



GUIDE

to the

National Merit[®] Scholarship Program

September 2024

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MICHAEL G. JOHNSON, Chairman

Former Chief Human Resources Officer, UPS

FRANK J. DELLAQUILA, Vice Chairman

Former Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Emerson Electric Co.

PETER C. JENNINGS, Vice Chairman

Director of College Counseling, Concord Academy, Concord, Massachusetts

RICHARD C. BENSON, *President, The University of Texas at Dallas*

BRAD R. CARSON, *President, The University of Tulsa*

CURLEY M. DOSSMAN, JR., *President, Georgia-Pacific Foundation, Inc.*

DIANE E. EARLL, *President, USG Foundation*

COLLEEN M. HARSIN, *Director, The Davidson Academy of Nevada
Reno, Nevada*

HEIDI B. JARK, *Senior Vice President and Managing Director
Fifth Third Foundation*

ERIN B. KOHL, *Director of Elementary Schools, Oshkosh Area School District
Oshkosh, Wisconsin*

ROSEMARY E. MATZL, *Vice President of Community Affairs, Illinois Tool Works Inc.*

TIMOTHY E. McGUIRE, *President, National Merit Scholarship Corporation*

THOMAS E. PITTMAN, *Principal, Fleming Island High School
Fleming Island, Florida*

MARK E. REED, *Managing Director, John M. Belk Endowment*

CHARLES F. ROBINSON, *Chancellor, University of Arkansas*

BRIAN P. SINCHAK, *President, Lakewood Catholic Academy, Lakewood, Ohio*

DAVID L. STUBBLEFIELD, *Associate Superintendent of Leadership and Learning
Shawnee Mission School District, Shawnee Mission, Kansas*

JUSTIN C. WALKER, *HR Director, Global Talent Acquisition, The Boeing Company*

WENDY A. WATKINS, *Executive Vice President and Chief Communications Officer
Pivot Bio*

OFFICERS

TIMOTHY E. McGUIRE, *President*

KAMILLA L. SPOEHR, *Vice President and Treasurer*

KIMBERLY C. GREINER, *Vice President*

RICHARD L. SEVCIK, *Secretary*

GUIDE
to the
NATIONAL MERIT[®] SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM




NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP CORPORATION
1560 Sherman Avenue, Suite 200
Evanston, IL 60201-4897
(847) 866-5100
www.nationalmerit.org



CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Student participation and recognition	4
Responsibilities of Semifinalists and their high schools	16
National Merit® Program scholarships	20
Steps in the 2025 National Merit Program	24–25
Sponsors and their support for scholarships	28
PSAT/NMSQT® procedures and reports	41
Key dates	47
Index	50

This *Guide to the National Merit Scholarship Program (Guide)* contains proprietary information of National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC®).

The corporate “Lamp of Learning” logo  and the names *NMSC*, *National Merit*, *Merit Scholarship*, and *Merit Scholar* are federally registered service marks of National Merit Scholarship Corporation, which enforces its rights in these marks. *PSAT/NMSQT* is a registered trademark of National Merit Scholarship Corporation and College Board. *SAT* is a registered trademark of College Board, and *Bluebook* and *PSAT* are trademarks owned by College Board. *ACT* is a registered trademark of ACT, Inc. College Board and ACT, Inc. were not involved in the production of this publication. For reasons of style and format, the registration and service mark symbols appear in this distribution only on initial use in each chapter.

Introduction

The National Merit® Scholarship Program, conducted by National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC®), is an annual academic competition for recognition and college undergraduate scholarships. Established in 1955, NMSC is a privately financed not-for-profit organization that operates without government assistance.

The competition is open to all U.S. high school students who meet published participation requirements. Scholarship winners are chosen on the basis of their abilities, skills, and accomplishments—without regard to gender, race, ethnic origin, or religious preference.

The goals of the National Merit Scholarship Program are to:

- *identify and honor academically talented U.S. high school students and encourage them to pursue rigorous college studies;*
- *provide professional services for corporations, company foundations, colleges and universities, and other individuals and organizations that wish to sponsor scholarships for outstanding participants in the competition;*
- *promote a broader and deeper respect for learning in general and for exceptionally talented individuals in particular;*
- *stimulate increased support for the education of scholastically able students; and*
- *encourage the pursuit of academic excellence at all levels of education.*

Although a sizable number of National Merit Scholarships are underwritten by NMSC with its own funds, the majority of scholarships awarded in the National Merit Program are sponsored by about 280 corporate organizations and higher education institutions. Since

the first scholarships were awarded in 1956, the educational opportunities of hundreds of thousands of academically talented young people have been enhanced by the support of scholarship sponsors, such as those listed on pages 32–40.

Each year, educators in about 21,000 high schools provide the opportunity for their students to participate in the National Merit Scholarship Program. The cooperation and assistance of these principals and counselors are essential to the successful operation of the competition, and NMSC is sincerely grateful to them.

This *Guide* is updated and distributed annually as a reference for school administrators. NMSC welcomes suggestions for improving this distribution and all other program materials provided for schools and students.

Student participation and recognition

Currently, over 1.3 million students in about 21,000 high schools enter the National Merit® Scholarship Program each year. Some 50,000 entrants qualify for program recognition, and approximately 7,580 outstanding students receive scholarships for college undergraduate study. The awards, valued at over \$33 million, are underwritten by NMSC® with its own funds and by several hundred corporate organizations and higher education institutions.

Program entry

Students enter the National Merit Program by taking the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®) and meeting other program entry requirements (listed on pages 6–8). The test, administered annually in the fall, is cosponsored by NMSC and College Board. (Information about test registration and procedures is on pages 41–46.) Questions regarding the test should be directed to College Board. All inquiries about the National Merit Program should be directed to NMSC, which independently conducts the competition.

NMSC uses the PSAT/NMSQT as an initial screen of the large number of entrants to the program. A particular year's test is the entry vehicle for a specific year's competition. For example, the 2023 PSAT/NMSQT was used for entry to the 2025 National Merit Program. Most 2025 program participants will enter college in the fall of 2025. The announcement of Semifinalists in September 2024 marks the midpoint of the 2025 competition; it will conclude in the spring of 2025 when winners of National Merit Scholarships are notified and their names are released to news media. The 2026 program begins with the PSAT/NMSQT administration in the fall of 2024 and ends in the spring of 2026. Each competition spans about one and a half years.

To ensure that the competition is conducted in a timely manner and that all participants are treated consistently, NMSC adheres to specified program requirements and deadlines. A schedule of key dates for both the 2025 and 2026 competitions is on pages 47–49.

Since its inception in 1955, the National Merit Scholarship Program has championed exceptional students across the nation. About 50,000 high-scoring students qualify for recognition each year, and some 7,500 receive scholarships for college undergraduate study. Recognition of these students has helped to focus attention on the development of one of our nation's greatest assets—its most intellectually talented individuals.



Information for students who wish to enter the competition is provided in the PSAT/NMSQT Student Guide, which is available on College Board's website and at www.nationalmerit.org, each fall before the test administration.

Requirements for entry

To participate in the 2025 competition, a student must:

1. be enrolled as a high school student (traditional or home-schooled), progressing normally toward graduation or completion of high school, and planning to enroll full-time in college no later than the fall following completion of high school;
2. take the PSAT/NMSQT in the specified year of the high school program and **no later than** the third year in grades 9 through 12, regardless of grade classification or educational pattern; and
3. attend high school in the United States, District of Columbia, or U.S. commonwealths and territories; or meet the citizenship requirements for students attending high school outside the United States (see box below).

To be eligible for the 2025 National Merit Scholarship Program, a student attending high school outside the United States must be a citizen of the United States; or be a U.S. lawful permanent resident (or have applied for permanent residence, the application for which has not been denied) and intend to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law.

When to take the qualifying test

Because a student can participate (and be considered for a scholarship) in only one specific program year, the year in which the student takes the PSAT/NMSQT to enter the competition is very important. The test must be taken in the specified year of the student's high school program, as described below.

1. **Students who plan to spend the usual four years in high school (grades 9 through 12) before entering college full-time** must

take the PSAT/NMSQT in their third year (usually grade 11, junior year). They will be entering the competition that ends when awards are offered in the spring of their fourth high school year (usually grade 12, senior year), the same year they will leave high school and enter college.

Some schools encourage their **sophomore** students to take the PSAT/NMSQT for guidance purposes; however, if these students are spending four years in grades 9 through 12, they must take the test again when they are juniors to enter the National Merit Scholarship Program.

