

For Immediate Release

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Media Release

NMSC awards college-sponsored scholarships to 15 CCSD students

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Charleston, SC – The National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) released the names of more than 3,000 winners of National Merit Scholarships financed by U.S. colleges and universities this week. The list includes the following 15 students from a combined four Charleston County School District (CCSD) schools:

Academic Magnet High School

Joseph J. Benich IV - National Merit Clemson University Scholarship
Elena S. Graham - National Merit University of South Carolina Scholarship
Henry A. Hughes - National Merit Clemson University Scholarship
Sampson P. Kennedy – National Merit University of South Carolina Scholarship
Irene Y. Liu - National Merit University of South Carolina Scholarship
Elizabeth A. Murray - National Merit Clemson University Scholarship
Finlay G. Palmer - National Merit University of South Carolina Scholarship
Lilly Skinner – National Merit Fordham University Scholarship
Alan Zhang – National Merit Clemson University Scholarship

Charleston County School of the Arts (SOA)

Ryan R. Dickerson – National Merit West Virginia University Foundation, Inc. Scholarship
Aurora L. Drye – National Merit Furman University Scholarship

Lucy Beckham High School

Thomas W. Collins – National Merit University of Alabama Scholarship

Wando High School

Alexander L. Fister - National Merit Clemson University Scholarship
Rowan W. Johnson - National Merit University of South Carolina Scholarship
Sydney Emma Lewis - National Merit University of South Carolina Scholarship

Officials of each sponsor college selected their scholarship winners from among the finalists in the 2023 National Merit Scholarship Program who plan to attend their institution. These awards provide between \$500 and \$2,000 annually for up to four years of undergraduate study at the institution financing the scholarship.

Twenty-four CCSD students have received scholarships in this 68th annual program so far. [Two Academic Magnet students picked up corporate-sponsored scholarships in April](#) and seven additional students from a combined three CCSD schools earned \$2,500 scholarships last month.

"The nine Raptors who earned the college-sponsored National Merit Scholarships etched their names on a prestigious list," Academic Magnet Principal Jacob Perlmutter said. "We are so proud of them and know they are destined to achieve great things in their college years and beyond."

This year, 153 higher education institutions are underwriting Merit Scholarship awards through the National Merit Scholarship Program. Sponsor colleges and universities include 81 private and 72 public institutions located in 42 states and the District of Columbia.

"SOA is thrilled to celebrate the success of Aurora Drye and Ryan Dickerson," added SOA's principal, Dr. Shannon Cook. "They are accomplished student-artists who deserve this honor and recognition."

College-sponsored Merit Scholarship winners announced today are a part of the distinguished group of more than 7,140 high school seniors who will receive National Merit Scholarships for college undergraduate study worth nearly \$28 million.

"We are very proud of Thomas for this exceptional achievement," explained Anna Dassing, Lucy Beckham's principal. "He exemplifies what hard work and dedication to his studies mean and we know he is going to go on to accomplish all of his goals."

High school juniors entered this year's National Merit Scholarship Program when they took the 2021 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT), which served as an initial screen of program entrants.

Once students were selected as semifinalists, they fulfilled requirements to become finalists. They submitted a detailed scholarship application, which included writing an essay and providing information about extracurricular activities, awards, and leadership positions. Semifinalists also had to have an outstanding academic record, be endorsed and recommended by a high school official, and earn SAT® scores that confirmed the qualifying test performance. From the semifinalist group, over 15,000 students met finalist requirements.

"I know Alexander, Rowan, and Sydney all left lasting, positive legacies at Wando," said Wando's incoming principal, Chas Coker. "We appreciate the examples they set and anticipate they will excel in college as well."

NMSC, a not-for-profit organization that operates without government assistance, was established in 1955 to conduct the National Merit Scholarship Program. The

majority of National Merit Scholarships offered each year are underwritten by some 340 independent corporate and college sponsors that support NMSC's efforts to honor the nation's scholastically talented youth and encourage academic excellence at all levels of education.

For more information, contact the Office of Communications at (843) 937-6303.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is a nationally accredited school district committed to providing equitable and quality educational opportunities for all of its students. CCSD is the second-largest school system in South Carolina and represents a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves approximately 49,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools. Options include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military.