



# Press Release

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## **Vertical Flight Society Announces 2025 Scholarship Recipients** *\$126,000 in Vertical Flight Foundation Scholarships Awarded to 33 Students*

**Fairfax, Virginia, April 1, 2025** — The Vertical Flight Society is pleased to announce its 2025 Vertical Flight Foundation (VFF) scholarship recipients. Scholarships totaling \$126,000 are being awarded this year to 33 talented engineering students interested in vertical flight.

“Since 1977, our Vertical Flight Foundation Scholarships have helped inspire generations of students to pursue careers in vertical flight, with many now holding leadership positions in industry, academia and government, over 725 scholarships awarded to date,” said VFS Executive Director Angelo Collins. “This year, VFS is able to award a record number of scholarships, and a record total amount of \$126,000, an increase of \$6,000 from last year, thanks to generous donations.”

The following are this year’s awardees, who will be recognized during the Opening General Session and Nikolsky Lectureship on Tuesday, May 20, 2025. The event will be one of the highlights of the Vertical Flight Society’s 81st Annual Forum & Technology Display, taking place May 20–22, 2025, Virginia Beach, Virginia, USA (see [www.vtol.org/forum](http://www.vtol.org/forum)).

### **Bachelor’s Degree Recipients**

- **Sarah Kate Dockery, Mississippi State University:** [Tom Wood Honorary Scholarship](#), which recognizes more than 50 years of technical contributions to Bell Textron by Tom Wood.
- **Molly Dolan, Oklahoma State University:** [Dr. Wei Chong \(Ben\) Sim Memorial Scholarship](#), honoring the US Army acoustics research scientist.
- **Alex Duffy, Pennsylvania State University:** [Friedrich Straub Scholarship](#), honoring the former senior manager of dynamics technology and technical fellow of The Boeing Company.
- **Makayla Galler, Arizona State University:** [Jeff Pino Scholarship](#), named for the retired US Army Master Aviator, former Bell executive, and retired Sikorsky Aircraft CEO.
- **Caden Perry, Georgia Institute of Technology:** [Walter J. Hodgson Scholarship](#), named for the late US Air Force and Hughes Helicopter test pilot.
- **Stephan Schmitz-Justen, University of Twente:** Virasak Family Scholarship, supported by longtime VFS member Jacques Virasak.
- **Emerson Self, University of Oklahoma:** [Bob Lynn Scholarship](#), which honors the memory of the former Bell Helicopter executive and Society’s leader par excellence.
- **Ritwik Shankar, Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur:** [Frank N. Piasecki Scholarship](#), honoring the inventor of the tandem rotor helicopter.
- **Alexander Sieckmann, Texas A&M University:** [Dr. John Zuk Scholarship](#), honoring the NASA engineer who was a champion of civil tiltrotor technology and applications.

### Master's Degree Recipients

- **Kumardip Basak, University of Maryland:** [Robert Head Scholarship](#), honoring the engineering pioneer from McDonnell/Hughes/McDonnell Douglas/Boeing.
- **Heather Beers, Georgia Institute of Technology:** [Charles C. Crawford Scholarship](#), named in memory of the former Army Aviation development leader, GTRI researcher and past VFS Board Chair.
- **Ron Berlin, University of Maryland:** [John J. Schneider Scholarship](#), honoring the memory of a preeminent VTOL aircraft designer and historian.
- **Cory Chianello, Georgia Institute of Technology:** [Joseph P. Cribbins Scholarship](#), honoring the individual who had perhaps the most influence and long-term impact on US Army Aviation logistics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- **John Gillespie, North Carolina State University:** [Glidden S. Doman Scholarship](#), named for one of the six original American helicopter pioneers.
- **Taemin Jeong\*, Seoul National University:** [Alex Stoll Scholarship](#), honoring the memory, passion and creative genius of one of pioneers of electric flight, **awarded \$5,000 through the Alex Stoll Memorial Foundation.**
- **Grace Nicole Johnson, University of Maryland:** [Dr. Richard M. Carlson Scholarship](#), former Hiller and Lockheed engineer who became the chief of the Army's Advanced Systems Research and Analysis Office at Ames Research Center.
- **Sahil Nitin Kale, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay:** [Frank Robinson Scholarship](#), honoring the founder of Robinson Helicopter Corp.
- **Irelyn Meckley, Georgia Institute of Technology:** [Barry J. Baskett Scholarship](#), honoring the memory of a career US Army engineer who led Aviation Engineering, and later managed the Aviation Technology Base Program.
- **Michael Morcos, University of Maryland:** [Hal Andrews Scholarship](#), which remembers a preeminent Navy aviation engineer, advisor and historian.
- **Isabelle Sanz, Georgia Institute of Technology:** [Dr. Robin Gray Scholarship](#), honoring the beloved Georgia Tech professor who taught generations of students.
- **Gray Simmons, Georgia Institute of Technology:** [Dr. Richard L. Bennett Scholarship](#), honoring the longtime Bell researcher, university professor and consultant.
- **Visesh Uppoor, University of Maryland:** [Dr. Alfred Gessow Scholarship](#), honoring a pioneer in the helicopter field at NACA/NASA and founder of the University of Maryland rotorcraft center.
- **Kunal Rahul Yadav, University of Texas at Austin:** [Troy M. Gaffey Scholarship](#), honoring his major roles in the development of the tiltrotor at Bell and the coaxial compound helicopter as CEO of AVX Aircraft.