2. **Students who plan to leave high school early to enroll in college full-time after spending three years or less in grades 9 through 12** usually can participate in the National Merit Program if they take the PSAT/NMSQT before they enroll in college. Such students must take the PSAT/NMSQT in either the next-to-last year or the last year they are enrolled in high school.
 - a) Those who take the PSAT/NMSQT in the *next-to-last year* of high school will be entering the competition for awards to be offered as they are finishing their final high school year.
 - b) Those who take the PSAT/NMSQT in their *last year* of high school will be entering the competition for awards to be offered the year after they have completed high school.
3. **Students who are dual enrolled in both high school and college** must take the PSAT/NMSQT in the fall of their third year of high school (grade 11, junior year) to enter the National Merit Program. The high school determines whether a student is dual enrolled and confirms the student's status as a high school student.
4. **Students who plan to spend five years in grades 9 through 12** usually can participate in the National Merit Program if they take the PSAT/NMSQT in both the third and fourth years of high school. A five-year student will not be eligible for the program until a written request for entry to the competition is approved by NMSC. The request should identify the student's name, high

school, and specific educational pattern (including the academic years spent in grades 9 through 12).

The student's highest possible level of recognition is determined by the qualifying score earned during the third year, the year in which all other competitors are considered. The student must qualify at or above that same level in the fourth year in order to compete in the fifth year, the year the student will leave high school and enter college.

Note: If there is a question about whether a student can participate in the National Merit Program because educational plans do not fit one of the previous descriptions, or for any other reason, contact NMSC immediately.

The student's responses to National Merit Scholarship Program eligibility questions provided during exam set-up for the PSAT/NMSQT are used to determine whether the student meets requirements to participate in a particular year's program. (More information about these questions can be found on page 33 in the NMSC section of the 2024 *PSAT/NMSQT Student Guide*.) Score reports provided to test takers and their schools indicate only whether or not the student is a program participant, not whether the student qualifies for recognition. Encourage your students to review this section of the score report carefully. A school official or the student should immediately contact NMSC regarding any error or change that may affect the student's participation in the program.

If a student misses the PSAT/NMSQT administration

A student who does not take the PSAT/NMSQT because of illness, an emergency, or other extenuating circumstance (but meets all other requirements for program participation) may still be able to enter the competition. If the PSAT/NMSQT testing window has not yet closed, the student may be able to take the PSAT/NMSQT on another date or at another school. If the PSAT/NMSQT testing window has closed, the student or a school official must **write** to NMSC to request alternate entry procedures. The alternate entry request should include the student's name and home address, the contact information of the person making the request, the name and address of the

student's high school, and a brief explanation of why the student missed the test. To be considered, a request should be sent as soon as possible but **must be postmarked no later than April 1** following the missed PSAT/NMSQT administration. NMSC will provide the alternate entry form that requires the signature of the high school principal, guidance counselor, or other school official designated by the principal.

Program recognition

The PSAT/NMSQT is administered in a digital format in October. Students will receive a Reading and Writing section score and a Math section score. NMSC will compute 2024 PSAT/NMSQT Selection Index scores by doubling the Reading and Writing section score, adding the Math section score, and dividing the total by 10. Score levels sufficient for recognition vary from year to year and from state to state; those for the 2025 competition are given on pages 13–14.

High scorers

In the spring following the PSAT/NMSQT administration, NMSC identifies about 50,000 program participants with the highest PSAT/NMSQT Selection Index scores and contacts their high school principals, asking them to identify any errors or changes in the reported eligibility of their high scorers. It is not until the beginning of the next school year that NMSC notifies high scorers that they have qualified as either Semifinalists or Commended Students.

Semifinalists

More than 16,000 of the high scorers, representing less than 1 percent of the nation's high school graduating seniors, qualify as Semifinalists in each annual National Merit Program. They are the only participants who have an opportunity to advance in the competition for some 6,870 Merit Scholarship® awards.

To ensure that academically talented students from all parts of the U.S. are included in this talent pool, Semifinalists are named on a state-representational basis. A participant can be considered

for Semifinalist standing in only one state or other selection unit (explained below), based on the high school in which the student is regularly enrolled when the PSAT/NMSQT is taken to enter the competition.

Using the most recent data available, NMSC determines an allocation of Semifinalists for each of the 50 states, based on the state's percentage of the national total of graduating high school seniors. For example, the Semifinalist allocation for a state that enrolls approximately 2 percent of the nation's high school graduates would be about 320 (2 percent of the 16,000 Semifinalists).

To begin the process of establishing each state's Semifinalist qualifying score, the Selection Index scores of all students in the state who meet program entry requirements are arranged in descending order. The score at which the state's allocation is most closely filled becomes the Semifinalist qualifying score for that state. Entrants with a Selection Index score at or above the qualifying score are named Semifinalists. The scores of all Semifinalists are extremely high. Although this process results in qualifying scores that vary from one state to another and from year to year, it produces an equitable, representative distribution of recognized students nationwide.

In addition to Semifinalists designated in each of the 50 states, and without affecting the allocation to any state, Semifinalists are named in several other selection units that NMSC has established for the competition. These additional units are for participants attending schools in the District of Columbia, schools in U.S. commonwealths and territories, schools in other countries that enroll U.S. citizens, and U.S. boarding schools that enroll a sizable proportion of their students from outside the state in which the school is located. Boarding schools are grouped into geographic regions, each consisting of several states; the Semifinalist qualifying score for students in each region is the same as the highest qualifying score among the states within that region.

In September, NMSC sends principals of participating high schools a booklet listing the names of the 16,000 Semifinalists by state and high school. Principals of schools enrolling Semifinalists are also sent scholarship application information and instructions for the students and school. NMSC sends the names of Semifinalists to news media for announcement and to regionally accredited four-

National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) management meets annually with an Advisory Council of experienced high school administrators from across the nation to review and refine National Merit Scholarship Program procedures. The Advisory Council serves as a bridge to the educational community and helps NMSC in its mission of recognizing and honoring the academically talented students of the United States.



year U.S. colleges and universities in an effort to enhance the educational opportunities of these scholastically talented young people.

Commended Students

About 34,000 of the 50,000 high scorers in each annual National Merit Scholarship Program are named Commended Students based on a national Selection Index qualifying score, applicable to all participants without regard to state-by-state distribution. The qualifying score for this level of recognition varies from year to year. All National Merit Program participants who score at or above the Commended level but below their selection unit's Semifinalist qualifying score are designated Commended Students.

In mid-September, NMSC sends principals a list of their school's Commended Students with *Letters of Commendation* for presentation to the students. Although Commended Students are honored for their academic promise, they do not continue in the competition for National Merit Scholarship awards. Some, however, may be candidates for Special Scholarships offered by corporate sponsors (explained on pages 22–23).

National Merit Program qualifying data for 2025

The National Merit Scholarship Program honors individual students for their exceptional scholastic potential. The program does not measure the quality or effectiveness of education within a school, district, or state. The table on pages 13–14 relates only to the 2025 National Merit Program, which began with the administration of the 2023 PSAT/NMSQT. **This information is provided as a reference for principals and counselors who understand the design and purpose of the National Merit Scholarship Program and the limited usefulness of the data.**

A number of factors should be kept in mind when interpreting data in the table. First, since Semifinalists are named on a state-representational basis, qualifying scores required for Semifinalist standing vary from one state to another. This ensures that students from all parts of the nation are included in the Semifinalist talent pool. The soundness of this method has been confirmed by

The information in this table constitutes proprietary information of National Merit Scholarship Corporation and may not be used except as expressly permitted, and may not be published or disclosed without the express written permission of National Merit Scholarship Corporation.

