2025 MENSA FOUNDATION ANNUAL REPORT









MENSA FOUNDATION: REAL BRILLIANCE, **REAL IMPACT**



BECAUSE OF YOU, PEOPLE FOUND BELONGING, PURPOSE, AND GROWTH

You helped build a welcoming front door for our community, where people could learn together, feel seen, and explore intelligence, giftedness, and neurodiversity in real life. Your commitment fueled scholarships, advanced research, and created programs that connect ideas to practical tools people can use at home, in classrooms, and at work.

This year, your support fueled the Mensa Foundation mission to unleash intelligence for the benefit of humanity.

We also listened. Guided by our Unmet Needs study, we focused on expanding how society understands intelligence. You made space for lived experience, elevated diverse perspectives, and helped transform intelligence from a score into a human capacity that grows in community. This report shows what you made possible.

GREETINGS, FELLOW MENSANS! I'm pleased to offer this reflection of my first full year as President of the world's most brilliant charitable organization, the Mensa Foundation. Our Board of Trustees and staff remain steadfast in the Foundation's mission to unleash intelligence for the benefit of humanity, and the furtherance of this mission is wholly predicated on the generous contributions of time, treasure, and talent from our donors, volunteers, and partners. We at the Mensa Foundation hold the utmost gratitude for this uncompromising and growing generosity.

Many of you will detect a bit of a departure this year from the typical vibe of the Foundation's Annual Report. While our updates in previous years might have resembled more traditional reporting on discrete achievements and lessons learned, we're intentionally centering this year's update on the measurable impact of your year-round support. Specifically, how your support has empowered the Mensa Foundation to meet the unmet needs identified through the Mensa Foundation's first commissioned research project, the Study of Unmet Needs Among Highly Intelligent Individuals, which serves as the prevailing North Star in our ever-evolving story.

Within this 2025 Annual Report, I'm delighted to highlight the impact of these successes from the past year where your gifts:

- Continued and expanded the Mensa Foundation Colloquium and Speaker Series to create space for new ideas and diverse perspectives on intelligence
- Furthered the exploration of intelligence by interrogating it through the lens of AI
- Launched the Mensa Foundation Challenge to provide gifted adults an outlet to utilize their intelligence and address real-world issues
- Recognized and awarded researchers whose work aligns with the Mensa Foundation's mandate to address the unmet needs of gifted and neurodivergent people

Additionally, we're excited to provide a sneak peek at the abundance of new donor-driven inventiveness on the horizon this upcoming year and beyond:

- Researching the feasibility of an AI Mentor to provide personalized support to gifted and neurodivergent individuals
- Launching our new Excellence in Science program to expand existing gifted youth programming
- Establishing the Mensa Foundation Network to help gifted and neurodivergent people find supportive programming, resources, and community
- Creating the first-of-its-kind Catalyst Grant to empower unconventional intelligence
- Advancing a research agenda that places lived experience at the heart of how intelligence, giftedness, and neurodiversity is understood

We know that our plans to mobilize new, thoughtful, and data-driven programs are aspirational and harrowing; after all, we're wading into uncharted waters. With your support, we will retain laser focus on our goal to effect meaningful, positive change for gifted and neurodivergent people. We invite you to continue this impactful journey with us, and we humbly ask that you please give whatever time, treasure, and/or talent that you have available to help build a more gifted-friendly and neuroinclusive world.

On behalf of the Mensa Foundation: Thank you to all of our supporters for your continued — and, we hope, expanded — generosity, which truly fuels everything at the Mensa Foundation. Please visit MensaFoundation.org to find the best (tax-deductible) way for you to contribute and to unleash intelligence. And, as always, stay brilliant!

Cheers.

Nguyen Pham President, Mensa Foundation

Mr. Mensa 2011



STUDY OF UNMET NEEDS AMONG HIGHLY INTELLIGENT INDIVIDUALS

In 2024, the Mensa Foundation partnered with researchers at the William & Mary Center for Gifted Education to better understand the realworld challenges facing gifted and high-ability people. Through surveys and interviews with 3,443 participants from around the world, the study revealed that intelligence alone doesn't guarantee access, opportunity, or belonging.

Participants reported unmet needs in four key areas: academic, career, social-emotional, and mental health. Many wanted mentorship and flexible, challenging learning experiences. Others sought better career guidance and supportive workplaces. Across ages and backgrounds, participants called for stronger social connections and trusted help managing anxiety, frustration, and self-doubt.