### Doctorate Degree Recipients

- **Daniele Granata\*, Politecnico di Milano:** [Dr. Jing Yen VFF Scholarship for Cost Awareness](#), \$6,000 awarded to the top applicant with a focus on improving rotorcraft affordability.
- **Howon Lee, Georgia Institute of Technology:** [Dr. E. Roberts \(Bob\) Wood Scholarship](#), named for the preeminent aeromechanics engineer and beloved professor who inspired generations.
- **Seyedreza Fattahi Massoum, University of Toronto:** [Dr. Frank Caradonna Scholarship](#), honoring the US Army Emeritus Scientist who worked for 43 years at the Ames Research Center in flight dynamics as a researcher and mentor.
- **Nathan O'Brien, University of Maryland:** [M.A. "Tony" McVeigh Scholarship](#), honoring the memory of the Boeing advanced rotorcraft designer and mentor.

- **Junhwi Park, Seoul National University:** [Evan Sampatacos Scholarship](#), remembering the former McDonnell Douglas/Boeing engineer.
- **Joel Sunder Rachaprolu, Pennsylvania State University:** [Prof. Barnes McCormick Scholarship](#), honoring Penn State's venerable Boeing Professor Emeritus.
- **Pranav Sridhar\*, Georgia Institute of Technology:** [Bell Textron Scholarship](#), provided by a generous endowment from the company, \$5000 awarded to the top scoring VFF applicant.
- **Vivek Vittal Uppoor, University of Maryland:** [Dr. Dewey H. Hodges Scholarship](#), awarded to a top applicant in the aeromechanics field and honoring the beloved professor at Georgia Institute of Technology, decorated engineer, and one of the foremost aerospace researchers of his generation.
- **Zoelle Wong, Georgia Institute of Technology:** [Franklin D. Harris Scholarship](#), honoring the contributions and memory of 65 years of dedicated service and numerous contributions to the rotorcraft industry.
- **Daniel Yu, University of Texas at Austin:** [Geoff Byham Scholarship](#), honoring an architect of advanced rotor aerodynamics at Westland Helicopters, Yeovil, England (now Leonardo Helicopters).

All the scholarships include cash awards of between \$3,250 and \$6,000. In addition, the top candidates (marked above with an asterisk) receive special recognition.

The Vertical Flight Foundation was established in 1967 as the philanthropic arm of the Vertical Flight Society. Since 1977, the merit-based scholarship program has been a great success story. For more information on the Vertical Flight Foundation or to donate to this important cause, please visit our VFF microsite at [www.vtol.org/vff](http://www.vtol.org/vff). A list of all past VFF scholarship winners and success stories is also available.

VFF and VFS are both recognized by the US Internal Revenue Service as 501(c)(3) charities. VFS covers all overhead costs of administration and accounting, so 100% of every tax-deductible contribution to VFF goes directly to student scholarships.

Founded as the American Helicopter Society in 1943, the Vertical Flight Society is the global non-profit society for engineers, scientists and others working on vertical flight technology. For more than 80 years, the Society has led technical, safety, advocacy and other important initiatives, and has been the primary forum for interchange of information on vertical flight technology.

**The Vertical Flight Society**

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