Empowering Stanford students

Funding scholarships is a direct way to open doors of opportunity for talented students—and prepare them to be the leaders that we will need in the decades to come.

The promise of access, opportunity, and top-quality education is intrinsic to Stanford’s identity and history—and remains critical to its vision for the future. Stanford opened its doors in 1891 as a nondenominational, coeducational institution, welcoming students of all backgrounds. Our founders, Jane and Leland Stanford, understood education as a vehicle to “correct inequalities.” Their goal was “to open an avenue whereby the deserving and exceptional may rise through their own efforts,” at a university dedicated to generating knowledge for the benefit of humanity.

Today, as students face significant economic and social pressures exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, Stanford’s capacity to provide an inclusive and transformative education is vitally important. Indeed, the need is urgent and the cost is great. The partnership of alumni, parents, and friends in providing additional support for undergraduate scholarships, both need-based and athletic, has never been more valuable. Underscoring its commitment to this priority, the university has established a major scholarship matching-fund initiative that aims to affirm—and amplify—Stanford’s foundational mission.
The university’s need-blind admission policy guarantees that qualified U.S. undergraduates will be accepted based strictly on their talents, not on their ability to pay. Backed by donors, Stanford meets the demonstrated financial need of all accepted undergraduates—and strives to provide the resources necessary for them to thrive academically and personally throughout their four undergraduate years.

Fundamentally, donor investment in need-based scholarships makes it possible for exceptional undergraduates from a wide range of backgrounds and across the socioeconomic spectrum to attend the university. At the same time, funding for athletics scholarships helps talented student-athletes come to Stanford and achieve their full potential in the classroom and in intercollegiate competition.

This vibrant campus environment reflects the dynamic nature of our country and our world, and ultimately elevates learning for all students. Fostering a diverse student body is especially important now: Fully understanding today’s complex and global problems requires interacting with the broadest range of people and gaining exposure to ways of thinking and life experiences that are different from one’s own. The imperative of building an inclusive community at Stanford—and making certain that diversity of thought and experience is represented in all aspects of Stanford’s education mission—is embedded in every aspect of the university’s Long-Range Vision.

“Coming from a low-income family, I joined the U.S. Army after high school with the hope that someday I would be able to afford a high-quality college education. Never did I expect myself to have the privilege of attending Stanford. Thanks to your kindness, I am part of an incredible, supportive community that cultivates my love for learning and encourages me to improve the world.”

Tina Wong, ’22
from a letter to scholarship donors
Preparing students for a life of purpose

The Stanford undergraduate experience nurtures the entire student, inside and outside the classroom. For many students, this transformative experience is possible only because of scholarship support. Our students gain not only skills and knowledge, but breadth, compassion, resilience, and the capacity for leadership as well.

Innovative curricula across disciplines include core classes about the obligations of citizenship and the value of lifelong learning. Newly restructured majors offer students the chance to explore the wide range of opportunities available at Stanford—and the tools to succeed in whatever major they choose, no matter their level of high school preparation. Immersive learning experiences, including research and capstone projects, Cardinal Service opportunities, and Bing Overseas Studies trips, enable students to challenge themselves as they define their own educational journeys.

More than 600 student organizations, from arts to business development to public service, allow undergraduates to express creativity, gain skills, and build connections. Students in Stanford’s varsity athletics program learn about teamwork and perseverance; their achievements inspire pride and create memorable shared experiences across the student body.

Underpinning all these elements of the student experience are programs that foster community and a sense of belonging—conditions that are fundamental to students’ capacity for personal and intellectual growth. These include an array of avenues for advising, mentoring, and mental health support. In addition, group-based transition programs, such as Leland Scholars and Stanford Summer Engineering Academy, help prepare incoming students—especially those from under-resourced high schools—for the academic rigor and personal challenges of Stanford life. Courses such as Frosh 101 and Transfer 101 give students a chance to connect with peers for emotional and social support as they begin their Stanford careers. Through programming and activities, seven campus community centers support diverse student populations while also facilitating multicultural exploration and conversation among all students.

While these resources are valuable to every student, they are particularly important for first-generation or low-income (FLI) students, who may have little context for navigating college. These students can also look to Stanford’s FLI Office, which connects undergraduates to a network of services and support campus wide.

"While I may have had limited resources before coming to Stanford, I can assure you that I have always had limitless aspirations. There have been many challenges in my life, but I have learned to look for the positives in every situation. I know that my college experience is something I will treasure for the rest of my life. I will never forget the sacrifices made to allow students like myself to attend this university."

Ethan Sperla, ’23
from a letter to scholarship donors
From the university’s earliest years, when Jane Stanford used her deceased son’s boyhood savings to create the Leland Stanford, Jr., Memorial Scholarship Fund, every Stanford education has been subsidized by donations from its founders, alumni, parents, and friends. Keeping this commitment stands among the university’s greatest achievements and highest goals. This promise to students—so fundamental to the history and destiny of Stanford—depends upon the commitment of scholarship donors.

