

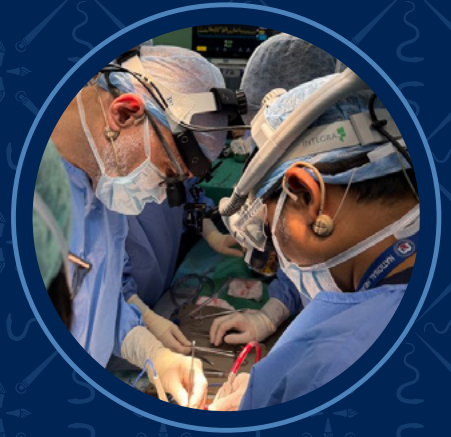


**AATS  
Foundation**

**Enduring Impact  
Advancing Opportunity  
Inspiring Leadership**

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**2024–2025 Biennial Report**



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**Proud to Report 100% of Board Members** generously supported the AATS Foundation in 2024–25.



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# Mission

Supporting thoracic and cardiovascular surgeons in research and education.

# Vision

A dynamic and innovative future of continued excellence in thoracic and cardiovascular surgery.

# Values

- Global Academic Exchange
- Advancing Patient Care
- Collaboration
- Innovation
- Fostering Leadership
- Trusted Stewardship

# Message from Leadership



The AATS Foundation continues to see steady growth and impact thanks to your generosity and commitment to the future of cardiothoracic surgery. We hear it in the feedback from our awardees: our programs make a substantial difference. Over the past two years we have engaged more donors, supported a larger cohort of applicants, and provided high-quality programs with exceptional faculty. This is no small feat, and your support shapes the trajectories of surgeons' lives and the lives of their patients.

We are deeply grateful for your continued commitment to our mission as we expand and elevate our global educational initiatives. It is our pleasure to share key highlights from 2024 and 2025, which reflect the AATS Foundation's enduring dedication to advancing innovation, excellence, and leadership across our field.

## Highlights from 2024–2025

### Remarkable Fundraising Success

Nearly \$4.7 million was raised to support the next generation of cardiothoracic surgeons through research, education, and leadership development.

### Support for Innovation and Career Advancement

We continued to fund research proposals and granted substantial career advancement awards, demonstrating our unwavering commitment to academic excellence and to empowering future surgical leaders.

### New “Honoring Our Mentors” Programs

We celebrated the enduring legacies of Dr. D. Craig Miller and Dr. G. Alexander “Alec” Patterson through the launch of new mentorship recognition initiatives.

### Leadership Recognition

We honored Dr. Fred A. Crawford Jr. with a named lectureship for founding the AATS Leadership Academy, a pivotal program shaping tomorrow's leaders in cardiothoracic surgery.

### Successful Fundraising Campaigns

The Get Together, Give Together campaign, featured at the 104th and 105th Annual Meetings, raised more than \$200,000 to support our mission.

### Launch of the “Step Up” Campaign

The Foundation introduced the Step Up Campaign to expand awareness at AATS meetings, raising more than \$300,000 at the AATS International Thoracic Surgical Oncology Summit, AATS Mechanical Support and Thoracic Transplantation Summit, and the AATS Mitral Conclave.

### Global Academic Exchange

Through our Global Academic Exchange Program, we strengthened international collaborations with mission-driven hospital visits in India, Mexico, Colombia, and Malaysia.

### Supporting Research

More than \$1 million was committed to support research through the Research Scholarship, Surgical Investigator, and Resident Investigator programs.

### Access to Education

Travel Awards were established for all AATS educational events, expanding access to essential learning opportunities.

### Growth of the Heritage Society

The Heritage Society continued to grow, providing a meaningful way for donors to leave a lasting legacy through planned giving.

### Second Annual Golf Tournament

Held in Naples, Fla., this event raised over \$360,000, directly supporting our charitable goals.

### Historic Philanthropic Gift

We were honored to receive the largest one-time gift in our history: a \$1.5 million donation from the Cleveland Clinic, designated to support future clinical trials.

As you read this Biennial Report, we hope you feel proud of the vital role you've played in the Foundation's achievements. Your belief in our mission directly impacts our patients and the global cardiothoracic surgical community.

### Thank you for your continued support.

With gratitude,

**DAVID H. ADAMS, MD**

AATS Foundation President  
99th AATS President

**Y. JOSEPH WOO, MD**

AATS Foundation Secretary  
AATS President-Elect

# Program Highlights

## Research Funding: New Knowledge, Changed Lives

Since inception, the AATS Foundation has awarded \$14.5 million cumulatively worldwide, including \$1 million in 2025 alone; 56% of its awards support research.

Among its many programs, the long-standing Research Scholarship—established in 1985 and named for leaders such as Dwight Harken, Norman Shumway, and Michael DeBakey—has funded 47 North American surgeons pursuing academic careers. Of the 47 recipients, 98% of those eligible have become members, 26% have served on AATS committees, 14% have led AATS meetings, and three have become AATS Presidents: Drs. David H. Adams, Yolonda L. Colson, and Thoralf M. Sundt, III.

### Celebrating 75 Years of the Evarts A. Graham Memorial Traveling Fellowship

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the AATS Evarts A. Graham Memorial Traveling Fellowship, a cornerstone program of the AATS Foundation named in honor of 10th AATS President Dr. Evarts Graham, a pioneering cardiothoracic surgeon best known for performing the first successful pneumonectomy for lung cancer.

Dr. Graham was also a devoted teacher and mentor who believed in the importance of global learning and collaboration—principles that continue to guide this fellowship.



“The Alton Ochsner Research Scholarship in 2002 was one of the early grants that started my career as a thoracic surgeon-scientist. It gave me the independence to run my lab, try new ideas, and go in new directions that eventually led to our current research operation funded by multiple NIH Ro1 grants. Donors to the AATS Foundation changed my life by providing new opportunities and supporting new ideas. I owe that same opportunity to the next generation of cardiothoracic surgery. I can’t think of a better investment in the future of our specialty.”

