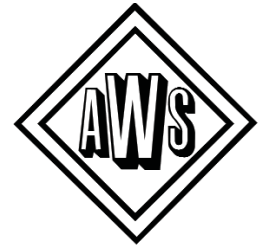


AWS Promotes Workforce Growth by Funding Welding Education



By Samuel Gentry and Monica Pfarr

The American Welding Society Foundation (www.aws.org) was established in 1989 with a single mission—to develop funding to support welding scholarships. In 1991, money was set aside to support the first fellowship, which was awarded for \$20,000. Since that time, the Foundation has awarded more than \$5.3 million to some 3,900 students.

Scholarship Programs

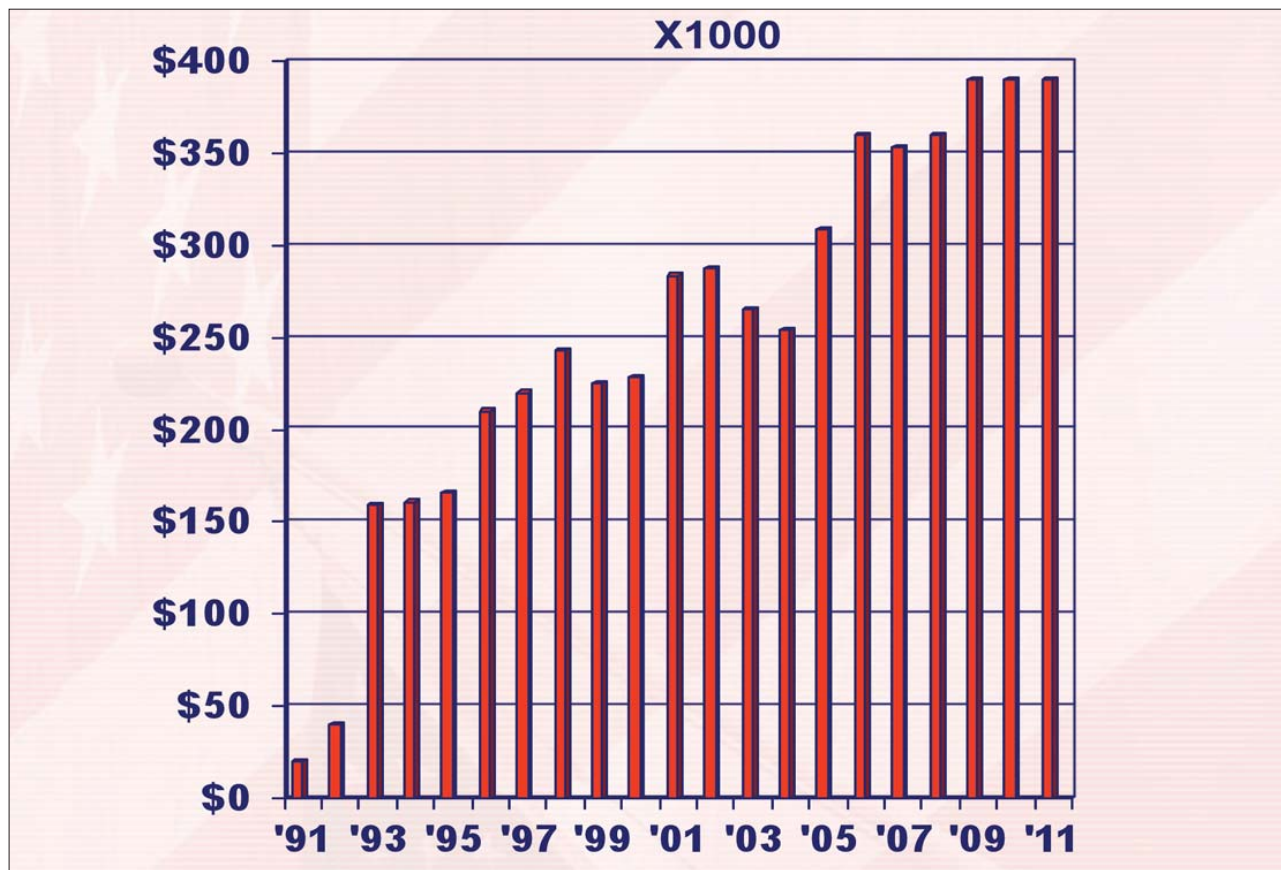
Today there are five existing AWS scholarship programs. The National Scholarship program includes two scholarships for associate degrees for welding-related studies and 22

scholarships for minimum bachelor degrees in welding engineering, welding engineering technology, materials joining engineering, civil engineering, or a business degree with interest in welding. These scholarships are funded by individuals and/or companies, and range from \$2,000 to \$3,500. These awards are supported by a minimum funding endowment of \$50,000.