2025 National Merit Scholarship Program

Semifinalists and Commended Students—2023 PSAT/NMSQT*

	SEMIFINALISTS			COMMENDED STUDENTS**	
	<i>Selection Index Qualifying Score</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Number of Schools</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Number of Schools</i>
Alabama	212	267	71	113	56
Alaska	214	36	18	24	15
Arizona	217	401	82	605	127
Arkansas	213	134	43	86	40
California	221	2,103	381	6,088	705
Colorado	218	272	94	563	143
Connecticut	221	177	58	644	131
Delaware	219	43	14	87	28
Florida	217	972	260	1,573	377
Georgia	218	624	126	943	187
Hawaii	217	74	16	112	27
Idaho	213	102	42	67	33
Illinois	220	738	141	2,007	282
Indiana	217	304	83	545	151
Iowa	212	156	44	58	31
Kansas	215	142	51	149	56
Kentucky	213	202	71	113	50
Louisiana	214	238	61	176	65
Maine	214	53	30	50	31
Maryland	222	296	75	1,114	166
Massachusetts	223	294	89	1,527	224
Michigan	218	511	130	892	226
Minnesota	217	288	86	386	119
Mississippi	212	155	46	71	36
Missouri	215	276	82	287	103
Montana	209	45	26	5	5
Nebraska	211	118	42	51	29
Nevada	214	162	46	105	38
New Hampshire	217	55	24	93	38
New Jersey	223	474	136	2,635	286
New Mexico	211	94	34	23	17

The information in this table constitutes proprietary information of National Merit Scholarship Corporation and may not be used except as expressly permitted, and may not be published or disclosed without the express written permission of National Merit Scholarship Corporation.

2025 National Merit Scholarship Program (continued)

Semifinalists and Commended Students—2023 PSAT/NMSQT*

	SEMIFINALISTS			COMMENDED STUDENTS**	
	<i>Selection Index Qualifying Score</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Number of Schools</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Number of Schools</i>
New York	220	1,089	250	2,768	443
North Carolina	218	518	119	948	214
North Dakota	210	28	17	6	5
Ohio	217	582	175	907	226
Oklahoma	211	214	58	70	41
Oregon	216	205	58	242	70
Pennsylvania	219	583	170	1,428	287
Rhode Island	217	50	17	77	26
South Carolina	214	234	66	201	80
South Dakota	208	41	14	0	0
Tennessee	217	319	87	456	112
Texas	219	1,714	322	3,780	565
Utah	211	195	57	67	42
Vermont	215	33	19	45	21
Virginia	222	394	110	1,640	198
Washington	222	358	91	1,157	170
West Virginia	209	66	32	11	9
Wisconsin	214	289	117	226	121
Wyoming	209	24	14	4	3
District of Columbia	223	47	13	177	20
U.S. boarding schools	***	165	47	545	78
U.S. territories & commonwealths	208	45	19	0	0
Outside the U.S.	223	112	72	566	239
<i>Totals</i>		<i>17,111</i>	<i>4,446</i>	<i>36,513</i>	<i>6,792</i>

*A total of 1,373,778 students from 18,966 schools entered the 2025 National Merit Program by taking the 2023 qualifying test and meeting participation requirements.

**The national qualifying score for Commended Students in the 2025 program is 208.

***U.S. boarding schools that enroll a substantial portion of students from outside the state in which the school is located are grouped into geographic regions; regional qualifying scores for Semifinalist standing vary from 218 to 223.

the thousands of students representing every state who have earned the Merit Scholar[®] title and have gone on to excel in undergraduate studies and beyond.

Second, the decision to offer the qualifying test, and to whom, belongs to officials of the individual schools. Some schools administer the PSAT/NMSQT to all juniors, while others test only a few. Therefore, although the 21,000 high schools that administer the PSAT/NMSQT enroll the vast majority of the nation's eleventh graders, the proportion of students tested in a particular year may differ markedly from school to school and state to state.

Third, while demographic changes that affect school enrollments are appreciably greater in some states and communities than in others, schools must design programs that are effective for all of their students. States and communities also differ in per capita income of residents, educational achievement of the adult population, per pupil expenditure for education, and qualifications prescribed for teachers. In addition, schools vary widely in educational objectives and standards, in numbers of seniors who plan to attend college, in curricular offerings, and in the extent to which students take advantage of the highest-level courses offered. Many factors influence student performance, and no single factor accounts for differences among educational units.

For these and other reasons, National Merit Program data provided to schools should not be used to measure the educational quality of a school, district, or state. **Qualifying scores and numbers of recognized students are relevant only within the context of a particular year's competition, and use of such data for any other purpose is neither valid nor appropriate.** NMSC regularly cautions news media, high schools, and all others interested in the competition against attempts to make comparisons on the basis of numbers of students honored in the National Merit Program. When this caution is ignored, conclusions drawn are usually erroneous and can be detrimental to the groups being compared as well as to the National Merit Program and the participating students.

Responsibilities of Semifinalists and their high schools

To compete for National Merit[®] Scholarships, Semifinalists must advance to the Finalist level of the competition by fulfilling several additional requirements. A Semifinalist can become a Finalist and compete for a Merit Scholarship[®] award in only one program year.

Requirements for Finalist standing

To qualify as a Finalist, a Semifinalist must:

1. continue to meet all requirements for participation in the competition (see pages 6–8);
2. be enrolled in the last year of high school and plan to enroll full-time in college the following fall, or be enrolled in the first year of college if grades 9 through 12 were completed in three years or less;
3. be fully endorsed for Finalist standing and recommended for a National Merit Scholarship by the high school principal (or school official designated by the principal);
4. have a record of consistently very high academic performance in all of grades 9 through 12 and in any college courses taken;
5. complete the NMSC[®] Online Scholarship Application (OSA) with all information requested;
6. take an authorized administration of the SAT[®] or ACT[®], earn scores that confirm performance on the PSAT/NMSQT[®] taken for program entry, and arrange for the National Merit Program to receive an official score report of the SAT or ACT taken; and
7. provide any additional documentation and information that NMSC requests.

In late August, NMSC sends high school principals a list of their Semifinalists, along with instructions for using the OSA. Important

information about requirements and deadlines is available both through the OSA and on NMSC's website. Both the Semifinalist and the school official must supply a substantial amount of information on the application, which NMSC uses to determine whether the student qualifies to advance to Finalist standing and to select scholarship recipients.

What Semifinalists must do

One requirement on the OSA is the submission of a personal *essay* authored solely by the Semifinalist. Semifinalists must respond to an essay prompt provided on the OSA, which helps scholarship selection committees get to know the applicants better and discern the most outstanding students. Each Semifinalist also completes a section of the application listing *activities/volunteer service, leadership positions, honors or awards, and employment*.

The OSA requires the Semifinalist to supply *biographical information* that includes home address, parental employment, college choice, college major, and career plans. This information is used to identify candidates for corporate-sponsored and college-sponsored awards provided for Finalists who meet a grantor's specified criteria. It is important for the Semifinalist to report to NMSC all changes in this biographical information that occur after the scholarship application is submitted.

In addition, each Semifinalist in the 2024 competition must make all arrangements to *take either the SAT or ACT* on one of the national administration dates specified in the scholarship application materials and to *have an official score report sent* to NMSC. To become a Finalist, the Semifinalist must *earn SAT or ACT scores that confirm the PSAT/NMSQT performance*. The scores a Semifinalist submits will only be used to determine whether Finalist requirements are met and will not be used in the selection of award recipients.

A Semifinalist who attends high school outside the United States and has not yet become a U.S. citizen must submit citizenship documentation to NMSC with the Scholarship Application. The *Requirements and Instructions* document available through the OSA and on NMSC's website provides information about the documentation needed.

What high schools must provide

For a Semifinalist to advance to Finalist standing and compete for National Merit Scholarships, the student's high school principal (or a school official designated by the principal) must *endorse* the Semifinalist for further consideration. A school official must also complete several sections of the OSA, including the Semifinalist's academic record (course work and grades), information about the school, and a school recommendation and characterization of the Semifinalist. Further, the principal is asked to notify NMSC **at once** if at any time during the competition the academic performance of a student at either the Semifinalist or Finalist level declines noticeably, or if the school can no longer recommend the student for Merit Scholarship consideration.

High schools must provide a report of the student's *academic record*, which includes grades earned and course work completed in grades 9 through 11 and a list of courses to be taken in grade 12. The academic record is crucial, both in determining whether the Semifinalist qualifies as a Finalist and in choosing Merit Scholar[®] awardees. To help evaluators place a student's record in perspective, the scholarship application includes questions about the school's curricular offerings and grading system. This information is important because the thousands of schools that Semifinalists attend vary widely in grading standards and practices; in the number and difficulty level of courses offered (including accelerated and honors sections of college preparatory subjects); and in the way grade point average and class rank, if any, are calculated. In selecting Merit Scholarship recipients, each candidate's academic record is scrutinized in the context of the particular school as well as compared to the records of students in other schools. Selection committees evaluate grades earned in relation to course load, difficulty level, and depth and breadth of subjects studied.