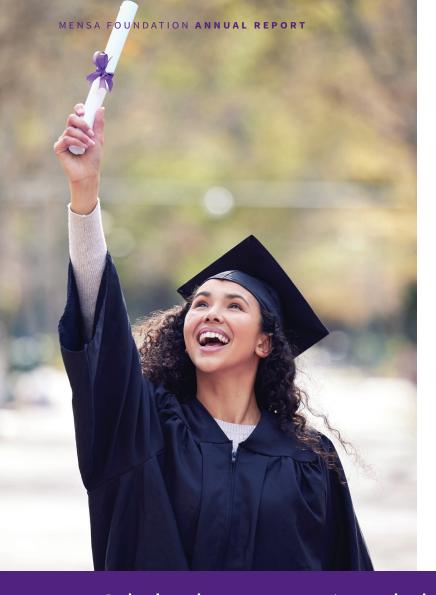
The findings showed that a quarter of participants experience low levels of unmet need, half face moderate challenges, and a quarter report high unmet needs — clear evidence that more support and connection are needed.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MENSA FOUNDATION ACTION

- Improve societal attitudes toward high intelligence
- Support academic skill development
- Support academic and career planning
- Provide financial supports for academic and career opportunities
- Foster social connectedness
- Provide mental health support

These insights now guide the Foundation's work to make intelligence not just measurable, but livable.

Study by Jennifer Riedl Cross, PhD; Tracy L. Cross, PhD; and Anyesha Mishra, PhD









PUTTING POTENTIAL ON THE PATH TO **SUCCESS**

BECAUSE OF YOU, talent is turning into impact. Your gifts removed real barriers so these students can push math forward, design cleaner cities, heal children, protect wildlife, argue for justice, and create art that moves people.

You made this possible. The confidence, time, and tools you provided are already paying off in labs, clinics, classrooms, studios, and communities. By investing in their strengths — not their deficits — you have personally changed the future and potential for these individuals, and the ripples of your generosity will be felt far beyond a single scholarship year.

You're not just changing lives, you're transforming generations.

76 Scholarships | 126 Awarded | \$184,800 Distributed



"You're investing in a future agronomist farmers can trust."

> MADDIE B. STEM Scholarship for Women



"Your gift helps a first-gen student stay on track in grad school."

> KIMBERLY W. Gen Y Scholarship



"Because of you, I'm learning to design solutions that make communities more resilient to climate change."

VERA H. Deb Stone Scholarship



"Your support helps me become a physical therapist who sees the whole person."

ALLISON M. The Sylvia Scholarship

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR GENEROUS DONORS!

GIVING SOCIETIES

The Mensa Foundation recognizes all donors who contribute \$25 or more during our fiscal year. However, those who contribute at leadership levels are recognized through our annual, lifetime, and legacy giving societies.



MENSA" FOUNDATION

TRUSTEES ROUNDTABLE

Support at the \$1,000+ annual level fuels the Foundation's mission to unleash intelligence and nurture brilliance for the benefit of humanity, sustaining programs that champion intelligence across the lifespan.



MENSA" FOUNDATION

THE LUMINARY SOCIETY

Lifetime contributions of \$10,000 or more provide sustained momentum for our global mission. This remarkable support advances scholarships, research, and initiatives that unleash intelligence and nurture brilliance around the world.



LEGACY SOCIETY

Planned gifts and estate commitments ensure the Mensa Foundation's future. This visionary support secures our ability to unleash intelligence and nurture brilliance for generations to come, expanding access to resources for gifted and/or neurodivergent individuals.

MENSA FOUNDATION DONOR HONOR ROLL

The Donor Honor Roll recognizes all supporters who contribute each fiscal year. Their generosity powers the Foundation's mission to unleash intelligence and nurture brilliance for the benefit of humanity.

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RESEARCH & DISCOVERY: UNFOLDING INTELLIGENCE, **TOGETHER**

WHAT IF musical practice could change your brain? Not just in theory, but visibly: white matter thickening, new pathways forming, intelligence itself becoming more adaptable. That's what Swedish neuroscientist and pianist Fredrik Ullén discovered, and it's the kind of breakthrough you helped further with Mensa Foundation awards.

Because of you, awardees are showing that intelligence isn't a single number. It grows through persistence, opportunity, stress, personality, and culture factors we're only beginning to understand. Their work is redefining giftedness as a lived, evolving experience.

