



85 Prescott Street  
Worcester, MA 01605-2610

(508) 831-5859  
FAX: (508) 831-5880

TO: Area News Media  
FROM: Michael Barney,  
Director, Massachusetts Academy of Math and Science  
RE: Press Release for Immediate Publication

### **Mass Academy Senior named as Semifinalist in the 2012 National Achievement® Scholarship Program**



Grace DiFrancesco of Fitchburg, a senior at the Mass Academy of Math and Science at WPI in Worcester, has been named a Semifinalist in the 2012 National Achievement Scholarship Program. More than 1,600 Black American high school seniors who have been designated Semifinalists in the 48th annual National Achievement Scholarship Program were announced Wednesday by National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) officials. These scholastically talented young men and women now have an opportunity to continue in the competition for approximately 800 Achievement Scholarship® awards worth more than \$2.4 million to be offered next spring. To be considered for a National Achievement

Scholarship, Semifinalists must fulfill several requirements to advance to the Finalist level of the competition. About 80 percent of Semifinalists are expected to attain Finalist standing, and more than half of the Finalists will win an Achievement Scholarship award.

Director Michael Barney of the Mass Academy, comments that “Grace is an outstanding student and role model. I have been fortunate to work with Grace as her senior advisor and I am so impressed by her motivation, work ethic, and the high goals and standards she has set for herself. We are extremely proud of her. “

The National Achievement Scholarship Program, conducted by NMSC, is a privately financed academic competition that operates without government assistance. It was initiated in 1964 to recognize academically promising black students throughout the nation and to provide scholarships to a substantial number of the most outstanding program participants. To date, over 31,100 young men and women have received Achievement Scholarship awards worth more than \$98 million.

#### **About the Competition**

More than 160,000 high school juniors from all parts of the United States requested consideration in the 2012 National Achievement Scholarship Program when they took the 2010 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®). Semifinalists are designated within geographic regions and are the highest-scoring program entrants in the states that make up each region.

To advance to the Finalist level in the competition, Semifinalists must present a record of high academic performance throughout high school, be endorsed and recommended by the high school principal, write an essay, and earn SAT scores that confirm their PSAT/NMSQT performance. In addition, the Semifinalist and a high school official must complete a detailed scholarship application in which they provide information about the student's participation in school and community activities, demonstrated leadership abilities, and educational goals.

From the approximately 1,600 Semifinalists, about 1,300 are expected to advance to the Finalist level, and in January they will be notified of this designation. All Achievement Scholar® awardees will be selected from the Finalist group on the basis of their abilities, accomplishments, and potential for success in rigorous college studies.

### **National Achievement Scholarships**

National Achievement Scholarships provided in 2012 will be supported by corporations, professional organizations, foundations, and by NMSC's own funds. Two types of scholarships will be offered. Every Finalist will compete for one of the 700 one-time National Achievement \$2500 Scholarships, which will be awarded on a regional representation basis. In addition, corporate and business sponsors will underwrite about 100 Achievement Scholarship awards for Finalists who meet criteria set by the grantor. Although some corporate-sponsored awards provide a single payment, most are renewable for up to four years of undergraduate study. NMSC will release the names of scholarship winners to news media in early April.