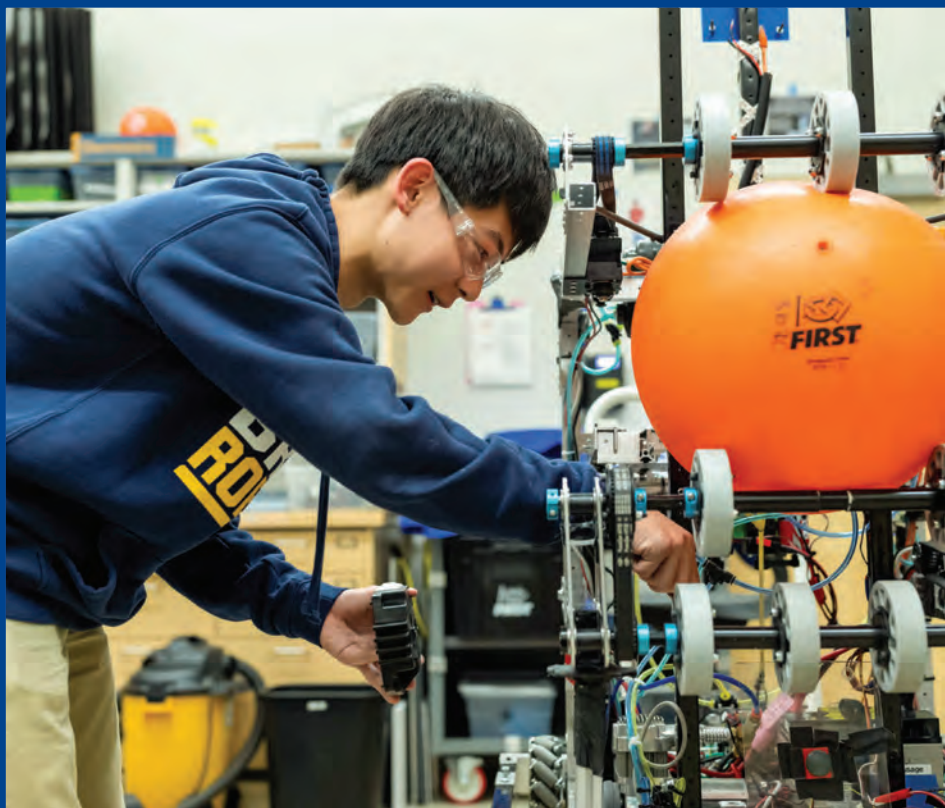




# GUIDE

*to the*

**National Merit<sup>®</sup> Scholarship Program**



**September 2023**

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GUIDE  
to the  
NATIONAL MERIT® SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM




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## 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 320 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<sup>®</sup> Scholarship Program each year. Some 50,000 entrants qualify for program recognition, and approximately 7,880 outstanding students receive scholarships for college undergraduate study. The awards, valued at over \$35 million, are underwritten by NMSC<sup>®</sup> 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<sup>®</sup>) 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 2022 PSAT/NMSQT was used for entry to the 2024 National Merit Program. Most 2024 program participants will enter college in the fall of 2024. The announcement of Semifinalists in September 2023 marks the midpoint of the 2024 competition; it will conclude in the spring of 2024 when winners of National Merit Scholarships are notified and their names are released to news media. The 2025 program begins with the PSAT/NMSQT administration in the fall of 2023 and ends in the spring of 2025. 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 2024 and 2025 competitions is on pages 47–49.



*Beginning in the fall of 2023, the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) will be administered digitally. Approximately 1.3 million high school students will enter the National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the digital PSAT/NMSQT. It is expected that some 50,000 high-scoring students will receive recognition and approximately 7,800 of them will receive scholarships for college study.*



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](http://www.nationalmerit.org), each fall before the test administration.

