



**SEMIFINALISTS IN THE 2009
NATIONAL MERIT[®] SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
September 10, 2008 Announcement**

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Note: This press release was distributed to news media on September 8 with a list of Semifinalists to encourage public recognition of these outstanding students. The release is made available here to provide information about the National Merit Scholarship Program, however the names of Semifinalists are not posted on this Web site.

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, see NMSC's Web site.

Semifinalists Named in the 2009 National Merit[®] Scholarship Program

(Evanston, Illinois) Today officials of National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) announced the names of approximately 16,000 Semifinalists in the 54th annual National Merit Scholarship Program. These academically talented high school seniors have an opportunity to continue in the competition for some 8,200 National Merit[®] Scholarships, worth more than \$35 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 approximately 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 Program. Scholarships are underwritten by NMSC with its own funds and by approximately 500 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 Competition

More than 1.5 million juniors in over 21,000 high schools entered the 2009 National Merit Program by taking the 2007 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT[®]), which served as an initial screen of program entrants. The nationwide pool of Semifinalists, which represents 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, a Semifinalist must have an outstanding academic record throughout high school, be endorsed and recommended by the high school principal, and earn SAT scores that confirm the student's earlier performance on the qualifying test. The Semifinalist and a high school official must submit a detailed scholarship application, which includes the student's self-descriptive essay and information about the Semifinalist's participation and leadership in school and community activities.

Approximately 15,000 Semifinalists are expected to advance to the Finalist level and it is from this group that all National Merit Scholarship winners will be chosen. 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.

Merit Scholarship Awards

Three types of National Merit Scholarship awards will be offered in the spring of 2009. Every Finalist will compete for one of 2,500 National Merit \$2500 Scholarships that will be awarded on a state representational basis. About 1,100 corporate-sponsored scholarships will be provided by some 300 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, approximately 200 colleges and universities are expected to finance some 4,600 college-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards for Finalists who will attend the sponsor institution.

National Merit Scholarship winners of 2009 will be announced in four nationwide news releases beginning in April and concluding in July. These scholarship recipients will join more than 259,000 other distinguished young people who have earned the Merit Scholar title.

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