



Eligibility

The PAVE Essay Contest and Scholarship Program is open to all high school juniors and seniors enrolled at a school in Michigan. Immediate family members of PAVE staff, PAVE member organizations, contest sponsors, and the Essay Contest Selection Committee are not eligible to enter.

Period of Entry and Awards

Period of Entry:

Students may submit contest entries between December 10, 2025, and February 28, 2026. Submissions received after 11:59 PM (EST) on February 28, 2026, are ineligible.

Award Notification:

Essay contest winners will be selected and informed of their award in the spring of 2026.

Prizes:

Scholarship funding will be awarded in the following amounts: \$2,000 for first place, \$1,000 for second place, and \$500 for third place.

How to Enter

Entry Form:

Eligible students must complete the online submission form and submit their essay prior to the end of the application period. The online submission form is available on the contest website. Students may request an emailed entry form by contacting emails@pavecampaign.org. Emailed entries must be received by the close of the application period.

Essay Specifications:

Essays exceeding 1000 words will not be considered. Essays should focus on autonomous vehicle technology and the societal implications of these technologies but should refrain from referencing specific companies or brands.

Winning essays will include a detailed explanation of the topic and creative defense of the thesis without specifically naming current vehicle models, business trademarks, logos, or any other distinct proprietary information related to manufacturers, designers, or any other businesses directly or indirectly related to the development of autonomous vehicle technology.

Essay topics: Students may select their topic between three prompts. The choices can be found on the submission form on the [PAVE Essay Contest website](#).

Essays will be evaluated based on [this scoring rubric](#).

Judging & Selection of Winners

The PAVE Essay Contest Selection Committee will select three winning essays, and the students will be notified via the contact information provided on their application form. The selection committee may require students to provide proof of enrollment in a school within the essay contest jurisdiction.

The scholarship may be awarded to an alternate winner if the scholarship notification is undeliverable, or if the winner does not respond to the scholarship notification within 14 days following notification. If the winner does not claim the scholarship, PAVE, at its sole discretion, may select an alternate winner.

Students and parents will be asked to sign a waiver giving contest organizers permission to publicly announce the names of contest winners.

Terms & Conditions

By submitting an entry, applicants accept all competition rules. Applicants under the age of 18 must have the consent of a parent or legal guardian to enter.

Submitted essays must be original work written solely by the entrant. If any part of an essay is found to have been copied or plagiarized, the applicant will be disqualified from the competition. All essays will be run through an AI detector, and any submissions found to have used AI technology will be disqualified.

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: PAVE shall not use or sell information provided by the applicant in any manner other than as it relates to the scholarship or other PAVE mission-related communications. Once submitted, the applicant acknowledges that PAVE may use any essay content in future PAVE communications and marketing materials.

Additional Information

Scholarship recipients should review any potential tax implications related to a winner's use of scholarship funds.

General Guidance from the IRS:¹

- Scholarships and grants are tax-free for the recipient if: (1) the recipient is a candidate for a degree at an educational institution that maintains a regular faculty and curriculum and normally has a regularly enrolled body of students in attendance at the place where it carries on its educational activities; and (2) the amounts received are used to pay for tuition and fees required for enrollment or attendance at the educational institution, or for fees, books, supplies, and equipment required for courses at the institution.
- Scholarships and grants are taxable for the recipient if: (1) the amounts received are used for incidental expenses, such as room and board, travel, and optional equipment; or (2) the amounts received are payments for teaching, research, or other services required as a condition for the fellowship grant (unless received as part of federal programs for health professions).

Scholarship recipients should consult with a tax professional for further guidance.

¹<https://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc421>