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ARCS® FOUNDATION ATLANTA

CULTIVATING SCIENTISTS
IN GEORGIA
SINCE 1992

2026 SCHOLAR YEARBOOK

ACHIEVEMENT REWARDS FOR COLLEGE SCIENTISTS FOUNDATION, INC.

Scholar Awards Celebration
250 years of American Science:
Honoring Those Who Advance It
November 11, 2026
Piedmont Driving Club

A collective story, in pictures and videos, of an organization of altruistic, dedicated women supporting the next generation of America's most brilliant scientists with the help of visionary donors – and the unique connection that exists between all of us.

ARCS® FOUNDATION MISSION STATEMENT

ARCS® Foundation advances science and technology in the United States by providing financial awards to academically outstanding U.S. citizens studying to complete degrees in science, engineering and medical research.

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ARCS® FOUNDATION ATLANTA CHAPTER

ARCS® Foundation advances science and technology in the United States by providing financial awards to academically outstanding U.S. citizens studying to complete degrees in science, engineering, and medical research. Since its founding in 1958, ARCS Foundation has provided over 22,500 scholar awards totaling over $148,000,000. We have approximately 1,000 members in 15 chapters across the United States.

ARCS Foundation's principles and practices have remained consistent since our founding in 1958:

- 100% of award contributions go directly to fund scholars.
- Recipient schools are qualified through rigorous eligibility requirements.
- Schools select scholars based on academic achievement without regard for race, creed, or gender.
- Scholars are U.S. citizens and students of high achievement in the basic sciences.
- ARCS Foundation scholar award funds are raised and distributed locally.
- ARCS Foundation is an all-women volunteer organization.

ARCS Foundation Atlanta Chapter was founded in 1992. The vision of ARCS Foundation Atlanta Chapter is to fund STEM scholars who will change the world. Our support of each scholar is an expression of our belief that each scholar holds the promise of a better future. ARCS Foundation scholar awards are *unrestricted*, and these funds enable our scholars to conduct research that has the potential to solve the challenges of today. This is the opportunity that ARCS Foundation offers to our donors, the opportunity to change the world.

During our 34-year history, we have provided over $8.6 million for 1,286 individual scholar awards. The 2026–2027 ARCS Atlanta scholar awards total $469,000 and will go to 53 scholars at Emory University, the Georgia Institute of Technology, Morehouse College, and the University of Georgia. These scholars are among our country's best and brightest in the fields of science, engineering, and medical research.

The funding of our scholars is made possible by the generosity of our donors and volunteers. We are deeply grateful for your support of over 30 years.

Frances Swensson
President, ARCS Foundation, Inc. Atlanta

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Thank you to Lou and Tom Glenn and the Wilbur and Hilda Glenn Family Foundation for the initial contributions that established our ARCS® Atlanta Chapter Endowment. The 30th Anniversary Endowment Campaign, begun in 2022, sought to bring our Endowment to over $1 million. In December of 2024, the Wilbur and Hilda Glenn Family Foundation approved another extraordinary gift which allowed the ARCS Atlanta Endowment to surpass the 30th Anniversary Endowment Campaign goal of $1 million. To see the members and friends who contributed to this campaign, please visit our 30th Anniversary Endowment Campaign webpage under the Support Us tab on the ARCS Atlanta website.

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Thank you to the following whose time and talents contributed to the success of our annual Scholar Awards Celebration:

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"At Emory, our STEM doctoral scholars are advancing research that addresses the world's most pressing challenges and improves the human condition. We are grateful to the ARCS Foundation for its generous support of these exceptional students. Through its investment in scientific talent, ARCS empowers the next generation of researchers whose creativity, dedication, and leadership will drive discovery and progress for years to come."

—

Christopher L. Augostini
President, Emory University

EMORY UNIVERSITY



Elise Bezold

Roche Award

Ph.D. Candidate, Chemistry
Third Year ARCS Scholar

Elise Bezold graduated summa cum laude from Northern Kentucky University with a B.S. in Chemistry in 2022. Her undergraduate research focused on synthesizing small molecules with antimicrobial activity with a characteristic 1,2,3-triazole moiety. Elise is a fifth year Ph.D. Candidate and Women in Natural Sciences fellow in Prof. William Wuest's lab at Emory University. Her current research focuses on the development of novel disinfectants to combat antimicrobial resistance. Her research has resulted in four first-author publications, ten additional publications, being named an NIDDK T32 trainee and NSF-GRFP Honorable Mention and representing the State of Georgia during the NSCEB Biotech Across America Roadshow. Outside of the laboratory, she enjoys playing the violin and exploring local farmers markets.



Lina Dimitrov

McGowan Award

Ph.D. Candidate, Epidemiology
Third Year ARCS Scholar

Lina is a doctoral candidate in Epidemiology at Emory University, where she is a current Goizueta Alzheimer's Disease Research Center Scholar and National Institute on Aging F31 Fellow. Her research focuses on the impact of the physical and social environmental on neuropsychiatric outcomes. She previously studied Neuroscience, graduating with a B.A. from Barnard College, Columbia University. In January 2020, Lina received an M.P.H. in Epidemiology and Biostatistics from Boston University, where she was an Activist Achievement Award scholar and was inducted into the Delta Omega Honorary Society. In her spare time, Lina enjoys photography, taking dance classes, and spending time outside with her dog.