Since 2006, the American Welding Society Board of Directors has contributed \$2,100,000 to the AWS Foundation to support additional funding for scholarships and in support of welder workforce training.

The District Scholarship program provides \$165,000 to each of the 22 AWS Districts so that they can award scholarships at the local level. Each District has \$7,500 to be awarded annually. AWS and the AWS Foundation provide the annual funding for these awards. Each District, at its annual conference, selects the scholarships to be awarded to local applicants who have applied for

AWS Scholarships Awarded by Year (in thousands of dollars)



Source: AWS Foundation

scholarship funding. These awards usually range from \$200 to \$2,500.

The Section Named and District Named Scholarship program includes 17 Section Named Scholarships and 6 District Named Scholarships. These scholarships are funded at the local Section or District level by individuals and/or companies in the local area. A minimum endowment of \$10,000 supports these awards.

This year, AWS funded a new endowment to support The Educator's Scholarship program. This program will provide three national scholarships for \$3,500 and two for \$2,500. In addition, it will provide \$16,500 for the 22 Districts, \$750 per District, for scholarships for associate, bachelor, master, or PhD degrees in welding engineering, welding engineering technology, materials science and engineering, metallurgical engineering, industrial engineering, mechanical engineering, chemistry, physics, or education related to welding.

The Graduate Research Fellowship program provides two research fellowship grants for \$25,000, which are matched in-kind by the academic institution. Each of these was donor endowed for \$500,000. They are awarded to support a selected welding research project at a university.

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The Welding for the Strength of America Capital Campaign

In 2005, based on continued data about the shortage of welders, the AWS Foundation broadened its mission to include welder workforce development initiatives. With this new focus in 2006, the Foundation inaugurated the Welding for the Strength of America Capital Campaign. This campaign has two goals: establishing additional scholarships to support entry-level students and those already involved in the welding profession; and building funding to support the AWS Welding Workforce Development Program.

The Welding Workforce Development Program focuses on both the "Image of Welding" and the "Recruitment of Welders to the Workforce." Through collaboration with other

national organizations such as National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), Society of Manufacturing Engineers (SME), and others who have a goal of improving the image of manufacturing and welding, the AWS Foundation is working to enhance the industry by portraying welding through its dynamic, advanced, and ever-developing technologies and opportunities. The Foundation continues to work with media entities to ensure coverage is accurate and portrays today's highly technical, advanced welding industry.

Through sponsorship and funding from industry partners, the AWS Foundation has developed relationships with well-known personalities to represent the welding industry. One example of a successful project includes development of a DVD entitled, "Hot Bikes, Fast Cars, Cool Careers" featuring Jay Leno and three young cable television personalities. And beginning in October 2011, a semi-trailer will travel the US offering "virtual" welding experiences and promoting careers in welding.

Through collaboration with the National Center for Welding Education & Training (Weld-Ed), a National Science Foundation-funded entity, as well as with industry partners, the Foundation develops and distributes resources that connect students with welding careers. The Foundation staff strives to provide students as well as school counselors, parents, and teachers with interesting and relevant information about career opportunities, education, and training, and the skills needed for various jobs within the welding industry. The Foundation also offers resources to explore career opportunities and gives tips on how to help students connect and build successful futures. Over the past three years, the AWS Foundation distributed nearly 500,000 copies of welding career information throughout the country. Successful projects have included: Iron Man Comic; Welding Careers Magazine; Career Guide; and Students in Welding DVD.

The AWS Foundation also has developed a website, www.careersinwelding.com, which

serves as a portal to information and additional resources about careers in welding. It includes career exploration articles, industry and professional profiles, a welding school locator database, scholarship information, resume building and writing resources, social networking, and more.

A job board at www.jobsinwelding.com was launched in 2009 through support and funding from industry partners. The site provides jobs seekers with access to more than 93 percent of welding job openings posted on the Internet. Employers can post job openings, as well as conduct a résumé search to find qualified candidates.

Through collaboration with Weld-Ed, as well as industry partners, the AWS Foundation is offering professional development events designed to educate middle and high school administration about careers and opportunities in the welding industry. And through collaboration with other national organizations, Weld-Ed, and industry partners, the Foundation is organizing and participating in national events focused on dialogue, awareness, innovation, and action. An example of a successful event held on September 9, 2011, in Chicago is "The State of the Welding Industry Workforce Roundtable" in which 18 panelists and more than 50 participants discussed challenges in recruiting, training, and retaining students and workers in the welding field. Solutions to these challenges were developed in small group discussions. A report detailing this important event will be available in November 2011 at the AWS Foundation Booth at the FABTECH show, to be held at McCormick Place in Chicago, Illinois. ■

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