In the school's *recommendation and characterization* of the Semifinalist, the school official is asked to describe qualities and attributes that distinguish the student from others. Because every Semifinalist who qualifies as a Finalist has an excellent academic record and outstanding test scores, the recommendation can be a valuable source of information about the student's demonstrated leadership and accomplishments, both in and out of school. The

recommendation is most helpful when it complements other information in the application, revealing personal characteristics that cannot be gleaned from test scores or grades. Citing the student's personal qualities with supporting examples is valuable because selection committees look for evidence of a student's motivation and ability to intelligently direct energy toward goals. For instance, if the candidate is considered to be a "leader" or is said to be "concerned for others," describe how this has been demonstrated and in what types of school or community activities. If the student is termed "creative" or "intellectually inquisitive," how has this specifically been shown? An effective characterization of the Semifinalist also points out how the student copes with challenges and describes situations that have resulted in personal or academic growth. Since the records of all students who attain Finalist standing are superior, no record "speaks for itself." Therefore, it is important to avoid generalizations. A thoughtfully and thoroughly prepared school recommendation is a vital and influential part of the student's scholarship application.

In the process of characterizing the Semifinalist, the school official is strongly encouraged to evaluate the rigor of the Semifinalist's course selections and provide a summary assessment of the Semifinalist in the areas of academic achievement, extracurricular accomplishments, and personal qualities and character.

Notifying schools of the status of their Semifinalists

Currently, about 95 percent (over 15,000) of the Semifinalists in each competition qualify as Finalists. In February, NMSC notifies principals of their Semifinalists who have advanced to the Finalist level. A *Certificate of Merit*, attesting to distinguished performance in the competition, is provided for presentation to each Finalist. NMSC also directly informs Finalists (by mail and OSA) of the recognition and that they are being considered for a National Merit Scholarship. NMSC does not release the names of Finalists to the media, but schools may announce their Finalists if they choose.

Semifinalists who do not meet all Finalist requirements and standards are withdrawn from the competition. They are notified directly by NMSC at their home addresses.

National Merit[®] Program scholarships

Some 7,580 awards with a total value of over \$33 million are offered each year to outstanding participants in the National Merit Scholarship Program. In addition to 6,870 National Merit Scholarships that are awarded to Finalists, about 710 Special Scholarships are sponsored by business organizations for other high performers in the competition. All winners are chosen on the basis of their scholastic and extracurricular accomplishments, abilities, and potential for future academic success.

Types of awards

Three types of scholarships for undergraduate study are offered each year. National Merit[®] \$2500 Scholarships and college-sponsored scholarships are offered **only** to Finalists. Corporate-sponsored awards may be Merit Scholarship[®] awards reserved for Finalists or Special Scholarships offered to other outstanding students.

National Merit \$2500 Scholarships. The 2,500 National Merit \$2500 Scholarships offered annually are an integral part of the competition because every Finalist is considered for one and winners are chosen in every state and other selection unit. These single-payment scholarships are awarded on a state-representational basis, as in the designation of Semifinalists. This method ensures that distinguished students nationwide will be among each year's Merit Scholarship recipients.

NMSC[®] convenes a committee of college admission officers and high school counselors to choose the winners. Working in teams, committee members use their professional skills in evaluating the scholarship applications of all Finalists within a state or other selection unit.

Most of the one-time National Merit \$2500 Scholarships are financed by NMSC with its own funds. However, companies and business organizations that provide corporate-sponsored scholarships help underwrite National Merit \$2500 Scholarships with grants they provide to NMSC in lieu of paying administrative fees. Donations

From each year's pool of 15,000 Finalists, a Selection Committee of high school guidance counselors and college admission officers chooses 2,500 winners of the National Merit \$2500 Scholarship awards. Working in teams, committee members assess information provided about the students' academic attainments, personal qualities, leadership abilities, goals and plans, and other characteristics that distinguish Merit Scholar awardees.



made to NMSC's President's Fund also provide funding for National Merit \$2500 Scholarship awards.

Corporate-sponsored Scholarships. Each year about 130 corporations, company foundations, and professional associations finance approximately 1,480 scholarships for National Merit Program participants who meet both the competition standards set by NMSC and criteria specified by the sponsor. A corporate organization may provide awards for children of its employees or members, for residents of areas where the company is located, or for students planning to pursue college majors or careers the sponsor wishes to encourage. These scholarships are not subject to state-by-state distribution because only program participants who meet a sponsor's criteria can be considered for these awards. Almost all winners are chosen by NMSC's professional staff.

Of the 1,480 corporate-sponsored awards, about 770 are **National Merit Scholarships** offered to Finalists who meet sponsors' criteria. NMSC identifies Finalists who may be eligible for each sponsor's awards from information students provide on the OSA. (Some sponsor organizations also require candidates to file Entry Forms.) A corporate sponsor may offer a specific number of awards or elect to sponsor a scholarship for every eligible Finalist.

More than two-thirds of the corporate sponsors choose to complement their National Merit Scholarships with **Special Scholarships** for high-scoring program participants who meet the sponsor's criteria *but are not Finalists*. This enables a sponsor to offer a pre-determined number of scholarships in each annual competition, even though the number of Finalists eligible for its awards varies from year to year.

To be considered for a Special Scholarship, students who meet a sponsor's criteria must file Entry Forms made available through the sponsor. NMSC contacts a pool of high-scoring candidates through their high schools and provides Special Scholarship Applications patterned after the National Merit Scholarship Applications completed by Semifinalists. (See pages 16–19.) About 710 outstanding students are recipients of Special Scholarships each year.

Corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards and Special Scholarships are usually named for the sponsoring orga-

nization. However, the “National Merit” title is not included in the name of a Special Scholarship. Examples of a sponsor’s scholarship names are “National Merit Marsh McLennan Scholarship” and “Marsh McLennan Scholarship.”

The sponsor organization decides whether to provide **renewable** or **one-time** awards and also determines the dollar amount for its scholarships. One-time awards provide a single payment that can range from \$2,500 to \$5,000. Renewable awards, which cover up to four years of undergraduate study, provide a fixed stipend that can range from \$1,000 to \$10,000 per year and is the same for every recipient of the sponsor’s scholarships.

College-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards. About 150 four-year regionally accredited U.S. colleges and universities annually support about 3,600 National Merit Scholarships that can be used only at the respective sponsor institution. Finalists who have notified NMSC that a sponsor college is their first choice (and have not been offered another Merit Scholarship award) are referred to the sponsor college or university for consideration. College sponsor officials then select winners of awards the institution will underwrite.

A sponsor college may decide to offer a Merit Scholarship award to every eligible Finalist who is admitted to the institution or choose to limit the number of awards it provides. A college-sponsored Merit Scholarship award is renewable for up to four years of undergraduate study at the sponsor institution. It is not transferable and is offered with the condition that it must be used at the institution financing it. For that reason, an offer is canceled if the winner decides not to attend the sponsor college or university.

Each college sponsor chooses the annual stipend their institution offers to award recipients, within a range of \$500 to \$2,000 per year. All college-sponsored scholarship recipients at the institution will receive the same stipend amount, as determined by the college.

Winner selection

Although all students who attain Finalist standing in the National Merit Scholarship Program are distinguished, **unfortunately**

Steps in the 2025 National Merit

1,300,000 Entrants. U.S. high school students who took the competition and met the participation requirements entered the 2025 competition for National Merit. All program entrants were juniors who planned to enroll in college in 2025. Entrants use PSAT/NMSQT Selection Index scores (calculated by doubling the math and reading section score, and dividing the total by 10) to determine 50,000 High Scorers.

50,000 High Scorers. In April 2024, NMSC sent a list of high scoring students to schools. Schools reported errors or changes in the reported eligibility of students whose scores were on the list.

Participants who qualify for National Merit

34,000 Commended Students. In late September 2024, more than two-thirds of the 50,000 high scorers will be notified through their high school principals that they have qualified as Commended Students. NMSC will provide *Letters of Commendation* for schools to present to these students in recognition of their outstanding academic promise. Commended Students (see page 12) are named based on a nationally applied Selection Index score. Although they will not continue in the competition for National Merit Scholarships, some of these students may be candidates for Special Scholarships provided by corporate sponsors.

Scholarship recipients

710 Special Scholarship recipients. Beginning in March 2025, NMSC will notify winners of Special Scholarships provided by corporate sponsors (described on pages 22–23). Recipients, who will be chosen from candidates sent scholarship applications in late November 2024, will be outstanding students (although not Finalists) who meet their sponsors' eligibility criteria. Sponsors will handle public announcement of their Special Scholarship winners.