#### **Yolonda L. Colson, MD, PhD**

Alton Ochsner Research Scholarship Recipient



“I was fortunate to receive the Edward Churchill Research Scholarship, a unique opportunity in the mid-1980s. This award funded my research into the physiology of lymph flow for the next five years. The availability of this substantial award allowed me to present my work in national and international meetings, meet countless mid- and senior-level leaders in the specialty, and develop mentorship relationships that endured for decades. Having a research component in my portfolio put me on a fast track for academic promotion and permitted me to participate in study sections and manuscript reviews, activities I wouldn’t otherwise have had access to. The award enabled me to obtain additional funding from other sources that sustained the research aspects of my career for 40 years.”

#### **Mark K. Ferguson, MD**

Edward Churchill Research Scholarship Recipient



“The David C. Sabiston award allowed me to transition from a fellow to a faculty member. The award, and the preliminary data I accumulated, served as a critical bridge for obtaining the next level of funding—an American Heart Association Scientist Development Grant. From there, I went on to receive an NIH Ro1. The ripple effect helped me achieve a successful career in translational research.

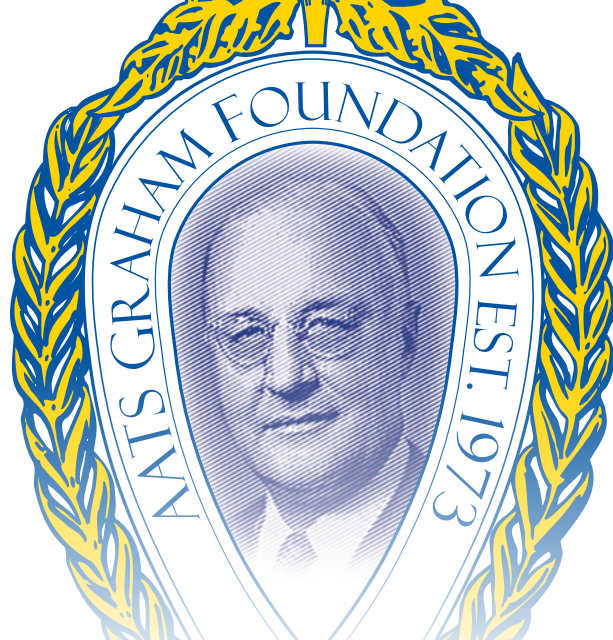
It is critical that we continue to support the development of future leaders, investigators, and clinical experts within cardiothoracic surgery because they are the future of our field. Any donation is highly impactful. Donors should not think twice about supporting the future of our specialty.”

#### **Pavan Atluri, MD**

David C. Sabiston Research Scholarship Recipient

**HAO LI, MD**  
**2023-2024 Evarts A. Graham Traveling Fellowship Award Recipient**

“The Graham Fellowship has long been a dream opportunity for me, and after completing this exciting journey, I truly appreciate the vision behind this prestigious program—to cultivate future international leaders in thoracic surgery. Through this experience, I gained a broader global perspective, witnessed high-quality MDT care, and learned how to conduct rigorous clinical research. These lessons will continue to guide me as I work toward becoming a leading academic thoracic surgeon, dedicated to improving care for patients in China and around the world.”



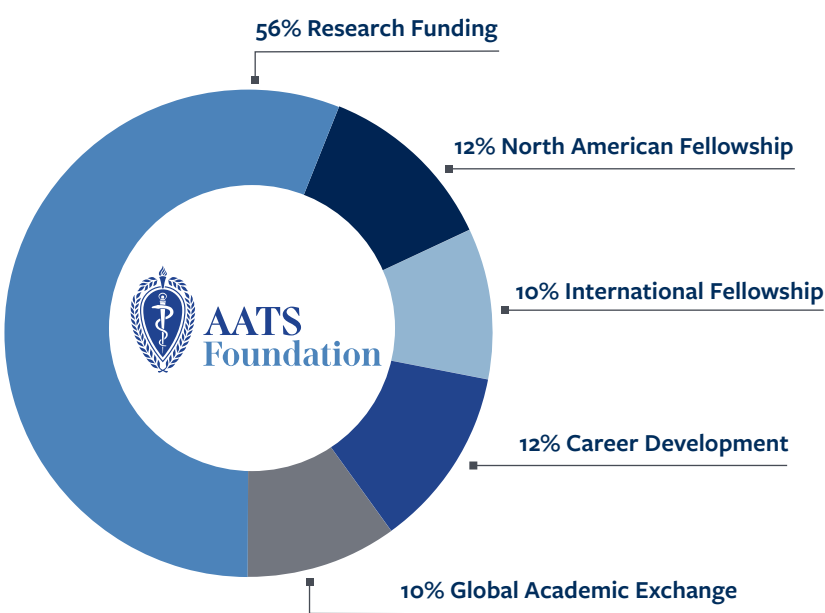
**IN MEMORIAM**

The AATS Foundation honors Dr. Víctor A. Paz Flores of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, who passed away in April 2025 at the age of 46. Dr. Paz Flores was the first formally trained pediatric cardiovascular surgeon in Honduras and the founder of the nation’s first pediatric cardiovascular program at Hospital María.

In 2021, he was awarded the Evarts A. Graham Memorial Traveling Fellowship, which allowed him to train under Dr. Victor Morell at the Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh. Reflecting on their time together, Dr. Morell shared, “The Graham Fellowship provided Dr. Paz Flores the ability to observe and intellectually participate in our research meetings. I remember that once back in Honduras, he texted me wanting to collaborate on a clinical research project examining outcomes of a specific surgical technique for the repair of AVSD that he learned from us. He was always thinking of how to improve surgical care.”

Dr. Paz Flores will be remembered as a devoted father and husband, a gifted surgeon, and a compassionate visionary whose impact will continue to shape the future of pediatric cardiac surgery in Honduras.

**Annual Program Spend Percentage by Category**



**ANNA MARIA GARCIA CARDOSO, MD**  
2023 Valerie W. Rusch Mentored  
Career Development Award Recipient

“I am deeply grateful for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The experience and knowledge I’ve gained are truly invaluable. I am fully committed to sharing these insights and applying them to help elevate the standard of thoracic surgery.”



