



## NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP CORPORATION

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### NATIONAL MERIT<sup>®</sup> SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS May 12, 2021 Announcement

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**Note: This press release was distributed to news media on May 11 with a list of National Merit Scholarship winners to encourage public recognition of these outstanding students. The release is made available here to provide information about these Merit Scholarship<sup>®</sup> awards; however, the names of award recipients are not posted on this website.**

*Today's release is the second announcement of winners in the 2021 National Merit Scholarship Program. On April 21, about 1,000 recipients of corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards were named, and on June 2 and July 12, some 4,000 college-sponsored Merit Scholarship winners will be announced. By the conclusion of this year's competition, about 7,500 academic champions will have won National Merit Scholarships worth approximately \$30 million.*

### National Merit<sup>®</sup> \$2500 Scholarship Winners

(Evanston, Illinois) Today, National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC<sup>®</sup>) announced this year's National Merit \$2500 Scholarship winners. The 2,500 Merit Scholar designees were chosen from a talent pool of some 16,000 outstanding Finalists in the 2021 National Merit Scholarship Program.

National Merit \$2500 Scholarship winners are the Finalists in each state judged to have the strongest combination of accomplishments, skills, and potential for success in rigorous college studies. The number of winners named in each state is proportional to the state's percentage of the nation's graduating high school seniors.

These Scholars were selected by a committee of college admissions officers and high school counselors, who appraised a substantial amount of information submitted by both the Finalists and their high schools: the academic record, including difficulty level of subjects studied and grades earned; scores from the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT<sup>®</sup>); contributions and leadership in school and community activities; an essay written by the Finalist; and a recommendation written by a high school official.

NMSC finances most of these single-payment National Merit \$2500 Scholarships. Corporations and company foundations that sponsor awards through NMSC also help underwrite these scholarships with grants they provide in lieu of paying administrative fees. Scholars may use their awards at any regionally accredited U.S. college or university.

### **2021 National Merit Scholarship Competition**

This year's National Merit Scholarship Program began in October 2019 when over 1.5 million juniors in about 21,000 high schools took the PSAT/NMSQT, which served as an initial screen of program entrants. Last fall, the highest-scoring participants in each state, representing less than one percent of the nation's high school seniors, were named Semifinalists on a state-representational basis. Only these approximately 17,000 Semifinalists had an opportunity to continue in the competition.

From the Semifinalist group, some 16,000 students met the very high academic standards and other requirements to advance to the Finalist level of the competition. By the conclusion of the 2021 program, about 7,500 Finalists will have earned the "Merit Scholar" title and received a total of nearly \$30 million in college scholarships.

NMSC, a not-for-profit corporation that operates without government assistance, was founded in 1955 specifically to conduct the National Merit Scholarship Program. The majority of scholarships offered each year are underwritten by approximately 400 independent corporate and college sponsors that share NMSC's goals of honoring scholastically talented youth and encouraging academic excellence at all levels of education.

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**CAUTION:** Any attempt to compare high schools on the basis of numbers of Merit Scholarship winners will lead to erroneous and unsound 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.