

NEWS RELEASE – February 26, 2026

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## UCA Scholarships Now Available for Aspiring Underground Professionals

*Undergraduate and Graduate Students Encouraged to Apply for Conference Attendance and Academic Scholarship Opportunities*



**NAT2026**  
NORTH AMERICAN  
TUNNELING CONFERENCE

JUNE 15-18, 2026

ANAHEIM, CA

The Underground Construction Association (UCA) and the Rapid Excavation and Tunneling Conference (RETC) Executive Committee, in conjunction with the Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration (SME) are currently accepting applications through March 29 for scholarships providing special access and more to the North American Tunneling Conference (NAT 2026) from June 15-18 in Anaheim, CA.

Overall, selected recipients are given a front-row seat to learning all about civil engineering underground—essentially the integration of geotechnical, structural and construction engineering—while enjoying exclusive opportunities to network with industry experts and potential employers.

Currently open scholarship opportunities include:

### **NAT Conference Attendance Scholarships**

- Provides selected students with an opportunity to attend where they can experience first-hand the challenges, opportunities and rewards of a career in the field of tunneling and underground construction.

### **Academic Scholarships**

- Awards one or more scholarships to promising college students who desire to develop their skills in the tunneling industry. The total amount of the award (approximately \$5,000) is apportioned to one or more students at the discretion of the RETC Executive Committee.

“Opening doors to future generations of underground construction professionals at our events remains paramount to our workforce development efforts,” said Melanie Penoyar-Perez, Chief Operating Officer of SME. “We look forward to welcoming another class of students to a conference where the many virtues of the industry are on display unlike anywhere else.”

For information regarding open scholarships and associated guidelines, visit [smenet.org/uca/uca-student-resources/uca-scholarships](http://smenet.org/uca/uca-student-resources/uca-scholarships).

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### **About UCA**

The Underground Construction Association, a Division of SME (UCA) brings together tunneling’s brightest and most dedicated professionals. Global association members advance their careers with world-class technical resources, educational programs, networking opportunities and professional development tools from UCA. Our members are focused on sharing best practices in safety, environmental stewardship and technological advancements. UCA. *Inspiring tunneling professionals worldwide.*