**ALI IRSHAD, MD**  
2024 Denton A. Cooley Fellowship  
Award Recipient

“The Denton A. Cooley Fellowship allowed me an invaluable experience that broadened my clinical perspective, enhanced my surgical insight, and reinforced my commitment to advancing the care of patients with complex aortic disease. From observing intricate procedures and hybrid techniques to engaging in meaningful discussions with world-class surgeons, every aspect of the program contributed to both my personal and professional growth. The experience not only deepened my technical understanding of thoracoabdominal and arch surgery but also highlighted the importance of structured, multidisciplinary systems—such as a dedicated aortic center—in achieving optimal outcomes. I leave this observership with renewed motivation, new skills, and a clear vision for how I hope to evolve and contribute to the field of aortic surgery moving forward.”



More Than \$1 Million  
Committed to research funding in 2025  
(\$14.5 million to date)

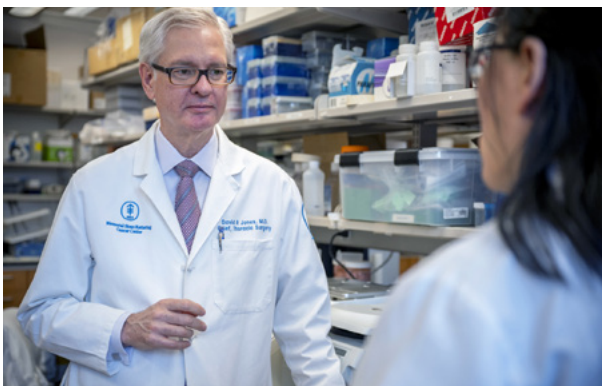
# Industry Partnerships

## Thoracic Surgical Oncology Clinical Trial Research Training Fellowship

The AATS Foundation launched the AATS Thoracic Surgical Oncology Clinical Trial Research Training Fellowship with support by AstraZeneca. This fellowship is the first AATS Foundation award to place a surgeon in an industry research environment. In the words of the program's founder, Dr. David R. Jones, "This unique opportunity pairs the shared vision between the AATS Foundation and AstraZeneca to train the next generation of surgical clinical trialists with a clear focus in thoracic oncology."

"There is an increasing appreciation that systemic therapies need to be delivered in earlier-stage diseases as part of a multidisciplinary approach to lung and esophageal cancers," Dr. Jones said. "Clinical trials exploring these therapies combined with surgery are the future of treatment paradigms for these diseases."

The program will involve hands-on learning and the completion of a research project at an AstraZeneca site. The program will cover clinical trial design—including endpoint selection and prediction of treatment response—as well as protocol development and data analysis. The awardee will partake in discussions of late-stage clinical development from the perspective of medical affairs, while also considering the role of surgery within modern studies.



## Intuitive Surgical Robotics Program

Since 2014, the AATS Foundation Thoracic Surgical Robotics Fellowship has trained final-year residents in robotic-assisted thoracic surgery, combining advanced technology with close mentorship. Supported by Intuitive Surgical, the program has guided more than 330 participants, many of whom report a clear advantage as they begin independent practice.

Led by Dr. Bernard J. Park, the fellowship includes didactic sessions, hands-on clinical experience, and webinars with advanced case discussions. Fellows complete a set number of cases as console surgeon and submit surgical videos to earn certification in robotic thoracic surgery, addressing a gap in formal training not required by the American Board of Thoracic Surgery.

Training begins with an intensive day at Intuitive Surgical's Atlanta facility, featuring simulations, cadaver labs, and instruction on the da Vinci® Surgical System for procedures such as lobectomy and segmentectomy. Fellows gain confidence in a supportive environment before performing live cases.

Dr. Park notes the program's enduring impact: "Having former fellows return as mentors is the ultimate goal of surgical training, ensuring the field continues to grow and evolve."





## A Family Legacy Advancing Cardiothoracic Surgery Worldwide

For more than 105 years, Scanlan has remained a family-owned, fourth-generation designer and manufacturer of precision surgical instruments, built on close collaboration with surgeons dating back to 1921 and the development of the first Mayo scissors. That same spirit of partnership continues through its century-long relationship with AATS and the AATS Foundation. Together, they support surgeons at every stage of their careers through scholarships, mentorships, wet lab training, and engagement at annual meetings—ensuring access to the highest quality instruments while advancing surgical techniques and innovation in cardiothoracic care. The Scanlan Family is honored to work hand-in-hand with AATS members—supporting their work, listening to their needs, and providing surgical instrument solutions to help surgeons save lives. This is at the heart of what we do.

Globally, this partnership has had meaningful impact by equipping surgeons with precision instruments that help reduce operative trauma and time, ultimately improving patient outcomes. Through international fellowships and outreach programs, particularly in regions with limited access to advanced products and training, surgeons gain world-class mentorship and hands-on experience that they bring back to their home countries. Looking ahead, Scanlan remains committed to strengthening these collaborations—supporting today’s leaders and the next generation of surgeons to advance the future of cardiothoracic surgery worldwide.