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Nasab Ghazal

David, Helen and Marian Woodward Award

Ph.D. Student, Biochemistry, Cell and Developmental Biology
Third Year ARCS Scholar

Nasab is a fifth year Ph.D. student in the Biochemistry, Cell, and Developmental Biology program at Emory University. She is interested in using mouse models to understand mitochondrial metabolism and cell death in cardiac disease. She has contributed to twelve peer-reviewed publications and received the APS select Award for distinction in scholarship in the *American Journal of Physiology-Cell Physiology* for her first-author article. In 2023 she received the Margaret and Thomas Lew First Year Award in Biomedical Sciences for outstanding academic performance. She is supported by a predoctoral fellowship from the American Heart Association to continue her thesis work on cardiomyopathy. Outside her scientific interests she likes hiking the trails of Atlanta with her husband and two kids.



Riley Hughes

Sterchi Award

Ph.D. Candidate, Chemistry
Second Year ARCS Scholar

Riley earned an Honors B.S. in Biochemistry from Providence College, where he completed four years of organic synthesis and biochemistry research as a Walsh Fellow, contributing to two publications. He also worked with Pfizer's Global Product Development team, gaining experience in clinical trial development. As an NRSA Fellow Chemistry Ph.D. candidate at Emory University, Riley continues to work at the interface of chemistry and biology, developing new chemical proteomics methodologies to monitor Alzheimer's disease progression and study protein degradation pathways. Outside the lab, Riley's interests include his involvement as President of the Emory Biotech Consulting Club, skiing (seven years as an instructor), and volunteering for the Maddie Potts Foundation.

EMORY UNIVERSITY



Sara Kim
Klamon/Winston Award
Ph.D. Student, Epidemiology
Second Year ARCS Scholar

Sara is an Epidemiology doctoral student at Emory University, focused on improving vaccine effectiveness estimation and infectious disease forecasting using advanced machine learning and causal inference methods. She earned her B.A. in Economics from Emory University and a M.P.H. from Yale University. Sara previously was an Epidemiologist with the CDC's Influenza Division and deployed to the COVID-19 emergency response, during which she received the Center Director's Employee of the Month Award. Sara is a T32 NIH pre-doctoral scholar and recipient of the 2026 Robert A. Driggers III Award for Excellence in Epidemiologic Research. She has co-authored thirty-nine peer-reviewed publications, including seven as first-author.



Hadassah Mendez-Vazquez
Glenn Award
Ph.D. Candidate, Neuroscience
Second Year ARCS Scholar

Hadassah Mendez-Vazquez is a Neuroscience Ph.D. candidate at Emory University, where she investigates how environmental toxicants disrupt mitochondrial function to drive the onset of neuroinflammation. Her passion for neuroscience research grew from her experiences as the daughter of a veteran affected by Agent Orange and as a caregiver for Alzheimer's patients. She earned her B.S. in Neuroscience and M.S. in Biomedical Sciences at Colorado State University, where her research on genetic and environmental determinants of autism-related synaptic dysfunction, supported by NSF LSAMP, led to several awards and two co-first-author papers in Neuropharmacology and PNAS. At Emory University, she is an HHMI Gilliam Fellow, Centennial Scholar, and is a passionate advocate for equity in science training and accessible science communication.

EMORY UNIVERSITY



Rebecca Roth

Liss/Reid Award

Ph.D. Student, Neuroscience
First Year ARCS Scholar

Rebecca Roth is a Neuroscience Ph.D. student at Emory University. She earned a B.A. in Psychology (summa cum laude) from Clemson University before holding research positions at the Medical University of South Carolina and Emory University. Her research optimizes deep brain stimulation for drug-resistant epilepsy by combining neuroimaging, electrophysiology, and computational modeling. She is first-author on multiple publications and was selected for a symposium presentation at the American Epilepsy Society, all while holding a competitive NINDS T32 fellowship and maintaining a 4.0 GPA. Outside the lab, she enjoys reading and spending time with her dog.



Shalom Sabwa

Carroll-Ross/ARCS Atlanta Century Award

Ph.D. Student, Epidemiology
First Year ARCS Scholar

Shalom is a doctoral student in Epidemiology at Emory University's Rollins School of Public Health, studying how psychosocial and structural exposures shape cardiovascular disease in Black women. She earned her B.S. in Behavioral and Community Health at the University of Maryland, where she received the Sharon M. Desmond Community Service Award, and her M.P.H. in Epidemiology from New York University. She has four years of experience in cardiovascular epidemiology at Cornell's Center for Global Health and in global health systems research at Harvard's QuEST Network. She has sixteen peer-reviewed publications, including a first-author paper in the Journal of the American Heart Association on cardiovascular disease in Haiti. Outside of research, Shalom is committed to engaging with community initiatives that serve underserved populations.

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Jacy Scott
Doyle/Love Award
Ph.D. Student, Immunology
First Year ARCS Scholar

Jacy Scott is an Immunology and Molecular Pathogenesis doctoral student at Emory University whose research examines how the immune system influences metabolic health. She earned a B.S. in Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology from Yale College and spent two years studying how innate immune pathways regulate pregnancy outcomes. This work resulted in two peer-reviewed publications and presentations at national and international scientific conferences. Her current research focuses on regulatory T cells and adipose tissue immunity, with the goal of identifying therapeutic targets for metabolic disease. Outside the laboratory, she enjoys hiking, birding, and trying recipes from her collection of cookbooks.



