



Davidson Institute  
**Fellows Scholarship**

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## **Charlottesville teen awarded \$50,000 scholarship for discovery to treat macular degeneration**

### **Meenakshi Ambati Named A 2021 Davidson Fellow Laureate Scholarship Winner**

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Charlottesville, Va. – The Davidson Fellows Scholarship Program has announced the 2021 scholarship winners. Among the honorees is 16-year-old Meenakshi Ambati of Charlottesville. Ambati won a \$50,000 scholarship for her project, *Identification of Fluoxetine as a Direct NLRP3 Inhibitor to Treat Atrophic Macular Degeneration*. She is one of only four students across the country to be recognized as a Davidson Fellows Laureate and one of 20 scholarship winners in the 2021 Fellows class.

“I am grateful to The Davidson Institute and The Davidson Fellows Scholarship jury for recognizing my project,” said Ambati. “To me, being a Davidson Fellow means being curious, creative, and fearlessly striving to change the world. I really enjoy understanding the universe through the lens of science and mathematics to improve the human condition.”

For her project, Ambati discovered a widely prescribed anti-depressant medication, fluoxetine, could be repurposed to treat dry macular degeneration, a form of blindness that afflicts 200 million people around the world and that currently has no FDA-approved treatment. Dry age-related macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness among people over 50 years of age.

Ambati is a rising senior at Albemarle High School. When she is not continuing her studies in a laboratory, she enjoys playing piano, practicing ceramics, and painting the forest landscape behind her home.

“The 2021 Davidson Fellows Scholarship recipients have risen the challenges of a global pandemic to complete significant projects within their fields of study,” said Bob Davidson, founder of the Davidson Institute. “To be awarded this recognition, these students have shown immense skill and work ethic, and they should be commended as they continue their educational and research journeys while continuing to work to solve some of the world’s most vexing problems.”

The 2021 Davidson Fellows will be honored during a virtual ceremony in September 2021.

The Davidson Fellows Scholarship program offers \$50,000, \$25,000 and \$10,000 college scholarships to students 18 or younger, who have completed significant projects that have the potential to benefit society in the fields of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, literature and music. The Davidson Fellows Scholarship has provided more than \$8.6 million in scholarship funds to 386 students since its inception in 2001, and has been named one of the

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most prestigious undergraduate scholarships by [U.S. News & World Report](#). It is a program of the Davidson Institute, a national nonprofit organization headquartered in Reno, Nev. that supports profoundly gifted youth.

**About the Davidson Institute**

Founded by Bob Davidson in 1999, the Davidson Institute recognizes, nurtures and supports profoundly intelligent young people, and provides opportunities for them to develop their talents to make a positive difference. The Institute offers support through a number of programs and services, including the Davidson Fellows Scholarship and the [Davidson Academy of Nevada](#). For more information about the 2021 Davidson Fellows, please visit: [DavidsonGifted.org/gifted-programs/fellows-scholarship](http://DavidsonGifted.org/gifted-programs/fellows-scholarship)

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*High-resolution photos are available at [www.davidsongifted.org/gifted-programs/fellows-scholarship](http://www.davidsongifted.org/gifted-programs/fellows-scholarship)*