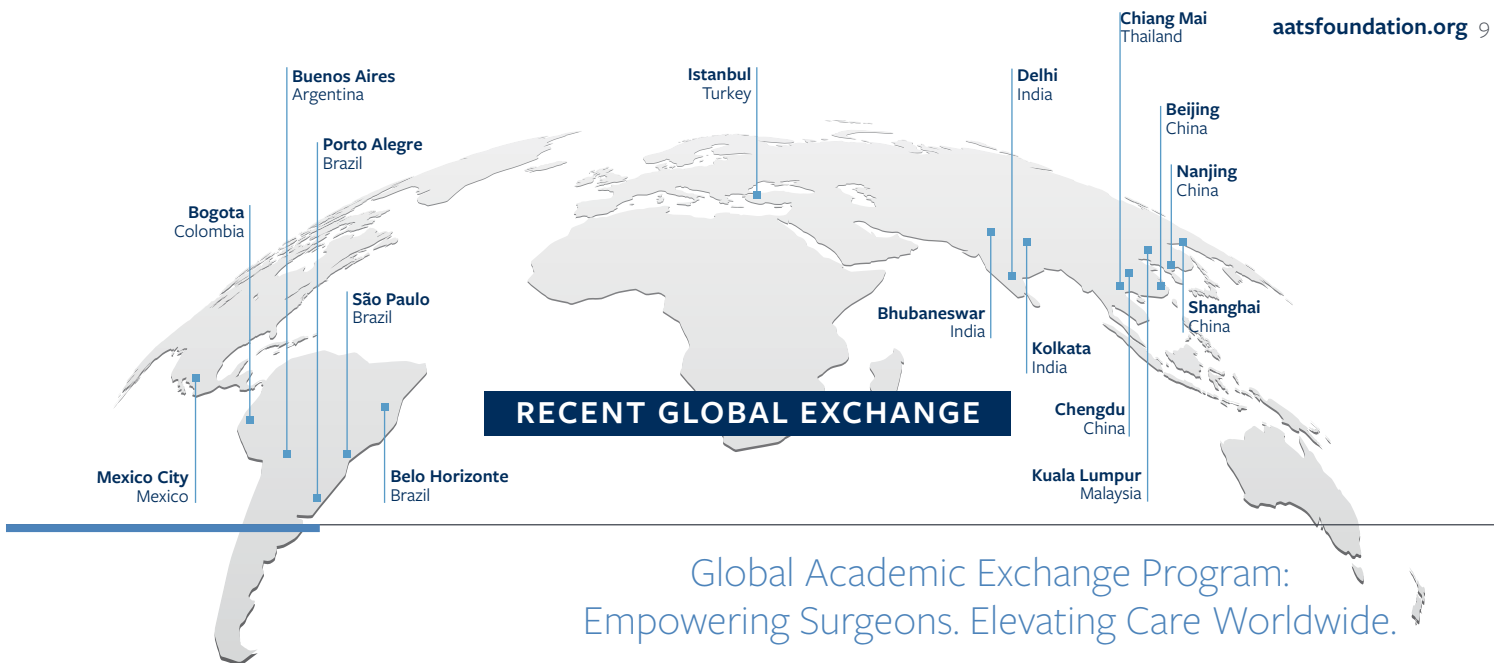
### MARK CORDELL 2025 Summer Intern Scholarship Award Recipient

“The AATS Summer Intern Scholarship has been a catalyst for my professional and personal growth. As a medical student, it offered me a front-row seat to the future I envision for myself in cardiothoracic surgery. Whether flying on a transplant procurement mission, enrolling patients in a prospective clinical trial, observing life-changing surgery, or presenting at academic meetings, this internship provided experiences that have cemented my drive towards a career in the field of cardiothoracic surgery, and I am so honored to have been selected. I am deeply grateful to the AATS, my mentors, and Wake Forest School of Medicine for hosting me. Because of the opportunity afforded to me by the AATS, I am more committed than ever to pursuing a future in this demanding and rewarding field. It is with tremendous appreciation and admiration that I submit a heartfelt thank you for this incredible gift.”

*Supported by Scanlan International, Inc.*



From Left to Right: Russ Scanlan, Brigid Scanlan-Eiyneck, Tim Scanlan, Chenoa Burga-Scanlan and Adam Scanlan



## Global Academic Exchange Program: Empowering Surgeons. Elevating Care Worldwide.



Driven by a shared passion for teaching and learning, several AATS surgeon leaders traveled to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in May 2025 for an educational visit to the Institut Jantung Negara, (IJN). The visit combined didactic sessions with live surgical demonstrations led by Drs. Emile A. Bacha, Puja Kachroo, Marc R. Moon, and Y. Joseph Woo. Fifty-two cardiothoracic surgeons from Bangladesh, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam took part in the workshop.

“Nothing surpasses live learning,” said Dr. Woo. “You see the challenges the surgeon faces in real time and learn from issues as they arise. It’s very different from a perfectly edited video.”

The event was organized by the AATS Foundation and funded by the Edwards Lifesciences Foundation’s Every Heartbeat Matters Program, which supports educational outreach in less-resourced regions through observation, collaboration, and academic exchange.

“The goal is not only to establish standard operative techniques, but also to explore new approaches to structural heart disease, including novel valve repair strategies and complex decision-making,” said Dr. Kachroo “Contributing to the advancement of cardiovascular surgery worldwide is incredibly rewarding.”

Surgeries were performed collaboratively by AATS and IJN teams. A particularly notable case involved Dr. Bacha mentoring Dr. Sivakumar Sivalingam during a Ross-Konno operation—the first Ross procedure performed at IJN in 15 years.

The success of this operation positions IJN to develop a dedicated Ross program. “For a major congenital heart program, offering the Ross and Ross-Konno procedures is essential,” said Dr. Bacha. “It is the only aortic valve replacement that grows with the patient, even when performed in infancy. It was an honor to mentor the IJN team in launching this crucial capability.”

**EDWARDS**  
**LIFESCIENCES**  
**FOUNDATION**

“What excites us most about this collaboration is our shared commitment to advancing cardiac care and ensuring more patients receive the structural heart treatment they need to thrive. As Every Heartbeat Matters evolves, Edwards Lifesciences is focusing its efforts on expanding access to high-quality structural heart treatment for patients facing barriers to care.

Our partnership with the AATS Foundation is especially meaningful. Surgeon-led programs supported through the Foundation translate expertise directly into patient care, often in communities where treatment options are limited.

Together, this collaboration reflects what Every Heartbeat Matters is about—putting patients first and expanding what is possible so more patients have the opportunity to thrive.”

Amanda C. Fowler  
Vice President, Global Corporate Giving  
Executive Director, Edwards Lifesciences Foundation



# Signature Initiatives



## Expanding Opportunity, Strengthening the Specialty

“In my 2021 AATS Presidential Address, we committed \$1.2 million over five years to launch the AATS Medical Student Opportunity Scholarship through the AATS Foundation, and in just four years the results have been extraordinary: 56 scholarships totaling \$980,000 have been awarded to 35 recipients, with nearly 90% of graduates entering cardiothoracic surgery training pathways or related fields, and representation in CT i-6 programs rising significantly among Hispanic, African Americans, and other historically underrepresented groups after decades of stagnation. Although the ACGME removed the formal definition of “Underrepresented in Medicine” in 2025, the need for access and exposure remains. The scholarship promotes “Diversity Without Exclusion,” supporting highly qualified, academically strong students who may have lacked mentorship, exposure, or financial means, and counters misconceptions that such programs prioritize identity over merit. Inspired by a belief in equal opportunity and shaped by my own experiences growing up in Detroit, I sought to use my leadership role to expand access to cardiothoracic surgery for talented students who might otherwise never have considered the field, addressing barriers of exposure, mentorship, and cost through a program that is already demonstrating meaningful return on investment.”

