



## 2026 LIGCSA SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

Celebrating 13 outstanding students and the continued commitment of the LIGCSA community to education.

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|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| <b>\$20,200</b> | <b>13</b>       | <b>\$282,200</b>  |
| Awarded in 2026 | 2026 Recipients | Awarded 2006-2026 |

The Long Island Golf Course Superintendents Association is proud to recognize the recipients of its **2026 Scholarship Awards** and to celebrate the outstanding young men and women within the extended LIGCSA family who are continuing their education and preparing for careers in a wide range of fields.

In 2026, LIGCSA awarded **\$20,200 in scholarships** to 13 recipients. With this year's awards, the Association has now distributed a total of **\$282,200 in scholarship assistance between 2006 and 2026**.

The LIGCSA Scholarship Program was re-established in 2006 to provide educational assistance to members and their dependents. Since that time, the program has become one of the Association's most meaningful traditions, providing financial support to the sons, daughters, grandsons and granddaughters of LIGCSA members as they pursue post-secondary education.

### PROGRAM SUPPORT & SELECTION

The strength of the program is made possible through the continued generosity and participation of the LIGCSA membership. Funding comes from a portion of membership dues, Association raffles, donations and, importantly, the annual **LIGCSA Scholarship & Research Golf Tournament**. Funds not awarded in a given year remain dedicated to future scholarships.

Scholarship applications are evaluated independently by three professors from the University of Kansas who also serve as judges for the GCSAA Legacy Awards program. Applicants are considered on the strength of their academic accomplishments, activities, goals and overall applications.

## JOHN CARLONE SCHOLARSHIP PRIZE

### Grace Benedict

The Association is especially proud to recognize **Grace Benedict** as the recipient of the **2026 John Carlone Scholarship Prize**, LIGCSA's top scholarship award. Named in honor of longtime Scholarship Chairman John Carlone and his extraordinary commitment to the program, the award recognizes the highest-ranking scholarship recipient and incorporates John's generous annual contribution to the Scholarship Fund.

Grace is the daughter of Brian and Marihelen Benedict. Brian works for Advanced Turf Solutions. Grace is entering her senior year at the **University of South Carolina**, where she is majoring in Mathematics with minors in Actuarial Science and Risk Management. She plans to pursue a career as an actuary.

## 2026 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

This year's recipients represent an impressive range of universities, academic disciplines and career aspirations.

### Dylan Pughe

Dylan is the son of Dave and Beth Pughe. Dave works for Advanced Turf Solutions. Dylan is entering his senior year at **Bucknell University** in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, where he is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a major in Finance and a minor in Real Estate.

During the past academic year, Dylan had the opportunity to study abroad in both Sydney, Australia, and Singapore. With a strong entrepreneurial interest, he hopes after graduation to eventually build a business of his own, potentially in real estate or wealth management.

### Zachary Pughe

Zach is also the son of Dave and Beth Pughe. He is entering his sophomore year at **Fairfield University** in Fairfield, Connecticut, where he has been accepted into the Dolan School of Business.

While Zach has not yet declared a specific major, his interests include real estate and financial management, and he looks forward to exploring those areas further as he continues his studies.

### Lindsay O'Neill

Lindsay is the daughter of Eric and Denise O'Neill. Eric is the Superintendent at The Towers in Floral Park. Lindsay is entering her senior year at the **University of Rhode Island** in Kingston, Rhode Island.

She is majoring in Elementary Education with a minor in Human Development and Family Sciences and has been accepted into URI's **4+1 program**, which will allow her to earn a master's degree in Special Education immediately following completion of her undergraduate studies. Lindsay plans to pursue a career in special education and hopes to work in a classroom supporting students with diverse learning needs and disabilities.

### Michael O'Neill

Michael is also the son of Eric and Denise O'Neill. He is entering his sophomore year at the **University of Wisconsin-Madison**, where he is majoring in Mechanical Engineering.

Michael was drawn to Wisconsin for its collaborative environment and its emphasis on challenging students both inside and outside the classroom. While he has not yet decided which area of engineering he ultimately hopes to pursue, his goal is to choose a career through which he can make a positive impact.

### Abbie Lynch

Abbie is the granddaughter of **Richie Struss**, a retired LIGCSA member and Past President of the Association. She is entering her junior year at **Adelphi University** in Garden City, New York, where she is majoring in Special Education.