Brandie Shackelford
Klamon Impact Award
Ph.D. Candidate, Environmental Health Sciences
Second Year ARCS Scholar

Brandie Shackelford is a Ph.D. candidate in Environmental Health Sciences. She has a B.S. in Civil Engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology and an MSPH from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Before attending Emory University, Brandie taught high school science in Atlanta Public Schools for two years and worked for international organizations on water, sanitation, and hygiene programs for five years. Her most recent experience living in Malawi informs her current research interest: identifying the most effective and sustainable interventions to improve food security for women and children in low-income countries. Brandie has authored eleven peer-reviewed publications and holds a patent.

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Sydney Shuff

Petter Award

Ph.D. Candidate, Cancer Biology
Third Year ARCS Scholar

Sydney Shuff is a Cancer Biology Ph.D. candidate, T32 fellow, and F31 fellow at Emory University studying how metabolic reprogramming confers chemo-immunotherapy resistance in lung cancer. She began her research journey as a high school intern at Notre Dame where she contributed research toward two publications. Sydney earned her B.S.N. from Emory University in 2019, where she served as president of the graduating class. Following graduation, she worked as a research assistant at the University of Colorado, investigating the role and therapeutic potential of targeting circadian rhythms and phospholipids in human diseases. During her time in Colorado, Sydney contributed to seven publications, including Nature Cell Biology and two as the first-author. In her free time, Sydney is an international-level triathlete.



Elaina Sinclair

Janis Henry ARCS Light Award

Ph.D. Student, Environmental Health Sciences
First Year ARCS Scholar

Elaina is an Environmental Health Sciences doctoral student at Emory University, focused on molecular toxicology and researching chemical exposures and neurodegeneration. She holds a BSPH from Indiana University, where she was a Cox Research Scholar, and an MSPH from Emory University. Elaina has co-authored three peer-reviewed studies and published her master's thesis as first author in Nature Water. Her graduate research earned a Young Investigator Award at the 2022 ASTMH Conference. Previously, she worked as a public health scientist, specializing in environmental health assessment and regulation. In her free time, Elaina enjoys spending time outdoors and listening to audiobooks.

EMORY UNIVERSITY



Nuri Smith

Donnell Award

Ph.D. Candidate, Genetics and Molecular Biology
Third Year ARCS Scholar

Nuri Smith is a first-generation Ph.D. candidate at Emory University, funded by the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program. She began with B.S.s in Biology and Experimental Psychology from the University of South Carolina Upstate, where she co-authored three publications exploring the impact of folate on the epigenome. This research passion led her to Johns Hopkins' NIH-PREP program, where she utilized CRISPR/dCas9a to enhance gene expression in schizophrenia models, presenting her findings at the Society for Neuroscience and receiving the Trainee Professional Development Award. Currently, Nuri uses spinal cord organoid models of ALS to study motor neuron degeneration at Emory University.



Anna Staskiewicz

Lundeen/Bazzel Award

Ph.D. Candidate, Biochemistry, Cell, and Developmental Biology
First Year ARCS Scholar

Anna is a Ph.D. candidate in Biochemistry, Cell, and Developmental Biology currently supported by a T32 fellowship at Emory University. Driven by a lifelong interest in human health, she earned her B.S. in Biology from the University of Georgia and M.S. in Biomedical Sciences from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, where she received The Faculty Award in Biomedical Sciences Thesis Track and worked as a research assistant for two years. She has authored five peer-reviewed articles, including first-author research and review publications. Her thesis work in the Lerit lab focuses on the contributions of centrosome dysregulation to melanoma progression.

EMORY UNIVERSITY



John Talbott

Easterly/McDaniel Award

Ph.D. Student, Chemistry
Third Year ARCS Scholar

John earned his B.S. in Chemistry with minors in Biology and Business Administration from Elizabethtown College, starting his research in organic chemistry designing novel nucleobases for selective RNA recognition. As a fifth year Chemistry doctoral student at Emory University, John has shifted his research aims towards detecting biological metabolites that promote disease progression including Alzheimer's Disease.

John's work in the field of chemical biology to date has resulted in fifteen publications, including seven first-author papers, and being named a Goldwater Scholar and an NSF GRFP honorable mention. Outside of lab, John enjoys volunteering with local youth lacrosse organizations as well as pursing an M.B.A. at his alma mater.



ÁNGEL CABRERA, PRESIDENT

"For more than 30 years, ARCS Foundation Atlanta has helped Georgia Tech support and launch some of the most promising scientific minds in the country. What strikes me most about this partnership beyond the scale of the investment — which now totals more than $2.7 million in graduate scholar awards — is the foundation's commitment to people, not just projects. I've met many of our ARCS Scholars over the years and what they have in common is a rare combination of curiosity and grit — the same qualities that define Georgia Tech at its best. To this year's class of Scholars: know that your work is seen, valued, and made possible in part by people who believed in you before the world did. To ARCS Atlanta: thank you for continuing to believe in what's possible when talent meets opportunity."

—

Ángel Cabrera
President, Georgia Institute of Technology

GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY



Jordan Berezowitz

HA (Gus) Peed Award

Ph.D. Student, Chemical Engineering
First Year ARCS Scholar

Jordan received his B.S. and M.S. in Chemical Engineering from the University of Kentucky, where his research on novel gynecological cancer therapies led to two first-author publications, a first-author preprint, and four national conference presentations. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering in the School of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology as a President's Fellow. Building on his experience with nanoscale therapeutics, Jordan's doctoral research focuses on developing a self-assembling protein nanocage as a universal influenza vaccine. He is also developing synthesis techniques for protein nanoparticle vaccines for less common but highly lethal hemorrhagic fevers. Outside the lab, Jordan enjoys running in Piedmont Park and along the Beltline in Midtown Atlanta.



