

★ SUMMIT OVERVIEW

The Summit

2009 Summit, South Africa

Summit Overview

The American Academy of Achievement, founded in 1961, held its inaugural International Achievement Summit program at Budapest, Hungary in June 1999.

Prior to the occasion of the first International Achievement Summit in Budapest, the American Academy of Achievement had, since 1961, provided life-changing experiences to thousands of American high school students at the annual Salute to Excellence program.



1999: The American Academy of Achievement's Inaugural International Achievement Summit held in Budapest, Hungary. Left: Academy of Achievement delegates and members gather on the steps of the Hungarian Parliament Building following their participation in the XVI NATO Workshop. Right: His Excellency Árpád Göncz, first President of post-Communist Hungary, addressing the Academy delegates and members at the Hungarian Palace of Justice.

The International Achievement Summit enabled the Academy to expand its reach outside the United States for the first time by generating a dialogue between eminent international achievers and the most promising young leaders of tomorrow. The Academy's global Summit adhered to the legacy of its domestic Salute to Excellence

program by bringing together men and women of exceptional accomplishment to share their experiences with remarkable young people from around the world, with an adjusted focus toward graduate-level scholars.



Justice Anthony M. Kennedy addresses the Academy delegates at the 2014 Achievement Summit in San Francisco.

For the inaugural Summit in Budapest, more than 100 outstanding international graduate students were selected by the Academy from nominations submitted by administrators of such international exchange programs as the Rhodes Scholarship Trust, Truman Scholarship Foundation and Fulbright Scholarship program.



Awards Council member, theoretical physicist and futurist Dr. Freeman Dyson presenting the American Academy of Achievement's Golden Plate Award to Dr. Francis H.C. Crick, recipient of the Nobel Prize as the co-discoverer of the structure of DNA, during the 1987 Banquet of the Golden Plate ceremonies in

Scottsdale, Arizona; Physicist and astronaut Dr. Sally K. Ride, the first American woman in space, addresses delegates and members at a symposium during the 2004 International Achievement Summit in Chicago, Illinois; Awards Council member and Nobel Prize laureate Dr. Charles H. Townes presenting the American Academy of Achievement's Golden Plate Award to British biochemist Dr. Frederick Sanger, recipient of two Nobel Prizes in Chemistry, at the 2000 Summit in Hampton Court.

Delegate nominations were also provided by the faculty of more than 25 institutions, including the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton, Institute of Political Studies in Paris, School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins, Stanford Business School, Harvard Law School, United States Military Academy, Naval Academy and Air Force Academy.



Chicago 2004: Google co-founders Sergey Brin and Larry Page, former Academy delegates at 2000 International Achievement Summit, returned as Golden Plate Awardees and symposium presenters at the 43rd annual Summit.

During the four-day International Achievement Summit, the Academy delegation of young scholars joined hundreds of distinguished guests — including heads of state, leaders of industry, foreign ministers, ministers of defense, military commanders and diplomats — in an extraordinary series of symposia and roundtable discussions.



2003: Awards Council member and pioneer of rock and roll music Chuck Berry presents the American Academy of Achievement's Golden Plate Award to the legendary singer-songwriter and musician Bob Dylan at the Banquet of the Golden Plate ceremonies during the 42nd annual International Achievement Summit held in Washington, D.C.

The Academy members and graduate students participated in a number of memorable and inspiring events during the Summit, highlighted by presentations in the Palace of Justice from His Excellency Árpád Göncz, President of the Republic of Hungary, and Dr. Bronislaw Geremek, Foreign Minister of Poland, on their imprisonment by communist governments and their commitment to democracy.



Golden Plate Awards Council member President Bill Clinton with the acclaimed singer and musician, Ray Charles, a 1975 American Academy of Achievement guest of honor, at the 2003 Banquet of the Golden Plate in Washington.

The 1999 International Achievement Summit also included a dialogue on the expansion of NATO with His Excellency Viktor Orbán, Prime Minister of the Republic of Hungary, in the historic Parliament building; a summary of the Kosovo crisis by General Wesley K. Clark, USA, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe; and a conversation on the pursuit of NATO membership with Her Excellency Nadezhda Mihailova, Foreign Minister of Bulgaria, and His Excellency Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania.



Actor and comedian Robin Williams performing a spontaneous “Academy rap” with the Grammy-winning singer-songwriter Sheryl Crow at the 2006 Banquet of the Golden Plate ceremonies during the 45th annual International Achievement Summit held in Los Angeles. Awards Council member and filmmaker Steven Spielberg presenting the Academy of Achievement’s Golden Plate Award to Sheryl Crow after her performance at the Banquet ceremonies.

The second International Achievement Summit took place at Claridge’s in London, England, in October 2000. The American Academy of Achievement invited 30 men and women of exceptional accomplishment to share their wisdom and experience with 200 outstanding graduate students in the disciplines of law, medicine, the sciences, economics and international affairs. The assembled students represented over 40 different countries and more than 25 institutions of higher learning.



