

News Release

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Wisconsin has 12 Presidential Scholar Semifinalists

MADISON — Twelve Wisconsin students have been named semifinalists for the 2016 Presidential Scholars award, considered the nation's highest honor for graduating high school seniors.

“Congratulations to the state's Presidential Scholar Semifinalists,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers. “These students have shown exceptional academic scholarship and talent in the career and technical education fields. In addition to recognizing your hard work, I extend thanks to your parents and teachers who supported this accomplishment.”

The Presidential Scholars program was established in 1964 to recognize and honor some of our nation's most distinguished high school students. The state's 12 semifinalists are among 689 semifinalists for 2016.

Wisconsin's Presidential Scholar semifinalists are

- Alicia K. Church of Whitewater, Fort Atkinson High School;
- Alexander S. Diebold, Evansville Senior High School;
- Michael Gui, Marshfield Senior High School;
- Curtis Hakes, Cornell High School;
- Hannah L. Healy of Oconomowoc, Kettle Moraine High School, Wales;
- Aileen N. Herman, Brookfield Central High School;
- Paige E. Kassner, Kewaunee Senior High School;
- Robert Li, Platteville High School;
- Henry R. Lynch, Wauwatosa East High School;
- Tiffany A. Moskal, Clayton High School;
- Gabriel A. Saiz, West High School, Madison; and
- Kendra L. Spier, Cambridge Senior High School.

From nearly 3.3 million graduating high school seniors, more than 4,700 students were identified as candidates for the program based on exceptional performance on the ACT or SAT college admissions tests. About 60 of those students were identified through their participation in the YoungARTS program, sponsored by the

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National Foundation for the Advancement of the Arts. Four of Wisconsin's semifinalists — Church, Hakes, Moskal, and Spier — were semifinalists nominated for their accomplishments in the career and technical education fields. Candidates were invited to complete application materials that include essays, self-assessments, secondary school reports, and transcripts. An independent, national committee of educators convened by the Commission on Presidential Scholars reviewed application materials to select semifinalists.

The Commission on Presidential Scholars will make the final selection of the nation's 121 academic Presidential Scholars — one male and one female from each state, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and from families of U.S. citizens living abroad; and up to 15 students chosen at large. The Presidential Scholars Commission also chooses up to 20 Presidential Scholars in the Arts and 20 Presidential Scholars in Career and Technical Education for a total of up to 161 Presidential Scholars.

Students chosen as Presidential Scholars will travel to Washington, D.C., in June, where they will meet with government officials, educators, authors, musicians, scientists, and other accomplished individuals. Presidential Scholars will have opportunities to visit area museums and monuments and have a chance to exchange ideas and build friendships with their peers. They also will receive a Presidential Scholars medallion at a ceremony sponsored by the White House.

Scholars are asked to identify one teacher who was most influential in their education. The teacher also will be invited to the nation's capital for National Recognition Week and will receive the Presidential Scholars program Teacher Recognition Award.

“Best wishes to our 2016 Presidential Scholar Semifinalists,” Evers said. “They are among the many fine students who will be graduating from our high schools this spring.”

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NOTE: This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2016_51.pdf.