Srinidhi Bharadwaj

Herz Global Impact Award

M.D./Ph.D. Student, Biomedical Engineering
Second Year ARCS Scholar

Srinidhi Bharadwaj is an M.D./Ph.D. student in the Wallace H. Coulter Department of Biomedical Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Srinidhi graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Engineering from Columbia University in 2019 and joined the Emory University/Georgia Institute of Technology Medical Scientist Training Program in July 2020. She joined the Robles Lab in the Department of Biomedical Engineering in August 2023 and currently works on a variety of biomedical and clinical imaging applications with quantitative oblique back-illumination microscopy (qOBM), a label-free phase imaging technique.

GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY



Lily Capeci
Sarah Eby-Ebersole Award
Ph.D. Student, Chemistry and Biochemistry
Second Year ARCS Scholar

Lily Capeci earned her B.S. in Biochemistry from Brandeis University, where she also interned with Sanofi's structure-based drug discovery team in Cambridge, MA. In 2024, she began her Ph.D. in Biochemistry at the Georgia Institute of Technology as a President's Fellow and ARCS Scholar. Her research focuses on the de novo design and characterization of lipid-binding proteins for immune modulation and diagnostic applications. Beyond the lab, Lily is passionate about scientific outreach and helped develop an educational module on NMR spectroscopy that profiles the chemical composition of wine. In her free time, she enjoys hiking and training for marathons.



Grace Crim
Burke Award
Ph.D. Student, Electrical and Computer Engineering
First Year ARCS Scholar

Grace earned a B.S. in Electrical Engineering and a B.S. in Chemistry from Purdue University in 2024, where she developed interests in Microfabrication and Genetic Engineering. She began her Ph.D. program in Electrical and Computer Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology as a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program (NSF GRFP) recipient and a President's Fellow in 2024. Her work focuses on integration of synthetic biology and microelectrode design to build living biosensors for precise biochemical detection. Besides research, Grace enjoys teaching and being active in the graduate student community.

GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY



Alivia Eng

David, Helen and Marian Woodward Award

Ph.D. Candidate, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences
Third Year ARCS Scholar

Alivia is a Ph.D. candidate at the Georgia Institute of Technology studying Planetary Science-specifically the geology of Mars. She received her B.S. and M.S. in Geology at Western Washington University where she began participating in science operations for NASA's Curiosity rover. Alivia is also involved in lab and field work to contextualize data from spacecraft. Broadly, her research aims to understand the surface mineralogy of Mars to constrain areas that may have interacted with water in the past. She received the Fellowship for Future Investigators in NASA Earth and Space Science Technology (FINESST) in 2024. In her free time Alivia enjoys arts & crafts, video games, and spending time with her two dogs.



Marrissa Izykowicz

Roche Award

Ph.D. Candidate, Chemistry and Biochemistry
Third Year ARCS Scholar

Marrissa started her doctoral program in Chemistry and Biochemistry at the Georgia Institute of Technology in 2022 with a President's Fellowship. In her time here, she has also been awarded the ARCS Scholar Award and the Pathbreakers Fellowships for promise as a researcher and excellence as a first-generation student, respectively. Her first-generation status inspired her interest in equity in chemical education, leading to the publication of a paper in *J. Chem. Ed.* during her undergraduate studies at Salisbury University. At this time, she was also named a Barry Goldwater Scholar. Marrissa's current work focuses on the development of hydrogel drug delivery systems for immunology and cancer and has led to the publication of one manuscript in *Nature Communications.* When she's not in the lab, you'll likely find her rock climbing, sewing, or cycling.

GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY



Maya Levitan

Herz Global Impact Award

Ph.D. Student, Biomedical Engineering
Second Year ARCS Scholar

Maya is a Ph.D. student in Biomedical Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology and Emory University. She is working in Susan Thomas's lab to develop a targeted drug delivery platform to treat lymphedema. After receiving a B.S. in Bioengineering from Rice University in 2022, she conducted research on biomaterials for pancreatic islet encapsulation at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim, Norway on a Fulbright grant. She began her doctoral studies in 2023 with a President's Fellowship from the Georgia Institute of Technology and a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship. She has co-authored six peer-reviewed publications.



John Pederson

Mary Jo Peed/Joslin Award

Ph.D. Student, Chemistry and Biochemistry
Third Year ARCS Scholar

John earned his B.S. in Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology, where he earned the President's Undergraduate Research Award for his work on multi-scale modeling of complex chemical systems. He has extended his method to study reactions at solid/liquid interfaces as a Chemistry Ph.D. student, ARCS Scholar, and President's Fellow at the Georgia Institute of Technology, resulting in two first-author papers, an NSF GRFP Honorable Mention, and a SETCA Best Poster Award. He leveraged his expertise to support the development of advanced nuclear fuels as an intern at TerraPower, LLC in the summer of 2026. John has also performed demonstrations for the Atlanta Science Festival and advised the Vertically Integrated Projects Chemical Equity Team. Outside of science, John enjoys graphic design and reading.

GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY



Theodore St. Francis

John and Mary Franklin Foundation Award

Ph.D. Student, Aerospace Engineering
Third Year ARCS Scholar

Theo is a Ph.D. student in the Georgia Institute of Technology's Low Gravity Science & Technology Lab, where he researches electrolytic technologies for oxygen generation for astronauts and hydrogen production on Earth. His current project aims to validate a magnetohydrodynamic (magnets exerting forces on liquids) architecture for separating gases and liquids in the microgravity environment of space. His prior work includes design on rocket vehicle structures and valves, robotics for the lunar environment, product design for Apple's Vision Pro, as well as being half of a two-person team for building and firing a methane-oxygen rocket engine. Theo earned his B.S. in Aerospace Engineering from MIT.