Merit[®] Scholarship Program

Take the PSAT/NMSQT[®] in October 2023 and met other program requirements for National Merit Program recognition and scholarships. Nearly 50,000 high scorers will be notified of their recognition and scholarship status in 2024. (See pages 6–8 for entry requirements.) NMSC[®] will be providing the Reading and Writing section score, adding the Math score to determine the total score for high-scoring participants who qualify for program recognition.

NMSC will notify participants to high school principals and asked them to identify any high-scoring participants who qualify them for recognition in the fall of 2024.

National Merit Program recognition

16,000 Semifinalists. In early September 2024, about a third of the 50,000 high scorers will be notified that they have qualified as Semifinalists (see pages 9–12). Named on a state-representational basis, Semifinalists are the highest-scoring program participants in each state. NMSC will provide scholarship application materials explaining requirements (see pages 16–17) to advance in the competition for National Merit Scholarships to be offered in 2025.

15,000 Finalists. In February 2025, Semifinalists who meet academic and other requirements will be notified that they have advanced to Finalist standing and receive *Certificates of Merit*. All Merit Scholarship[®] winners (Merit Scholar[®] awardees) will be chosen from this group of Finalists based on their abilities, skills, and accomplishments. (See pages 23–26.)

Scholarship winners

6,870 Merit Scholarship winners. Beginning in March 2025, NMSC will notify winners of the three types of National Merit Scholarships:

- National Merit[®] \$2500 Scholarships
- Corporate-sponsored scholarships
- College-sponsored scholarships

During April through July, NMSC will release the names of Merit Scholar awardees to news media for publication. (See pages 20–23 and 26–27.)

not all Finalists receive a National Merit Scholarship. The National Merit Program is very competitive, and, in recent years, only about half of the 15,000 Finalists have been selected to be Merit Scholar® awardees. A student may be considered for more than one scholarship, but no student can receive more than one monetary award from NMSC.

To select winners of two types of awards, National Merit \$2500 Scholarships and corporate-sponsored awards, committees of experienced professionals evaluate a variety of information submitted about each candidate in conjunction with the scholarship application. They carefully weigh each student's academic record (including course load, difficulty level, depth and breadth of subjects studied, and grades earned) in the context of the high school's report of class size, percentage of seniors going to college, curricular offerings, and grading system. Students' essays and the recommendations of school officials may provide information about students' personal qualities, demonstrated leadership abilities, and service to their schools and communities. Winners are candidates judged to have the strongest combination of academic and extracurricular attainments and the greatest potential for success in rigorous college studies. Winners of these two types of awards are notified in March.

Recipients of college-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards are chosen by officials of the sponsor institution. College officials base their decisions on information Finalists file with the college as part of the admission process. NMSC begins sending college-sponsored Merit Scholarship offers to winners in early May.

Scholar announcements and award administration

Beginning in March, NMSC will notify scholarship winners and post formal scholarship offers to their OSA dashboards. Notification of each award will be sent to the winner's high school. NMSC releases the names of Merit Scholarship recipients to news media nationwide in scheduled announcements (one for each type of Merit Scholarship award) on three dates in April, May, and June, followed by a second release of college-sponsored award

winners in July. (See page 48.) The announcements identify Scholars' high schools and Merit Scholarship sponsors. Special Scholarship winner announcements are handled independently by the corporate sponsors.

Every scholarship recipient is responsible for fulfilling admission requirements of the college or university to be attended. In addition, each recipient must comply with all terms specified in the NMSC scholarship offer, which cover conditions of eligibility, standards of student performance, and other requirements.

NMSC scholarship payments, which are sent to Scholars through their colleges, must be used exclusively for undergraduate education at a college or university in the United States that holds accredited status with a regional accrediting commission on higher education. NMSC scholarship stipends are not payable for students' attendance at service academies or institutions that are limited in purpose or training. Winners of one-time awards receive a single payment in the fall following their selection; four-year scholarship winners receive payments in installments, generally twice a year. To receive a scholarship payment, the winner must be enrolled full-time, be in good standing, and be pursuing a course of study leading to a traditional baccalaureate degree.

Sponsors and their support for scholarships

About 280 independent sponsor organizations and individual donors currently underwrite scholarships through the National Merit® Scholarship Program. Since the first competition in 1956, corporations and businesses have underwritten both National Merit Scholarships and Special Scholarships in every annual competition. Colleges and universities began sponsoring Merit Scholarship® awards in 1963. In 2024, NMSC created new opportunities for individuals to fund National Merit \$2500 Scholarship awards. The generosity of sponsors and donors is key to the success of the National Merit Program, in which scholarships worth more than \$1.8 billion have been awarded.

Sponsor support

Corporate organizations and colleges and universities have underwritten 79 percent of the 447,000 scholarships offered to date, committing a total of over \$1.6 billion. NMSC® has used over \$217 million of its own funds to support 92,500 Merit Scholarship awards.

Corporate sponsors. Over the National Merit Program's 69 competitions, business organizations have significantly increased their commitment for scholarships. In the first competition, 24 companies provided about \$800,000 to finance 195 Merit Scholarship awards and 10 Special Scholarships. In 2024, about 130 corporate sponsors committed nearly \$13 million to underwrite some 770 Merit Scholarship awards and 710 Special Scholarships. To date, corporate and business organizations have provided about 165,300 awards worth a total of more than \$912 million for program participants with qualifications of interest to the sponsor. Corporate sponsors also make a modest supplemental grant to NMSC, in lieu of paying an administrative fee, which is used to underwrite National Merit® \$2500 Scholarships that all Finalists have an opportunity to win.

College sponsors. College-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards were introduced in the eighth annual competition, when nine institutions

Currently, about 130 corporate organizations and 150 higher education institutions sponsor scholarships through the National Merit Scholarship Program for academically talented students. In 2024, NMSC created new opportunities for individuals to fund National Merit \$2500 Scholarship awards. Individuals can underwrite additional scholarship awards by establishing endowments with NMSC or by donating to NMSC's President's Fund.



underwrote 175 scholarships valued at approximately \$400,000. In 2024, about 150 U.S. colleges and universities committed over \$14 million to underwrite approximately 3,600 Merit Scholarship awards for students to attend sponsoring institutions. Over 62 competitions, colleges have expended and committed more than \$712 million for 189,200 Merit Scholarship awards. Funds from college and university sponsors are used exclusively for scholarship payments to their Merit Scholarship recipients.

Individual donors. Individuals provide support for Merit Scholarship awards through establishing endowments with NMSC or donating to NMSC's President's Fund. Beginning in 2024, some individuals made arrangements with NMSC to underwrite National Merit \$2500 Scholarship awards, and 19 scholarships were offered this year.

NMSC services for sponsors

The National Merit Program provides educationally sound and cost-effective professional services for corporations, higher education institutions, and individual donors that wish to sponsor scholarships for scholastically talented young people in whom they have particular interest.

For corporate sponsors and individual donors, NMSC:

- identifies scholarship candidates who meet a sponsor's criteria (i.e., children of company employees, residents of plant communities and areas specified by the sponsor, or students planning to pursue particular college majors and careers);
- collects information about the most outstanding candidates eligible for a sponsor's awards;
- selects scholarship recipients and determines their annual stipends;
- sends scholarship offers to award winners;
- announces Merit Scholarship winners through news media nationwide;

- provides scholarship certificates for corporate sponsors to present to their award recipients or provides certificates directly to individual donors' award recipients;
- sends scholarship payments to recipients through their colleges; and
- administers the awards and monitors winners' progress toward their undergraduate degrees.

For college sponsors, NMSC:

- identifies Finalists who wish to attend the sponsor institution and refers them to college officials for scholarship consideration;
- sends scholarship offers to award winners;
- distributes news media announcements about winners;
- provides certificates for presentation to winners;
- sends scholarship payments to winners; and
- administers the awards throughout the recipients' undergraduate years at the sponsor college or university.

Sponsor identity. The sponsor is identified with the awards it supports in several ways, including the name of the scholarship: for example, “National Merit NVIDIA Corporation Scholarship,” “National Merit University of Tulsa Scholarship,” and “National Merit – The Child Family Scholarship.” Information about the sponsor is included in NMSC media announcements about Merit Scholarship winners. Scholarship certificates identify the sponsor and are often presented at events held by sponsors to honor their award recipients.

Names of corporate scholarship sponsors and endowment scholarship sponsors with descriptions and numbers of awards offered are listed in the *PSAT/NMSQT® Student Guide*. This publication is available online to high school students before the annual competition begins in October.

