put, javelin, and hammer/weight throw. As of Indoor 2025, they are a three-time NCAA DIII All-American in the discus throw and shot put, contributing to a women's team National Champion title in Indoor 2025. Em is also a two-time NEWMAC conference women's Field Athlete of the Year. Em loves to rollerblade around campus and fire spin dragon staff in MIT Spinning Arts club. After MIT, Em plans to attend medical school and become a physician.



**Ishaq Balogun** – Course 6-7

Ishaq Balogun hails from Charlottesville, Virginia. At MIT, he majored in Biology and Computer Science with a minor in Music, focusing on Jazz, West African music, and music technology. A highlight of his academic journey was conducting independent research through the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) in Professor Tami Lieberman's lab, where he developed a novel computational method for large-scale microbial genome-wide association studies. Outside the classroom and lab, Ishaq enjoyed hosting a campus radio show, biking, and snowboarding. This summer, he plans to bike across the country with MIT Spokes, bringing hands-on STEM education to young people in underserved communities. Looking ahead, Ishaq is excited to pursue graduate school and continue his research in bioinformatics.

# Student Biographies

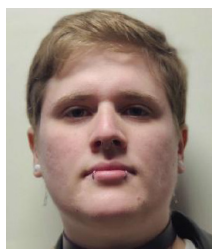


**Natalie Barnouw**—Course 6-7

Natalie Barnouw is from Los Angeles, California. Natalie studied Computational Biology and minored in Neuroscience. In her time at MIT, Natalie did research with a professor at UCSF (Dr. Caffarelli), analyzing EEG data to determine if patients were at risk of having a stroke. She is currently doing research using machine learning methods to analyze delirium outcomes in ICU patients. Outside of research, Natalie was a four-year starter for the varsity Women's Soccer team, captaining the team her senior year. She helped found the MIT Kidney Disease Screening and Prevention (KDSAP) club at MIT, volunteered at Boston Children's Hospital, and spent time crocheting. She was a volunteer tutor for MIT ESOL and was also involved in the Undergraduate Association where she worked on food security issues around campus. Natalie will be doing her MEng at MIT in Computational Biology while she applies to medical school!



**Alexis Boykin**  
Course 5-7



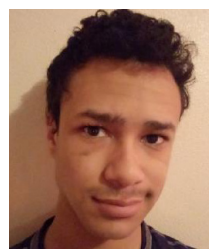
**Willow Carretero Chavez**  
Course 7



**Jose Angel Cazares Torres**  
Course 6-7



**Eric Chen**  
Course 7



**Keanu Clark**  
Course 6-7



**Sofia Galiana** – Course 5-7

Sofia is originally from Miami, Florida. At some point she thought she wanted to major in finance, but she came to her senses. Sofia majored in chemistry and biology and minored in theatre arts. The highlight of Sofia's time in the biology department has been her UROP in the Case Lab studying the phase separation of talin. She is grateful to all of her biochemistry and chemical biology classes for instilling her with a love of protein biochemistry, something she hopes to continue studying after graduation. She also hopes to attend medical school. Outside of her major, Sofia has enjoyed participating in various theatre groups and loved being an actor, producer, and writer through Next Act and the theatre department. She is excited to continue pursuing research and exploring biology after graduation.

# Student Biographies



**Ryan Gray**  
Course 7



**Alexander Greer**  
Course 6-7



**Sebnem Gul** – Course 5-7

Sebnem grew up in Ankara, Turkey. At MIT, she majored in B.S. Chemistry and Biology with a minor in Computer Science. She began research in Dr. Daniel Anderson's lab where she worked to develop modified RNAs for improved delivery to cells and prolonged stabilization against RNases. Later, she discovered her interest in cancer immunotherapy research and joined Dr. Stefani Spranger's lab where she studied immune responses to therapeutic vaccination against lung cancer. She served as an exec member at MIT Laureates & Leaders social committee and MIT Turkish Student Association. Outside of lab, she enjoys hanging out with her friends, looking at art, and exploring Boston. After graduation, she is off to California to pursue a PhD in Immunology at Stanford University. Sebnem would like to thank her amazing mentors, friends and family for their continued support throughout her journey at MIT.



