

# Ingram Scholars Program celebrates 30 years

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Ingram Scholars Program: 30 Years of Impact

A transformative scholarship program at Vanderbilt University is celebrating its 30th anniversary.

The Ingram Scholarship, one of three signature merit-based scholarships for undergraduates at Vanderbilt, provides recipients with full tuition, all required fees and the value of on-campus housing each year.

The highly selective program also grants a summer stipend for the student to create and execute a service-learning project, which can be used to meet the [Immersion Vanderbilt](#) graduation requirement.

Vanderbilt celebrated the program's milestone with a private 30th Reunion dinner at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum on Nov. 4. The celebration brought together alumni of the Ingram Scholars Program and paid tribute to the donors whose generosity has touched the lives of so many Vanderbilt students and alumni.

The Ingram Scholars Program was founded in 1993 by E. Bronson Ingram, chairman of the Vanderbilt University Board of Trust from 1991 until his death in 1995. The Ingram family's generosity has led to transformative experiences for many Vanderbilt students, who have in turn given back to Nashville and to communities around the globe.

Scholarship programs such as this are the impetus behind Vanderbilt's [Dare to Grow](#) campaign—a \$3.2 billion comprehensive campaign and the most ambitious in university history. By providing tuition support, Vanderbilt expands access for students, attracting the best aspiring professionals in a range of fields and positioning them to lead discovery and discourse in their local communities and globally. Learn more at [vu.edu/daretogrow](https://vu.edu/daretogrow).

Members of the Ingram family, along with current scholars and alumni, attended the Nov. 4 celebration, where the theme highlighted the program's "30 Years of Impact."



Chancellor Daniel Diermeier (top left) and C. Cybele Raver, provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs (top right) celebrate with members of the Ingram family at the Ingram Scholars 30th Reunion. Pictured in the center is Vanderbilt student Anoushka Puri.  
Photo: Anne Rayner



Members of the Ingram family celebrate the Ingram Scholars Program's "30 Years of Impact" at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. Photo: Anne Rayner



Musicians perform at the Ingram Scholars 30th Reunion at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.  
Photo: Anne Rayner



Vanderbilt students celebrate at the Ingram Scholars 30th reunion.  
Photo: Anne Rayner



John Ingram speaks at the event.

## 30 Years of Impact

Here's a snapshot of some students whose Vanderbilt experiences were positively shaped by the generosity of receiving an Ingram Scholarship and whose service projects are making a difference in communities across the world.

**Name:** Grace Jones

**Service Partner:** Mano a Mano International, Cochabamba, Bolivia

**Date of Project:** [June–August 2023](#)

**Description:** Bolivia has the most severe rural poverty rate in South America, is in a drought, and is vulnerable to extreme events. Jones traveled to Bolivia to partner with Mano a Mano, an organization focused on health and education, roads and water, ecological agriculture training, aviation, and international partnerships.

**Impact:** Jones worked to expand the organization's capacity by publishing a weekly bulletin detailing local events, designing brochures about hydroponic farming systems, producing a seven-part video series and writing articles. She also helped build organizational frameworks and researched innovations on sustainable agriculture and organic farming.



Grace Jones

**In her own words:** “Having the opportunity to work with Mano a Mano International was so transformational. The staff and volunteers welcomed me with open arms, and getting to know these incredibly devoted and hard-working individuals has had such a profound effect on my priorities since returning to campus. I returned with such profound gratitude and deep friendships that I know will continue for years to come. Throughout the Ingram Scholars Program, we devote a considerable amount of time to considering what effective and meaningful service looks like, and having the opportunity to see this theory put into action through Mano a Mano and contribute toward this mission was so inspiring.

Whether in how Mano a Mano's team roots every project directly in the voice of the community, or how they seek to expand capacity through projects built for long-term sustainability, I am so honored to have had the opportunity to get to work alongside Mano a Mano's supportive team and contribute toward their mission-driven work. I long for the day when I can return.”

