



NAC Press Release

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NAC Again Recognizes Excellence, Awards Academic Scholarships

Austin, TX — The National Academy of Construction has awarded academic scholarships for the second consecutive year to deserving students. Five highly talented recipients were selected by the NAC Scholarship Committee.

“One way the Academy can help strengthen our industry is through supporting the leaders of tomorrow, our aspiring engineering and construction students,” said Wayne Crew, NAC General Secretary. “The Scholarship Committee has the task of identifying exceptional future leaders. Our purpose with this effort is to reward that excellence. Expanding the program this year to five deserving students shows our commitment to supporting future leaders.”

The scholarships were established through the generosity of NAC members to provide funding for undergraduate and/or graduate students pursuing a bachelor’s or master’s degree in engineering or construction, or a closely related field, and who desire a career in the industry. The intent of these scholarships is to provide financial support for two semesters for deserving students who are juniors or above, have a high GPA, are advancing toward a degree in construction or a construction-related program, and demonstrate exceptional leadership as well as participate in extracurricular activities.

The Scholarship Committee established the scholarship program two years ago. The committee solicits student applicants with recommendations from NAC members, professors, and other university personnel. The initial three recipients were recognized at the 2020 virtual annual meeting last October. This year, the committee evaluated 30 applicants from across North America before selecting the recipients below. The 2021 applicants were supported by recommendation letters from 27 NAC members.

The 2021 Scholarship Recipients



Shalee Allison is a junior at Barrett, the Honors College, at Arizona State University, studying construction management. She hopes to pursue a master’s degree after graduation. Shalee is a member of the Navajo (Diné) Nation. Her early exposure to STEM programs such as the Native American Science and Engineering Program at the University of Arizona and Inspire at ASU during high school influenced her decision to enter the engineering field. She is a leader in many student organizations at ASU, including Construction in Indian Country and Advancing Women in Construction, and served as media director for the Barrett Indigenous Culture Association. A summer intern at JE Dunn Construction Company, she is involved in two projects in the Phoenix area. Her plan is to become a project manager.



Giovanni Hernandez is a junior majoring in civil engineering with an emphasis in construction at the University of Colorado-Boulder. A native of Colorado, Giovanni was raised in Chihuahua, Mexico, and immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 16 to better his life and his educational opportunities. He earned two associate degrees at Front Range Community College in Longmont, CO, before entering CU-Boulder. He was heavily influenced by his father, who brought him to construction sites as a young boy. This early exposure to construction sparked his passion for the industry and led him to pursue a civil engineering degree. He plans to graduate in May 2022 and work for a general contractor with the goal to be a project superintendent.



Tyler Kleinsasser is an MS student in civil engineering at the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology in Rapid City, SD. Born and raised in South Dakota, his interest in construction began at an early age because of his family's involvement in the industry. Visiting project sites and completed projects where family members had worked, Tyler was intrigued and decided to pursue a career in construction. He aspires to graduate from South Dakota Mines with a 4.0 GPA and find challenging positions in the construction industry. His ultimate goal is to start his own company. Extremely active in leadership roles and mentoring at SDSMT, he hopes to give back to his community by imparting his experience and knowledge to students at local high schools, technical schools, and colleges regarding the benefits of a construction-related career.



Mayra Rodriguez, pursuing a degree in engineering and architectural design at the University of Southern California, is from Argentina. She is the first in her family to go to college. In high school in Miami, she developed leadership skills that have helped her navigate the demands of college while holding work-study jobs at USC and internships at DPR Construction and Turner Construction. Her family's sacrifices to help her succeed are not lost on Mayra, who is a good example to her younger siblings. Her participation in the Associated Schools of Construction's competition in construction management reinforced her passion for the built environment. Aiming to be a licensed professional engineer, she hopes to work in the construction management field and integrate the various disciplines involved in projects.



Maria Standley, a junior at the University of Houston, is studying construction management with a focus on industrial construction with a minor in business administration. She chose the construction industry because she believes women can make a difference in this male-dominated field. At UH, she participates in the student chapter of the Associated Builders and Contractors. Her association with ABC has allowed her to network with industry professionals and with fellow students pursuing similar interests. She also led the development of UH's Cougars for Women in Construction chapter with guidance from the National Association of Women in Construction, an effort she found extremely rewarding. She works full time as a piping field engineer at the global engineering firm, Clough, in the greater Houston area. After attaining her bachelor's degree in construction management in December 2022, Maria hopes to continue her studies as an MBA grad student.

The National Academy of Construction, established in 1999, is an organization of industry leaders who have made outstanding contributions over a career to the design, engineering, and construction industries. For more information on this press release, contact Rusty Haggard at 512/557-7672 or email rhaggard99@gmail.com. NAC is administratively based at The University of Texas at Austin, Austin TX 78712.