



# NAC Press Release

For immediate release  
June 14, 2023

## **NAC Selects Seven for Scholarships, Including Initial Wayne A. Crew NAC Scholarship Recipient**

*Austin, TX* — The National Academy of Construction has selected seven outstanding students who plan to pursue a career in the built environment for scholarships during the 2023-24 academic year. The initial recipient of the Wayne A. Crew Scholarship is among the newly selected students. This marks the fourth year for the NAC Scholarship Program.

“The NAC Scholarship Program identifies, rewards, and mentors outstanding junior and senior students and first-year master’s students by plugging them into long-term mentoring relationships with Academy members,” said Adjo Amekudzi-Kennedy, chair of the Academy’s Scholarship Committee. “This year’s awardees are balancing heavy course loads with leadership of student organizations, volunteering to give back to their communities, mentoring their peers, and working to support themselves through college.”

### **Scholarship Funding and the New Wayne A. Crew NAC Scholarship**

Academy funding for the Scholarship Program comes from proceeds from the auction that is held at the Annual Meeting as well as from personal gifts from members. This year, \$35k was available for scholarship recipients. That amount also includes funds for the NAC’s new Wayne A. Crew NAC Scholarship. Crew led NAC as its President/CEO from 2015-2022 retiring at the end of last year.

At the October 2022 Annual Meeting, an anonymous donor provided \$20k as a starter pledge to establish a new scholarship to be named in honor of Crew. Additional gifts from NAC members raised the Crew scholarship to over \$50k. The Scholarship Committee then worked with NAC leadership and Crew to set the parameters for the gift. That collaboration resulted in a prerequisite that the recipient of the Wayne A. Crew NAC scholarship must be a highly qualified student with a high level of need relative to other NAC scholarship applicants. The committee then chose the first Wayne A. Crew NAC Scholarship recipient, Diego Melgar, a master’s student at the New Jersey Institute of Technology. Part of the total Crew scholarship gift was deposited as an investment for future years.



“This is a great example of gifting to leave a legacy as we support the future generations of our industry. As in the past, we had many more qualified applicants than funding. This gift is helping to make a difference. Thanks to those who supported this effort,” said Edd Gibson, President/CEO of NAC.

The students who received the NAC scholarships for the 2023-24 academic year are described below.

## The 2023 Scholarship Recipients

**Isabella Bernard** Isabella Bernard is pursuing two degrees, civil engineering and architecture, with a minor in sustainability at Catholic University. She has gained professional experience at firms in the Washington, D.C., area: Manhattan Construction Company, Gilbane Construction Company, and Cunningham | Quill Architects. Isabella holds leadership roles in student organizations: president of the Society of Women Engineers, secretary of the American Institute of Architecture Students, and upperclassmen representative of the American Society of Civil Engineers. She also volunteers with Habitat for Humanity, where she applies her classroom knowledge as she assists in building houses for the surrounding community. Her future includes working with a focus on sustainability, combining the innovative fields of design and construction. Isabella's goal is to open her own firm one day, aimed towards improving communication between the many different levels of the construction industry as she is tasked with large-scale, influential community projects.



**Daisy Dominguez-Hooper** is pursuing a bachelor's degree in construction engineering and management at Cal Poly Pomona. Currently she is an intern with Parsons on the I-405 Improvement Program. The construction industry has always been a part of her life—her father was a construction company owner—and she is passionate about creating something tangible that will last for generations. She believes construction is not just about building something. Working for Parsons has shown her real-world construction management, experienced professionals, innovative technology, and sustainable construction practices. Daisy has faced challenges in the past, including health issues and financial struggles, but she has overcome those and has a strong desire to become a successful leader. She plans to challenge traditional construction practices, advocate for diversity and inclusion, and find ways to increase efficiency while maintaining quality. Her determined spirit and her willingness to face and conquer any challenge will serve her well.



