&U

Certificate of Award: _____

ampersandU.com/deets

&U is an elite world-wide grant program which selectively gave away $180k+ in 2025 to a small handful of exceptional talents around the globe. The program has no direct analog but may be thought of as closely related to fellowships such as: Emergent Ventures[1], South Park Commons[2], O'Shaughnessy Fellowships[3], Thiel Fellowship[4], etc.

Full details may be found at the link above. In brief, the program conceives of capitalism as a universal good a la Ayn Rand. By incubating founders and helping them go "from -1 to 0" &U aims to prepare grant recipients for rigorous accelerators like YCombinator, the global standard for startups[5]. In building a successful company, founders achieve personal and financial freedom, deepen their mastery of income streams, and ultimately create jobs and philanthropy down the line for both the United States and their homelands as well, wherever those may be.

Andy Trattner is the sole operator, backer, and talent evaluator for &U. Andy is a serial entrepreneur whose companies have served many tens of thousands of American citizens as satisfied customers. He is an MIT contemporary of notable leaders in the tech industry such as Luana Lopes Lara (founder of Kalshi), Alexandr Wang (founder of Scale AI), Nikhil Buduma (founder of Ambience Healthcare), Leigh Marie Braswell (partner at Kleiner Perkins), Steven Hao (cofounder of Cognition), etc representing tens of billions in market cap value creation.

Under President Obama, Andy was selected by the White House as a U.S. Presidential Scholar in 2014. He then spent several years running the program as a volunteer, including under the first Trump Administration, and later served on the board of the Alumni Association to identify internal talent cultivation strategies. After working in both government (Ed) and Silicon Valley, hiring many dozens of people from around the world, and accumulating a wide breadth of experience, Andy is convinced that novel and more rigorous standards of talent evaluation are required in the fast-paced modern world and that very few current programs meet his standards for provable excellence.

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[1] EV - https://www.mercatus.org/emergent-ventures

[2] SPC - https://www.southparkcommons.com/founder-fellowship

[3] OSV - https://www.osvfellowship.com/

[4] https://thielfellowship.org/ from Paypal + Palantir cofounder and the first Facebook backer Peter Thiel

[5] Paul Graham's "Startup = Growth" essay effectively defined the term itself: https://www.paulgraham.com/growth.html

Andy applies such standards to himself and his peers rigorously, and he publicly blogs about his learnings at andys.blog, which has a small but influential subscribership. Especially after seeing his college friends become billionaires from nothing and having a front-row seat to unprecedented rates of modern company-building and technology development, as well as living in Ecuador and Singapore, Andy deeply wants to maintain his country of birth, the United States, as a competitive market internationally and a strong, enduring destination for the very best talent to make their home.

Google does not require Demis Hassabis to become a tenured professor before they acquire him on raw talent ability, knowing his trajectory is exponential enough to eventually win not just one Nobel Prize but many other things as well. This decision has proven to be one of the pivotal moments in history that created the entire modern AI industry. Similarly, it behooves institutions and programs like the O-1 Visa to recognize that their criteria is both flawed and at odds with their ultimate goal.

Specifically, one of the strongest markers of high agency[6] is an ability to find, seek out, and *create* opportunities. This is what every &U grant recipient did, in live and public competition with thousands of other interested grant seekers[7]. They do not ignore or discount &U because it is tiny and appears new, without media coverage. Peter Thiel frequently says to ignore mimetic tendencies and establishment buzz because that's how to best evaluate true substance over superficial signaling. Media coverage and awards are a terrible standard of evaluation and they destroy the O-1's credibility. You cannot build the best future by looking at the average, filtered past.

You need competent evaluation from people who are willing to stake their careers, reputations, and ultimately the livelihoods of their children's children on resource allocation decisions that will help or harm the future of the USA—like when Shaun Maguire burned his bridges to force Sequoia to invest in SpaceX. Andy Trattner does this with complete and utter dedication to a zero net-worth philosophy through his personal grant program. He treats this as a for-profit activity in the long run and refuses to register a nonprofit 501(c)3 vehicle. He would prefer to fix the entire U.S. tax system before conceding that our existing institutions and social structures are sufficient to meet the present moment in history.

Thanks for your consideration. You may contact him at any time on behalf of any &U grant recipient.

Nov 24, 2025



AndyTrattner.com

[6] https://www.highagency.com/

[7] Great work finds the people who matter, fast - https://www.humaninvariant.com/blog/audience