Again and again, alumni, parents, and friends have opened doors to the next generation of promising and exceptional students. Scholarship supporters have created more than 1,800 named undergraduate and athletic scholarship funds over the decades. Combined with contributions made through annual funds, these gifts ensure that nearly 3,400 undergraduates and 500 student-athletes benefit from the generosity of others every year.

“I have learned so much here, not only on the football field but also through the constant support of professors and academic advisors. I would not have had so many great learning experiences, chances to grow, and the opportunity to become a better version of myself if it were not for your kindness and willingness to help me attend Stanford University.”

Simi Fehoko, ’22
from a letter to scholarship donors
An accelerating need

Stanford’s commitment to meeting students’ full demonstrated financial need is costly—and the need is increasing. Since 2006, Stanford has more than tripled its investment in financial aid. At the same time, new benchmarks designed to assist middle-income families are providing higher levels of financial support overall: Undergraduates from families earning less than $150,000 now qualify for full-tuition scholarships. For those below $65,000, scholarships also cover room, board, and expenses. (In 2021–22, that benchmark will increase to $75,000, providing aid to additional families.) Students from families with higher incomes (particularly those with more than one child in college) may also qualify for some assistance.

The current COVID-19 health and financial crisis presents significant additional challenges, as more students need more help to continue their Stanford journeys. Particularly impacted are undergraduates who are first generation or low income. In a Stanford student survey, many of these undergrads reported shouldering additional family responsibilities, and more than half reported an overall loss of family income due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Financial aid funds for rent and living expenses are helping these students avoid worsening their families’ financial situation.

“I’m a first-generation, low-income student, and when I think back on my Stanford experience, I feel incredibly grateful. Because of the financial aid I received, I was able to attend Stanford for four years, to graduate debt-free, and to do something that I really loved. The Class of 2020 has been through a whole lot in the last year. But I think that’s what makes us special—the fact that we’ve endured this together.”

Sam Duke, ‘20
from a video message to scholarship donors
Stanford continues to evaluate student needs as longer-term impacts on family incomes become clear. At the same time, the pandemic has resulted in substantial losses to revenue and increased costs for the university.

Stanford has faced similar daunting challenges before. Early in 2008, prior to the recession, Stanford committed to greatly expanding financial aid, promising no-tuition or no-cost attendance to qualified low- and middle-income families, and eliminating the need for student loans. Even when the economic fallout from the Great Recession strained Stanford’s budget and increased the financial need of families, the university reaffirmed its promise to students. Generous donors stepped forward to help provide the funding required to maintain the enhanced financial aid program.

Stanford remains committed to its core value: to attract and nurture students from the widest possible range of income levels, backgrounds, talents, and life experiences—even in the face of global challenges. The partnership of committed donors is critical to making this possible.
UNDERGRADUATE FINANCIAL AID

Two ways to give, plus “Fast Forward” matching

There are two ways to create a Stanford undergraduate scholarship:

1. **Fund an annual scholarship** (need-based or athletic). Current-year scholarship funds can be established with a gift of $25,000 through The Stanford Fund or the Buck/Cardinal Club.

2. **Establish an endowed scholarship** (need-based or athletic). This creates a permanent source of funding for students today and into the future. Endowed scholarships can be established with a gift of $250,000.

**Fast Forward matching**

Because financial aid is one of Stanford’s highest priorities, the university has mounted the Fast Forward Match, a significant drive seeking gifts that will simultaneously support both current-year and endowed scholarships.

For donors able to commit at least $500,000 (or $250,000 for graduates within the last 15 years), Stanford will match your gift at a ratio of 1:2 (match amount to donor amount). The combined funds create both a current-year scholarship and an endowed scholarship fund in your name.

Your gift goes to work fast, with students receiving aid now. And it keeps going forward, with endowed funds supporting students of the future in perpetuity.

**How Fast Forward matching works**

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<th>Total donor gift amount</th>
<th>Amount of gift directed to annual scholarships (Stanford Fund or Buck/Cardinal)</th>
<th>Amount of gift directed to endowed fund</th>
<th>University match applied to endowed fund</th>
<th>Total endowed fund, after match</th>
<th>Number of one-year Stanford Fund or Buck/Cardinal scholarship grants created (total over five years)*</th>
<th>Number of students supported each year in perpetuity by endowed fund (when fully funded)**</th>
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* Based on Stanford Fund Scholarship award of $25K.
** Based on annual fund payout of 5.5% and average scholarship award of $52K. Because award amounts vary based on each student’s demonstrated need, the number of recipients supported will vary. As the endowed fund’s value increases over time, the fund may support more students.

For more information, please contact

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