You also supported researchers opening doors. One built an open-source tool to study high ability. Another traced gifted adults' educational memories. Others revealed how culture shapes teachers' perceptions. Fellows and earlycareer grantees are expanding that reach, addressing equity gaps and pairing intellectual challenge with emotional growth.

You're not just funding plaques or résumé lines. You're helping rewrite the story of intelligence from fixed ability to flexible potential. Thanks to you, the conversation is larger, more nuanced, and more human — an ever-widening view of what it means to be intelligent and, ultimately, what it means to be human.

MENSA FOUNDATION PRIZE



Fredrik Ullén, PhD Karolinska Institutet (Sweden) and Max Planck

Institute for Empirical Aesthetics (Germany)

A cognitive neuroscientist and concert pianist, Dr. Ullén studies how practice reshapes the brain and why some individuals benefit more from training than others. His research on music, intelligence, and neuroplasticity revealed that skill development strengthens whitematter pathways linked to cognition, inspiring a new model of how genes, environment, and effort combine to shape human potential.

GIFTED EDUCATION FELLOWSHIPS



Brenda Matos Purdue University Matos designs research-based

STEM learning experiences that nurture both intellect and emotional growth. As program coordinator for Purdue's GER²I Summer Residential Program, she leads curriculum design and educator training focused on belonging, motivation, and identity among gifted adolescents.



Kristin Lavin Taveira FlexSchool Taveira, a former journalist turned educator, champi-

ons strengths-based

tools for gifted and twice-exceptional learners. At New Jersey's FlexSchool, she develops scalable frameworks and training resources that help educators recognize and cultivate student potential, building classrooms where neurodivergent students feel seen, supported, and inspired to take creative risks.

EARLY CAREER MINI-GRANTS



Tvler Clark, EdD Western Kentucky University

Dr. Clark investigates

how personality traits such as openness to experience intersect with giftedness. His work aims to clarify psychological frameworks for gifted learners while advancing leadership, creativity, and equity in higher education through his roles in national and international gifted organizations.



Al Mansor "Shamin" Helal University of Arkansas

A doctoral candidate in education policy, Helal uses large-scale

data and advanced quantitative methods to study the long-term outcomes of gifted education. His research evaluates program effectiveness, equity, and access — particularly in rural contexts — and applies machine learning to improve how gifted students are identified and supported through data-driven education policy.

AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH



Angie L. Miller, PhD Indiana University Dr. Miller studies creativity, engage-

ment, and achievement among gifted and honors students. Her award-winning work examines how personality, perfectionism, and gender shape coping and social stress in high-ability college populations, helping institutions better support the emotional well-being of gifted learners.



Gabriella D. Noreen Vanderbilt University Noreen researches best practices for support-

ing gifted and underserved students. Her longitudinal studies with the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth amplify gifted adults' voices, showing how early educational acceleration shapes later achievement and highlighting the long-term benefits of matching learning pace to readiness.



Sophie von Stumm, PhD University of York (UK) Dr. von Stumm explores how intelli-

gence, personality, and socioeconomic background influence learning and life outcomes. Her research reveals how ambition, curiosity, and openness interact with family context to predict educational and emotional success in young adulthood.



Heejin Woo, PhD University of New South Wales (Australia)

Dr. Woo investigates how culture influences

teachers' perceptions of giftedness. Her study of South Korean pre-service educators found that competitive academic environments can discourage support for gifted programs, underscoring the need for more teacher training and nuanced cross-cultural understanding of talent.



Stephanie Ruth Young, PhD Northwestern University

Dr. Young develops technology-based tools

to improve cognitive assessment. She helped validate the open-source International Cognitive Ability Resource, advancing fairer and more accessible measures of intelligence. Her NIH-funded projects track cognition across the lifespan using mobile platforms to refine how ability is identified and understood.

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EXPLORING INTELLIGENCE THROUGH THE MENSA RESEARCH JOURNAL

AT THE MENSA FOUNDATION, we believe intelligence isn't just something to measure — it's something to explore, nurture, and unleash. Each issue of the *Mensa Research Journal* invites readers to view intelligence from fresh perspectives, connecting ground-breaking research with real-world experience. Through thoughtful curation and collaboration, the journal bridges the divide between scientific insight and everyday understanding, deepening our collective appreciation of what it means to be intelligent.