### Requirements for entry

To participate in the 2024 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 2024 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 on 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 32 in the NMSC section of the 2023 *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 write to 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**

Beginning in October 2023, the PSAT/NMSQT will be administered digitally. Students will receive a Reading and Writing section score and a Math section score instead of Reading, Writing and Language, and Math Test scores. To maintain consistency with the range of Selection Index scores from prior years, NMSC will compute 2023 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 2024 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 7,140 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

*From the beginning of National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) in 1955, an Advisory Council of experienced high school administrators from all areas of the nation has met regularly with NMSC senior staff. The Advisory Council members provide an essential link between the educational community and NMSC and help to uphold the corporation's goals and uniquely high standards for the National Merit Scholarship Program.*



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-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 2024**

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 2024 National Merit Program, which began with the administration of the 2022 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 Semi-



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**2024 National Merit Scholarship Program**

Semifinalists and Commended Students—2022 PSAT/NMSQT\*

	<i>Selection Index Qualifying Score</i>	SEMIFINALISTS		COMMENDED STUDENTS**	
		<i>Number</i>	<i>Number of Schools</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Number of Schools</i>
Alabama	210	263	68	77	43
Alaska	209	35	13	8	7
Arizona	216	394	92	486	105
Arkansas	210	126	43	69	35
California	221	2,037	349	6,257	642
Colorado	216	306	88	561	142
Connecticut	221	170	51	660	131
Delaware	219	46	13	95	26
Florida	216	998	256	1,468	343
Georgia	217	614	127	940	176
Hawaii	217	57	16	120	30
Idaho	211	100	35	64	29
Illinois	219	676	140	1,930	264
Indiana	216	295	81	502	145
Iowa	210	155	57	48	31
Kansas	214	144	45	139	47
Kentucky	211	201	60	91	40
Louisiana	214	198	56	161	51
Maine	213	57	26	62	33
Maryland	221	306	69	1,051	134
Massachusetts	222	336	85	1,492	224
Michigan	217	493	120	917	214
Minnesota	216	274	87	400	117
Mississippi	209	163	54	32	21
Missouri	214	292	96	273	93
Montana	209	45	22	12	8
Nebraska	210	111	35	40	27
Nevada	211	161	40	57	27
New Hampshire	215	65	27	77	34
New Jersey	223	429	114	2,798	264
New Mexico	207	102	32	0	0

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### 2024 National Merit Scholarship Program (continued)

Semifinalists and Commended Students—2022 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	999	199	3,050	432
North Carolina	217	486	108	840	190
North Dakota	207	35	19	0	0
Ohio	216	518	150	915	228
Oklahoma	208	203	55	20	14
Oregon	216	187	42	266	72
Pennsylvania	219	563	146	1,412	289
Rhode Island	215	49	20	69	22
South Carolina	209	250	87	63	40
South Dakota	209	45	21	14	11
Tennessee	217	305	79	561	120
Texas	219	1,535	309	3,970	570
Utah	209	195	60	49	28
Vermont	212	23	14	23	14
Virginia	219	467	90	1,287	167
Washington	220	322	73	1,045	158
West Virginia	207	63	29	0	0
Wisconsin	213	280	106	228	112
Wyoming	207	25	14	0	0
District of Columbia	223	31	12	177	17
U.S. boarding schools	***	140	38	655	82
U.S. territories & commonwealths	207	38	17	0	0
Outside the U.S.	223	78	55	510	203
<i>Totals</i>		<i>16,486</i>	<i>4,140</i>	<i>36,041</i>	<i>6,252</i>

\*A total of 1,303,574 students from 19,141 schools entered the 2024 National Merit Program by taking the 2022 qualifying test and meeting participation requirements.

\*\*The national qualifying score for Commended Students in the 2024 program is 207.

\*\*\*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 217 to 223.

finalist 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 thousands of students representing every state who have earned the Merit Scholar<sup>®</sup> 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<sup>®</sup> 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<sup>®</sup> 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<sup>®</sup> Online Scholarship Application (OSA) with all information requested;
6. take an authorized administration of the SAT<sup>®</sup> or ACT<sup>®</sup>, earn scores that confirm performance on the PSAT/NMSQT<sup>®</sup> 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<sup>®</sup> Program scholarships

Some 7,880 awards with a total value of over \$35 million are offered each year to outstanding participants in the National Merit Scholarship Program. In addition to 7,140 National Merit Scholarships that are awarded to Finalists, about 740 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<sup>®</sup> \$2500 Scholarships and college-sponsored scholarships are offered **only** to Finalists. Corporate-sponsored awards may be Merit Scholarship<sup>®</sup> 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<sup>®</sup> 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.