**Akshay Gupta**  
Course 7



**Sofia Haug**  
Course 7



**Maria Hernandez** – Course 6-7

Maria Hernandez is originally from Caracas, Venezuela and grew up in Katy, Texas. At MIT, she majored in Computer Science and Molecular Biology and concentrated in French. She researched in the Griffith Lab at the MIT Center for Gynecopathology Research, under the mentorship of Ellen Kan, where she contributed to the development of 3D cell culture platforms for patient-derived models of endometriosis. Her passion in women's health also led her to lead a MIT Engineers Without Borders team on a project to renovate a healthcare facility that serves around 5,000 community members in Mkutani, Tanzania so women can have a safe, comfortable space to give birth. Maria was also involved in MIT Hacking Medicine and the Latino Cultural Center through MAES and SHPE. After graduation, Maria will be heading to NYC to pursue a MD at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

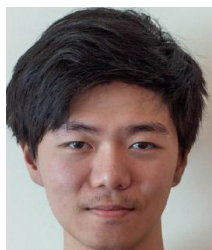


# Student Biographies



**Vivian Hir**  
Course 6-7

Vivian is from Danville, California. At MIT, she majored in Computer Science and Biology, with minors in Chemistry and Asian Studies. She is doing a SuperUROP in the Uhler Group at the Broad Institute to study the spatial organization of tumors using computational pathology tools. Last summer, she interned at Amgen under the Transforming Digital Capabilities team. Outside of academics, Vivian was an admin in the MIT Educational Studies Program (ESP) and editor for The Tech. Her global experiences include teaching science in GTL Italy and Germany, as well as conducting biology research in Taipei as part of MISTI Taiwan. After graduation, Vivian will be a summer intern at Merck under the Data Rich Experimentation department and then MEng in the next academic year. She plans to apply to graduate school in the fall.



**Wilson Ho**  
Course 6-7



**Jonathan Huang**  
Course 7



**Ian Koe**  
Course 7



**Alexander Krusell**  
Course 7



**Nanako Mary Kuze**  
Course 6-7

Nanako Kuze, a Cambridge native, studies Biology and Computer Science at MIT. She has conducted research at the Whitehead Institute's Hrvatin Lab, the Max Planck Institute in Berlin, and NASA Headquarters. Currently, she works with brain organoids in simulated microgravity in the Petersen Lab at MIT. Beyond research, Nanako served as the director of Camp Kesem at MIT, a program providing free summer camp and year-round support for children of cancer patients. She also supports students in black-and-white film photography as LIST's darkroom monitor. After graduation, she hopes to continue her work in space biology research through an MEng.

# Student Biographies



**David Kwabi-Addo**

Course 6-7

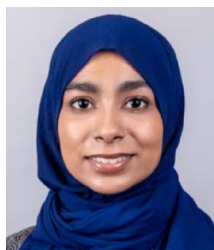
David Kwabi-Addo, originally from Woodbridge, Virginia, grew up with his two brothers and parents. At MIT, he combines Molecular Biology and Computer Science, and has acquired experience in data management and machine learning through roles at Google, Howard University, Harvard Medical School, and the Barzilay Lab at CSAIL. Committed to education, he mentors students through organizations like the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) and has led a high school tutoring clinic with the MIT Jameel Clinic, focusing on AI in Healthcare. As a leader in MIT's Eta Kappa Nu (HKN) Honor Society and the Undergraduate Association, he works to strengthen academic excellence and student-faculty connections. His research explores machine learning for protein ensemble generation, and he plans to pursue an MEng in Computational

Biology at MIT after graduation. Outside academics, he enjoys reading, running, playing card games, and discussing theology.