National Merit Program scholarship sponsors

Each sponsor organization underwrites from 1 to nearly 200 scholarships annually. Following is a list of 352 corporate organizations, individuals, and higher education institutions that have financed scholarships awarded by NMSC during the past four academic years. Sponsors that will offer scholarships for the first time in 2025 have been added.

AbbVie Foundation	Apache Corporation
Abilene Christian University	Arizona State University
Acushnet Company	Arkema Inc. Foundation
Adient Foundation Inc.	Ascension
ADP Foundation	Aspen Technology, Inc.
Aerojet Rocketdyne Foundation	Astellas US LLC
Akzo Nobel Inc.	AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals LP
Albany International	Auburn University
The Allergan Foundation	BASF Corporation
Ameren Corporation Charitable Trust	Battelle
American Air Liquide Holdings, Inc	Belmont University
American City Business Journals, Inc.	Bentley Systems, Incorporated
American Electric Power	Trust Under The Will of Mary E. Beyerle
American Financial Group	BNSF Railway Foundation
American University	The Boeing Company
The AMETEK Foundation	Boston College
Aon Foundation	Boston University
	Bowdoin College
	Bradley University
	Brady Corporation
	Brandeis University

Bridgestone Americas
Trust Fund
Brigham Young
University
Bristol Myers Squibb
Foundation
Broadridge Financial
Solutions, Inc.
Brown & Brown, Inc.
Bucknell University
Bunge
Bunzl USA, LLC
CACI International Inc
Calvin University
Carleton College
Carlisle Companies
Incorporated
Carpenter Technology
Corporation
Case Western Reserve
University
CC Services, Inc.
CDK Global, LLC
Cencora, Inc.
Centre College
Chevron U.S.A. Inc.
The Child Family
Claremont McKenna
College
Clemson University
Coalfire Systems, Inc.
Colby College (Maine)
Colgate-Palmolive
Company
College of Charleston
College of Wooster
Colorado College
Colorado State
University
Commvault Systems, Inc.
Computer Aid, Inc.
Corning Incorporated
Creighton University
Crum & Forster
CSX Corporation
Davidson College
Dentsply Sirona Inc.
DePauw University
Dollar Tree, Inc.
Gaylord and Dorothy
Donnelley Foundation
Drake University
E*TRADE Financial
Corporation
Eastman
Eaton Charitable Fund
ECMS
Ellucian Company L.P.
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical
University

Emerson Charitable
Trust

Emory University

The Estée Lauder
Companies Inc.

Eversource Energy
Foundation, Inc.

FedEx Custom Critical, Inc.

FedEx Freight, Inc.

FedEx Ground Package
System, Inc.

Ferro Corporation

Fifth Third Foundation

Florida Atlantic
University

Florida International
University

Florida State University

Fluor Foundation

FMC Corporation

Fordham University

Formosa Plastics
Corporation, U.S.A.

Fox News Channel, LLC

FTS International, LLC

Furman University

GAF

Gannett

Gates Industrial Corporation
Foundation

GEICO Philanthropic
Foundation

Genentech, Inc.

General Dynamics
Corporation

General Dynamics Ordnance
and Tactical Systems

Georgia-Pacific
Foundation, Inc.

Gleason Family
Foundation

Global Tungsten &
Powders LLC

Gordon College
(Massachusetts)

Goshen College

W.W. Grainger, Inc.

Greyhound Lines, Inc.

Grinnell College

Gustavus Adolphus
College

Harding University

Harvey Mudd College

Hendrix College

Hill-Rom Holdings, Inc.

Hillsdale College

Hope College

Hormel Foods Corporation
Charitable Trust

The Hubbell Foundation

Hunter Industries
Incorporated

Illinois Tool Works Inc.

Illinois Wesleyan University

Indiana University
Bloomington

Ingalls Shipbuilding Division
of Huntington Ingalls
Industries

Insperty Services, L.P.

International Union of
Bricklayers and Allied
Craftworkers

Iowa State University

J. Walter Thompson Company
Fund, Inc.

John Bean Technologies
Corporation

Johnson & Johnson
Services Inc.

Kalamazoo College

Kaman Corporation

Kansas State University

The Kennametal
Foundation

Kenyon College

L3Harris Technologies

LANXESS Corporation

Lawrence University
(Wisconsin)

Lehigh University

Leidos, Inc.

Lewis & Clark College
(Oregon)

Liberty Mutual Scholarship
Foundation

Liberty University

Loews Corporation

Louisiana State
University

Louisiana Tech
University

Loyola University
Chicago

LPL Financial LLC

The Lubrizol
Foundation

Luther College

Macalester College

Macy's, Inc.

Mannington Mills, Inc.

Marquette University

Marsh McLennan

McGraw Hill LLC

Mead Witter
Foundation, Inc.

Miami University-
Oxford

Michigan State
University

Michigan Technological University	North Dakota State University
Mississippi State University	Northeastern University (Massachusetts)
Missouri University of Science and Technology	Northrop Grumman Corporation
The MITRE Corporation	NOV Inc.
Molex LLC	Novartis US Foundation
Montana State University- Bozeman	Novo Nordisk Inc.
Moody's Foundation	NVIDIA Corporation
Motorola Solutions Foundation	Oberlin College
National Distillers Distributors Foundation	Occidental College
Nationwide Foundation	Occidental Petroleum Corporation
New College of Florida	Ohio University-Athens
New Jersey Manufacturers Insurance Company	Oklahoma Christian University
New York Life Foundation	Oklahoma State University
The NewMarket Foundation	Old National Bancorp
NextEra Energy Foundation, Inc.	Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering
NiSource Charitable Foundation	Omron Foundation, Inc. onsemi
Norfolk Southern Foundation	Ouachita Baptist University
	Owens Corning Foundation
	Paramount Global

Parker Hannifin
Foundation

Frank E. Payne and Seba B.
Payne Foundation

The Penn Mutual Life
Insurance Company

Pennsylvania State
University

The PepsiCo Foundation, Inc.

Pfizer Inc.

Pilkington North
America, Inc.

Pomona College

PPG Foundation

PPL

PricewaterhouseCoopers
Charitable Foundation, Inc.

Primient

Principal Life Insurance
Company

Public Service Enterprise
Group

Purdue University

Putnam Investments, LLC

Quanex Foundation

Raytheon Company

Rensselaer Polytechnic
Institute

Research Triangle
Institute

Reynolds American
Foundation

Rheem Manufacturing
Company

Rhodes College

Robert Half Inc.

Rochester Institute of
Technology

Rockwell Automation Charitable
Corporation

Rolls-Royce North America Inc.

Rose-Hulman Institute of
Technology

RSM US LLP

Rutgers, The State University
of New Jersey

S&P Global

Saint Louis University

St. Olaf College

Samford University

Santa Clara University

Schindler Elevator
Corporation

Schneider Electric North
America Foundation

Sensient Technologies
Foundation

Sentry Insurance
Foundation, Inc.

Siemens Foundation

Snap-on Incorporated
Sogeti USA
Sony Electronics Inc.
South Carolina Sports Medicine
and Orthopaedic Center
Southern Company
Services, Inc.
Southern Methodist
University
C. D. Spangler
Foundation, Inc.
Specialty Materials Inc
Spirit AeroSystems, Inc.
State Farm Companies
Foundation
Stony Brook University
Suburban Propane, L.P.
Synthomer Foundation
TD Ameritrade Services
Company, Inc.
Teachers Insurance and Annuity
Association of America
TEGNA Foundation, Inc.
Tennessee Technological
University
Texas A&M University
Texas Christian University
Texas Instruments
Foundation
Texas Tech University
Textron Charitable Trust
3M Company
Trane Technologies Charitable
Foundation
The Travelers
Employees' Club
Tredegar Corporation
Trinity University (Texas)
Truist Financial
Corporation
Truman State University
TTEC Foundation
Tufts University
Tulane University
United Services Automobile
Association
University of Alabama at
Birmingham
University of Alabama in
Huntsville
University of Alabama at
Tuscaloosa
University of Arizona
University of Arkansas,
Fayetteville
University of Central Florida
University of Chicago
University of Cincinnati
University of Dallas
University of Dayton

University of Evansville
University of Florida
University of Georgia
Foundation
University of Houston-
Main Campus
University of Idaho
University of Iowa
University of Kansas
University of Kentucky
University of Louisville
University of Maine
University of Maryland
University of Miami
University of Minnesota
University of Mississippi
University of Missouri-
Columbia
University of Montana-
Missoula
University of Nebraska-
Lincoln
University of Nevada,
Las Vegas
University of Nevada, Reno
University of New Mexico
University of North Dakota
University of North Texas
University of Oklahoma
University of Oregon
University of Pittsburgh
University of Puget Sound
University of Rochester
University of St. Thomas
(Minnesota)
University of South Carolina
University of South Florida
University of Southern
California
University of Southern
Mississippi
University of Tennessee,
Knoxville
University of Texas at Dallas
University of Tulsa
University of Utah
University of Wisconsin-
Madison
University of Wyoming
The UPS Foundation
USG Foundation, Inc.
Utility Workers Union of
America, AFL-CIO
Valparaiso University
Vanderbilt University
Varian Medical Systems
ViaSat, Inc.
Villanova University
Virginia Commonwealth
University

Vulcan Materials Company
Foundation

Walgreen Co.