**Diego Melgar** is the first recipient of the Academy's Wayne A. Crew Scholarship. Established in 2022, the scholarship recognizes an outstanding student who has persisted and demonstrated resilience in the face of adversity. Originally from El Salvador, Diego immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 13 and has overcome many hardships in the process of acclimating to differences from his country of origin. He is currently pursuing his master's in geotechnical engineering with a certification in construction management at the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT). He is also employed as a geotechnical engineer. Of particular interest to him are sustainable design and renewable energy. His recent work on a high-rise residential building in Jersey City, NJ, has instilled in him a deep respect for construction management and has inspired him to further understand the CM role in major construction projects. Diego carefully balances his studies and full-time work schedule and is constantly striving for excellence. He has a strong desire to become a college professor and help motivate other aspiring engineers.



**Madison Merwine** is a senior in the Bachelor of Architecture program at the University of Oregon and will finish the five-year bachelor program in four years. She also works remotely and part-time for an architecture firm in Bremerton, WA. She is a leader in the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS), Freedom by Design, Architects in Schools, and the HOPES Conference. Madison has been a member of the AIAS since her first year on campus as both media director and student representative mentor liaison. This year she stepped up to the role of co-director of Freedom by Design, the design-build arm of the AIAS, and is working diligently to lead a team of new members to revitalize the organization, which has seen a lack of leadership since the onset of the pandemic. She has a keen interest in urban design, social justice, and civic architecture as well as projects that promote socioeconomic and cultural growth.



**Rory Oden**, from Muncy, PA, is a junior at Carnegie Mellon University and is planning to graduate with a dual degree in civil engineering and engineering and public policy. The civil engineering courses provide her with insight on how to protect the environment through sustainable infrastructure while the EPP curriculum centers on analyzing issues in society, technology, and government. She is active in the Alpha Phi Omega Service Fraternity, the Society of Women Engineers, American Society of Civil Engineers, Habitat for Humanity, and is on the CMU Women's Water Polo Team. Rory has served as a summer intern with PennDOT and with the Regional Industrial Development Corporation (RIDC), a Pittsburgh non-profit that manages development and construction of projects on former industrial sites. She also is a mentor for grades K-12. Over spring break, she traveled to Thibodaux, LA, and volunteered in Habitat for Humanity's work on houses and helped at the Habitat ReStore.



**Pedro Sanchez** grew up in Yonkers, NY, surrounded by—as he has said—some of the greatest infrastructure feats in the world. He is pursuing a civil engineering degree at Manhattan College and plans to earn a graduate degree in construction management as well. A first-generation college student and coming from a single-parent household, he now is developing leadership and communication skills through his college chapter of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE). In addition, Pedro is working for the E.E. Cruz Company, a heavy civil general contractor based in Queens, NY. He started with the firm in June 2022, gaining field experience and learning different aspects of the industry. The classroom and work experience have helped him become more aware of the skills needed to be resourceful in the industry. His hope is that through the course work and the industry experience he can be a greater contributor to industry and to society.



**Lauren Welker** is pursuing a master's degree in construction engineering and management at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Originally from Green Bay, she earned her bachelor's degree in civil engineering at UW-Madison in May 2022. She has worked as an intern at several firms across the nation, including in Wisconsin, California, and Texas. Currently interning with DPR Construction in Austin, TX, she is continuing her course work toward her master's degree while serving as a teaching assistant in construction project management. Her goal is to work for a national general contractor, and her hope is to be involved in a new core market or city. Lauren credits much of her success to both her career and her academic mentors. In addition to the master's degree and the teaching, she plans on being involved in the ACE Mentor Program with the goal to enlighten others, especially women, about the opportunities in the construction industry.



### **The Scholarship Program, NAC Members, and the Academic Community Work Together**

The Scholarship Committee requests student applicants provide faculty recommendations from their universities as well as from NAC members who can support their nominations with personal letters. The committee's work initially began in 2020. The Academy has now awarded a total of 22 scholarships to students across the nation.

"These scholarship recipients are simply impressive," said committee chairperson Amekudzi-Kennedy. "Several of them have persisted as they chart exceptional journeys in the face of adversity. I want to sincerely thank supporters of our Scholarship Program: the highly engaged and dedicated Academy members and university faculty who wrote recommendations for these outstanding students. The Academy's outreach in this scholarship effort will reap significant benefits for the profession and society at large in the future."