**Olivier Lafontant-Joseph**

Course 6-7



**Rudiba Laiba**

Course 6-7



**Emma Lee**

Course 6-7



**Olivia Lee**

Course 6-7



**Katelyn Lee**

Course 7

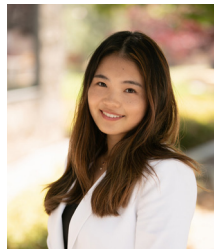
Katelyn Lee is originally from Queens, NYC. At MIT, she majored in biology and minored in Spanish. She conducted lung cancer research at the Koch Institute for 4 years and was co-president of the MIT PreMedical Society. Katelyn was also an associate advisor, part of a sorority, tour guide for the admissions office, and two-time TA for 7.016. She also participated in MISTI and worked in a clinical research lab in Madrid for a summer. After graduating, Katelyn plans to pursue medical school.

# Student Biographies



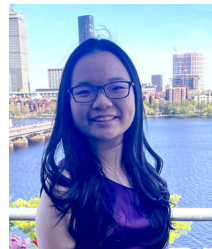
**Josh Lian**  
Course 5-7

Josh Lian is from Miami, Florida. At MIT, he majored in Chemistry and Biology (5-7). He found his love for geobiochemistry in a brief stint as a wannabe Course 12 double major and followed his passions to the Suess research group. There, he worked on nitrogenase proteins and their cofactors. In summer 2024, he interned in the Roessler research group at Imperial College London, where he investigated biological electron transport. Josh also minored in Asian and Asian Diaspora Studies, where he has learned about classic Chinese novels as well as Asian American and Chinese theatre. In his free time, Josh likes to cook, try new foods, and sing karaoke. After graduation, he will be pursuing a Ph.D. in chemistry at Princeton University.



**Jessie Liu**  
Course 6-7

Jessie Liu is from Westborough, Massachusetts. At MIT, she majored in Computer Science and Molecular Biology (6-7) and was an undergraduate researcher in the Bhatia Lab. Outside of lab, she was a TA for 7.05–Biochemistry and taught chemistry in Regensburg, Germany to high school students as part of MISTI GTL. On campus, she worked as an MIT Admissions tour guide, was part of the MIT Biotech Group and MIT Figure Skating Club, and served as VP of Recruitment in her sorority. Outside of academics, Jessie worked part-time as a product manager for Illumina and volunteered in the HOPE Clinic at Massachusetts General Hospital. After graduation, she plans to complete her MEng and pursue a career in medicine.



**Winona Liu**  
Course 7

Winona Liu is from Brooklyn, New York, and she is graduating from MIT with a degree in biology. Outside of class, she did a UROP in the Choudhary Lab at the Broad Institute. She studied the use of CRISPR to treat Type 1 diabetes and explored ways to improve CRISPR through directed evolution. While at MIT, she pursued her passion for education. She taught chemistry in Germany as part of MISTI Global Teaching Labs and mentored young girls in MIT SHINE. She greatly enjoys contemporary dance and trying new dance styles in her free time. One of the highlights of her MIT career was choreographing for the first time as part of MIT Dance Troupe. After graduation, she will work as a pediatric ophthalmic technician in New York while applying to medical school. She would like to thank her family, friends, and mentors for their guidance during her time at MIT!



**Zixuan Liu**  
Course 7

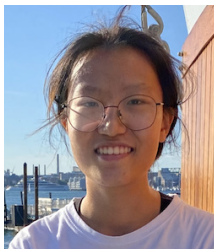
Zixuan, Zi, Liu is from Brooklyn, New York. At MIT, she majored in Biology and Biological Engineering while also pursuing a minor in Chinese. During her time here, she worked with the Lees Lab, the Traverso Lab, and the DeKosky Lab, engaging in research spanning epigenetics to immunoengineering. A highlight of her MIT experience was going on MISTI activities, from internships to GTL, where she traveled to pursue the life sciences. Outside of classes, she was involved with the Biotech Group, NEET Living Machines, and the Lion Dance Team. She also enjoys going on walks and discovering new foods. After graduation, Zi will be pursuing her PhD in Bioengineering at Stanford.



