

News Release

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15 students named Presidential Scholar Semifinalists

MADISON – Fifteen Wisconsin students have been named semifinalists in the 2018 Presidential Scholar Program, one of the nation’s highest honors bestowed on a high school graduate.

“Congratulations to Wisconsin’s semifinalists in the Presidential Scholars Program,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers. “These students, with support from families, teachers, and their community, have shown dedication to their studies and service to others. Their future is bright.”

The Presidential Scholar Program was established in 1964 to recognize and honor some of our nation’s most distinguished graduating high school seniors. The state’s 15 semifinalists are:

- Sarah Albers, Prairie du Sac, Sauk Prairie High School;
- Alnaser Al-Fawakhiri, Shorewood, Whitefish Bay High School;
- Annie Butler, Cedarburg, Cedarburg High School;
- Jennifer Cape, Brookfield, Brookfield Central High School;
- Derek W. Fairburn, Germantown, Germantown High School;
- Michael P. Ginn, Pewaukee, Catholic Memorial High School, Waukesha;
- Charles X. Hua, Middleton, West High School, Madison;
- Xavier Lightfoot, Milwaukee, Pius XI Catholic High School, Milwaukee;
- Faith Majors-Culp, Oregon, Oregon High School;
- Nabeel J. Quryshi, Mequon, University School of Milwaukee;
- Julian Rhee, Brookfield, Brookfield East High School;
- Anne Runde, Janesville, Joseph A. Craig High School;
- Muhamed Sanneh, Madison, East Senior High School;
- Sophia F. Sun, Brookfield, Brookfield Central High School; and
- Curtis Weltzien, Arcadia, Arcadia High School.

The students are among 630 Presidential Scholar semifinalists nationwide. Earlier this year, the Presidential Scholars Program identified more than 5,300 candidates based on three paths of accomplishment. The majority of scholars are selected based on broad academic achievement as measured

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by the ACT and SAT college admissions exams. Another group, including **Lightfoot and Rhee**, are selected on the basis of their academic and artistic scholarship in the visual arts, performing arts, or creative writing. Finally, beginning in 2015, students are selected based on their ability and accomplishment in career and technical education fields. **Majors-Culp, Runde, and Weltzien** are semifinalists in career and technical education. Students identified as candidates are invited to apply and submit essays, self-assessments, secondary school reports, and transcripts to confirm their interest and assist in the selection process.

A review committee of individuals from secondary and postsecondary education evaluates candidates on their academic achievement, personal characteristics, leadership and service activities, and the quality and content of their essay. Names and supporting materials for semifinalists are forwarded to the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars, which reviews the applications. The commission selects one male and one female scholar from each state, the District of Columbia, the commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and from families of U.S. citizens living abroad; up to 15 students chosen at large; 20 scholars in the arts; and 20 in career and technical education for a total of up to 161 U.S. 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.

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