



**NATIONAL MERIT<sup>®</sup> SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS**  
**April 30, 2008 Announcement**

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**Note: This press release was distributed to news media on April 28 with a list of National Merit \$2500 Scholarship winners to encourage public recognition of these outstanding students. The release is made available here to provide information about these Merit Scholarship<sup>®</sup> awards; however, the names of award recipients are not posted on this Web site.**

*Today's release is the second announcement of winners in the 2008 National Merit Scholarship Program. On April 16, about 1,100 recipients of corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards were named, and on May 28 and July 14, some 4,600 college-sponsored Merit Scholarship winners will be announced. By the conclusion of this year's competition, about 8,200 academic champions will have won National Merit Scholarships worth over \$36 million.*

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

(Evanston, Illinois) Today officials of National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) announced the names of some 2,500 distinguished high school seniors who have won National Merit \$2500 Scholarships. These Merit Scholar<sup>®</sup> designees were chosen from a talent pool of approximately 15,000 Finalists in the 2008 National Merit Scholarship Program.

National Merit \$2500 Scholarship winners are the Finalists in each state judged to have the strongest combination of accomplishments, skills, and potential for success in rigorous college studies. They were selected by a committee of college admissions officers and high school counselors. These Scholars may use their awards at any regionally accredited U.S. college or university.

NMSC is financing most of the single-payment National Merit \$2500 Scholarships with its own funds. Companies and businesses that sponsor awards through NMSC also help underwrite these scholarships with grants they provide in lieu of paying administrative fees.

All Finalists competed for these awards. Scholar selection was based on committee members' appraisal of a substantial amount of information submitted by Finalists and their high schools. Evaluated were each Finalist's academic record, including difficulty level of subjects studied and grades earned; scores from two standardized tests; contributions and leadership in school and community activities; an essay describing interests and goals; and the recommendation written by a high school official. The number of winners named in each state is proportional to the state's percentage of the nation's high school graduating seniors.

### **2008 National Merit Scholarship Competition**

This year's competition for National Merit Scholarships began in October 2006 when more than 1.4 million juniors in over 21,000 high schools took the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®), which served as an initial screen of program entrants. Last fall, the highest-scoring participants in each state, representing less than one percent of the state's seniors, were named Semifinalists on a state representational basis. Only the 16,000 Semifinalists had an opportunity to continue in the competition.

Approximately 15,000 Semifinalists met the very high academic standards and other requirements to advance to the Finalist level of the competition. By the conclusion of the 2008 program, about 8,200 Finalists will earn the "Merit Scholar" title and receive a total of more than \$36 million in college scholarships.

NMSC, a not-for-profit corporation that operates without government assistance, was founded in 1955 specifically to conduct the annual National Merit Scholarship Program. The majority of scholarships offered each year are underwritten by approximately 500 independent corporate and college sponsors that share NMSC's goals of honoring scholastically talented youth and enhancing their educational opportunities.

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**CAUTION:** Any attempt to compare high schools on the basis of numbers of Merit Scholarship winners will lead to erroneous and unsound conclusions. The National Merit Scholarship Program honors *individual* students who show exceptional academic ability and potential for success in rigorous college studies. The program does not measure the quality or effectiveness of education within a school, system, or state.