Gianna Slusher

Swensson Award

Ph.D. Student, Bioengineering
Third Year ARCS Scholar

Gianna Slusher is a Bioengineering Ph.D. student in Mechanical Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology, where she also earned her M.S. in Biomedical Engineering. Her research integrates nanofabrication, microfluidics, mass spectrometry, and bioengineering to investigate cellular and extracellular processes, with applications in therapeutic cell manufacturing, extracellular vesicle analysis, and cancer drug resistance. Her work has resulted in multiple peer-reviewed publications, international presentations, an issued U.S. patent, and a provisional patent application. She has received numerous awards and fellowships recognizing her research, innovation, and service and is actively involved in graduate leadership, STEM outreach, teaching, and mentorship. Her long-term research interests center on engineering tools that enable deeper biological insight and improve the development, manufacturing, and accessibility of healthcare technologies.



Maggie Straight

Lim Award

Ph.D. Candidate, Ocean Science and Engineering
Second Year ARCS Scholar

Maggie is a Ph.D. candidate in Ocean Science and Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology. As a recipient of both the Georgia Tech President's Fellowship and a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, she studies how bacteria can be beneficial to various host organisms such as marine microalgae in the open ocean and smooth cordgrass in coastal saltmarshes. In between receiving her B.S. in Microbiology from the University of Rochester and her graduate studies, she worked for a year at Bausch and Lomb as a quality control microbiologist. Outside of her research, Maggie enjoys traveling, beginner dance classes, and bringing her excitement for science to students and the community.



Nathan Taylor

Northside Hospital Award

Ph.D. Candidate, Chemistry and Biochemistry
Second Year ARCS Scholar

Nathan is a Ph.D. Candidate and a President's Fellow in the School of Chemistry and Biochemistry at the Georgia Institute of Technology. After graduating from Washington State University with a B.S. in Biochemistry, he briefly interned as a computational biologist at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. He then accepted a staff research position at the Georgia Tech Research Institute in Atlanta where he worked on trace chemical forensics projects for the Intelligence Community. After going back to school, he found a new graduate research passion answering cellular biochemistry questions in cancer and regenerative medicine using a novel molecular imaging technique, BCARS. Outside of research, he enjoys traveling, reading, and cooking with his wife.

GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY



Xavier Velez

Chambers/Jones Award

Ph.D. Student, Electrical and Computer Engineering
Second Year ARCS Scholar

Xavier is an Electrical and Computer Engineering Ph.D. student and President's Fellow at the Georgia Institute of Technology. He received his B.S. in Electrical Engineering from the University of Florida. Under the support of the MARC GatorSTAR Fellowship, Xavier researched the effects of transcutaneous vagus nerve stimulation on learning and memory in healthy older adults. In 2023, he was accepted to the Amgen Scholars Program, where he researched oxytocin nanosensing at the University of California, Berkeley, and subsequently presented his findings at a national conference. Currently, Xavier develops signal processing and machine learning solutions to better diagnose and understand neurodegenerative and psychiatric conditions.



Pierce Walker-Howell

Herz Global Impact Award

Ph.D. Student, Robotics
First Year ARCS Scholar

Pierce is a Robotics Ph.D. student at the Georgia Institute of Technology focusing on robot learning, multi-robot systems, and human-robot interaction. He has presented and published his current research at three top-tier robotics conferences. While Pierce was receiving his B.S. in Electrical Engineering at San Diego State University, he held the role as Software Lead and Electrical Lead for the Mechatronics Club, where he formed his love for robotics while building autonomous underwater vehicles. Throughout both his undergraduate and graduate studies, Pierce interned, and then later worked, for the Naval Information Warfare Center doing algorithm development for autonomous systems. In addition to his academics, Pierce loves activities such as trail running, rock climbing, and spending quality time with friends.



Matthew Yen

Wahlen Award

Ph.D. Student, Mechanical Engineering
Second Year ARCS Scholar

Matthew is a Ph.D. student in Mechanical Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology and a Renewable Bioproducts Institute Fellow. His research explores how natural polymers such as cellulose and lignin can be engineered into energy storage materials, with a focus on greener battery components that improve both performance and safety. He earned his B.S. in Chemical Engineering from Texas A&M University, where he also gained expertise at the intersection of materials science and data-driven research. Building upon his experience using machine learning to accelerate materials discovery and property optimization, he aims to combine materials science with data-driven techniques to advance energy storage technology.

MOREHOUSE COLLEGE

F. DUBOIS BOWMAN, PRESIDENT

"Thank you to the ARCS Foundation for investing nearly $1.3 million since 1992 to support the education of exceptional STEM students at Morehouse College, the only institution where undergraduates are honored with the prestigious ARCS Scholarship. Together, we are preparing principled, morally grounded, AI-ready leaders who pair technical excellence with creativity, ethical responsibility, and the courage to innovate in the science and technology ecosystem."