South Africa's Archbishop Desmond M. Tutu receives the American Academy of Achievement's Golden Plate Award from Council member Coretta Scott King during the 2003 International Achievement Summit in Washington, D.C.

Featured speakers included Bertie Ahern, Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland; Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga; NATO Secretary-General Lord Robertson; Benazir Bhutto, former Prime Minister of Pakistan; Lech Walesa, the former President of Poland; and Mikhail Gorbachev, former Premier of the Soviet Union.



1991: Academy guest of honor and screen legend Audrey Hepburn with famed fashion designer and Golden Plate Awards Council member Ralph Lauren at the American Academy of Achievement's dinner held in New York City.

In June 2002, the 41st annual Salute to Excellence program and the third International Achievement Summit took place simultaneously in historic Dublin, capital of the Republic of Ireland. The Academy of Achievement invited 50 men and women of exceptional accomplishment (30 past honorees and 20 new awardees) to share their wisdom and experience with 200 outstanding graduate students from 40 countries in the disciplines of law, medicine, genetics, the sciences, engineering, economics, finance, journalism, international relations and diplomacy.



Three Titans of Tech: (Left) Steven P. Jobs, the 26-year-old co-founder and the board chairman of Apple Computer Company, with General David C. Jones, USAF, Golden Plate Awards Council co-chairman and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at the American Academy of Achievement's 1982 Banquet of the Golden Plate in New Orleans, Louisiana; (Center) Microsoft's Co-Founder and Chairman, Bill Gates, receives the Golden Plate Award from Awards Council member, Dr. Arno A. Penzias, recipient of the Nobel Prize in Physics, during the 1992 American Academy of Achievement Summit in Las Vegas; (Right) Jeff Bezos, founder and CEO of Amazon.com, addressing the Academy student delegates and members during the 2001 Academy of Achievement Summit program in San Antonio, Texas.

The student delegates for the 2002 Summit were selected by prestigious international exchange programs, including the Rhodes Scholarship Trust, the White House Fellows program, Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Truman Scholar Foundation, and the Marshall and Fulbright Scholarship programs.



2012: Queen of Soul Aretha Franklin is joined onstage by Awards Council member General Colin Powell during her memorable musical performance to close the evening of the 50th annual Banquet of the Golden Plate ceremonies.

Additional student delegates were designated by the faculty of leading institutions around the world, including Harvard Law School, the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, the Sanger Centre at Cambridge, MIT School of Engineering, Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, Sofia University School of International Relations in Bulgaria, University College Dublin, the Max Planck Institute in Berlin, the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton, Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, Moscow Institute of International Relations, Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, and the United States Military Academy, Naval Academy and Air Force Academy.





Academy student delegate Taylor Swift performs her hit songs at the 2008 Banquet of the Golden Plate in Hawaii.

Subsequent International Achievement Summits have occurred in Chicago, New York and Los Angeles, as well as Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, Cape Town, South Africa, Washington, D.C., San Francisco, and London, England.



Hal Prince receives the Golden Plate Award from Awards Council member and Nobel laureate Toni Morrison during the American Academy of Achievement's 2007 Banquet of the Golden Plate gala ceremonies in Washington, D.C.; Composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim receives the Academy's Gold Medal from Awards Council member James Earl Jones at the 2005 International Achievement Summit during a Broadway symposium in New York City; Awards Council member and Astronomer Royal Lord Martin Rees presents the Golden Plate Award to Nobel Prize-winning British novelist, screenwriter, and short-story writer Kazuo Ishiguro at the 2017 Achievement Summit in London.

In 2012, the 50th anniversary gathering of the Academy of Achievement in Washington, D.C. brought the most promising young social media innovators and technology entrepreneurs from 30 nations to the U.S. Capitol, Supreme Court and other historic venues for symposium discussions with the leaders of American government, business and science. Many of the delegates were selected based on recommendations by the U.S. State Department, which partnered with the Academy to identify exceptional young people from around the world who have employed social media platforms and emerging technologies to effect significant change within their respective homelands.



2017: Jeremy Irons, Justice Neil M. Gorsuch and his wife, Louise, join Academy members and 70 Marshall Scholars at a dinner hosted by the Duke of Marlborough in The Long Library at Blenheim Palace in Woodstock, Oxfordshire.

