



## NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP CORPORATION

1560 Sherman Avenue, Suite 200, Evanston, Illinois 60201-4897 (847) 866-5100

### SEMIFINALISTS IN THE 2016 NATIONAL MERIT® SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM September 9, 2015 Announcement

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**Advance: For release on Wednesday, September 9, 2015**

**Note to editors: Semifinalists in your state are listed alphabetically by city and high school following this press release.**

*This material is prepared solely for news media to announce the names of Semifinalists; its use for any other purpose is prohibited.*

*Caution: Using numbers of Semifinalists to compare high schools, educational systems, or states will result in erroneous conclusions. The National Merit® Scholarship Program honors individual students who show exceptional academic ability and potential for success in rigorous college studies. The program does not measure the quality or effectiveness of education within a school, system, or state. For more information about the competition, please visit NMSC's website at [www.nationalmerit.org](http://www.nationalmerit.org).*

### **Semifinalists in the 2016 National Merit® Scholarship Program**

(Evanston, Illinois) Today officials of National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) announced the names of approximately 16,000 Semifinalists in the 61<sup>st</sup> annual National Merit Scholarship Program. These academically talented high school seniors have an opportunity to continue in the competition for some 7,400 National Merit Scholarships worth more than \$32 million that will be offered next spring. To be considered for a Merit Scholarship® award, Semifinalists must fulfill several requirements to advance to the Finalist level of the competition. About 90 percent of the Semifinalists are expected to attain Finalist standing, and about half of the Finalists will win a National Merit Scholarship, earning the Merit Scholar® title.

NMSC, a not-for-profit organization that operates without government assistance, was established in 1955 specifically to conduct the annual National Merit Scholarship Program. Scholarships are underwritten by NMSC with its own funds and by approximately 440 business organizations and higher education institutions that share NMSC's goals of honoring the nation's scholastic champions and encouraging the pursuit of academic excellence.

### **Steps in the 2016 Competition**

About 1.5 million juniors in more than 22,000 high schools entered the 2016 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2014 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®), which served as an initial screen of program entrants. The nationwide pool of Semifinalists, representing less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors, includes the highest-scoring entrants in each state. The number of Semifinalists in a state is proportional to the state's percentage of the national total of graduating seniors.

To become a Finalist, the Semifinalist and his or her high school must submit a detailed scholarship application, in which they provide information about the Semifinalist's academic record, participation in school and community activities, demonstrated leadership abilities, employment, and honors and awards received. A Semifinalist must have an outstanding academic record throughout high school, be endorsed and recommended by a high school official, write an essay, and earn SAT® scores that confirm the student's earlier performance on the qualifying test.

From the approximately 16,000 Semifinalists, about 15,000 are expected to advance to the Finalist level, and in February they will be notified of this designation. All National Merit Scholarship winners will be selected from this group of Finalists. Merit Scholar designees are selected on the basis of their skills, accomplishments, and potential for success in rigorous college studies, without regard to gender, race, ethnic origin, or religious preference.

### **National Merit Scholarships**

Three types of National Merit Scholarships will be offered in the spring of 2016. Every Finalist will compete for one of 2,500 National Merit® \$2500 Scholarships that will be awarded on a state-representational basis. About 1,000 corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards will be provided by approximately 250 corporations and business organizations for Finalists who meet their specified criteria, such as children of the grantor's employees or residents of communities where sponsor plants or offices are located. In addition, about 190 colleges and universities are expected to finance some 3,900 college-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards for Finalists who will attend the sponsor institution.

National Merit Scholarship winners of 2016 will be announced in four nationwide news releases beginning in April and concluding in July. These scholarship recipients will join more than 315,000 other distinguished young people who have earned the Merit Scholar title.

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# NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP CORPORATION

1560 Sherman Avenue, Suite 200, Evanston, Illinois 60201-4897 (847) 866-5100

September 15, 2015

Dear Principal:

We are very pleased to notify you that each senior named on the enclosed list is a *Commended Student* in the 2016 National Merit® Scholarship Program. Commended Students are being recognized for the exceptional academic promise demonstrated by their outstanding performance on the qualifying test used for program entry. They will not, however, continue in the competition for National Merit Scholarships to be offered next spring.

Over 1.5 million students took the 2014 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®) last October and entered the National Merit Scholarship Program, a nationwide competition for recognition and awards conducted by National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC). In April, NMSC identified the 50,000 highest scorers and notified their high schools. Some 16,000 of those high performers were recently designated Semifinalists on a state representational basis. Their schools were notified a few weeks ago and NMSC released their names to news media on September 9. Only Semifinalists have an opportunity to continue in the Merit Scholarship® competition and advance to Finalist standing by meeting a number of additional requirements.

The other 34,000 high performers are now being named Commended Students on the basis of a national Selection Index score of 202, applicable to all program participants without regard to state-by-state distribution. Participants who scored at or above the Commended Student Selection Index score, but below their state or selection unit's Semifinalist Selection Index score, are Commended Students. Although NMSC will not announce their names, we are enclosing a sample press release in the event you wish to provide the information to news media in your area.

A Letter of Commendation with a congratulatory message is enclosed for each Commended Student on your school's list. There is a place for your signature above the name of your school on the Letter of Commendation. **Please present the Letter of Commendation as soon as possible, since it is the student's only notification of this National Merit Scholarship Program honor.** If a Commended Student has transferred, please forward the Letter of Commendation to the principal of the school the student currently attends.

We have great respect for the important part that you and your professional staff play in the development of academically talented young people, and it is a genuine pleasure for NMSC to join you in honoring these able students. We look forward to the continued participation of your school's students in the annual National Merit Scholarship Program.

Sincerely,

Michelle S. Cicirello

Executive Director of Scholarship Administration

Enclosures



**NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP CORPORATION**

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September 2015

For immediate release by the school

**COMMENDED STUDENTS IN THE 2016 NATIONAL MERIT® SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

The principal, \_\_\_\_\_, of \_\_\_\_\_  
principal's name high school  
announced today that \_\_\_\_\_ has (have) been named (a) Commended  
student name(s)  
Student(s) in the 2016 National Merit Scholarship Program. A Letter of Commendation from the school and National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC), which conducts the program, will be presented by the principal to this (these) scholastically talented senior(s).

About 34,000 Commended Students throughout the nation are being recognized for their exceptional academic promise. Although they will not continue in the 2016 competition for National Merit Scholarship awards, Commended Students placed among the top five percent of more than 1.5 million students who entered the 2016 competition by taking the 2014 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®).

“The young men and women being named Commended Students have demonstrated outstanding potential for academic success,” commented a spokesperson for NMSC. “These students represent a valuable national resource; recognizing their accomplishments, as well as the key role their schools play in their academic development, is vital to the advancement of educational excellence in our nation. We hope that this recognition will help broaden their educational opportunities and encourage them as they continue their pursuit of academic success.”

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