

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, September 15, 2010 / 2011 National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists

172 high school seniors named semifinalists in 2011 National Merit Scholarship Program

EVANSTON, IL – One hundred seventy-two students in 56 public high schools across South Carolina are among the 16,000 [semifinalists announced today](#) in the 56th annual National Merit Scholarship program. They will vie for 8,400 scholarships worth more than \$36 million that will be offered next spring.

About 90 percent of semifinalists are expected to advance to the finalist level, and approximately half of those will eventually earn a scholarship, according to the non-profit [National Merit Scholarship Corporation](#).

The [Governor's School for Science and Mathematics](#) in Hartsville had the largest number of students attaining semifinalist status – 18. Charleston County's [Academic Magnet High School](#) in North Charleston had 17 students make the grade.

“I congratulate all of our semifinalists for their pursuit of academic excellence,” said State Superintendent of Education Jim Rex. “Semifinalist status puts them in the top one percent of our nation’s high school seniors and proves they are truly scholastic champions.”

Nine home-schooled students in the state also qualified as semifinalists, along with 37 students from 23 private schools. More than 1.5 million juniors in over 22,000 high schools entered the 2011 National Merit Program by taking the 2009 [Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test](#), which serves as an initial screening.

The number of semifinalists in a state is proportional to the state’s percentage of the national total of graduating seniors. To advance to the finalist stage, a semifinalist must have an outstanding academic record throughout high school, be endorsed and recommended by the high school principal, and earn SAT scores that confirm the student’s earlier performance on the qualifying test.

A detailed scholarship application – including an essay and information about the student’s participation and leadership in school and community activities – also is required. Merit Scholars will be selected from the finalist pool on the basis of their skills, accomplishments and potential for success in rigorous college studies, without regard to gender, race, ethnic origin, or religious preference. Scholarship awards will be announced in four nationwide news releases beginning next April and concluding in July.