# Student Biographies



**Effaima Longe**  
Course 5-7



**Kate Lu**  
Course 6-7



**Larissa Ma**  
Course 6-7



**Gabriela Erin Mariangel**  
Course 6-7

Gabriela Erin Mariangel is originally from Indonesia. At MIT, she studied Computer Science and Molecular Biology (6-7). As an undergraduate researcher in the Laub Lab, Erin spent three years studying how *E. coli* defends itself against jumbophages and RNA phages. Throughout college, she was deeply involved in the arts—singing in church and a cappella groups, playing violin in VGO, dancing in ADT, and painting murals for Next Haunt. She also developed a passion for cancer biology research through her internship at Orum Therapeutics in Korea via MISTI. When she wasn't in the lab, in rehearsals, or taking a nap in Banana Lounge, she loved traveling, exploring new restaurants, watching movies, and rotting while reading random books at Trident. After graduation, Erin will be pursuing an MEng in the DeKosky Lab to further explore immunology and bioinformatics.



**Anna Mikulevica**  
Course 7

Anna Mikulevica was born and raised in Riga, Latvia. She started at MIT as a Math major but had a great interest in Genetics. After exploring this area through different biology courses and a research internship in Knut Drescher's lab at Biozentrum in University of Basel, she decided to also pursue a major in Biology. A highlight of Anna's scientific journey at MIT was the opportunity to conduct research with different faculty. During her time at MIT, Anna worked in Jorn Dunkel's group studying the application of wavelet transform to image segmentation, in Sergey Ovchinnikov's lab investigating the application of genomic language models (gLMs) to the assembly of metagenome-assembled genomes (MAG), and in David Page's lab exploring the impact of the number of inactive X chromosomes on gene expression in mice. Outside of

her academic work, Anna served as a squad leader on the MIT Fencing Team and as a TA in ESG (Experimental Study Group). After graduation, Anna will be pursuing a PhD in Computational Biology and Bioinformatics at Yale.



**Liza Metcalf**  
Course 7

# Student Biographies



**Jyotsna Nair**  
Course 7

Jyotsna Nair spent her childhood in New Jersey, the UK, and south India. She is graduating with a double major in Biology and Writing. Studying biology helped Jyotsna discover her interest in infectious disease, which she explored at MIT by conducting research on Lyme disease and Long COVID at the Tal Research Group. Jyotsna has enjoyed being part of *The Tech* and served as co-president of her undergrad dorm, McCormick Hall. She loves visiting the many coffee shops in Boston and hopes they'll still be here when she returns. After graduation, Jyotsna intends to attend medical school.



**Franklin Nguyen**  
Course 6-7

Franklin Nguyen was born and raised in Decatur, Alabama, the son of two Vietnamese immigrants. A first-generation, low-income student, Franklin studied Computer Science and Molecular Biology at MIT, with a concentration in Spanish. Without any prior coding background, he quickly discovered a passion for programming and went on to serve as a Lab Assistant for introductory computer science courses for three semesters. Some highlights from his time at MIT include participating in humanities-focused dinner seminars as a Burchard Scholar, working abroad in Copenhagen, studying for a month in Madrid, and speaking at major events for MIT Orientation, MIT Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, MIT Career Advising and Professional Development, and MIT International Science and

Technology Initiatives. Driven by a deep interest in human and environmental health, Franklin spent his senior year as an MCSC Climate and Sustainability Scholar, improving an urban flood monitoring and response system in Bangkok, Thailand through his work at the MIT Urban Risk Lab. After graduation, he will remain in Boston to work at Medtronic Surgical Robotics as a GUI Software Engineer.



**Morayo Oladipo**  
Course 7

Morayo Oladipo is from Chicago, Illinois. She is a double major in Chemical-Biological Engineering (10B) and Biology (7) with a concentration in Science, Technology, and Society (STS). Her most recent research experience was in Martha Gray's lab, investigating the correlation between social determinants of health and Type 2 diabetes. Outside of classes, she is a volunteer EMT for MIT EMS, a tutor for both biology and chemical engineering classes, and was the co-chair for MIT's Black Women's Alliance. After graduation, she plans to continue research, with hopes of ultimately becoming a physician.