### Marc R. Moon, MD

AATS Foundation Vice President  
101st AATS President

“Receiving the AATS Foundation Medical Student Opportunity changed the trajectory of my training. Shortly after I received the first award, I learned I was expecting. Without family in Chicago, reliable childcare felt out of reach and with it, my ability to show up fully for clinical rotations and pursue CT research. The scholarship made it possible to hire an au pair, which meant I could arrive on time for rotations, take calls, and protect dedicated hours for cardiothoracic projects and manuscript work. It also covered USMLE Step preparation materials that I otherwise could not have afforded.

The second award, one generously funded by AATS Foundation President Dr. David Adams, was more than financial support; it was affirmation. That investment told me that leaders in our field believed I belonged here, as a new mother and an aspiring cardiothoracic surgeon.

Thank you for turning what could have been barriers into a bridge for me, and for the patients I hope to serve. To AATS, I thank you. To donors, I am forever grateful!”

### Titilayo Oden Shobayo

Loyola University of Chicago, Stritch School of Medicine:

## ZARA SHIRAZI, MBBS, FCPS 2024 Marc R. de Leval Fellowship Award Recipient

### Excerpt from Final Report

“The Marc R. de Leval Fellowship has been a transformative experience in my career as a pediatric cardiac surgeon. It reinforced my passion for congenital cardiac surgery and solidified my commitment to improving pediatric cardiac care in lower-income settings. I now have a deeper understanding of complex congenital procedures and plan to implement new techniques and patient management strategies at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases in Pakistan. Furthermore, this experience has motivated me to pursue further international collaborations and advocate for the establishment of advanced pediatric cardiac programs in Pakistan.”



## Cardiothoracic Surgical Trials Network: Advancing Research to Improve Patient Care

The AATS Foundation and the Cardiothoracic Surgical Trials Network (CTSN) took an important step forward through the formation of a strategic partnership focused on advancing meaningful, patient-centered cardiothoracic surgical research. With generous funding support from Cleveland Clinic, under the leadership of Drs. A. Marc Gillinov and Lars G. Svensson, this collaboration reflects a shared commitment to strengthening both the intellectual and financial foundation of CTSN while keeping patient needs at the center of surgical trial development.

Through this partnership, AATS, CTSN, and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) of the U.S. National Institutes of Health are working collaboratively to enhance communication, support trial development, and make more efficient use of shared resources. Key initiatives include the creation of a dedicated AATS-CTSN Committee—bringing the collective expertise of AATS member surgeons directly into the trial development process—as well as a dedicated session at the AATS Annual Meeting to share updates and foster dialogue with the global academic cardiothoracic surgical community.

“It is great that surgeons are taking the lead to provide both financial and intellectual support for key randomized clinical trials (RCTs),” said Dr. Gillinov. “High quality trials are a requirement given the changes in interventions in cardiothoracic surgery and rapid changes in medicine including the utilization of artificial intelligence. The trials we do today will impact guidelines and standards of care for years to come. This partnership will ensure we are both nimble and relevant.”



104th AATS President Dr. Lars Svensson receives the first ever AATS Foundation Pinnacle Award on behalf of the Cleveland Clinic from CEO David R. Bobbitt.



On average, the AATS Foundation provides funding to **hundreds of professionals** annually and has an impressive international reach, with awardees representing **more than 60 countries** across the continents.



## Fred A. Crawford Jr., Lectureship at the AATS Leadership Academy

The Dr. Fred A. Crawford Jr. Lectureship honors 83rd AATS President Dr. Crawford's pioneering vision in establishing the AATS Leadership Academy, an invited program focused on the non-technical skills necessary for medical and academic leadership. Funds help support a guest lecturer at the Leadership Academy each year during the AATS Annual Meeting.

Dr. Crawford's colleagues note the transformative nature of the Academy as well as Dr. Crawford's steadfast service as a faculty member for the program since its inception in 2008. Dr. Thomas A. D'Amico, current Chair of the Leadership Academy shares, "With his vision and under his direction, the AATS Leadership Academy has promoted leadership by providing hundreds of cardiothoracic surgeons the opportunities of leadership education and career mentorship."

"The success of the AATS Leadership Academy is a reflection of Dr. Fred Crawford's earnest commitment to the development of the next generation of leaders in our specialty," said Dr. Thoralf M. Sundt, III. "He had the vision to establish an intimate format that fosters open and honest conversation about relevant topics—sometimes difficult ones. For me personally it is a highlight of the AATS Annual Meeting, and I regard it as a crown jewel of the organization."



## MEGAN HOANG 2025 Summer Intern Scholarship Award Recipient

"This internship had a transformative impact on my career trajectory. Before this experience, I was uncertain whether it was feasible to integrate a career in surgery with scientific research in biomedical engineering. My time at MGH demonstrated that this dual career is not only possible but profoundly impactful and necessary to save lives and advance patient care in surgery. The program provided me with the resources, confidence, and inspiration to pursue this path. This program affirmed my aspiration to become a surgeon-scientist, dedicated to advancing treatments through a career that integrates surgery, biomedical engineering, and translational research."

*Supported by Scanlan International, Inc.*



Dr. Crawford with AATS 2025 Leadership Academy Participants



## About the AATS Foundation Honoring Our Mentors Program

The AATS Foundation's Honoring Our Mentors (HOM) Program celebrates the extraordinary power of mentorship in shaping both surgical careers and the future of cardiothoracic care. The program began in 2013 by honoring 79th AATS President Dr. F. Griffith Pearson as its inaugural mentor. Since then, the HOM Program has grown to recognize 15 distinguished surgical leaders whose legacies are defined not only by their clinical and academic achievements, but by the generations of surgeons they have inspired, trained, and guided. The program recognizes a surgical leader whose influence extends far beyond the operating room, transforming the lives of their mentees while advancing excellence in patient care, research, and education. It is a meaningful reflection of the values of the AATS Foundation and the AATS that mentorship is so highly esteemed within our global community that our highest honors recognize surgeons for their impact as mentors.