Over the past year, the journal has investigated a wide range of topics tied to the concept of intelligence. Each issue typically revolves around a single theme or set of related ideas, offering readers a broad spectrum of research and reflection on one particular dimension of intelligence.

The recent issue, *Organizational Intelligence & Culture*, guestedited by Dr. Steve Gruenert, delved into the interplay between organizational culture and organizational intelligence through research and thought experiments. Next came the journal's annual *Excellence in Research* issue, which honored the 2024 Mensa Foundation awardees by publishing either their award-winning or foundational work in the field of intelligence research.

Continuing a recent tradition, the journal released a special companion issue to the Mensa Foundation's Colloquium: *Human Intelligence in the Age of AI*. Guest editor Matthew Guggemos curated this edition, which not only features compelling research on artificial intelligence but also includes an interactive AI experience designed in collaboration with Nicola Ianeselli and Elizabeth Ngonzi — exclusive to readers.

Don't miss the Fall 2025 issue, which examines *Extraterrestrial Intelligence*. This special edition invites us to expand our understanding of what true non-human intelligence might look like — and what it means, in turn, to be human. To subscribe or purchase a single issue, visit MensaFoundation.org/MRJ.

Peter Marks

















YOU BUILT A COMMUNITY **AROUND CURIOSITY**

MENSA FOUNDATION EVENTS are the gateway to a thriving community. They spark real conversations about intelligence, giftedness, and neurodiversity while helping people find and share belonging. This year, the Colloquium welcomed 250+ attendees, the inaugural Challenge brought 50+ new voices into the fold, and year two of the Speaker Series engaged 40+ people each session with ideas they could use at home, in classrooms, and at work.

These gatherings meet a real unmet need: expanding how society understands intelligence in real life. By making space for lived experience, you are shifting the narrative from test scores to how people think, create, contribute, and grow, while opening doors for more people to be seen and supported. That progress began with you.

Bob Marlay Julius Marold Carol W. Martinez C. Matthews Heather Mattisson Angie Mattson ⊕ Sara Maurer Lisa Maxwell ⊕
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THE SUM OF YOUR SHARED **GENEROSITY**

THE GIVING PATTERNS to the Mensa Foundation mirror national trends: resilient yet volatile. Across the sector, total giving has grown, but fewer donors are carrying more of the weight. Our own results reflect this reality. After modest levels from 2018-20, giving rebounded in 2021 with post-pandemic recovery, then surged to an extraordinary peak in 2023 thanks to a handful of very large gifts.

In 2024 and 2025, support returned to more typical levels, though both the average gift and total giving remain well above pre-2020 benchmarks. This pattern aligns with national findings* that philanthropy is rising overall but within a narrower donor base. The lesson is clear: Transformational gifts matter, but so does every single contribution. Your generosity, no matter the size, strengthens the Mensa Foundation and fuels our mission to unleash intelligence.

*Sources: "Giving USA: The Annual Report on Philanthropy," Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy and the Giving Institute; "Fundraising Effectiveness Project," Association of Fundraising Professionals, Foundation for Philanthropy, and GivingTuesday

MENSA FOUNDATION GIVING TRENDS

	Year	Average Gift	Total Given	Total Donors
	2018	\$289	\$ 532,220	1,503
ĺ	2019	\$152	\$ 219,508	1,301
	2020	\$192	\$ 307,255	1,426
ĺ	2021	\$274	\$ 579,196	1,776
	2022	\$258	\$ 419,480	1,625
ĺ	2023	\$1,485	\$ 1,301,244	877
	2024	\$402	\$ 407,971	1,015
ı	2025	\$557	\$ 497,847	894

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WHAT YOU'VE MADE POSSIBLE DOESN'T END HERE

Travis Vieth

⊕ James VanderMeer

Amanda Vaughn

If you're a current donor, thank you. Your generosity powers everything in this report. If you're not yet a donor, we'd love to welcome you to the Mensa Foundation community.



Trustees Roundtable: Lead our most ambitious work with an annual gift of \$1,000 or more. Your leadership fuels innovation, drives impact, and helps shape the future of the Foundation's mission.



Legacy Society: Your legacy becomes part of the Mensa Foundation's story. By including the Foundation in your will or estate plans, you ensure that your values and vision for human intelligence live on for generations.



Foundation Circle: Join a dedicated community of monthly supporters who keep progress moving all year long. Your consistent giving sustains programs that nurture intelligence and change lives.