—

F. DuBois Bowman, '92, Ph.D.
President, Morehouse College

MOREHOUSE COLLEGE



Dallas Arnold

Davis Award

Applied Physics/Dual-Degree Engineering Major
First Year ARCS Scholar

Dallas is a junior at Morehouse College pursuing a B.S. in Applied Physics through the Dual-Degree Engineering Program. His research interests include mechanical engineering, aerospace, experimental design, and optomechanical systems, with a particular fascination for aviation and flight testing. During the summer of 2026, he conducted research at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory through the Academic Cooperation Program, where he designed and fabricated custom optomechanical components for streak-camera diagnostics using parametric CAD and additive manufacturing. At Morehouse College, Dallas has received multiple academic honors and serves as a Student Ambassador for the AUCC IDEA/Dual-Degree Engineering Program. He plans to continue his studies in Mechanical Engineering and pursue a career in aerospace, with interests in aircraft development and flight testing.



Austin Betts

Georgia-Pacific Award

Dual-Degree Engineering with a Mathematics Minor
First Year ARCS Scholar

Austin is a junior at Morehouse College pursuing a B.S. in Dual-Degree Engineering with a Mathematics minor. His research interests include mechanical engineering, product design, additive manufacturing, 3D printing, and manufacturing. His current work explores how modular design can affect the efficiency, customization, and production of 3D-printed products. Austin has experience with engineering design, prototyping, CAD, and Arduino-based projects. He is interested in pursuing graduate study in Mechanical Engineering and developing innovative manufacturing solutions. Outside of academics, he enjoys fashion, spending time with family and friends, and giving back to his community.

MOREHOUSE COLLEGE



Bilal Ibrahim
Kaiser Permanente Award
Biology Major
First Year ARCS Scholar

Bilal is a junior Biology major at Morehouse College. His research interests are infectious diseases, particularly HIV persistence and the socioeconomic factors that influence health outcomes in underserved communities. He has conducted environmental health research through Morehouse College's Environmental Justice and Sustainability Program, investigating bacterial contamination in Metro Atlanta waterways and its relationship to socioeconomic factors. He also conducted HIV research through the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine Summer Undergraduate Internship Program, developing a latency model in primary macrophages. Bilal was named EJSP Best Overall Research Scholar and received a Certification of Achievement at ABRCMS. In addition to research, he enjoys mentoring other students and exploring opportunities in biomedical science.



Zarek Moore
Bankoff/Hardin Award
Biology Major
First Year ARCS Scholar

Zarek Moore is a junior Biology major with a Sociology minor at Morehouse College. His research interests are in immunology and genetics, with a focus on T-cell engineering and CRISPR-based approaches. Along with his love of research, he enjoys listening to and collecting records, going on hikes, and serving as a teaching assistant for general biology. Last summer, he worked at the University of California, San Francisco, in the Marson Lab, and the summer before that at the Morehouse College Environmental Justice and Sustainability Program, studying water quality and infectious disease. He currently conducts on-campus research at Morehouse College, working with Leishmania donovani.

MOREHOUSE COLLEGE



Ekenedilichukwu Okoye

Graves Award

Computer Science Major
First Year ARCS Scholar

Ekenedilichukwu Okoye is a junior pursuing his B.S. in Computer Science at Morehouse College. His academic interests are strongly rooted in technology, particularly in his ongoing research involving MIPS architecture. In addition to his love for coding and research, Ekenedilichukwu enjoys a variety of other activities, including gaming, playing chess, and working out. He is also highly dedicated to making a positive impact in his community, which he demonstrates through his commitment as an active plasma donor.



Justin St. Cloud

Glenn Leadership Award

Biology Major, Public Health Minor
Second Year ARCS Scholar

Justin is a Biology major on the pre-medical track at Morehouse College pursuing a B.S. in Biology with a minor in Public Health. He is a continuing ARCS Scholar with research interests in molecular biology, cancer biology, and disease mechanisms. He previously conducted research at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine investigating neurodevelopmental disorders and later completed cancer-focused research at the Huntsman Cancer Institute at the University of Utah through the 5 For The Fight program, studying hTERT variants associated with telomere biology disorders. Justin has presented his research at poster sessions and has earned a publication. He plans to attend medical school and pursue a career combining medicine and research. Outside of academics, he enjoys fitness and watching movies.

MOREHOUSE COLLEGE



Ashton Szarnicki

Roche Award

Chemistry Major
Second Year ARCS Scholar

Ashton Szarnicki is a senior Chemistry major at Morehouse College, a Jack Kent Cooke Scholar, and a continuing ARCS Scholar. His research interests are in Chemistry, specifically organic chemistry, pharmaceuticals, and biomedical research. He conducted research in cardiac tissue engineering at the Coulombe Lab at Brown University as part of the Leadership Alliance, and this work contributed to a manuscript submitted to Scientific Reports. He is currently conducting chemistry research at Morehouse College focused on organic synthesis. Ashton plans to pursue postgraduate study in medicine and business, with interests in healthcare administration. Outside of academics, he enjoys watching baseball, playing chess, and cooking.



Imhotep Truitt

ARCS Atlanta Century Award

Biology Major
Second Year ARCS Scholar

Imhotep Truitt is a senior Biology major on the pre-med track at Morehouse College. His research interests are in neuroscience, specifically in clinical research. During the summer of 2025, he worked at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill in a glioblastoma lab studying the effects of ferroptosis on tumor cells. He has also conducted research at Morehouse College for three years. He has done research in molecular genetics during the spring semester of the 2024-2025 school year resulting in a publication. He is continuing C. elegans behavioral studies in the neuroscience department. Outside of school, he is also studying cell viability of neuroblastoma cell lines when exposed to different compounds at the Morehouse School of Medicine. In addition to his studies, Imhotep enjoys all types of music, cooking, and night drives.



