

Thiel Foundation Announces 2015 Thiel Fellows, Expands Fellowship Program

Record Number of Applicants Highlights the Explosion of Interest in Tech Entrepreneurship Among Young People

SAN FRANCISCO -- June 5, 2015 -- [The Thiel Foundation](#) today introduced the 2015 class of [Thiel Fellows](#). Twenty new fellows have been selected from a record number of 2800 applications received. Thiel Fellows receive \$100,000 and mentorship from the Foundation's network of founders, investors, and scientists, provided they skip or stop out of college during the two years of the program.

"College can be good for learning about what's been done before, but it can also discourage young people from doing something new – especially when it leaves them in debt," said Peter Thiel, who founded the program. "Each of the fellows charts a unique course, but together they have proven that young people can succeed by thinking for themselves instead of competing on old career tracks."

The Foundation also announced that it will expand the program to accept up to 30 fellows each year, and that, effective immediately, it will begin reviewing Fellowship applications on a rolling basis, uncoupling the selection process from the academic calendar. "Young people shouldn't have to wait until the end of a school year to build something awesome," said Jack Abraham, Executive Director of the Fellowship. "Our fellows learn more from the Fellowship than any college can teach. We want to support talented applicants as soon as they're ready, because great ideas can't wait."

Abraham also announced plans to expand the Fellowship by including all college-age young people. While in previous years the program's age limit was 20, beginning with this year's class the program will be open to anyone 22 or younger. "Demand for this program has exploded," he said. "Our advertised limit didn't stop hundreds of driven 21- and 22-year-olds from contacting us to apply this year, and we believe they deserve the same opportunity to show just how much they can get done outside college."

Collectively, the 80 current and former Thiel Fellows have already raised more than \$142 million in venture capital and generated \$41 million in revenue. The fellows have also created 375 jobs in the course of tackling problems ranging from telemedicine and human longevity to solar energy and clean water.

Many of the new fellows will be attending the Thiel Foundation Summit, a twice-yearly gathering for young entrepreneurs to discuss their projects with peers and meet with mentors from the Thiel Fellowship network. Attendees can also pitch their ideas for new companies for an opportunity to win \$1,000 grants to get started. The next Thiel Foundation Summit takes place June 6 and 7 in San Francisco. More information is at <http://summit.thielfellowship.org/>

Introducing the 2015 Thiel Fellows

Name (Age at application, Hometown) Project Type

Caroline Beckman (20, Sacramento, CA) Health and Wellness Products

Caroline is co-founder of Nomva, a health food company that makes 100% organic fruit and vegetable snacks powered by immune-boosting and digestion-supporting probiotics. Nomva expects to launch in California retail stores and online nationwide this summer. Caroline is also a founding member and VP of Special Projects at [Suja Juice](#), the nation's leading organic and cold-pressed juice brand.

Cathy Tie (18, Toronto, Ontario, Canada) Genomic Sequencing

Cathy is co-founder and CEO of [Ranomics](#), a biotech startup that is improving the accuracy of genetic testing by determining the consequences of all variants in hereditary disease genes before they are seen in patients. Ranomics aims to revolutionize preventative medicine by determining with unparalleled precision whether a person is prone to a hereditary condition as a result of their individual genetic variations.

George Matus (17, Salt Lake City, UT) Unmanned Aerial Systems

George is CEO of [iDrone](#), where he designs, builds, and pilots advanced UAV technology. He has been a drone test pilot since age 12, won a global drone competition at age 16, and now at 17, manufactures incredibly capable UAVs for consumer and commercial markets.

Harry Gandhi (22, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada) Wearable Medical Technology

Harry is co-founder and CEO of [Medella Health](#), a startup that is creating a smart contact lens platform for continuous and non-invasive monitoring of health vitals, starting with diabetes management. With this technology, Harry aims to make a reactive healthcare system proactive, so that diseases can be prevented in advance instead of treated only after symptoms appear.

Jason Marmon (17, Armonk, NY) Real Estate Technology

Jason is co-founder and CEO of [HomeSwipe](#), an apartment rental app that makes renting an apartment easy by providing reliable listings and the best mobile search experience on the market.