Washington and Lee
University

Washington State
University

Waste Management National
Services Inc.

Wayne State University
(Michigan)

West Virginia University
Foundation, Inc.

Western Washington
University

Westlake

Wheaton College
(Illinois)

Whitman College

Wichita State University

Willamette University

Wofford College

Wm. Wrigley Jr.
Company

The Xerox Foundation

Zoetis Inc.

PSAT/NMSQT[®] procedures and reports

The Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT), which is cosponsored by NMSC[®] and College Board, is the official route of entry to the National Merit[®] Scholarship Program. The PSAT/NMSQT is delivered digitally through Bluebook[™], College Board's custom-built application for the test. High school officials should refer to the College Board website at <https://satsuite.collegeboard.org/sat-suite-educator-guide> for a full description of the digital PSAT/NMSQT and an explanation of what is included on the test. The *PSAT/NMSQT Student Guide* will be available online to all administrators and test takers in advance of the test administration. The *Student Guide* provides test-taking tips and includes information on how to take a full-length Practice Test through Bluebook. It also contains valuable information about the National Merit Scholarship Program. For the latest updates to testing policy, please see <https://satsuite.collegeboard.org/k12-educators/educator-experience>.

Note: The PSAT[™] 10 and PSAT[™] 8/9 will not be considered for entry to the National Merit Scholarship Program. Please contact NMSC directly with questions about entering the program.

Registration, test dates, and fees

Questions about testing arrangements should be directed to the PSAT/NMSQT office. Educators may contact the PSAT/NMSQT office toll free at (888) 477-7728, from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday; educators in schools out-side the U.S. may call +1(212) 237-1335. The PSAT/NMSQT office fax number is (610) 290-8979, and the email address is psat/nmsqt@info.collegeboard.org. A wide array of information is also provided on College Board's website at www.collegeboard.org.

School registration. Registration for the PSAT/NMSQT is by high school, not by individual student. A link to College Board's SAT Suite Ordering and Registration System is emailed to PSAT/NMSQT Coordinators by late April. To allow sufficient time to complete all

test-related readiness tasks, schools should place their order at least 5 weeks before their intended test administration date.

Test dates. The PSAT/NMSQT testing date window is October 1 through October 31, 2024. The official who places the order must indicate the day the school intends to administer the test within the testing window. If a school decides to change their test date from the one designated when placing their order, they can do so at their discretion as long as it is within the testing window. A designated school official will upload a registration file containing information about the students who will be testing.

Test fees. The fee for the 2024 PSAT/NMSQT is \$18.00 per student tested. Schools may charge students an additional amount to cover local administrative costs, but the total fee must be the same for all students. Some schools cover all or part of the cost for their students.

Test preparation and administration

Test center staff use Test Day Toolkit, an intuitive web-based application for educators, to administer the PSAT/NMSQT. Each staff member will need a College Board Professional Account to use Test Day Toolkit. Before the test, the test coordinator will be able to see the roster of registered students in the application. Proctors will use Test Day Toolkit to check students in, read the script, start the test, monitor student progress, and report irregularities. Test Day Toolkit also includes helpful guides and resources.

Schools are emailed information about required training modules of the procedures for administering the digital test. Training topics for coordinators and staff include test center planning, Test Day Toolkit, technology requirements, and test day procedures.

Schools are also emailed access to resources on College Board's website that supplement Test Day Toolkit. The manuals and other materials cover everything needed for administering the digital test, including planning, technical readiness and troubleshooting, Test Day Toolkit setup, test coordinator test day procedures, instructions for proctors and hall monitors, and flyers for students and parents.

Only the scores of students who are tested according to published policies and procedures will be considered in the National Merit Scholarship Program. NMSC reviews all Irregularity Reports and reserves the right to make decisions regarding students' participation in the National Merit Program.

Schools should complete a digital readiness check with their students one to two weeks prior to when they expect to begin testing. Allow at least 30 minutes for students to complete the digital readiness check, which includes answering some preliminary questions. More time should be allotted if students will be taking the practice test at that time. Students will need Bluebook installed on an acceptable device and a sign-in ticket with login credentials to access the full-length in-app practice test. Schools should reserve at least 20 minutes on test day for students to get set up and started. This time is needed for students to view a tutorial video. Students who have not completed their digital readiness check will need additional time to complete exam setup before they begin testing. Actual testing time is 2 hours and 14 minutes, plus a 10-minute break between sections. (Some students testing with accommodations may require more time.)

Answers are submitted automatically when a student's test time is up and the student's testing status in Test Day Toolkit will change to Submitted. Proctors should make sure students get to the Congratulations page to ensure student answers have been successfully submitted. Also, any irregularities will need to be reported in Test Day Toolkit within 10 days of testing.

Special testing arrangements for individual students

For the following situations, special arrangements must be made. Arrangements for all but the last situation must be made **well before** the test administration date.

U.S. students temporarily outside the country. For students who will be studying outside the U.S. when their U.S. high schools administer the PSAT/NMSQT, testing arrangements must be made in advance. If a student wants to take the PSAT/NMSQT internationally, they should contact a local school as early as possible,

but no later than 6 weeks prior to the test. Students should visit <https://ordering.collegeboard.org/testordering/publicSearch> to look for schools in their area, and contact the school to request arrangements for testing.

Students with documented disabilities. Students with disabilities must be approved for accommodations by College Board Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) well in advance of test day. Students who have not already been approved for accommodations must submit a request for accommodations. Your school's SSD Coordinator can submit requests for accommodations online. Requests must be submitted at least seven weeks prior to the week that testing will begin. Information about the process for requesting testing accommodations is provided on the College Board website at www.collegeboard.org/ssd. Contact the SSD office by calling (844) 255-7728.

With digital testing, some accommodations will be administered differently than they are on paper and pencil tests. For example, students approved for a human reader, pre-recorded audio, or braille will generally test with a screen reader (text-to-speech) unless they request an exception. Some accommodations will not be needed for the PSAT/NMSQT. Students approved for use of computer will test without accommodations. Students approved for large-print or magnification device will use the zoom functionality on their devices to enlarge font size or change the background. Guides for testing students with approved accommodations are available in PDF format on College Board's website.

Students who cannot test on their school's date. If it is known in advance that one or more students cannot take the test on the day their high school will administer it, the high school may choose to offer the test on an additional test date within the testing window. If the high school has no other test dates available, the student or a school official may make arrangements for the student to test at a nearby school that has chosen another test date. For example, a school administering the PSAT/NMSQT on Saturday may arrange for a student whose religious observance prevents Saturday testing to be tested

at a school giving the PSAT/NMSQT on another test date. These arrangements are possible only if another school agrees and has space available. The administering school will be responsible for uploading the student's registration data.

Homeschooled students may request to test at a local high school since the PSAT/NMSQT cannot be administered at home. NMSC encourages high schools to honor such requests. These students are instructed to contact the local high school as early as possible regarding registration for the test. The administering school will be responsible for registering the student, but homeschooled students' scores will not be included in testing schools' reports.

Students who miss the PSAT/NMSQT administration. A student who meets all other requirements for participation in the National Merit Program but does not take the PSAT/NMSQT because of illness, an emergency, or other extenuating circumstance may still be able to enter the competition. To request information from NMSC about alternate testing arrangements, refer to pages 8–9 for procedures and the postmark deadline date.