The 2023 scholarship recipients will be invited to attend the NAC Annual Meeting in Boston, October 12-13. Thanks to all who have contributed toward the NAC scholarships over the past year, to the efforts of the Scholarship Committee, and to those NAC members nominating students.



# NAC Press Release

For immediate release  
July 10, 2023

## NAC-ACE Selects Seven for “Alumni” Scholarships

*Austin, TX* — The National Academy of Construction in conjunction with the ACE Mentor Program has selected seven outstanding students who plan to pursue a career in the built environment for scholarships during the 2023-24 academic year.

As many of you are aware, NAC has partnered with the ACE Mentor Program to offer joint scholarships for the past two years, with recipients chosen in a very competitive pool of applicants by a joint committee of NAC and ACE members and staff. These scholarships are offered to individuals who are “Alumni” of the ACE Mentor high school programs and who are in their final years of gaining an undergraduate or master’s degree. Funding for these scholarships has come from our NAC Auction and has been matched by ACE. As you can tell in the writeups below, NAC and ACE are making a difference in the lives of our future generation.

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Recipients of these scholarships for 2023 are:



### **Arpita Saha**

Arpita is a rising junior at Columbia University, majoring in Civil Engineering with a minor in Sustainable Engineering. On campus, she serves as a co-chair of the Engineering Recruitment Committee, where she leads engineering tours for prospective students, overlooks other tour guides, and manages committee operations. She is also the Vice President of Communications for PGN - Phi Gamma Nu, a professional business development organization she helped co-found on campus. Previously, she worked as a Lab Assistant at the Robert A.W. Carleton Strength of Materials Laboratory at Columbia University, where she performed small-scale strength of materials testing and assisted with large-scale strength of materials testing. She was also a participant in the ACE Mentor Program of Greater New York in high school and is now an ambassador, mentoring other students. In the future, she hopes to pursue the intersection of engineering, management, and sustainability.



### **Jakob Mikres**

Jakob is a B. Architecture student at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. In a winter co-op at ESa, he worked with technical designers, engineers, and contractors on complex healthcare projects. Last semester, he mentored in Nashville's ACE program, inspiring students to explore their potential in integrative design and construction. Furthermore, he attained his LEED Green Associate credential, emphasizing his commitment to sustainable spaces in the built environment. Currently he is studying abroad at Aalto University in Helsinki, Finland, where he is immersed in

Finnish design, timber construction, and sustainable engineering. Looking ahead to his final year of undergraduate school, he will delve into a self-directed thesis and is exploring a topic in building materials science. With this scholarship, he has the freedom to explore his interests in the industry without excessive debt and is very grateful for your support! This scholarship allows him to connect to his interest in integrating design and construction and he sincerely thanks you for investing in his future.



### **Kevin Danner**

Kevin Danner is a senior specializing within Structural Engineering in pursuit of a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is currently studying abroad at Waseda University in Tokyo, Japan. While there, he is furthering his understanding of urban planning and architecture, participating in experiments for carbon negative concrete and earthquake resistant structural systems,

and building upon his Japanese language skills. At Illinois, he is involved within additive manufacturing research with Professor Jinhui Yan and has had several notable internships related to construction project management and structural foundations with Clark Construction Group in both Washington, D.C. and Chicago, Illinois. Kevin is a recipient of the Harold R. Sandberg award, which recognizes the undergraduate structural engineering student at Illinois with the highest GPA at the end of their junior year. Kevin has also been an active member of the Fighting Illini Triathlon Team since 2021.



### **Kimberly Ulishney**

Since graduating high school and concluding her participation as a mentee in the ACE mentorship program, Kimberly continued to pursue her passion of mechanical engineering at Pennsylvania State University, where she will graduate next year. As of last fall, she decided to pursue a minor in mechatronics which provided her with knowledge in electrical engineering concepts and circuit design. It has been challenging but by far the most rewarding accomplishment she has achieved, and it has given her the opportunity to network with other engineering disciplines by becoming the Executive Assistant for the IEEE student branch. She has been a mechanical engineering intern for Gannet Fleming for approximately four years and has gained priceless industry insight and problem-solving skills. This summer she is learning to use CHVAC for building load simulations and calculations, CostWorks for cost estimation, HoloBuilder for building surveying and 3D scanning, as well as pipe and duct pressure loss calculations and sizing.



