



Press release  
28 May 2025

## Roark Chao awarded an SPIE Optics and Photonics Scholarship

BELLINGHAM, Washington, USA — **Roark Chao** has been awarded a 2025 Optics and Photonics Scholarship by SPIE, the international society for optics and photonics, for potential contributions to optics, photonics, or a related field.



Chao is an Electrical and Computer Engineering (ECE) graduate student at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), where he is advised by Professors **Jon Schuller** and **Steven DenBaars**. Previously, he received his BSc in ECE from UCSB in 2024 under the guidance of Schuller. Chao's research seeks to combine machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) with finite-difference time-domain (FDTD) and rigorous coupled-wave analysis (RCWA) models of light-matter interactions, with the express objective of demonstrating unconventional optoelectronics enabled by metasurfaces. His broad research interests include 2D hybrid organic-inorganic perovskites, III-Nitride optoelectronics, and photonic and plasmonic metasurfaces.

This month, the Society is awarding \$323,000 in scholarships to 74 outstanding SPIE Student Members, based on their potential contribution to optics and photonics, or a related discipline. Successful applicants were evaluated, selected, and approved by the SPIE Scholarship Committee, chaired by SPIE Senior Member **Brian Primeau**.

Since this program began in 1978, SPIE has distributed more than \$7.5 million dollars in individual scholarships. This ambitious effort reflects the Society's commitment to education as well as to the future generations of optical scientists and engineers around the world.

To view other 2025 scholarship press releases as they become available, please visit the [2025 Scholarship Recipients page](#) or learn more about [SPIE scholarships](#) on [spie.org](http://spie.org).

SPIE, the international society for optics and photonics, brings engineers, scientists, students, and business professionals together to advance light-based science and technology. The Society, founded in 1955, connects and engages with our global constituency through industry-leading conferences and exhibitions; publications of conference proceedings, books, and journals in the SPIE Digital Library; and career-building opportunities. Over the past five years, we have invested more than \$25 million in the international optics community through our advocacy and support, including scholarships, educational resources, travel grants, endowed gifts, and public-policy development. [www.spie.org](http://www.spie.org).

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Media contact:

Daneet Steffens, Public Relations Manager

[daneets@spie.org](mailto:daneets@spie.org)

[@spie.org](https://www.spie.org)