### D. Craig Miller Honoring Our Mentors Program

The AATS Foundation's D. Craig Miller Honoring Our Mentors Program celebrates a surgeon whose impact on cardiothoracic surgery spans clinical innovation, lifelong scholarship, and dedicated mentorship. Dr. Miller served as the AATS 88th President and spent more than four decades on the faculty at Stanford University, where he became one of the most respected aortic and valve surgeons of his generation. His career has been marked by groundbreaking work in complex aortic reconstruction and sustained scientific inquiry, including directing a National Institutes of Health-funded laboratory for more than 25 years. Throughout his career, Dr. Miller was renowned not only for his surgical expertise but also for his commitment to teaching, instilling deliberate decision-making and confidence in trainees in and out of the operating room. By consistently emphasizing thoughtful analysis and technical mastery, he shaped the professional paths of countless surgeons.

### G. Alexander "Alec" Patterson Honoring Our Mentors Program

The AATS Foundation's G. Alexander "Alec" Patterson Honoring Our Mentors (HOM) Program recognizes 90th AATS President Dr. Patterson for his longstanding leadership and groundbreaking contributions to lung transplantation. The program supports surgeon-scientist scholarships, thoracic and transplant research awards, and grants that advance thoracic surgical practice in both developed and developing countries. At a time of increasing uncertainty in research funding, the HOM Program is more important than ever, raising more than \$1 million in its first year.

Dr. Patterson's legacy is defined by inclusion and excellence—particularly his steadfast support of women in cardiothoracic surgery and his commitment to cultivating diverse talent with bold ideas. Reflecting on her mentorship, Dr. Mara Antonoff shared, "It was his impact on me outside the operating room that was far more pivotal than inside the operating room," noting that he has built generations of resilient, talented, and fulfilled surgeons.

"A distinguished innovator, teacher, master clinician, and academic leader," said Dr. David R. Jones. "But as a person, he is open, kind, thoughtful, fair, funny, and a true team-builder. He is a gem. This program is critical for protecting and advancing the future of our specialty."

This program is supported in part by Scanlan International, Inc..



# Engaging the Community

## Step Up Challenge

The inaugural Step Up Challenge was a resounding success, energizing donors at AATS meetings. Ahead of each 2025 AATS meeting, Foundation donors were invited to wear sneakers as a symbol of their support, representing the many steps it takes to become a cardiothoracic surgeon.

The campaign generated strong engagement and enthusiasm raising more than \$300,000 at the AATS Mechanical Support and Thoracic Transplantation Summit, the AATS International Thoracic Surgical Oncology Summit, and the AATS Mitral Conclave, creating a visible and inspiring show of support across the community.



## Friends of the Foundation Dinners

The AATS Foundation hosts Friends of the Foundation Dinners to bring together the mentors, leaders, and champions whose generosity makes our mission possible. This year, the Foundation team hit the road, hosting gatherings in Boston, Cleveland, and Toronto.

These events are more than just an evening together—they are meaningful moments of connection, gratitude, and shared purpose.

If you are interested in hosting a Friends of the Foundation Dinner, we welcome you to reach out for more information.



AATS Friends of the Foundation Dinner in Boston

## Golf Tournament and Family Weekend

The AATS Foundation Golf Tournament and Family Weekend, held in Naples, Fla., in March 2025, was a vibrant celebration of community, philanthropy, and connection. For three days, surgeons, industry partners, and their families stepped away from the operating room and the meeting halls to come together in a more relaxed setting, sharing laughter, stories, and even some networking, all with a shared commitment to giving back. While some enjoyed friendly competition on the golf course, others took to the tennis and pickleball courts, explored the area, or simply enjoyed time with their loved ones in the Florida sunshine. Beyond the camaraderie, the weekend served a greater purpose, raising vital funds and awareness for the Foundation. It was a meaningful reminder that when this community comes together inside or outside the OR, the impact reaches far beyond the fairway. We look forward to building on this success when the tournament returns in early March 2027.





# Foundation Growth & Future

## Expanding Our Global Reach: The Inauguration of AATS Foundation Canada

In a historic development for our surgical community, AATS Foundation Canada was officially established in 2025 as a recognized charity by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). Operating as a distinct nonprofit corporation, the organization is led by a dedicated, all-volunteer Board of prominent Canadian and American AATS leaders. This strategic expansion allows the Foundation to work in close alignment with the AATS and the AATS Foundation to advance our shared mission of surgical education and clinical excellence.

“The establishment of AATS Foundation Canada provides a vital mechanism for surgeons and philanthropists in Canada to receive full tax benefits while supporting the peerless programming of the AATS,” noted Founding Board President Dr. Kazuhiro Yasufuku. “We are incredibly proud of the Foundation we have built. By supporting scholarships, travel awards, and fellowships, we are directly investing in career-advancing programs that enhance patient care both within Canada and across the globe.”

The response from the Canadian surgical community has been immediate and profound. Founding Secretary/Treasurer Dr. Maral Ouzounian reported that the organization has raised more than \$150,000 (CAD) within its first year. “This is only the beginning of our journey,” said Dr. Ouzounian. “We have an unprecedented opportunity to impact global academic exchange and foster the highest standards in our field. I am moved by the way our Canadian colleagues have stepped forward to champion the future of the AATS.”



AATS Canada Foundation Board:  
Kazuhiro Yasufuku, President, Shaf Keshavjee, AATS Finance Chair,  
Maral Ouzounian, Secretary/Treasurer, Leonard N. Girardi, Director



### JESUS GARCIA PINZAZ, MD

#### 2023 Aldo R. Castañeda Fellowship Award Recipient

“This opportunity, awarded through the Aldo Castañeda Fellowship, has profoundly impacted my approach to pediatric cardiothoracic surgery, reinforcing the importance of teamwork, preparation, and continuous learning. The lessons I’ve learned here will directly benefit my patients in Peru as I apply advanced surgical techniques, foster a collaborative environment within my team, and ensure that every child receives the highest standard of care, no matter the complexity of their condition. This fellowship has reignited my passion for surgery and strengthened my resolve to lead my team with the same dedication and compassion I witnessed at Children’s Wisconsin”.