Jeremy Cai (19, Chicago, IL) - Software, Human Resources

Jeremy is founder and CEO of [OnboardIQ](#), where he is reinventing the way companies build a modern workforce by developing software to streamline and automate interactions with service providers.

Jihad Kawas (17, Beirut, Lebanon) Sharing Economy

Jihad is founder and CEO of [Saily](#), a local marketplace that helps neighbors buy, sell, and swap secondhand products quickly and seamlessly from their mobile phones. Saily's mission is to help build neighborhoods that don't let anything go to waste.

John Backus (21, Great Falls, VA) Software

John is co-founder and CEO of [BlockScore](#), where he builds software that helps businesses to verify their customers' identities, fighting fraud and smoothly complying with regulations.

John Meyer (19, New York, NY) Media, Crowdsourced News

John dropped out of New York University to start [Fresco News](#), a startup that builds 21st century newsroom tools. Fresco helps news organizations mobilize the smartphone users who are capturing footage wherever news is breaking.

Kieran O'Reilly (19, Elmont, NY) and **Rory O'Reilly** (20, Elmont, NY) Animated GIFs

Rory and his brother Kieran dropped out of Harvard a year ago to make online communication easier and more fun. Their company [GIFTY](#) (formerly Gifyoutube) helps people to express themselves in pictures.

Liam Horne (19, Cambridge, Ontario, Canada) Software, Retail Real Estate

Liam is CTO of [PiinPoint](#), where he builds software that uses demographic, real estate, and traffic data to help retailers decide where to open new locations.

Max Lock (18, Bryn Mawr, PA) Supply Chain Logistics

Max is founder and President of [Fleet](#), an easy-to-use freight shipping platform that provides reliable shipments, fair pricing, and an unparalleled customer experience for shippers of any size -- particularly the small- to medium-sized companies traditionally underserved by the global freight industry.

Ocean Pleasant (17, New York, NY) Media, Social Good, Technology

Ocean founded [REAL Magazine](#), a national youth culture publication dedicated to engaging millennials on questions of social change. She is currently developing *REAL me*, a software application to connect young people with volunteer opportunities based on their unique interests.

Olenka Polak (21, Greenwich, CT) App-Based Software, Linguistics

Olenka is co-founder of [myLINGO](#), a free mobile app that lets you watch Hollywood movies in the theater in another language, using your smartphone and headphones. Advanced audio recognition technology ensures a perfectly synchronized studio-quality dub, eliminating the inconvenience of subtitles.

Patrick Coughran (21, Monterrey, Mexico) Logistics Software

Patrick is co-founder and CTO of [Foxtrot Systems](#), a logistics software platform that helps distributors execute better last-mile deliveries. Foxtrot uses traffic and weather information, in-house route-optimization algorithms, and machine learning to boost customers' fleets' efficiency and delivery success.

Simon Tian (20, Montreal, Quebec, Canada) Wearables, Consumer Electronics

Simon is the founder and CEO of [Neptune](#), which makes mobile hardware that fits on your wrist and helps you to work seamlessly in any environment.

Stacey Ferreira (22, Scottsdale, AZ) Technology, Entrepreneurship

Stacey is the co-Author of [2 Billion Under 20: How Millennials Are Breaking Down Age Barriers & Changing the World](#) and CEO of [AdMoar](#), an online marketplace that matches brands with YouTube influencers to facilitate product placement deals. She sold her first company, MySocialCloud, to Reputation.com in 2013.

Zach Latta (17, El Segundo, CA) Education, Nonprofit

Zach is Executive Director of [hackEDU](#), a national nonprofit that brings coding clubs to high schools nationwide. Students who love music can join band; students who love sports can join an athletic team; but students who want to code have to go home and do it alone. Zach's goal is to spread the hacker ethos (and programming skills) to every student in the nation.

Zoli Kahan (19, Austin, TX) Mobile Games, Software

Zoli is CTO of [Clay.io](#), a startup that publishes popular games to mobile web platforms. With Clay.io, developers can easily publish their games to more than 5 million users, and users can access hundreds of games instantly on any platform or device.

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