



Ad Astra Kansas Newsletter

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Winners of 2025 Ad Astra Kansas Foundation Space Scholarships named



The exceptional students selected for a \$1,000 scholarship each for the 2025-2026 academic years are working in the fields of aerospace engineering, and biochemistry/astrobiology. An honorable mention recipient studying biomedical engineering will receive \$250. Winners are invited to the 2025 Galaxy Forum at the Cosmosphere in Hutchinson on August 23.



Graduate winner--Yie Jian (Julian) Chee Wichita State University

Chee is a junior design engineer at WSU's Airbus Campus and a graduate aerospace engineering student, having earned his Bachelor of Science degree at WSU in 2021. He has worked at Airbus Americas Engineering and Bombardier Aerospace and placed first in both the Boeing & Wichita State University Bronze Propeller Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Competition and the Airbus & Wichita State University Wingbox Contest. As an international student from Malaysia with a passion for rocketry, he has mentored international student teams for competitions like the Spaceport America Cup Rocket Competition and WSU students for their capstone projects as a graduate teaching assistant. In 2022, Chee's paper airplane design broke the Guinness Book of World Records for the farthest flight — 252 feet, 26 feet over the previous record. His latest work is on in-flight stabilization for model rockets. Chee aspires to contribute to the aerospace systems industry with a greater capacity after he graduates. Courtesy photo

Julian Chee



Undergrad winner--Kai Smith University of Kansas

Smith is a junior at KU, with a major in biochemistry and a minor in astrobiology. The Pretty Prairie native has been involved in several undergraduate research projects at KU and has presented his work at four conferences. He recently participated in a NASA undergraduate training program called L'SPACE, where his team designed a hypothetical mission-- Kai served as the chief scientist. Besides his dream to serve as a chief research scientist for a NASA mission, he also is interested in STEM outreach and education, which he does now. He was also nominated for a Goldwater Scholarship. Courtesy photo

Kai Smith



Honorable mention--Lauren Coffman

Wichita State University

Coffman is a junior at WSU, majoring in biomedical engineering, minoring in mathematics. She has completed two internships at NASA's Johnson Space Center. And has conducted undergrad research at WSU, which she is currently preparing for publication. She was selected as a Kansas IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence (K-INBRE) Scholar and presented at three conferences. WSU website photo

Lauren Coffman

Ready for the planetarium show

Space Celebration reaches new heights



Buoyed by the participation of 25 science groups, planetarium shows, and good weather, the 2025 AAK Space Celebration at Washburn University drew over 350 attendees of all ages.

Photos

Cosmosphere, K-State Salina partnership to elevate K-12

aerospace education

HUTCHINSON--K-State University Salina and the Cosmosphere are forging a strategic partnership that will elevate aerospace education and research for K-12 students and beyond. Combining campus and museum expertise in technical and aerospace education they will develop new programs, public and youth outreach, summer camps, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) experiences; and new curriculums.

"The partnership will provide students with actionable paths to achieve their newly sparked dreams," said Jim Remar, Cosmosphere CEO.

Partnership



Wildcat rocketry soars

K State's Wildcat Rocketry team won first place in the national collegiate 2025 Argonia Cup rocketry competition held at the end of March. Beating 19 other teams, their competition rocket "Purple Horizon" also broke the world record for altitude on a commercial-staged L-impulse rocket, reaching 35,439 feet and a maximum speed of 1,050 miles per hour. Courtesy photo.

For more rocketry

Ad Astra Kansas News
INTERSTELLAR R & D
#47

Interstellar University Exclusive Focus and Update

This “Interstellar R&D” forty-seventh feature in the Ad Astra Kansas News continues a new editorial format experiment for the previous, this, and the next IR&D #s 46, 47, 48: *Interstellar University Exclusive Focus and Update*. The first 45 IR&D features with the Observation, Communication, and Transportation 3 column format provided a real-time chronicling of Interstellar Matters during the 1st quarter of the 21st Century, and perhaps more valuably, IR&D features 1-45 provide an introductory, fundamental, general Curriculum for a possible Interstellar University (IU) in the Ad Astra State. The 3 experimental IR&D features should enable more concentrated focus and advancement for IU. Ad Astra, Galactically – Steve Durst

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Future collaboration possibilities--A notional map of possible intended neighboring states Interstellar Resources with which an IU in Kansas could consider interaction.



West in Colorado – Colorado University, Colorado School of Mines, United Launch Alliance, Ball Aerospace, Lockheed Martin, United States Space Force, Space Foundation, Space Command

North in Nebraska – Nebraska University, Strategic Air Command & Aerospace Museum

East in Missouri – Missouri University, Washington University, Gateway Arch

South in Oklahoma – Stafford Space Museum, Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma Space Industry Development Authority, Collins Aerospace

Mission of the Ad Astra Kansas Foundation

Our mission is to advance the Kansas State Motto, “Ad Astra Per Aspera” (to the stars through difficulties), by promoting space science and education in Kansas.

Vision: We envision a Kansas known in the 21st century as the Ad Astra State and as a leader in space science research, development and education. Our goal is to: Interest Inform Inspire

Ad Astra Kansas Foundation

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