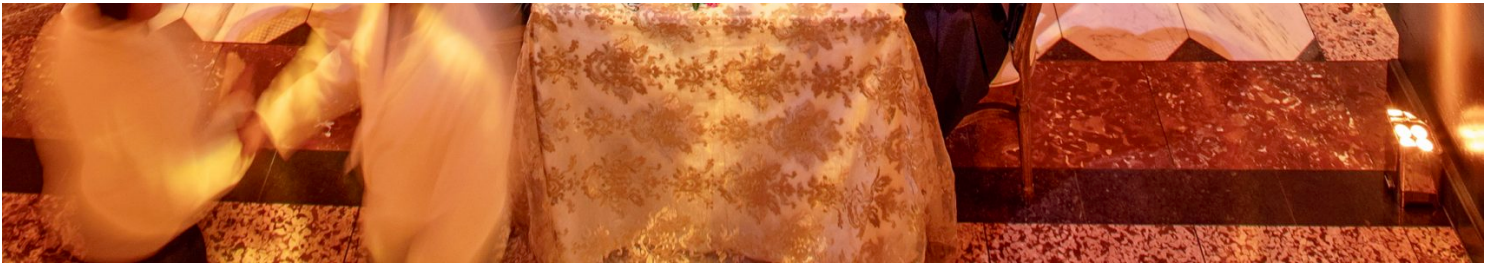
The 2014 International Achievement Summit in San Francisco saw the convergence of 100 preeminent leaders of our times with 100 youth delegates; Rhodes Scholars, Marshall Scholars, Soros Fellows, medical students and young physicians of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and the Harvard-MIT Medical Scientist Training Program, as well as scholars from the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Israel.



2019: Academy Chairman and CEO Wayne R. Reynolds, Summit Host Chairman Catherine B. Reynolds, the Summit Co-Host John Overdeck, and delegates at Four Seasons, New York during the International Achievement Summit.

Ideas flowed freely through symposium sessions and informal gatherings, as participants shared their views of the latest developments in medicine, technology, commerce and public affairs. The Academy's 2017 International Achievement Summit was held in London and Oxfordshire, England, and the 2019 International Achievement Summit was held in New York City. The 2022 International Achievement Summit was held in Washington, D.C.





September 12, 2022: The Banquet of the Golden Plate at Luce Center, National Portrait Gallery, in Washington, D.C.

In 2024, the Banquet of the Golden Plate was held in the distinguished setting of David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center, New York City, home of the New York Philharmonic. This prestigious event celebrated an illustrious group of honorees, including Nobel laureates, Grammy and Pulitzer Prize winners, heads of state, and Presidential Medal of Freedom recipients. The evening brought together extraordinary figures from diverse fields—such as the arts, athletics, literature, science, and business—honoring Olympic champions, pioneering medical researchers, visionary business leaders, and globally acclaimed artists, all united in recognition of their unparalleled achievements and contributions to society.



September 22, 2024: The Academy of Achievement's 55th Banquet of the Golden Plate at David Geffen Hall, Lincoln Center, New York City. (Left) Guests of Honor: World Athlete of the Year Faith Kipyegon, Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient Billie Jean King, and Olympic Gold Medalist Beatrice Chebet. (Center) Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy with World Bank President Ajay Banga. (Right) Baseball Hall of Famer Cal Ripken Jr., Boston Red Sox owner John W. Henry, singer-songwriter Jon Batiste, and Led Zeppelin founder and guitarist Jimmy Page.

In June 2026, the American Academy of Achievement returned to Washington, D.C. for the 56th International Achievement Summit, held June 23–25 in conjunction with the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The gathering was a celebration of creativity, imagination, innovation, and individual leadership. The Academy invited an extraordinary company of preeminent leaders and innovators — men and women of exceptional accomplishment in the arts, sciences, business, and public service — to share their wisdom and experience with a rising generation of outstanding young scholars, scientists, technology entrepreneurs, and public servants. Among the honored guests were 25 new recipients of the Academy's Golden Plate Award, together with the Golden Plate Awards Council, comprised of distinguished past honorees of the Academy. Taking part in the Summit for the first time were Paul and Daisy Soros Fellows, Rhodes Scholars, Marshall Scholars, Schmidt Science Fellows, young physicians and researchers of the Harvard-MIT Medical Scientist Training Program, Knight-Hennessy Scholars from Stanford, and McConnell Scholars from Harvard Law School.



June 24, 2026: The Banquet of the Golden Plate ceremony at the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium in Washington, D.C.

The historic Hay-Adams Hotel served as the setting for the introductory reception and dinner, the awards luncheon, and the symposium presentations, where honorees and delegates exchanged ideas across a wide range of disciplines. On the final evening, the International Achievement Summit culminated at the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium with the Banquet of the Golden Plate and the induction ceremony for the Academy's newest honorees.



(Left) June 24, 2026: The presentation of the Golden Plate Award to United States Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent. (Center) Awards Council member Amy Coney Barrett, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, presents the Golden Plate Award to Hall of Fame football coach Nick Saban during the Banquet of the Golden Plate ceremony. (Right) General Dan Caine, USAF, Class of 2026, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and a 2006 Academy delegate alumnus, with delegate Second Lieutenant Caroline Robinson, former First Captain of the Corps of Cadets at West Point, at the 56th annual Banquet of the Golden Plate ceremony in Washington, D.C.

Year after year, the International Achievement Summit provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the most gifted young leaders of the rising generation to interact with, to learn from — and even to inspire — the world's most accomplished and influential leaders from across the spectrum of human endeavor.

See printable version (PDF) of Summit Overview.