# Student Biographies



**Kate Oteng-Bediako**  
Course 7

Lara Ozkan is from Bergen County, New Jersey, majoring in Computer Science and Molecular Biology (6-7). At MIT, she has been an undergraduate researcher with the MIT Media Lab's Conformable Decoders group, where she has worked on breast cancer wearable ultrasound technologies. Lara was also a SuperUROP in Professor Manolis Kellis' computational biology research group at CSAIL, working on sex-specific differences in Alzheimer's disease. Lara has been a teaching assistant for 7.002 Fundamentals of Experimental Molecular Biology and 18.05 Introduction to Probability and Statistics, and a lab assistant for 6.100A/B. Lara also served as the President of MIT Capital Partners and MIT Sloan Business Club. Additionally, she was involved as a UROP Peer Ambassador and is a member of the MIT EECS Committee on DEI and the Schwarzman College

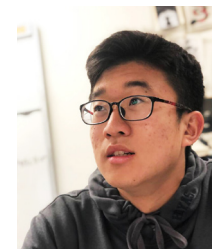


**Lara Ozkan**  
Course 6-7

of Computing Undergraduate Advisory Group. Outside of class, Lara volunteers with MIT Codelt and is a counselor with Camp Kesem. After graduation, Lara plans to attend the University of Cambridge as a Marshall Scholar to pursue an MPhil in Biological Science and an MRes in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning at Imperial College London.



**Michaela Purvis**  
Course 7



**Edward Park**  
Course 7

Born and raised in La Palma, California, Edward Park majored in Biology with a Science, Technology, and Society concentration. Initially drawn to computer science and finance, he studied in CSAIL and interned in quantitative economics via MISTI Korea, where he also had the opportunity to teach recently via the Global Teaching Labs initiative. However, he realized eventually his true passions lay in science and healthcare, leading him to the Ruiz group at Brigham and Women's Hospital. For the past year, he's worked on data analytics for SCC and CLL patients, working to improve risk stratification approaches. Outside of academics, Edward was deeply involved with MIT EMS, serving as Class Officer, Training Officer, and Chief. Post-graduation, he will continue research while applying to MD programs. He expresses gratitude to his friends, family, and mentors for their unwavering support!



# Student Biographies



**Denisse Romero Cruz**  
Course 5-7

Denisse Romero Cruz grew up in New York City. At MIT, she majored in Biology and Chemistry and concentrated in French while also exploring her interests in Women's and Gender Studies. Denisse started her research journey as a UROP in Paula Hammond's Lab characterizing lipid nanoparticles with the goal of developing a suitable polyanion layering protocol to generate homogenous lipid nanoparticles with high DNA encapsulation to eventually use there to address sickle-cell anemia. During the summer after her sophomore year, Denisse participated in the Harvard Summer Research Program in Kidney Medicine and transitioned to working on research regarding the intraflagellar transport (IFT), a multi-subunit structure to understand the basis of polycystic kidney disease (PKD) at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. Outside of the classroom, Denisse

has enjoyed being a mentor through her work as a tutor/TA for general and organic chemistry for three years in Concourse as well as her participation as a mentor and now president of SHINE for girls, a mentorship program for young middle school girls. One of the highlights of her time at MIT was the opportunity to travel during IAP: she visited South Africa to learn about HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 through HST.434 and taught chemistry and biology in Spain during her sophomore year. Denisse is incredibly grateful for the support she has received from her family and close friends during this 4-year journey and is beyond excited to be the first in her family to graduate college. Next up, Denisse looks forward to gaining two years of work experience while applying to MD programs!



**Amelia Schueppert**  
Course 6-7

Amelia Schueppert grew up in Houston, TX. At MIT, she majored in Computer Science and Molecular Biology (6-7). She worked as a UROP in the Church Lab at Harvard Medical School under the mentorship of Dr. Felix Radford, designing an orthogonal translational system for incorporating non-standard amino acids. On campus, Amelia competed on the MIT fencing team, sang in her a cappella group, MIT Resonance, and volunteered with Camp Kesem. In her free time, she enjoys reading fantasy books and listening to *Survivor* podcasts. After graduation, Amelia will be pursuing a PhD in Computational Biology.