*Each year, committees of college admission officers and high school guidance counselors convene to evaluate the applications of more than 15,000 Finalists to select the 2,500 winners of National Merit \$2500 Scholarships. Committee members, working in teams, consider a wide variety of factors, including each student's academic record, personal essay, extracurricular activities, and recommendation from a high school official.*



**Corporate-sponsored Scholarships.** Each year about 160 corporations, company foundations, and professional associations finance approximately 1,580 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 1,580 corporate-sponsored awards, about 840 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 predetermined 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 that are made available through the sponsor organization. NMSC then 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 740 outstanding students are recipients of Special Scholarships each year.

Corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards and Special Scholarships are usually named for the sponsoring organization. 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 Novartis Scholarship” and “Novartis 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 160 four-year regionally accredited U.S. colleges and universities annually support about 3,800 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 **not all Finalists receive a National Merit Scholarship**. The National Merit Program is very competitive, and, in recent years, only about half

## Steps in the 2024 National Merit

**1,300,000 Entrants.** U.S. high school students who took the competition and met the participation requirements entered the 2024 competition for National Merit. All program entrants were juniors who planned to enroll in college in 2024. 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 2023, NMSC sent a list of high scoring students to schools to correct errors or changes in the reported eligibility of students whose scores were high.

**Participants who qualify for National Merit**

**34,000 Commended Students.** In late September 2023, more than two-thirds of the 50,000 high scorers will be notified that they have qualified as Commended Students. NMSC will notify them through their schools and provide *Letters of Commendation* 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**

**740 Special Scholarship recipients.** Beginning in March 2024, 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 2023, will be outstanding students (although not Finalists) who meet their sponsors' eligibility criteria. Sponsors will handle public announcement of their Special Scholarship winners.

## Merit<sup>®</sup> Scholarship Program

took the PSAT/NMSQT<sup>®</sup> in October 2022 and met other program requirements for National Merit Program recognition and scholarships. Nearly 50,000 high scorers will be recognized and awarded scholarships in 2024. (See pages 6–8 for entry requirements.) NMSC<sup>®</sup> will be releasing the Reading and Writing section score, adding the Math section score to determine the total score for high-scoring participants who qualify for program recognition.

will be sending letters to high school principals and asked them to identify any high-scoring participants who qualify them for recognition in the fall of 2023.

### National Merit Program recognition

**16,000 Semifinalists.** In early September 2023, 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 2024.

**15,000 Finalists.** In February 2024, 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<sup>®</sup> winners (Merit Scholar<sup>®</sup> awardees) will be chosen from this group of Finalists based on their abilities, skills, and accomplishments. (See pages 23–26.)

### Scholarship winners

**7,140 Merit Scholarship winners.** Beginning in March 2024, NMSC will notify winners of the three types of National Merit Scholarships:

- National Merit<sup>®</sup> \$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.)

of the 15,000 Finalists have been selected to be Merit Scholar<sup>®</sup> 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 320 independent sponsor organizations currently underwrite scholarships through the National Merit<sup>®</sup> Scholarship Program. Beginning with the first competition in 1956, corporations and business organizations have underwritten both National Merit Scholarships and Special Scholarships in every annual competition. Colleges and universities began sponsoring Merit Scholarship<sup>®</sup> awards in 1963. The generosity of scholarship sponsors 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 80 percent of the 439,400 scholarships offered to date, committing a total of over \$1.6 billion. NMSC<sup>®</sup> has used over \$211 million of its own funds to support 90,000 Merit Scholarship awards.

***Corporate sponsors.*** Over the National Merit Program's 68 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 2023, about 160 corporate sponsors committed over \$13 million to underwrite some 840 Merit Scholarship awards and 740 Special Scholarships. To date, corporate and business organizations have provided about 163,800 awards worth a total of more than \$900 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<sup>®</sup> \$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 underwrote 175 scholarships valued at approximately \$400,000.