Abbie was drawn to the field because she wants students with disabilities to understand that they are capable of success regardless of the challenges they may face. Following graduation, she hopes to become a special education teacher with a focus on social studies.

### Morgan Lynch

Morgan is also the granddaughter of Richie Struss. She graduated from **SUNY New Paltz** in December 2025 with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a minor in Disaster Studies.

Morgan has now begun graduate studies at **Teachers College, Columbia University**, where she is enrolled in the School Psychology: Applied Developmental and Learning Psychology master's program. She hopes to become a board-certified school psychologist and Board Certified Behavior Analyst and plans to build a career helping children and families through school psychology.

### Elaina Benedict

Elaina is the daughter of Tim and Leslie Benedict. Tim is the Superintendent at **North Hills Country Club**. She is entering her sophomore year at **SUNY New Paltz**, where she is majoring in Environmental Science.

Elaina has always loved spending time outdoors and developed an early appreciation for nature and exploring places beyond Long Island. Although she has not yet settled on a specific career path, she knows she would like her future work to keep her connected to the outdoors and the natural environment.

### Grace Benedict

Grace is the daughter of Brian and Marihelen Benedict. Brian works for Advanced Turf Solutions. Grace is entering her senior year at the **University of South Carolina** in Columbia, South Carolina, where she is majoring in Mathematics with minors in Actuarial Science and Risk Management.

She plans to pursue a career as an actuary, applying mathematics, statistics and risk analysis to help predict future outcomes and understand their potential financial consequences.

### Ryan Cash

Ryan is the son of Pete and Carolyn Cash. Pete is the Superintendent at **Huntington Crescent Club**. Ryan is entering his junior year at the **University at Buffalo**, where he is majoring in Mechanical Engineering. He is also a member of the university's men's lacrosse team.

Balancing collegiate athletics with a demanding engineering curriculum has helped Ryan develop strong time-management skills, responsibility and commitment. He plans to pursue a career as a mechanical engineer, although he is still exploring which area of the profession interests him most.

### Elizabeth Chant

Elizabeth is the daughter of Mark and Shannon Chant. Mark is the Superintendent at **The Rock** in Riverhead. Elizabeth is entering her junior year at **Roger Williams University** in Bristol, Rhode Island. She is pursuing a double major in English and Journalism with a minor in Psychology.

Elizabeth has found a field that combines her interests in writing, research and understanding people, and she hopes to pursue a career as an investigative journalist.

### Spencer Caporicci

Spencer is the son of Chris and Dana Caporicci. Chris is the Superintendent at **Cherry Valley Club**. Spencer is entering his senior year at **Clemson University** in Clemson, South Carolina. He is majoring in Marketing with a minor in Management and an emphasis in data analysis.

During the spring of 2026, Spencer studied abroad in Barcelona, Spain. This summer he worked as a marketing intern for a media company in New York City, an experience he greatly enjoyed. While he has not yet settled on a specific career path, his studies and internship experiences are helping him determine where his interests in marketing and business will take him.

### Ryan Currier

Ryan is the daughter of Craig and Joanna Currier. Craig is the Superintendent at **Glen Oaks Club**. Ryan is entering her junior year at **Boston College** in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, where she is pursuing a double major in Political Science and Communication.

She will spend the upcoming semester studying abroad in Prague. Following graduation, Ryan hopes to work on a political campaign before attending law school, with the long-term goal of pursuing a career in public interest law or civil rights advocacy.

### Keira Choinski

Keira is the daughter of Jim Choinski. She is entering her sophomore year at **Marist University** in Poughkeepsie, New York, where she is majoring in Studio Art.

Keira enjoys both the academic challenges and relationships she has developed at Marist. Although a degree in art offers many possible career directions, she is particularly interested in combining her creativity and artistic skills with a future career as a jewelry designer.

## INVESTING IN THE NEXT GENERATION

The accomplishments and ambitions of this year's recipients reflect the tremendous range of interests and opportunities being pursued by the next generation of the LIGCSA family - from engineering, education and environmental science to finance, journalism, law, psychology and the arts.

The LIGCSA congratulates each of our **2026 scholarship recipients** and wishes them continued success in their education and future careers.

We also extend our sincere thanks to **John Carlone** for his many years of leadership and dedication to the Scholarship Program, as well as to every LIGCSA member, sponsor, club and supporter whose participation makes these awards possible.

The continued success of the Scholarship Program is a direct reflection of the generosity of the LIGCSA community and its commitment to supporting education and investing in the next generation.