**Ananth Shyamal**  
Course 6-7

Ananth Shyamal is originally from Coralville, Iowa. At MIT, he majored in Computer Science and Molecular Biology with a minor in Mathematics. As an undergraduate researcher in the Bhatia Lab at the Koch Institute, he developed nanoparticles for cancer drug delivery. He was also actively involved with the MIT Biotech Group and the MIT Undergraduate Research Journal and served as a tutor for the Biology Department. In his free time, Ananth enjoys playing basketball, spending time outdoors, and watching sports. After graduation, he will remain in Boston, working at the intersection of computation and the life sciences in the biotech industry before pursuing medical school.

# Student Biographies



**Esme Sun**  
Course 6-7

Esme Sun is from Falls Church, Virginia and grew up in the suburbs of Washington DC. At MIT, Esme studied Computer Science and Biology, with a concentration in Japanese. As a UROP in the Weissman lab, Esme spent 2 years building a CRISPR-based epigenetic editing tool to investigate the function of the HUSH complex, an important epigenetic repressor complex. Outside of the classroom and the lab, Esme loved to cook and was a member of MINCE, MIT's student-run fine dining culinary club. After graduation, Esme will continue to follow her research passions and pursue a PhD in the Biological and Biomedical Sciences program at Harvard Medical School.



**Mohamed Suufi**  
Course 6-7

Mohamed Suufi is originally from metro Atlanta, Georgia. In conjunction with his degree in Computer Science & Molecular Biology, he minored in Science, Technology, and Society. His research work has primarily focused on addressing healthcare inequities through data science at Boston Children's Hospital and Harvard Medical School. At MIT, Mohamed served as an Admissions Ambassador at MIT Admissions, served on three standing Institute committees, teaching assistant for the 6.100 series, and lead maintainer and developer of MIT OpenGrades via SIPB. When not at MIT, Mohamed primarily worked as an EMT serving towns in the greater Boston area, binge-watched TV shows and movies, and captured the world around him through his camera.



**Benicio Tapia**  
Course 7

Benicio Tapia is originally from Grand Ledge, Michigan. Benicio majored in Biology (7) while also minoring in Spanish (21K), which included studying abroad in Madrid. He worked in the Lourido Lab for 1.5 years through the UROP program, studying the epigenetic regulation of the apicomplexan parasite *Toxoplasma Gondii*. He was also an undergraduate summer fellow in the University of Michigan's Department of Molecular and Integrative Physiology. Aside from this, Benicio enjoyed mentoring through a variety of teaching opportunities both inside and outside of MIT. This included 4 semesters of service as a teaching assistant as well as independent virtual tutoring. Following graduation, Benicio plans to pursue an MD in his home state of Michigan.



**Alexandra Volkova**  
Course 6-7

Alexandra Volkova is originally from Franklin Lakes, New Jersey. Pursuing a lifelong interest in developing medicines, she studied Computer Science and Molecular Biology (6-7) and Finance (15-3). She conducted research in the Langer-Tsai and Coley Labs, contributing to the development of a brain-on-a-chip project, aiming to create a higher-fidelity model of the human brain for high-throughput drug testing, and a software tool (SPARROW), which selects chemical compounds for testing based on cost-reward optimization of multiple properties. Outside of studies and research, Alexandra aspired to connect students with professional experiences and skills, serving as an Industry Relations Officer in the NEET Living Machines thread, Co-President of the MITech Consulting Club, Co-VPF of the MIT Biotech Group, and an LA for 6.C01. As a member

# Student Biographies

of the Schwarzman College of Computing Undergraduate Advisory Board, Alexandra helped develop a course selection software for students based on past students' paths. After graduation, Alexandra hopes to pursue an MEng in Computer Science and Molecular Biology at MIT and spend more time traveling the world with friends and family.