*About 320 corporate organizations and higher education institutions partner with NMSC to honor and encourage America's academically talented youth. Sponsor organizations award over 5,300 scholarships each year, totaling approximately \$29 million, and often follow their Scholars' academic progress throughout college. The identity of the award sponsor is included in the name of the scholarships it supports.*



In 2023, about 160 U.S. colleges and universities committed nearly \$16 million to underwrite approximately 3,800 Merit Scholarship awards for students to attend sponsoring institutions. Over 61 competitions, colleges have expended and committed more than \$701 million for 185,600 Merit Scholarship awards. Funds from college and university sponsors are used exclusively for scholarship payments to their Merit Scholarship recipients.

### **NMSC services for sponsors**

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

#### ***For corporate sponsors, 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 sponsors to present to their 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 Boeing Scholarship” and “National Merit Purdue University 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 with descriptions and numbers of awards offered are listed in the *PSAT/NMSQT*® *Student Guide*. This publication is available online to approximately four million 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 385 corporate organizations 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 2024 have been added.

AbbVie Foundation

Abilene Christian  
University

ACI Worldwide, Inc.

Acushnet Company

ADP Foundation

Aerojet Rocketdyne  
Foundation

Akzo Nobel Inc.

Albany International

The Allergan Foundation

Ameren Corporation  
Charitable Trust

American Air Liquide  
Holdings, Inc

American City Business  
Journals, Inc.

American Electric Power

American Financial Group

American University

The AMETEK Foundation

Anadarko Petroleum  
Corporation

Anixter Inc.

Aon Foundation

Apache Corporation

Archer Daniels Midland  
Company

Arizona State University

Arkema Inc. Foundation

Ascension

Aspen Technology, Inc.

Astellas US LLC

AstraZeneca

Pharmaceuticals LP

Auburn University

BASF Corporation

Battelle

Belmont University

Bentley Systems,  
Incorporated

Bethel University

Trust Under The Will of  
Mary E. Beyerle

BNSF Railway Foundation

The Boeing Company

BorgWarner Inc.  
Boston College  
Boston University  
Bowdoin College  
Bradley University  
Brady Corporation  
Brandeis University  
Bread Financial  
Bridgestone Americas  
Trust Fund  
Brigham Young University  
Bristol Myers Squibb  
Foundation  
Broadridge Financial  
Solutions, Inc.  
Brooks Brothers Group, Inc.  
Brown & Brown, Inc.  
Bucknell University  
Bunge  
Bunzl USA, LLC  
Butler University  
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.  
(AmerisourceBergen)  
Centre College  
Chevron U.S.A. Inc.  
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  
Corporation  
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 Foundation, Inc.  
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 Corp.  
Gordon College  
(Massachusetts)  
Goshen College  
W.W. Grainger, Inc.  
Greyhound Lines, Inc.  
Grinnell College  
The Guardian Life Insurance  
Company of America  
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  
Insperity Services, L.P.  
International Union of  
Bricklayers and Allied  
Craftworkers  
Iowa State University  
Ithaca College  
J. Walter Thompson Company  
Fund, Inc.  
Jacobs Engineering  
Foundation  
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.  
Maritz Holdings Inc.  
Marquette University  
Marsh McLennan  
McGraw Hill LLC  
Mead Witter  
Foundation, Inc.  
Miami University-Oxford  
Michigan State University  
Michigan Technological  
University

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



Pfizer Inc	RSM US LLP
Pilkington North America, Inc.	Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Pomona College	S&P Global
PPG Foundation	Saint Louis University
PPL	St. Olaf College
PricewaterhouseCoopers Charitable Foundation, Inc.	Samford University
Primient	Santa Clara University
Principal Life Insurance Company	Schindler Elevator Corporation
Public Service Enterprise Group	Schneider Electric North America Foundation
Purdue University	Scripps College
Putnam Investments, LLC	Sensient Technologies Foundation
Quanex Foundation	Sentry Insurance Foundation, Inc.
Raytheon Company	Siemens Foundation
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute	Snap-on Incorporated
Research Triangle Institute	Sogeti USA
Reynolds American Foundation	Solvay America
Rheem Manufacturing Company	Sony Electronics Inc.
Rhodes College	South Carolina Sports Medicine and Orthopaedic Center
Robert Half International Inc.	Southern Company Services, Inc.
Rochester Institute of Technology	Southern Methodist University
Rockwell Automation Charitable Corporation	Southwest Airlines Co.
Rolls-Royce North America Inc.	C. D. Spangler Foundation, Inc.
Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology	

Specialty Materials Inc  
Spirit AeroSystems, Inc.  
SRI International  
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.  
The TeleTech Community  
Foundation  
Tennessee Technological  
University  
Teradata Corporation  
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  
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 Richmond  
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  
The Xerox Foundation  
Zoetis Inc.

