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Ten Seniors from Mass Academy of Math and Science recognized as Semifinalists in the 2016 National Merit Scholarship Program

(Evanston, Illinois) Today officials of National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) announced the names of approximately 16,000 Semifinalists in the 61st annual National Merit Scholarship Program. These academically talented high school seniors have an opportunity to continue in the competition for some 7,400 National Merit Scholarships worth more than \$32 million that will be offered next spring. To be considered for a Merit Scholarship® award, Semifinalists must fulfill several requirements to advance to the Finalist level of the competition.

Ashay Athalye (Shrewsbury), **Kristen Behrakis** (Dracut), **Gal Bejerano** (Natick), **Mugdha Gupta** (Northborough), **Karthik Karnik** (Westborough), **Isay Katsman** (Shrewsbury), **Anastasiya Khovanskaya** (Shrewsbury), **Yashaswini Makaram** (Northborough), **Amol Punjabi** (Northborough), and **Mulan Yang** (Southborough) will all advance in the competition.

About 90 percent of the Semifinalists are expected to attain Finalist standing, and about half of the Finalists will win a National Merit Scholarship, earning the Merit Scholar® title. 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.

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. For more information about the competition, please visit NMSC's website at www.nationalmerit.org.

Steps in the 2016 Competition

About 1.5 million juniors in more than 22,000 high schools entered the 2016 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2014 Preliminary SAT /National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®), which served as an initial screen of program entrants. The nationwide pool of Semifinalists, representing less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors, includes the highest-scoring entrants in each state. The number of Semifinalists in a state is proportional to the state's percentage of the national total of graduating seniors.

To become a Finalist, the Semifinalist and his or her high school must submit a detailed scholarship application, in which they provide information about the Semifinalist's academic record, participation in school and community activities, demonstrated leadership abilities, employment, and honors and awards received. A Semifinalist must have an outstanding academic record through-out high school, be endorsed and recommended by a high school official, write an essay, and earn SAT® scores that confirm the student's earlier performance on the qualifying test.

From the approximately 16,000 Semifinalists, about 15,000 are expected to advance to the Finalist level, and in February they will be notified of this designation.

All National Merit Scholarship winners will be selected from this group of Finalists. Merit Scholar designees are selected 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.

National Merit Scholarships

Three types of National Merit Scholarships will be offered in the spring of 2016.

Every Finalist will compete for one of 2,500 National Merit® \$2500 Scholarships that will be awarded on a state-representational basis. About 1,000 corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards will be provided by approximately 250 corporations and business organizations for Finalists who meet their specified criteria, such as children of the grantor's employees or residents of communities where sponsor plants or offices are located. In addition, about 190 colleges and universities are expected to finance some 3,900 college-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards for Finalists who will attend the sponsor institution.

National Merit Scholarship winners of 2016 will be announced in four nationwide news releases beginning in April and concluding in July. These scholarship recipients will join more than 315,000 other distinguished young people who have earned the Merit Scholar title.

About the Mass Academy of Math and Science

The Mass Academy is a public, co-educational school of excellence program that enrolls about 100 academically accelerated 11th and 12th graders. Math and science are emphasized within a comprehensive, interactive academic program. The rigor of the junior year classes exceeds high school honors and AP, emphasizing depth over breadth, engaging students in project-based learning and more than 1,100 hours of instruction. Seniors complete a full year of college, enrolling in classes at WPI, a nationally-ranked university, thus making the academy the only public school in Massachusetts whose students attend a private university full time as seniors in high school. The academy is a collaborative effort among the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, and the high schools of Massachusetts.

About Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Founded in 1865 in Worcester, Mass., WPI is one of the nation's first engineering and technology universities. Its 14 academic departments offer more than 50 undergraduate and graduate degree programs in science, engineering, technology, business, the social sciences, and the humanities and arts, leading to bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees. WPI's talented faculty work with students on interdisciplinary research that seeks solutions to important and socially relevant problems in fields as diverse as the life sciences and bioengineering, energy, information security, materials processing, and robotics. Students also have the opportunity to make a difference to communities and organizations around the world through the university's innovative Global Perspective Program. There are more than 30 WPI project centers throughout North America and Central America, Africa, Australia, Asia, and Europe.