**Leon Wang**  
Course 5-7



**Rachel Whyte**  
Course 7

Rachel Whyte is originally from Oviedo, Florida. She majored in Biology while taking neuroscience classes. Outside of school, she volunteered at multiple hospitals including Massachusetts General Hospital and Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital as well as a clinic in Chinatown named Boston Specialists. Furthermore, Rachel conducted research in the Yilmaz and Choi Labs. In order to practice her Christian faith, she also volunteered at her church's ministry that provides meals to those in need and was involved in planning and leading events for Asian Christian Fellowship. After graduation, Rachel plans to take a gap year before applying to medical school.



**Isias Workeneh**  
Course 7

Isias Workeneh is originally from Houston, Texas. He majored in Biology and Chemical-Biological Engineering while at MIT. During his undergraduate semesters, he performed research in various labs studying immunology and morphology. His most meaningful experience was when he had the chance to conduct a research project at MD Anderson studying artificial vascular grafts. Outside of school, he volunteered at MGH and tutored peers as a physics mentor. He enjoyed playing frisbee, tennis, and video games with his friends, as well as watching horror movies. After graduation, Isias will be attending Baylor College of Medicine for medical school.



**April Wu**  
Course 7

# Student Biographies



**Michelle Wu**  
Course 7

Michelle Wu is originally from Winchester, MA. She majored in Biology at MIT. Highlights from her time at MIT include researching cancer metabolism as a UROP in the Vander Heiden Lab, being a teaching assistant for 7.002 Fundamentals of Experimental Molecular Biology, teaching biology and chemistry in Mexico and Germany as part of MIT Global Teaching Labs, and mentoring middle-school students for DynaMIT, a STEM outreach summer program. Michelle also enjoyed being a MedLink, serving on leadership for MIT Asian Christian Fellowship, teaching English and US History for Chinatown Citizenship, and dancing. Outside of MIT, she was dedicated to caring for young patients as a volunteer in the Division of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology at MGH and as a summer intern at the MGH Lurie Center for Autism.

After graduation, Michelle will work as a clinical assistant in Boston while applying to medical school.



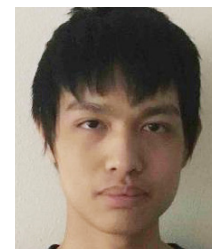
**Grace Yang**  
Course 7



**Victory Yinka-Banjo**  
Course 6-7

Victory Yinka-Banjo was born and raised in Lagos, Nigeria. As a Computer Science & Molecular Biology major, she spent the past four years balancing both fields. Her research experiences in the Weissman Lab at the Whitehead Institute, where she applied molecular biology and engineering to epigenetics, and in the Uhler Lab at the Broad Institute, where she used deep learning to study metabolic diseases, fueled her passion for translational molecular medicine—especially with an eye toward future impact across Africa. Hence, after graduation, she will move to NYC to pursue a PhD in Computational Biology & Medicine at Cornell's School of Medicine through its joint Tri-Institutional program with Rockefeller and MSK. Beyond research, Victory was deeply involved in campus life, serving as President of the MIT African

Students Association and Undergraduate President of the MIT Biotech Group. She also found community in Cru, a Christian group on campus. What she'll miss most about MIT is the spontaneity and exploration of IAP, along with the joy of seeing her friends every day.



**Qiyang Zhou**  
Course 5-7

# Student Biographies



**Alvin Zou**

Course 6-7

Alvin Zou is originally from Queens, New York. During his time at MIT, he double majored in Chemical-Biological Engineering (10-B) and Computer Science and Molecular Biology (6-7). He conducted research at the Koch Institute developing bispecific antibodies in the Wittrup Lab and evaluating molecular glue compounds in the Koehler Lab. Outside of classes, Alvin was involved as an ESL/US citizenship tutor for MIT ITEC, an LSC movie projectionist, and an E33 Lighting Technician (of which helping light DanceTroupe performances each semester holds a special place in his heart)! Furthermore, he enjoys playing trivia with his friends and learning new ancient languages like Latin, Greek, Sumerian, and Middle Egyptian. After graduation, he will be pursuing an MD at Harvard Medical School.