## PSAT/NMSQT<sup>®</sup> procedures and reports

The PSAT/NMSQT, which is cosponsored by NMSC<sup>®</sup> and College Board, is the official route of entry to the National Merit<sup>®</sup> Scholarship Program. Beginning in the fall of 2023, the PSAT/NMSQT will be delivered digitally through Bluebook<sup>™</sup>, 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 the content areas on the test. The *PSAT/NMSQT Student Guide* will be available online to all administrators and test takers in advance of the test administration. In addition to a full description of the test and question types, 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/administration>.

**Note:** The PSAT<sup>™</sup> 10 and PSAT<sup>™</sup> 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 outside 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](mailto:psat/nmsqt@info.collegeboard.org). A wide array of information is also provided on College Board's website at [www.collegeboard.org](http://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 2 through October 31, 2023. 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 2023 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 new 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 online guides and resources with available PDF downloads on College Board's website that supplement Test Day Toolkit. The guides 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](http://www.collegeboard.org/ssd). Contact the SSD office by calling (844) 255-7728.

With the transition to 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. A guide for testing students with approved accommodations is 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 give it, a school official may make arrangements for them to test at your high school on an alternate test date. The student may also 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. 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 in November with guidance for 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 *Understanding PSAT/NMSQT Scores* at <https://psat.org/downloads>.

Students can access their PSAT/NMSQT scores online in November. 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<sup>®</sup> 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 must write to NMSC at once. 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

### 2024 National Merit® Scholarship Program

#### 2022

**October 12, 15, or 25, 2022:** Students entered the 2024 program by taking the 2022 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®).

#### 2023

**August 22:** 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 11:** List of Semifinalists mailed to admission officials of four-year regionally accredited U.S. colleges and universities.

**September 13:** Date for news media nationwide to release NMSC's announcement of Semifinalists.

**September 14:** *Letters of Commendation* for Commended Students mailed to high school principals.

**October 7:** Authorized SAT® administration for Semifinalists.

**By October 11:** Schools submit completed National Merit Scholarship Applications to NMSC®.

**October 28:** Authorized ACT administration for Semifinalists.

**November 4:** Authorized SAT administration for Semifinalists.

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

**December 2:** Last authorized SAT administration for Semifinalists to be considered for Finalist standing.

**December 9:** Last authorized ACT administration for Semifinalists to be considered for Finalist standing.

**2024**

**February 5:** *Certificates of Merit* for Finalists mailed to principals.

**February 12:** 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 13:** NMSC begins notifying winners of corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship® awards and Special Scholarships. Each winner's high school is also notified.

**March 21:** 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 24:** Corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship winners

**May 8:** National Merit \$2500 Scholarship winners

**June 5:** College-sponsored Merit Scholarship winners

**July 15:** 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

### 2025 National Merit® Scholarship Program

#### 2023

**Late April:** 2023 PSAT/NMSQT® ordering information emailed to high school PSAT/NMSQT Coordinators.

**Late June:** 2023 *PSAT/NMSQT Student Guide* is available online.

**By early September:** Participating schools register their students for the 2023 PSAT/NMSQT.

**October 2 through October 31:** Testing window for the administration of the PSAT/NMSQT.

**November:** 2023 PSAT/NMSQT online scores are available to educators.

#### 2024

**April 1:** Postmark deadline for students who missed taking the 2023 PSAT/NMSQT to request consideration for alternate entry to the 2025 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 2025 National Merit Scholarship competition.

**Note:** Dates for completion of the 2025 National Merit Program will be published in the September 2024 *Guide*.

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## 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.



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