

August 8th, 2026

Dear Mr. Cline and Team,

As a recipient of the 7x24 Exchange Silicon Prairie Chapter Scholarship for the last four years, I wanted to take a moment to thank you for your generosity and sponsorship of this program. Your financial assistance and support has been hugely beneficial towards my education by alleviating some financial burden and allowing me to focus wholly on academics. At this time, I am scheduled to graduate at the top of my class from Iowa State University in May of 2027; I will have earned a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering and a minor in Applied Artificial Intelligence.

To provide some background information about myself, I am originally from New Hartford, Iowa, and attended Dike-New Hartford High School. I graduated with about sixty other kids in my class and was always worried my small-town education may not be enough to help me stand out at a large university. I started working towards overcoming this by exploring as many extracurriculars as possible in high school, such as First Tech Challenge (FTC) robotics, speech, soccer, cross country, Future Problem Solving, Talented and Gifted, Big House (high school ministry), volunteering in Kids' Ministry, and service as the Student Body President. While at Iowa State, I have continued this pursuit as a part of Women in Science and Engineering (WiSE), Women in Mechanical Engineering (WiME), leadership in Kairos Student Ministry, the Habitat for Humanity club, and several intramural sports. While studying, I have also put my learning into practice by acting as a Teaching Assistant for a Thermodynamics 2 course and completing several internships in the project and manufacturing engineering fields.

Much of the reason I chose to major in Mechanical Engineering was because of my involvement in robotics, where I developed a passion for the design, problem-solving, and STEM elements of engineering. Engineering has always felt like a field in which I can directly improve lives, and that sense of purpose is what will fill my bucket everyday throughout my career. Because Iowa State is one of the most prestigious universities in the engineering field and is in my home state, it seemed like the perfect fit for me.

Last May, I completed my third year in the Mechanical Engineering undergraduate program at ISU. What makes this year special is that I was able to complete my sixth semester abroad at the University of Limerick in Ireland. This was a once in a lifetime opportunity to immerse myself in another country and culture while still progressing towards my degree—but it wouldn't have been possible without the help of scholarships like this one. I am grateful beyond words for the countries I explored, friendships I made, and international perspective I gained while in Europe—so thank you.

Currently, I am spending my summer as a manufacturing engineering intern in Ankeny, Iowa. I look forward to developing my professional and engineering skills further as I wrap up the summer and am more excited than ever to come back to ISU in the fall and kick off my senior year. Upon my expected graduation from Iowa State this spring, I hope to earn a position at an innovative mechanical design and engineering company and use my skills towards the company's success while building meaningful relationships with the people around me. It is my goal to play a leadership role in my future company by utilizing outreach to inspire other women to pursue and thrive in STEM careers.

This scholarship has been beyond helpful along the way to achieving my engineering goals and education at Iowa State (and the University of Limerick). It will continue to alleviate my financial burden throughout the next year, allowing me to prioritize my studies and pursue my dream career. The 7x24 Exchange Silicon Prairie Chapter Scholarship is immensely appreciated, and I cannot thank you enough for this gift!

Sincerely,

Alaina Steffen

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