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA

JERE W. MOREHEAD, PRESIDENT

"ARCS Foundation Atlanta has been an extraordinary partner to the University of Georgia, consistently investing in exceptional graduate students whose research and professional growth advance discovery, innovation, and impact throughout our state and beyond. Their generosity has played a pivotal role in the success of so many UGA students over the past 26 years, and we are deeply grateful for their enduring support of future leaders in STEM and medical disciplines."

—

Jere W. Morehead
President, University of Georgia

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



Monstera Brown
Leake/Brading Award
Ph.D. Student, Plant Biology
First Year ARCS Scholar

Monstera is a Plant Biology doctoral student at the University of Georgia focusing on the evolution of rare and threatened plants in Florida scrub. During her B.S. in Biology at Florida Gulf Coast University, she fell in love with Florida scrub and quickly realized she wanted to do the science that would advocate for the conservation of this precious ecosystem. She advocates for radical trans-inclusionary botany and science through workshops, talks about plant sex systems, and her community group the Trans Scientist Collective. She hopes to make science more accessible for underprivileged communities.



Christina Endara-Arnold
David, Helen and Marian Woodward Award
Ph.D. Candidate, Neuroscience
Third Year ARCS Scholar

Christina obtained a B.S. in Biology from Lee University. During her undergraduate career, she worked as a medical assistant and used her native language, Spanish, to help break down language barriers for underserved Latino patients in Chattanooga, TN. Christina continues to be involved with outreach in her community by planning and leading bilingual STEM events. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate studying Neuroscience at the University of Georgia, where her research interests include regeneration, neuropeptide signaling, and clinical medicine. Outside of science she enjoys spending time with family, leading worship on Sundays, and playing volleyball with friends.

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



Saumya Gade

Dodson Award

DVM/Ph.D. Student, Comparative Biomedical Sciences
Second Year ARCS Scholar

Saumya is a D.V.M.-Ph.D. student and UGA Graduate School Doctoral Fellow pursuing her Ph.D. in the Comparative Biomedical Sciences program at the University of Georgia. Interested in comparative pathology and translational medicine, she studies Cushing's disease, an endocrine disorder, between canines and humans. She received her B.S.A.B in Applied Biotechnology and an Undergraduate Certificate in One Health at the University of Georgia and has worked with several research labs throughout her degrees. She has experience working with vector-borne diseases, wildlife pathology, parasite ecology, murine models of bone disease, and stem cell and organoid research.



Zoe Griffin

Arrendale/Skinner Award

Ph.D. Student, Genetics
First Year ARCS Scholar

Zoe is a Ph.D. student in Genetics at the University of Georgia whose research explores how the eye develops and evolves, using reptiles to better understand how albinism affects vision. She earned her B.S. in BioSciences from Rice University with Distinction in Research and Creative Work. Her research has been recognized with the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship and the National Institutes of Health Genetics T32 Fellowship, and she has authored peer-reviewed publications and presented her work at numerous national conferences. Originally from rural Wyoming, Zoe enjoys sharing her passion for science through outreach and mentoring students from rural communities. Outside the lab, she loves birdwatching, caring for her pet lizards and cats, and baking treats for her labmates.

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



Mira Le

Olchowski/Potter Award

Ph.D. Student, Chemistry
First Year ARCS Scholar

Mira Thanh Ngoc Le is a doctoral student at the Department of Chemistry at the University of Georgia whose research focuses on the development of novel biodegradable plastics. Growing up in Vietnam, she witnessed the environmental consequences of plastic pollution firsthand, which inspired her interest in biodegradable materials and the chemistry behind their design and degradation. After earning her B.S. in Biochemistry from the University of Georgia, Mira began her research career at the New Materials Institute, where she evaluated the degradability of polymer materials. In 2025, she began her doctoral studies in Dr. Jason Locklin's research group, focusing on the development of biobased plastics with improved mechanical strength and novel strategies for evaluating material degradability. Mira has co-authored a peer-reviewed publication and continues to advance her research at the intersection of polymer chemistry, sustainable materials, and environmental stewardship.



Jennifer McCann

Burtchaell Award

Ph.D. Student, Genetics
Third Year ARCS Scholar

Jenny is a Genetics Ph.D. student at the University of Georgia studying genetic sex determination. Her research is interested in understanding how germ cells contribute to female determination and ovary development. Before beginning her doctoral program, Jenny spent ten years teaching high school and college Science and earned her M.S. in Biology from the University of Nebraska-Kearney. At UGA, Jenny is a UGA Doctoral Fellow. Outside lab, Jenny loves backpacking in the mountains, reading, and spending time with her husband and three kids.

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



Kristofer Meier

Boyd/Henry Award

Ph.D. Student, Toxicology
First Year ARCS Scholar

Kris is a second-year Ph.D. student and first-year ARCS Scholar in the Interdisciplinary Toxicology Program at the University of Georgia. After obtaining a B.S. in Biology in 2023, also from the University of Georgia, he worked as a research technician specializing in the development and optimization of protein detection immunoassays. He began his doctoral studies in 2025 under the mentorship of Dr. Xiaoqin Ye, where he studies endometrial hormone signaling and its effects on uterine fluid movement and endometriosis. Since beginning the program, Kris has co-authored a review manuscript and worked on two research articles that are being prepared for publication.



