



# THE FALCON FOUNDATION ADVANTAGE

Every U.S. Air Force Academy graduate shares a celebrated heritage, forever connected as members of the Long Blue Line. Within these ranks exists a unique group of Airmen who also share another distinguished lineage. They are Falcon Foundation Scholars—Air Force Academy graduates who would not have had the chance to become members of the Long Blue Line without the intervention of a small, dedicated nonprofit organization.

Each year, thousands of talented young men and women apply for admission to the Air Force Academy. After a rigorous selection process, less than 10 percent of applicants make the final cut. And each year, the Falcon Foundation offers up to 100 privately funded scholarships to those applicants who narrowly missed admission to the Academy. Since 1958, the Falcon Foundation has quietly supported the Academy's ongoing mission of attracting and developing outstanding leaders of character for our nation. Its scholarships enable recipients to attend one of eight preparatory schools, providing an invaluable opportunity to bring their performance and academic skills up to the requirements for acceptance at one of the nation's most prestigious colleges.

The Falcon Foundation's success rate speaks for itself. Over 54 years, more than 95 percent of its Scholars have been granted admission to the Academy. The Falcon Foundation works with Academy Admissions intensively, year-round, to determine the best candidates for its scholarships.

"Our primary purpose is to identify and bring in those youngsters who have an intense commitment to serve their nation through developing themselves at the Air Force Academy," says Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Jay Kelley '64, President of the Falcon Foundation. "The overwhelming intensity, desire

to serve, and personal drive of our Falcon Scholars assure their success. Persistence pays off!"

The Falcon Foundation holds an annual banquet at the Academy, hosting Air Force and Academy leadership, Foundation trustees and Falcon Scholars. At the most recent banquet, three former Scholars took the stage at their alma mater to discuss the lasting impact of the Foundation's support.

The speakers candidly described their initial shock after learning they had been passed over for appointment, and how the subsequent scholarships enabled them to recover and press forward. "I had my eyes set on an appointment to the Academy, and the outlook was promising—straight A's, student body president, First Team All-City in soccer—but my SAT test scores were too low," said Major Matt Jones '99. "My determination to serve exceeded my disappointment: I applied to ROTC and continued taking SAT and ACT tests. My big break came with the offer of a Falcon Scholarship. Receiving the scholarship, and the subsequent experience at Northwestern Prep school that it afforded me, is the single most meaningful experience of my life."

Jones applied the skills he learned as a Falcon Scholar to great effect. "While anyone can benefit from the opportunities afforded by good timing, I feel the comprehensive readiness instilled in us during prep school and the added year of maturity are the keys to our success," he said. "That readiness enabled me to act as our squadron's fourth class leader, Cadet Wing Command Chief, and Cadet Wing Commander during my time at the Academy. I contend that Falcon Foundation Scholars, who were 'red-shirted' out of high school, now stand more mature, focused, appreciative, humble and, ultimately, more 'ready to conquer' the many unpredictable, dynamic challenges our country and service currently face." Major Jones was ultimately his



U.S. Air Force photos

“Falcon Scholarships are not a guarantee of success nor of entry to the Academy. In execution, they must be matched by the same drive, intensity, and persistence—the ‘gleam in eyes’—demonstrated by the great Airmen these scholarships honor. Major Jones, Lt. Underwood and Major Schantz are only three, among many, superb examples of Falcon success.”

—Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Jay Kelley '64, President of the Falcon Foundation

class' number two military graduate. He is a C-5 pilot now serving a staff tour at the Pentagon.

Class of 2009 graduate First Lt. Forrest Underwood's experience mirrored that of his predecessor. “In high school, I was team captain, club president, and active on class councils, which may have made me stand out at one point; however, that level of performance is par for the course at the Academy. I was below average academically, but my strong desire to serve and the fervor with which I pursued my dream caught the Falcon Foundation's attention,” he said. “They granted me a critical second chance—the opportunity to prove myself worthy.” Today, Underwood flies C-130J aircraft at Ramstein Air Force Base.

Hard work in preparatory school opened the way to a multitude of opportunities. “I learned life skills at prep school that gave me the confidence to succeed both at the Academy and in life,” said Major Henry Schantz '00. “While at the Academy, I participated in so many different activities. I was on a nationally recognized competitive parachuting team, the Wings of Blue; I was able to go to the Naval Academy exchange program; I did summer research at the Los Angeles Air Force Station; and was the Wing Operations NCO and the First Group cadet commander. After graduation, I successfully completed pilot training and am now the F-22 demonstration pilot at Langley Air Force Base.”

Reflecting on the profound impact that Falcon Scholarships had on their lives, these Academy graduates expressed their collective commitment to carry

the Falcon Foundation legacy forward. “I can't begin to convey the importance of foundational programs like those offered through the Falcon Foundation, in developing Airmen who are ready to lead in service to our nation,” said Jones. “I believe we owe the Foundation, its Board of Trustees and the donors who helped provide us with scholarships our deepest gratitude and, in recognition of this, we should strive to repay the gift we all have in common—whether it means returning to our high schools and prep schools to share our experiences, encouraging junior airmen to continue their education, or donating to the same organizations that sponsored us.”

Under the eyes of all in attendance, who had united that evening to celebrate each Falcon Scholar's success as their own, Underwood reiterated the promise that the Falcon Foundation made to its growing family of Scholars, and the Academy and Air Force community many years ago: “We must all remember the opportunities created for us, in order to create opportunities for others. It is our responsibility to ensure the future of the Line and keep it strong, because our fellow and future members are worth it.” 

---

*The Falcon Foundation, in cooperation with the United States Air Force Academy Endowment and the AOG, continues to provide critical private resources in support of the Academy's mission.*



Visit [falconfoundation.org](http://falconfoundation.org) to learn more about the Falcon Foundation.