IowaCollegeAid.gov

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Iowa College Aid Recognizes National Merit® Scholarship Program Semifinalists

Five students from Marion, Iowa were honored

Des Moines, IA., September 23, 2013 – The Iowa College Student Aid Commission (Iowa College Aid) announced today that 176 Iowa high school seniors were among the nearly 16,000 national semifinalists recognized by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC). Among these semifinalists, are Benjamin L. Jacobs, Josiah K. Low, Kesav V. Narayan, Kyle D. Smith and Dana M. Sublett from Marion, Iowa. These high school seniors have earned the opportunity to continue in the competition to become National Merit Scholarship® Finalists and recipients of some 8,000 National Merit Scholarships, worth a total of $35 million.

In order to qualify as a National Merit® Scholarship Semifinalist, students must take the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®) as a high school junior. The highest-scoring entrants in each state are chosen in proportion to the state's percentage of the national total of graduating seniors. In total, the Semifinalists are less than one percent of all U.S. high school seniors. Around 1.5 million juniors in over 22,000 high schools competed to become 2014 National Merit® Scholarship Program Semifinalists.

The next step for these Semifinalists will be to submit a scholarship application that includes information regarding their academic record, extracurricular and community activities, leadership abilities, employment, honors and awards. Semifinalists must have an exemplary academic record, receive an endorsement by a high school official, submit an essay and receive exceptionally high SAT scores. The 2014 National Merit Scholarship winners will be announced in four separate press releases starting in April and ending in July.

"We are extremely proud to have so many bright and talented Iowa high school seniors," said Karen Misjak, executive director of Iowa College Aid. "We'd like to congratulate these seniors on their incredible accomplishments and wish them the best of luck in their pursuit to become Finalists. We hope they will take advantage of the free test prep our agency offers through I Have A Plan Iowa® so they can do their absolute best on the SAT."

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By utilizing the I Have A Plan Iowa® Test Prep, students can make a personalized study plan based on the approaching test date and their current skill level. The SAT® portion of the test prep focuses on sharpening students' math and verbal skills. Students receive immediate feedback on incorrect answers and are given suggestions on what to study next. Students can also designate a test prep coach, such as a parent or teacher, who will receive updates on the student's progress so that they can provide further support and advice.

More information about the National Merit Scholarship Program is available at http://www.nationalmerit.org/. To learn more about the free test prep and other resources available through www.IHaveAPlanIowa.gov, contact Iowa College Aid at 877-272-4456. In addition, more information to help Iowa families plan, prepare and pay for college is available on Iowa College Aid's website, www.IowaCollegeAid.gov.

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About the Iowa College Student Aid Commission

Iowa College Aid provides college access, financial literacy, and outreach services to Iowa's students and families as they prepare, plan and pay for college. Iowa College Aid also administers state scholarship, grant, work study, and loan forgiveness programs totaling over $68.0 million annually, administers the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP)program, provides borrowers with assistance to avoid the serious consequences of default, conducts research and distributes higher education data, and offers Iowans assistance in obtaining student financial aid and college-related information. Through its role, Iowa College Aid also serves as the state-designated administrator of the U.S. Department of Education's College Access Challenge Grant, which is designed to increase the college-going culture in Iowa. Additionally, Iowa College Aid is the administrator of the Federal GEAR-UP Grant, a multi-year state-wide grant which is being utilized to provide early awareness programming and outreach initiatives to thousands of Iowa's students and families. More information is available at www.IowaCollegeAid.gov.

About the National Merit Scholarship Corporation

The National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC), a not-for-profit organization that operates without government assistance, was established in 1955 specifically to conduct the annual National Merit Scholarship Program. Scholarships are underwritten by NMSC with its own funds and by approximately 440 business organizations and higher education institutions that share NMSC's goals of honoring the nation's scholastic champions and encouraging the pursuit of academic excellence. More information is available at ***www.nationalmerit.org***