



# PRESS RELEASE

Tracey H. Lewis, Ed.D.  
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS  
P.O. Box 364  
209 N. Crutchfield Street  
Dobson, North Carolina 27017  
336/386-8211 Cell: 336/401-1873  
Fax: 336/386-4756  
E-Mail: lewist@surry.k12.nc.us



## NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP CORPORATION

1560 Sherman Avenue, Suite 200, Evanston, Illinois 60201-4897 (847) 866-5100

### SEMIFINALISTS IN THE 2021 NATIONAL MERIT® SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM September 9, 2020 Announcement

Contact: Eileen Artemakis or Matthew Budreau  
Public Information

Phone: (847) 866-5100  
Email: [mediainfo@nmerit.net](mailto:mediainfo@nmerit.net)  
Website: [www.nationalmerit.org](http://www.nationalmerit.org)

#### **For Immediate Release**

September 11, 2020

#### **East Surry Senior, Landon Smith, is a Semifinalist in the 2020 National Merit® Scholarship Program**

Evanston, Illinois — On Wednesday, September 9, the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) announced the names of approximately 16,000 Semifinalists in the 66th annual National Merit Scholarship Program. East Surry High School Senior, Landon Smith was among this group of outstanding seniors. Landon is the son of Melissa and Greg Smith, of Pilot Mountain.



These academically talented high school seniors have an opportunity to continue in the competition for some 7,600 National Merit Scholarships worth more than \$30 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. Over 90 percent of the Semifinalists are expected to attain Finalist standing, and more than 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 400 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.

### **Steps in the 2021 Competition**

Over 1.5 million juniors in about 21,000 high schools entered the 2021 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2019 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 a high school official 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 throughout high school, be endorsed and recommended by a high school official, and write an essay.

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 2021. 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 220 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 180 colleges and universities are expected to finance some 4,100 college-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards for Finalists who will attend the sponsor institution.

National Merit Scholarship winners of 2021 will be announced in four nationwide news releases beginning in April and concluding in July. These scholarship recipients will join more than 353,000 other distinguished young people who have earned the Merit Scholar title.