Press Release

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Vertical Flight Society Announces 2023 DiversiFlite Winners
Three engineering students at US minority-serving institutions
were competitively selected for this second annual cohort

Fairfax, Virginia, April 18, 2023 — The Vertical Flight Society today announced the selected participants for this year’s DiversiFlite Scholars program, part of an initiative to promote science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers for the future vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) aviation workforce. The program selects promising engineering students interested in vertical flight at US-recognized minority-serving institutions (MSI) for an all-expenses-paid trip to the Annual Forum, the world’s largest and longest serving vertical flight technical event. The three winners will be recognized at the Grand Awards Breakfast on Thursday, May 18, 2023, during the Society’s 79th Annual Forum & Technology Display in West Palm Beach, Florida, USA.

Mr. Yassin Alallaq is an aeronautical sciences major (with a business administration minor) at Delaware State University, a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). He has been passionate about aviation since he took his first commercial airline flight at age six. In high school, he joined the Air Force Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) and Civil Air Patrol to be able to fly, and earned his private pilot’s license at Delaware State. A first-generation college student, Yassin is interested in learning more about vertical flight technology and hopes to become a military aviator after college.

Mrs. Felicia Trebian is working towards her Bachelor of Applied Science in Information Technology at Navajo Technical University in Crownpoint, New Mexico, one of 32 federally recognized Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). A first-generation college student who has gone back to school as an adult, Felicie says she has always been fascinated by powered flight, and is eager to take advantage of the experience at the Forum so she can bring back what she learns to her community as an engineer or teacher.

Ms. Eszter Varga is an aerospace engineering student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, recognized by the US government as an MSI. Despite endemic discrimination growing up in Budapest (Hungary has the lowest number of females in engineering and STEM in the European Union, 25% in 2017), Eszti is completing an accelerated bachelors/masters degree program and expects that she will soon be the first female Hungarian aerospace engineer. She is also extremely active in helping and inspiring others to pursue careers in STEM and aerospace.
The Annual Forum (see www.vtol.org/forum) is the largest and longest-running VTOL technical event in the world, with 260 technical papers, 50 invited presentations by leaders in industry, academia and government, and 60+ exhibitors. In addition to the all-expense-paid trip to Forum 79, VFS is also providing each DiversiFlite Scholar with guides to help make the most of this unique opportunity; special small-group meetings with aerospace industry leaders; and the opportunity to make new contacts within the vertical flight technical community.

VFS created the DiversiFlite Scholars program to encourage more engineering/pre-engineering students from underserved demographics to consider careers in vertical flight to meet the future needs of the industry. VFS has estimated that the future vertical workforce will need an additional 10,000 engineers over-and-above the current talent pipeline to meet the requirements of advanced rotorcraft and AAM development plans (see www.vtol.org/workforce).

The DiversiFlite initiative aims to help the vertical flight community foster a more inclusive environment that grows stronger through IDEA: Inclusion, Diversity and Equity, with Accessibility considerations for both the workforce and customers. Learn more about the VFS DiversiFlite program at www.vtol.org/DiversiFlite, and about the DiversiFlite Scholars program at www.vtol.org/scholars.

Founded as the American Helicopter Society in 1943, the Vertical Flight Society is an educational, charitable non-profit for engineers, scientists and others working on vertical flight technology. For 80 years, the Society has been the global leader for technical, educational, safety, advocacy and other important initiatives, bringing together industry, academia and government bodies around the world to tackle the toughest challenges in vertical flight.

VFS can be found as @VTOLsociety on social media: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Mastodon, Twitter, and YouTube

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