

R&LHS announces 2026 scholarship awards

Seven students receive grants of \$4,000 each

The Railway & Locomotive Historical Society has announced the names of seven 2026 recipients of scholarships. Each award is worth \$4,000.

[Scholarships](#) are given in the names of those late R&LHS members who endowed them: Prof. George W. Hilton, Edward Myers, and Bruce R. Ward. This marks the seventh year of the program. In its first six years, R&LHS awarded scholarships to 30 students.

R&LHS offers funding to encourage the study of railroad history and operations. Undergraduates (2nd, 3rd and 4th year) and graduate students may apply. Scholarship applicants must be enrolled at an accredited college or university in a degree-seeking program in the award's academic year. Fourth-year, graduating seniors are eligible if, by the application submission date, they have been accepted for graduate study.

The program is open to students majoring in history, engineering, transportation or transportation logistics, or other majors where the student's work has a demonstrated connection to railroad operations and history.

For the 2026 round of awards, scholarships went to these students:

Kylie Bedel

Kylie Bedel of Evansville, Ind., is pursuing a master of science degree in agricultural economics at Kansas State University. Her thesis research focuses on comparing barge freight and rail grain shuttle movements from Midwest to New Orleans for corn and soybeans.

She is a 2025 graduate of Purdue University, where she was awarded a bachelor of science



Kylie Bedel

double major in agribusiness management and animal science. She has had two internships at Union Pacific Railroad in marketing and sales, and aspires to a career in railroading. She is also a two-time past recipient of the R&LHS scholarship.

Nathan Ives

Nathan Ives of Brookline, Mass., is attending Furman University, and working on a bachelor of arts degree in urban studies and theater. He is a member of the Boston Street Railway Association, for which he has contributed to its magazine, and made presentations. He also maintains an internet YouTube channel about Boston railroads.

He is an intern at Keolis, the operator for Boston commuter rail passenger service. Following graduation, he aspires to a master of science degree in transportation, and a career in planning for commuter rail service.

Aaron Murawski

Aaron Murawski of Oak Forest, Ill., is working on a degree in civil engineering at Purdue University Northwest. Growing up in the Chicago area, known for its vibrant



Nathan Ives



Aaron Murawski

railroad history and contemporary presence, has given him an awareness of the importance of the railroad industry.

Following graduation he hopes to apply his civil engineering expertise to the safe and efficient operation of railroads.

Kelvin Ortiz

Kelvin Ortiz of Winter Haven, Fla., is a civil engineering student pursuing a bachelor of science degree at the Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico-Orlando. He desires to use this expertise in transportation engineering and planning, with a focus on rail and multimodal systems, contributing to projects that improve operational efficiency, safety, and connectivity among rail, highway, and transit networks.

Following graduation, he plans to pursue graduate studies in transportation engineering.

Gabrielle Saldana

Gabrielle Saldana of Yuba City, Calif., is a business administration finance major at California State University, Chico. She comes from

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Kelvin Ortiz



Gabrielle Saldana



Hayden Vitz



James Walker

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a railroad family, with two generations having worked in the industry.

She aspires to become the third generation by applying her degree to railroad-related work. After completing a summer internship with Union Pacific Railroad in marketing and sales, she will continue with UP as a year-round intern while completing her degree. She plans to graduate in December 2026 and pursue a career in the railroad industry.

Hayden Vitz

Hayden Vitz, of Riverdale, N.J., is majoring in rail transportation engineering at Penn State-Altoona. He is the president of the AREMA student chapter there. He is an avid rail enthusiast who loves to video and photograph trains. He has had two internships at Railroad Construction Co. He is also interested in railroad history and preservation. Following graduation, he says he is excited to see where he ends up in the railroad industry.

James Walker

James Walker of Woodstock, Ga., is attending Georgia Southern University and working toward a BBA in supply chain management, with an emphasis in logistics and intermodal transportation.

Fueled by a passion for railway history, he views intermodal integration as key to improving reliability, reducing emissions, and driving cost savings across the logistics industry. Upon graduation he hopes to join a Class 1 railroad in operations or intermodal strategy.