**Name:** Kyle Vallone

**Service Partner:** Aspirnaut, Nashville, Tennessee, and Wynne, Arkansas

**Date of Project:** [May–July 2023](#)

**Description:** High-poverty counties in the U.S. are disproportionately rural. One pathway to help rural students out of poverty is to help them pursue science, technology, engineering and math careers, which pay more. Vallone sought to develop more approaches to recruit high school students from rural backgrounds into STEM fields. He partnered with Aspirnaut, a program on Vanderbilt's campus that brings students across the country to campus in the summer. He served as a residential counselor, developed and taught an ACT prep class, wrote and implemented an impact survey that assessed changes in students' self-confidence in their science skills, and designed a state-of-the-art Aspirnaut chemical biology research lab, which is being built as a temporary campus for students in Wynne, Arkansas, where their school was destroyed by a tornado.

**Impact:** Vallone's research through surveys found high school students who attended Aspirnaut programs left with increased self-confidence about their scientific ability and sense of belonging within the scientific community. The lab will support multi-year discovery experiences for high school students in Wynne.

**In his own words:** “Working with Aspirnaut this summer was a wonderful experience and a chance to finally fulfill a vision I've had since before I came to Vanderbilt. I was able to watch and support an amazing group that entered as high schoolers and left as young scientists possessing research, communication and

life skills that will last a lifetime. My first brush with scientific research was equally transformative, so it was extremely meaningful to be able to share this experience with others and help the next generation of diverse scientists find their “spark.” This project reinforced my desire to become a biology professor in the future so that I can continue to help students from nontraditional backgrounds thrive and feel empowered to persist in STEM fields. The benefit of working with an organization that was only a few feet away at VUMC and so closely aligned with my field of study here at Vanderbilt is that I’ve been able to continue working with Aspirnaut through the academic year as well.”



Kyle Vallone

**Name:** Charu Balamurugan

**Service Partner:** FLY, San Francisco Bay area

**Date of Project:** May–June 2023

**Description:** California has one of the highest youth incarceration rates in the country. Balamurugan partnered with FLY, a nonprofit that serves youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system by connecting them with positive mentors and role models and supporting them to become leaders. The project brought mental health support through music and wellness to youth reentering society after time incarcerated.

**Impact:** Youth who had recently spent time in juvenile halls and/or correctional facilities completed an eight-week “Music and Wellness: Introduction to Songwriting” program. Youth learned how music can affect emotions, resilience and mental health as a whole. Participants gained basic digital songwriting skills and produced a youth album at the end of the course titled *The FLY album: Volume 1*. Clinicians within the behavioral health system have agreed to use the course.

**In her own words:** “My summer service project at Fresh Lifelines for Youth (FLY) was an incredible experience. It taught me how to be perceptive to both implicit and explicit needs within underserved populations, such as these justice-involved youth.



Charu Balamurugan

More specifically, throughout my time at FLY, the most useful and sustainable deliverables I have created have been those not previously outlined in my initial proposal and simply arose from conversations I had with FLY staff and leadership. In addition, I now believe even more in the potency of music and wellness programming in improving youth mental health, especially seen through the extremely personal songs, synthesizing their experiences, created by girls at the Margaret J. Kemp Camp, such as “Beautiful Struggle,” now privately available in the form of a three-song album within FLY. In addition, I am extremely gratified by the level of trust I earned among these vulnerable populations throughout my time at FLY. For example, incarcerated youth initially uninterested in music and wellness programming began to request to participate in my sessions during their free time by the end of my time there. Consequently, this summer service project has had

lasting impacts on FLY’s workings in the form of music and wellness activities that case managers will continue to use with re-entry youth—something that they previously have not done—as part of fulfilling their Social Emotional Learning goals, for example. Their Law Program, currently implemented within middle schools and high schools in 48 Bay-area cities, is also in the process of being modified with the creative wellness curriculum I created with my project, which speaks volumes for the level of focus on mental health that FLY plans to implement after this past summer. Overall, this project taught me how to identify need, generate creative and novel solutions, and sustain impact via multifaceted action.”

## By the Numbers

The total amount of tuition dollars awarded to Ingram Scholars over the past 30 years stands at an impressive **\$39,899,608**.

An additional **\$66,000** has been awarded in philanthropy stipends to scholars, funding a remarkable **434** projects, spanning **221** domestic, **202** international, **10** remote and **70** Nashville-based initiatives.

Over the last 30 years, the 333 Ingram Scholars have volunteered more than 153,180 hours, which is 6,383 days, serving the Nashville community.

### STAY TUNED

Watch for additional student stories about Ingram Scholars Program participants in the coming months on Vanderbilt's [Instagram](#) page.

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615-322-6397



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