## Investing in the Future Through the AATS Foundation

Supporting the AATS Foundation is a vital responsibility for cardiothoracic surgeons who are committed to advancing their specialty. Donor-advised funds (DAFs) provide an effective and flexible way to support this mission. Dr. Rosemary F. Kelly describes her experience establishing a DAF as straightforward and efficient, especially when guided by a financial advisor. “By contributing during peak earning years, donors can maximize tax advantages while setting aside funds that can be distributed over time,” said Dr. Kelly. This approach has enabled her and her family to give significantly more—up to two and a half times what they could have donated through traditional after-tax giving—making it a true win-win for both the donor and the AATS Foundation.

Beyond tax efficiency, DAFs offer long-term planning benefits. Funds can be managed online, allocated strategically, and incorporated seamlessly into estate planning, reducing the burden on family members and executors while ensuring philanthropic intentions are honored. Most importantly, DAFs empower surgeons to respond generously and consistently to the needs they see firsthand in their patients and trainees.

AATS Foundation is committed to educating surgeons on how to make their financial planning work for their families and their goals, including philanthropy goals. You can find a series of webinars on DAFs and other practical planning advice at AATS Online Institute.



**DIEGO GAMARRA MOREIRA, MD**  
**Aldo R. Castañeda Fellowship**

“Among the many surgical techniques and discussions I observed at Boston Children’s Hospital, the most valuable lesson I take with me is the systematic and detailed analysis of valve repair strategies. I learned the fundamental principles of reconstructive aortic valve surgery, particularly the bicuspidization technique for aortic valve repair. This experience expanded my understanding of decision-making in complex congenital cases and the delicate balance between technical precision, anatomical understanding, and long-term patient outcomes.”

**LEONARDO MIANA, MD**

**2024 Every Heartbeat Matters Valve Fellowship Award Recipient**

“My time at UCLA, CHOC, Boston Children’s, and Dell Children’s left me both humbled and energized. The privilege of learning from leaders, seeing brilliant teams in action, and reflecting on our mission as congenital heart surgeons was invaluable. I am deeply grateful to the AATS Foundation and to my hosts for this opportunity. I leave this fellowship not only better informed, but more committed than ever to delivering hope and excellence to children and families in Brazil.”

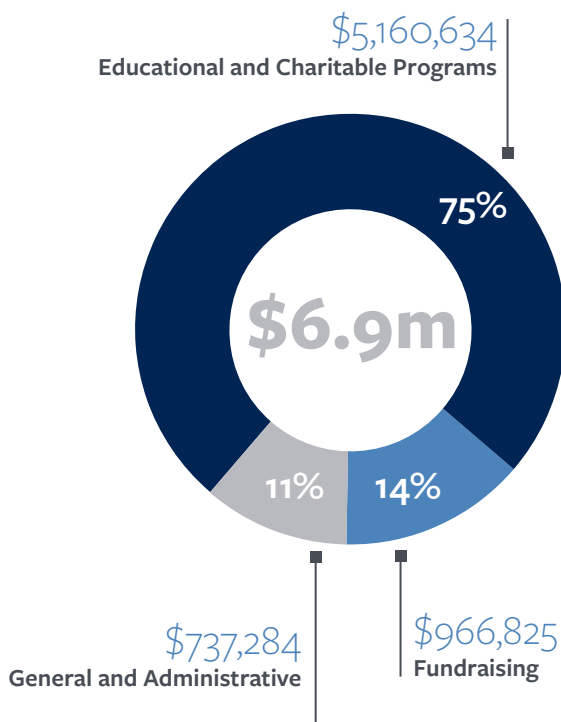


# Financial Report

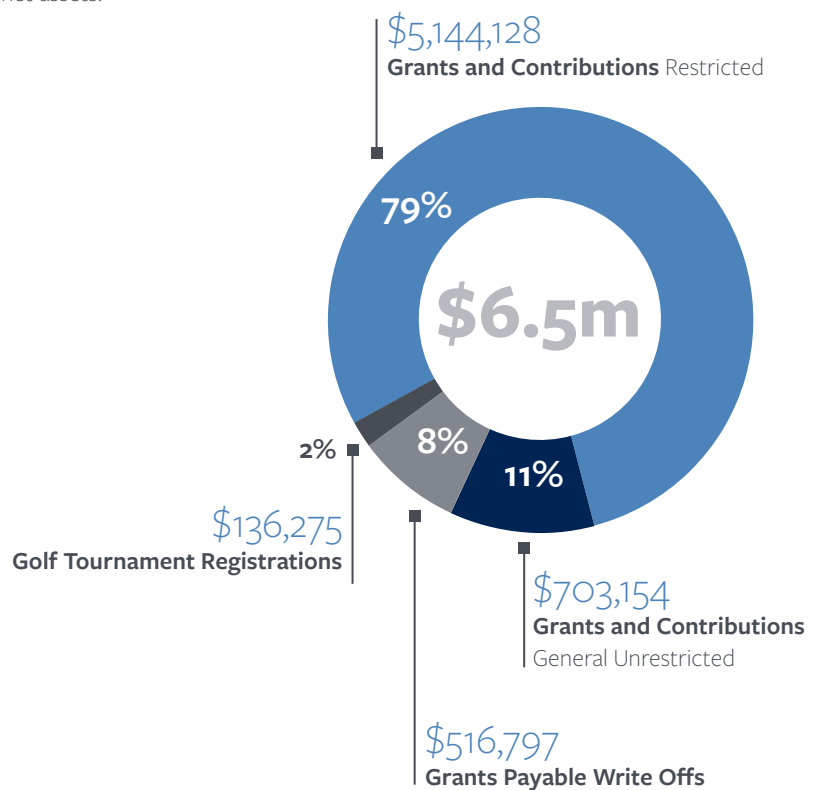
The following summary presents the AATS Foundation's combined financial results for the years ended December 31, 2024 and December 31, 2025\*.

As of December 31, 2025, the organization's financial position included \$14.7 million in assets, \$1 million in liabilities, and \$13.7 million in total net assets.