Jordan Parker

McGonigle/Rosenbaum Award

Ph.D. Candidate, Comparative Biomedical Sciences
Third Year ARCS Scholar

Jordan Parker received her B.S. in Equine Science in 2020 and her M.S. in Veterinary Science in 2023 from the University of Kentucky. Her passion for horses and biomedical sciences led her to pursue a career in research. She was accepted into the dual D.V.M.-Ph.D. program at the University of Georgia in 2023 and awarded a graduate fellowship. Parker works with Dr. John Peroni on regenerative medicine research in equids. Her self-designed Ph.D. project explores stem cell homing to injuries. Her work has been funded by the Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation, and she has published multiple articles and presented at international conferences during her Ph.D. She hopes to one day work in academia, educating the next generation of veterinary scientists.

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



Myddelton Parker

Roche Award

Ph.D. Student, Biomedical Engineering
Third Year ARCS Scholar

Myddelton (Myddie) Parker is a fourth-year Ph.D. student in Biomedical Engineering at the University of Georgia. Her translational research focuses on modifying current antibiotics to include nitric oxide, an endogenous gasotransmitter with antibacterial and antithrombotic properties, for broad-spectrum antimicrobial solutions. This work has led to six publications, four conference presentations, and three patent applications. Myddie earned her B.S. in Biological Engineering from the University of Georgia in 2023 and a Certificate in International Biomedical Regulatory Sciences from the University of Georgia's College of Pharmacy. Passionate about STEM education, Myddie tutors middle and high school students in math and science, aiming to inspire a love for STEM from an early age.



Neil Patel

Northside Hospital Award

Ph.D. Candidate, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
Third Year ARCS Scholar

Neil completed his B.S. in Biology at the University of North Georgia researching a novel approach to detect a bacterial infection of Mycoplasma gallisepticum in northern Georgia songbirds. Currently, he is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the University of Georgia. Neil received the Glycoscience Training Program NIH T32 training grant at the Complex Carbohydrate Research Center. He served as chair for the 2026 Proteoglycans Gordon Research Seminar to promote networking and scientific communication among young professionals in his field. His research intersects epigenetics, cancer biology, and glycoscience to investigate how specific complex carbohydrates are regulated in our bodies and how dysregulation of these sugars can alter melanoma tumor growth and progression.

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



Claire Reichardt

Taylor Award

Ph.D. Student, Microbiology
Second Year ARCS Scholar

Claire is a Microbiology doctoral student at the University of Georgia focusing on fungal pathogens. Claire is interested in fungal genomics and its correlation to pathogenicity. She received her B.S. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2023 where she maintained research positions in Microbiology and Plant Pathology departments. Claire was named an NIH T32 Trainee in the Genetics department at the University of Georgia in 2024. She has published two peer-reviewed articles. In her free time Claire helps publish young researchers at the Journal of Emerging Investigators through copy editing and reviewing.



Skylar Settles

Dick Award

Ph.D. Candidate, Genetics
Second Year ARCS Scholar

Skylar earned a B.S. in Biology from Purdue University where her love for research began through studying heat resistance in Salmonella enterica. During her undergraduate experience she also worked as a laboratory intern in both bioanalytical and in vivo laboratories at Inotiv, further solidifying her interest in the research industry and ambition to pursue graduate school. She is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia working toward a Ph.D. in Genetics studying pluripotent stem cell regulation in a freshwater flatworm, the planarian. Outside of her graduate studies she enjoys going on walks with her Dalmatian, reading, and cooking.

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



Moira Taber

Cooper/Mukharji Award

Ph.D. Student, Regenerative Bioscience
Third Year ARCS Scholar

Moira received her B. S. in Biological Sciences from the University of Georgia, during which time she served as an Ameri-Corp Service member and UGA Cattlemen's Association Club President. She pursued post-graduate education as a Regenerative Bioscience doctoral student and Franklin Foundation Fellow at the University of Georgia. Moira's research focuses on delineating the neural network recovery mechanisms and influence of sexually dimorphic neuroanatomy and development on functional recovery following traumatic brain injury (TBI). She has presented research at national conferences and her work is expected to yield seven publications to help address the research gaps which have delayed FDA approved treatments and limited therapy options for TBI patients who suffer from lifelong disabilities.



Breanna Timani

Hinkle Award

Ph.D. Candidate, Comparative Biomedical Sciences
Second Year ARCS Scholar

Breanna Timani is a fourth-year Ph.D. candidate in Dr. Brindley's virology lab pursuing her degree in Comparative Biomedical Sciences. Her research is focused on understanding the molecular requirements for Zika virus infection in different cell types, as well as understanding how Zika replication is impacted by varying temperatures. She received her B.S in Environmental Health Science from the University of Georgia. Throughout her undergraduate career, she gained experience working in infectious disease labs as well as environmental microbiology labs. As a graduate student, she has presented her work in national conferences and competed as a finalist in UGA's annual 3-Minute Thesis competition in 2024.

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



Joshua Weiss

UCB, Inc. Award

Ph.D. Candidate, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
First Year ARCS Scholar

Josh is a doctoral candidate in Biochemistry & Molecular Biology at the University of Georgia focusing on engineering designer biomolecules. He earned his B.S. in Biochemistry from Saint Michael's College while conducting CRISPR-Cas and neurodegeneration research, and he led the men's tennis team as a two-year captain and First Team All-Conference competitor. Josh's key honors include receiving the Christopher G. Cooper Graduate Fellowship and induction into the Blue Key National Honor Society. He has also received funding to expand synthetic biology education and research opportunities for rural, underserved students in Georgia. Outside the lab, he plays basketball and continues to play and teach tennis.

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