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BOSTON-AREA TEENS AWARDED \$175,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS FOR ACHIEVEMENTS IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH

Elizabeth Hanechak Awarded \$100,000 Laureate Scholarship

Ethan Yan Awarded \$50,000 Scholarship

Philip Meng Awarded \$25,000 Scholarship

BOSTON — Three Massachusetts students have been named 2025 Davidson Fellows, one of the nation's most prestigious honors for students 18 and younger. Elizabeth Hanechak of Russell, Ethan Yan of Groton, and Philip Meng of Andover will share \$175,000 in scholarships as part of the program's 25th anniversary year, which is awarding a record \$825,000 to 21 students nationwide.

Elizabeth Hanechak, 18, of Russell — \$100,000 Laureate Scholarship, Science

Hanechak, a first-year student at Brandeis University, developed a microbial system that converts plastic waste into fertilizer and drinkable water. Her process uses a genetically modified enzyme to break down plastics within 24 hours and a naturally occurring microalgae strain to neutralize the resulting toxins, producing safe fertilizer material. Designed to be low-cost and scalable, the system could help communities struggling with plastic pollution by restoring farmland, cleaning waterways and improving public health.

"The Davidson Institute scholarship is unique to me because it recognizes the focus and determination that is innate to young people," Hanechak said. "This recognition as a Davidson Fellow validates the hard work and sacrifice required to make my project a reality, and it encourages me to continue committing my energies to this project, even when I am faced with failure."

Ethan Yan, 16, of Groton — \$50,000 Scholarship, Science

Yan, a rising junior at Groton School, created ALlocate, a low-cost, AI-powered microscope add-on that detects acute myeloid leukemia cells from standard slides without expensive equipment. Tested to expert-level accuracy, the \$100 system is designed for small hospitals and clinics in underserved and remote areas, where it could help speed diagnosis and save lives.

"I have been inspired by the work, commitment and impact of many previous Davidson Fellows and am excited to join this community of innovators," Yan said. "Being named a Fellow is a meaningful affirmation that the efforts of young researchers can have a tangible effect on society."

Philip Meng, 18, of Andover — \$25,000 Scholarship, Technology

Meng, a rising senior at Phillips Academy, co-developed EnDive (English Diversity), a cross-

dialect benchmark for evaluating the fairness and performance of large language models. The tool tests how leading AI systems respond to five underrepresented English dialects, identifying biases that can misclassify or disadvantage speakers in contexts such as education, hiring and healthcare. By revealing these gaps, EnDive provides developers and researchers with a framework to create more equitable, dialect-aware AI systems.

“It is truly an honor to be selected as a Davidson Fellow,” Meng said. “This recognition not only validates the hard work and passion I have poured into my project, but also welcomes me into a community of brilliant, innovation-driven individuals dedicated to making a positive impact on society.”

“For 25 years, the Davidson Fellows Scholarship has recognized some of the most remarkable research undertaken by young people in the nation,” said Bob Davidson, founder of the Davidson Institute. “The 2025 class of Fellows continues to raise the bar for achievement as we celebrate this milestone year, marked by innovation, perseverance and the hundreds of alumni whose work continues to make a lasting difference in their fields and communities.”

The Davidson Fellows Scholarship program offers 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 \$10.7 million in scholarship funds to 469 students since its inception in 2001, and has been named one of the 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 2025 Davidson Fellows, please visit: [DavidsonFellows.org](#).

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High-resolution photos are available at
[DavidsonFellows.org](#)