## EXPENDITURES



## REVENUE



**Total Investment Income, net** amounted to \$2.2 million for the two years ended December 31, 2025, all of which is unrestricted.

We ended fiscal year 2025 with \$5,126,959 in unrestricted net assets and \$8,536,912 in restricted net assets for programs in 2026 and beyond.

The financial position of the AATS Foundation remains strong thanks to the continued generous support of our donors and partners.

*\*Please note, 2025 financial activities are unaudited at the time of print*



**KAOUTAR FARAH, MD**

**2023 Valerie Rusch Mentored Career Development Award Recipient**

“I want to extend my deepest and most heartfelt gratitude to the AATS Foundation for granting me the Valerie Rusch Mentored Career Development Award, an act of generosity that changed my life. As a young woman surgeon from Morocco, trained in a system with limited resources and opportunities, I have often looked toward the global cardiothoracic community as something distant—a world I admired, but feared I might never access. The AATS Foundation didn’t just open a door for me, it lifted a wall. You made space for me in a world-class institution. You reminded me that talent can come from anywhere, and that with the right support, it can flourish. You gave me more than an observership; you gave me validation, purpose, and a renewed belief that I, too, have something to contribute. No words will ever be enough to measure the weight of this opportunity or express the depth of my gratitude.”

# Programs

## Adult Cardiac

- Alain Carpentier Honoring Our Mentors Program
- Cardiac Surgical Resident Investigator Award
- Cardiac Surgical Robotics Program
- D. Craig Miller Honoring Our Mentors Program
- Denton A. Cooley Fellowship
- Every Heartbeat Matters Valve Fellowship
- International Clinical Fellowship in Thoracic Aortic Surgery
- James L. Cox Fellowship in Atrial Fibrillation Surgery
- Matthew Gerdisch Fellows Training Program
- Matthew Gerdisch Fellowship in Arrhythmia Surgery
- Matthew Gerdisch Institutional Scholarship in Arrhythmia Surgery
- Tirone E. David International Fellowship

## Congenital

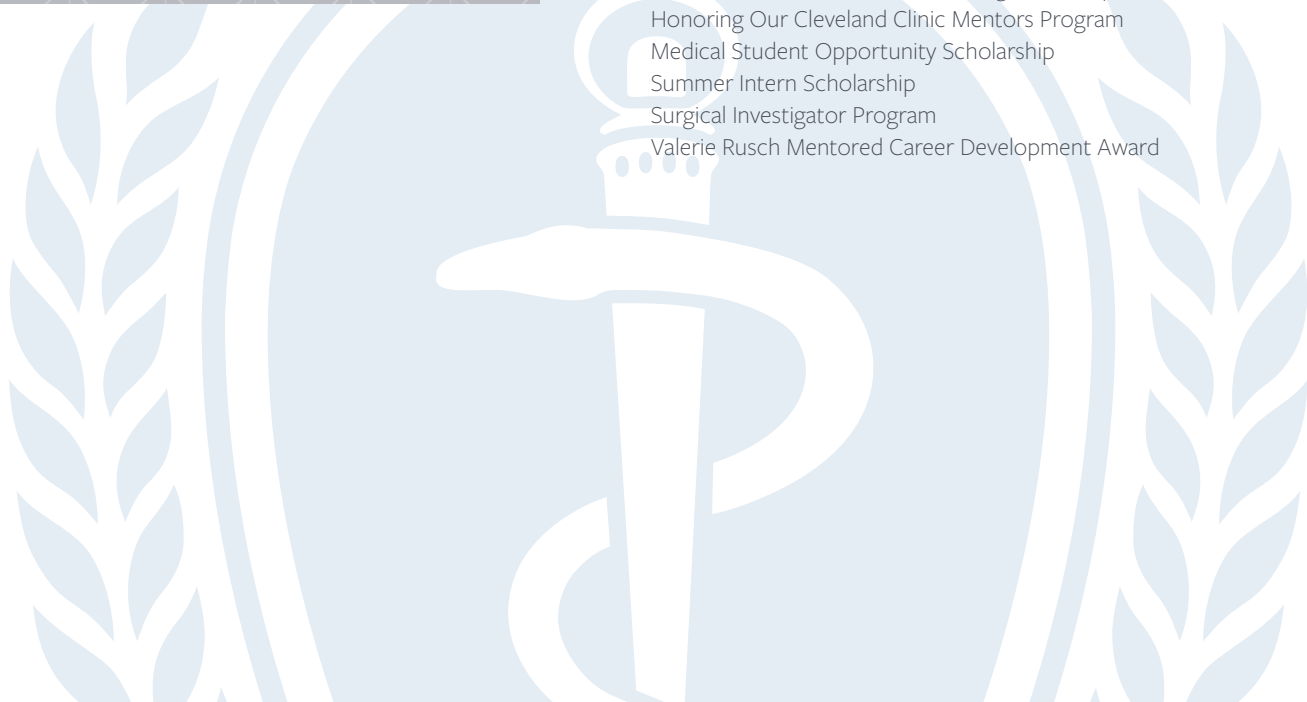
- Aldo R. Castañeda Fellowship
- Marc R. de Leval Fellowship
- William I. Norwood Travel Awards

## Thoracic

- David J. Sugarbaker Surgical Resident Investigator Award
- Jack A. Roth Fellowship in Thoracic Surgical Oncology
- Thoracic Surgical Oncology Clinical Trial Research Training Fellowship
- Thoracic Surgical Robotics Fellowship

## Multi Specialty

- AATS Foundation Research Scholarship
- AATS Foundation/WTS Mid-Career Investigator Award
- Academic Excellence Award
- Annual Meeting Travel Awards
- Evarts A. Graham Memorial Traveling Fellowship
- Honoring Our Cleveland Clinic Mentors Program
- Medical Student Opportunity Scholarship
- Summer Intern Scholarship
- Surgical Investigator Program
- Valerie Rusch Mentored Career Development Award



# Thank YOU

We are deeply grateful to our industry partners for their continued collaboration and support of the AATS Foundation.

Together, we are strengthening the future of cardiothoracic surgery and improving care for patients around the world.

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