### **Olivia Salinas**

Olivia attends the University of Houston (UH) and is working towards a NAAB-accredited Bachelor of Arts in Architecture. This upcoming semester will be her third year in this five-year degree program. At UH, she mentors freshman-level architecture students as part of the Future Women in Architecture (FWiA) program. By doing so, she hopes to further FWiA's mission of empowering minority and women students throughout their academic careers and supporting diversity within the architecture field. She is also mentored by different architectural professionals through the Latinos in Architecture (LiA) Mentorship Program. As a part of this program, she communicates with a mentor monthly to discuss career goals and attend portfolio reviews and American Institute of Architects (AIA) events. Through ACE, she was able to intern with PBK Architects San Antonio, and has continued to work for them every summer. As part of the PBK team, she has worked on safety assessments for Uvalde CISD and South San Antonio ISD; contributed to the office's renovation plans; mentored with building envelope consultants, architects, engineers, project managers, interior designers, and visualization specialists; and worked on construction sets for various K-12 and collegiate projects.



### **Abbey Briley**

Abbey is from Oregon City, Oregon and is a rising junior pursuing a BS in Civil Engineering at Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT). She has been fortunate enough to work with Turner Construction for a summer after high school as part of an externship program with ACE.

This summer she will be a structural engineering intern with Miller Consulting in the Portland area. She served as OIT's concrete canoe captain for part of this last academic year and has been elected Vice President of OIT's ASCE-AGC (American Society of Civil Engineers and Associated General Contractors of America) student chapter for the 2023-2024 academic year. She is a Tau Beta Pi member, making the President's list each term at OIT. She has been awarded an ACE program scholarship, an ACEC (American Council of Engineering Companies) scholarship, and a NITC (National Institute for Transportation and Communities) scholarship, among others.



### **Marcell Hajmuhammad**

Marcell is a mechanical engineering student at the University of Texas at Austin. This year he is experiencing his first internship at Bechtel as a plant design and pipeline engineer. He works closely with a very talented team of engineers to develop a liquified natural gas (LNG) facility that intends to be carbon neutral. He is working

alongside the materials team, conducting pipe stress analysis to understand the direct relationship between design modifications and the selection of piping. Throughout this internship, he has been truly amazed by the extent of collaboration and communication among the diverse disciplines within the engineering, procurement, and construction fields. Witnessing the seamless coordination between these disciplines has provided him with a comprehensive understanding of the interconnections and dependencies inherent in large-scale projects. Overall, the opportunity to apply his skills and knowledge and grow his expertise through the internship, along with the support of this scholarship, has given him the motivation to continue to pursue his degree in mechanical engineering and reignited his passion for the world of engineering and construction. He is truly honored to be a recipient of the NAC ACE Alumni Scholarship.

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With seven previously awarded NAC scholarships plus these seven NAC-ACE scholarship recipients, this brings the total for 2023 to 14 scholarship recipients receiving \$70,000. Thank you to the Scholarship Committee for its work in selecting these recipients and most importantly to the NAC members who have donated in support of this effort.



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*The National Academy of Construction, established in 1999, is an organization of industry leaders—construction users, constructors, engineers, architects, consultants, attorneys, sureties, editors, and academics—who have made outstanding, life-long contributions to the construction industry. In addition to honoring the personal contributions of its members, the Academy provides its leadership and expertise to a variety of organizations, governmental and nongovernmental, for the betterment of the industry and nation as a whole, fostering collaboration, future improvement, and building the next generation of leaders. For more information on this release or about NAC, contact Rusty Haggard, [rhaggard99@gmail.com](mailto:rhaggard99@gmail.com), 512/557-7672.*