Online score reports

PSAT/NMSQT scores are released online to educators a few weeks after the test administration. College Board will provide guidance for distributing score reports to students and connecting assessment results to instruction. Schools should go to <https://psat.org/scores> in the fall for more information about score availability for schools and their students. Schools receive summaries that provide data about their students' answers compared with other students nationwide. Resources are also available to support counselors and other educators during score release. Educators may visit the College Board website at <https://counselors.collegeboard.org/assessments/psat-nmsqt/scores> for further information. Additionally, educators can find benchmarks and further context for scores in the guide PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 8/9: Understanding Scores for Educators at <https://psat.org/downloads>.

Students can access their PSAT/NMSQT scores online two days after their scores are released to their high school. Each

student's online score report provides the student's total score, Reading and Writing section score, and Math section score; percentiles; knowledge and skills insights; examples of future career possibilities; NMSC Selection Index score and responses to eligibility questions used to determine whether the student meets requirements for entry* to the National Merit Scholarship Program; and a link to free, customized SAT® practice recommendations at Khan Academy.

*An asterisk printed next to a student's Selection Index score indicates that the Selection Index score will not be considered in the National Merit Scholarship Program because the student does not meet all entry requirements (outlined on pages 6–8). If the student made an error when completing the entry requirement questions on the PSAT/NMSQT or a change has occurred that may affect participation, a school official or the student may submit a request to update their answers with NMSC at www.nationalmerit.org/studentupdate. An asterisk can also indicate that a student's Selection Index score is reported for guidance-purposes only. In such a case, your school will have information from College Board about why the Selection Index score cannot be considered.

Key dates

2025 National Merit[®] Scholarship Program

2023

October 2 through October 31, 2023: Students entered the 2025 program by taking the 2023 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT[®]).

2024

August 27: National Merit Scholarship Application instructions for Semifinalists mailed to high school principals. Separate mailing of the booklet listing all 16,000 Semifinalists and this *Guide* to high school principals.

September 9: List of Semifinalists mailed to admission officials of four-year regionally accredited U.S. colleges and universities.

September 11: Date for news media nationwide to release NMSC's announcement of Semifinalists.

September 12: *Letters of Commendation* for Commended Students mailed to high school principals.

October 5: Authorized SAT[®] administration for Semifinalists.

By October 9: Schools submit completed National Merit Scholarship Applications to NMSC[®].

October 26: Authorized ACT administration for Semifinalists.

November 2: Authorized SAT administration for Semifinalists.

Late November: Application instructions for Special Scholarship candidates mailed to high school principals.

December 7: Last authorized SAT administration for Semifinalists to be considered for Finalist standing.

December 14: Last authorized ACT administration for Semifinalists to be considered for Finalist standing.

2025

February 3: *Certificates of Merit* for Finalists mailed to principals.

February 10: Notification of advancement to Finalist standing mailed to Semifinalists' home addresses. A copy of the letter will also be posted to the Finalist's Online Scholarship Application dashboard.

March 12: NMSC begins notifying winners of corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship® awards and Special Scholarships. Each winner's high school is also notified.

March 27: NMSC begins notifying winners of National Merit® \$2500 Scholarships. Each winner's high school is also notified.

May 1: NMSC begins notifying winners of college-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards. Each winner's high school is also notified.

Mid-May: Finalists not chosen to receive a National Merit Scholarship are notified at their home addresses. Candidates not chosen as Special Scholarship winners are also notified.

National Merit Scholar press releases

April 23: Corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship winners

May 7: National Merit \$2500 Scholarship winners

June 4: College-sponsored Merit Scholarship winners

July 14: Additional college-sponsored Merit Scholarship winners

A few additional National Merit \$2500 Scholarship winners and corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship recipients will be announced individually during the summer.

Key dates

2026 National Merit® Scholarship Program

2024

Late April: 2024 PSAT/NMSQT® ordering information emailed to high school PSAT/NMSQT Coordinators.

August: 2024 *PSAT/NMSQT Student Guide* is available online.

By early September: Participating schools register their students for the 2024 PSAT/NMSQT.

October 1 through October 31: Testing window for the administration of the PSAT/NMSQT.

Late October through November: 2024 PSAT/NMSQT online scores are available to educators.

2025

April 1: Postmark deadline for students who missed taking the 2024 PSAT/NMSQT to request consideration for alternate entry to the 2026 National Merit Program (see pages 8–9).

Mid-April: High school principals are notified if any of their students are among the 50,000 entrants with the highest PSAT/NMSQT Selection Index scores and asked to report any errors or changes in the reported eligibility of their high scorers.

Early September: Principals are notified of their Semifinalists in the 2026 National Merit Scholarship competition.

Note: Dates for completion of the 2026 National Merit Program will be published in the September 2025 *Guide*.

Index

- ACT 16–17, 47–48
- citizenship requirement 6
- Commended Students 12
- dates
 - 2025 program 47
 - 2026 program 49
- disabilities, students with 44
- early entrants to college 7
- entry requirements 6
- Finalist
 - notification 19
 - requirements 16
- high scorers 9
- homeschooled students 45
- National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) 2
- participation 4–9
- post-secondary enrollment 7
- program
 - description and goals 2
 - how to enter 4
- PSAT/NMSQT
 - asterisk next to Selection Index score 46
 - missed taking 8–9
 - online score reports 45–46
 - registration 41–42
 - studying outside U.S. 43–44
 - test dates 42
 - test fees 42
 - test preparation and administration 42–43
 - testing accommodations 44
 - testing at another school 44–45
 - when to take 6–8
- qualifying scores 10, 12, 15
- qualifying scores table 13–14
- qualifying test 4, 6
- SAT 16–17, 47
- scholarship application 16–17
- scholarships
 - administration 26–27
 - college-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards 23
 - corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards 22
 - corporate-sponsored Special Scholarships 22
 - media announcements 26–27, 48
 - National Merit \$2500 Scholarships 20
 - stipend range 23
 - winner selection 23
- Selection Index score
 - definition 9
 - qualifying scores table 13–14
- Semifinalists
 - designating 9–12
 - high school notification 10–12, 47
 - media announcement 12, 47
 - qualifying scores table 13–14
 - state allocations 9–10
- sophomore information 7
- sponsorship
 - college 28–30
 - corporate 28
 - identity with award 31
 - list of sponsors 32–40
 - services for sponsors 30–31
- steps in the 2025 program 24–25
- students finishing high school in three years or less 7
- students taking five years to complete high school 7–8
- students with documented disabilities 44
- test dates 42
- test fees 42

ADVISORY COUNCIL

DAVID BEILER, *Principal, Jenks High School, Jenks, Oklahoma*

PATRICIA L. BOSTWICK, *Director of College Counseling, The Roeper School
Birmingham, Michigan*

MICHAEL S. BRITT, *Principal, Kelly Walsh High School, Casper, Wyoming*

EMILY M. LIVELLI, *Director of College Counseling, Georgetown Day School
Washington, District of Columbia*

CONSTANCE J. LUMUMBA-PEREZ, *Director of College Counseling
Phoenix Country Day School, Paradise Valley, Arizona*

DIANA C. MOLINO, *Principal, Timberline High School, Boise, Idaho*

KEITH H. RICHARD, *Principal, Nashua High School South
Nashua, New Hampshire*

SUSAN T. SADLER, *Head of School, The Bryn Mawr School, Baltimore, Maryland*

JOHN B. SHELLEY, *Head of School, Pembroke Hill School, Kansas City, Missouri*

BRAXTON D. STOWE, *Principal, Ocean Springs High School
Ocean Springs, Mississippi*

ARI B. WORTHMAN, *Director of College Counseling, Lakeside School
Seattle, Washington*

NMSC Mission Statement

The mission of National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC®) is to recognize and honor the academically talented students of the United States. NMSC accomplishes its mission by conducting nationwide academic scholarship programs. The enduring goals of NMSC's scholarship programs are:

- To promote a wider and deeper respect for learning in general and for exceptionally talented individuals in particular
- To shine a spotlight on brilliant students and encourage the pursuit of academic excellence at all levels of education
- To stimulate increased support from individuals and organizations that wish to sponsor scholarships for outstanding scholastic talent

NMSC Lamp of Learning Logo

NMSC's "Lamp of Learning" logo is modeled after an oil-burning lamp—a classic symbol of knowledge and wisdom. Education fuels the flame that burns from the lamp, which is shown resting on a base that represents the Book of Knowledge. The logo is symbolic of the enduring goals of NMSC's scholarship programs.



National Merit Scholarship Corporation
1560 Sherman Avenue, Suite 200
Evanston, IL 60201-4897
(847) 866-5100
www.nationalmerit.org