



For Immediate Release  
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**SAN DIEGO TEENS AWARDED \$75,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS FOR  
ACHIEVEMENTS IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**  
**Zinia Khattar Awarded \$50,000 Scholarship**  
**Joe Smith Awarded \$25,000 Scholarship**

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**SAN DIEGO** — Two San Diego–area students have been named 2025 Davidson Fellows, one of the nation’s most prestigious honors for students 18 and younger. Zinia Khattar of San Diego and Joe Smith of Ramona will share \$75,000 in scholarships as part of the program’s 25th anniversary year, which is awarding a record \$825,000 to 21 students nationwide.

**Zinia Khattar, 17, of San Diego — \$50,000 Scholarship, Science**

Khattar, a first-year Harvard University student, discovered a key cellular pathway that could be targeted to treat diseases linked to mitochondrial dysfunction, including Parkinson’s and diabetes. Using a novel gene set profiling approach, she identified the integrated stress response (ISR) as the predominant pathway activated when mitochondria are damaged, confirming its role across multiple models. Her findings open new opportunities for developing therapies that restore mitochondrial health.

“Becoming a Davidson Fellow is a tremendous encouragement to continue asking probing questions,” Khattar said. “Joining a community of fellow thinkers, builders, and inventors who serve humanity has been a dream, and I’m forever grateful to the Davidson Institute for helping me materialize this vision.”

**Joe Smith, 17, of Ramona — \$25,000 Scholarship, Science**

Smith, a first-year Caltech student, developed a machine learning technique to identify astrometric binaries, pairs of stars that orbit each other, in sky surveys using artificial neural networks. His tool enables astronomers to distinguish true binary star systems from chance alignments in massive datasets like Gaia, potentially advancing research in areas from black hole detection to stellar evolution.

“Being named a Davidson Fellow is a very welcome surprise,” Smith said. “I am thankful to see how much my curiosity is valued, motivating me to continue pursuing projects I find perplexing and intellectually demanding.”

“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.”

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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](#)