

July 22, 2015

Dear Chief State School Officer:

We are writing to update you on the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program and again this year request your participation in the nomination process.

President Obama recently amended the program by adding a new component – recognition for excellence among students in career and technical education. *An Executive Order creating this third component was signed in late June by the President at the White House.* Therefore, we are excited to announce that – with your help – we will be honoring up to 161 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the 2016 program year, including 20 first-time U.S. Presidential Scholars in Career and Technical Education (CTE).

The U.S. Presidential Scholars Program was established by President Lyndon Johnson in 1964, and, since that time, the program has honored more than over 7,000 outstanding high school seniors. The mission of the program is to recognize and honor outstanding high school seniors, and thereby encourage high attainment among all students.

Per the original Executive Order establishing the program, students are selected on the basis of outstanding scholarship. For most of the program's existence, nominees have been invited to apply for Presidential Scholars recognition based upon SAT or ACT scores. As the program has grown, Scholars candidates have been invited to apply in other ways as well. Beginning in 1979, outstanding students who demonstrated ability and accomplishment in the visual and performing arts or creative writing were added to the program. Since 2013, Chief State School Officers have been invited to nominate candidates from their states. And now, starting in 2016, outstanding students who demonstrate excellence in career and technical education will also be included for Presidential Scholar recognition.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation for the assistance you have given us as Chief State School Officer. During the 2015 U.S. Presidential Scholars student nomination process, 51 CSSO-nominated students were named semifinalists and 14 CSSO-nominated students were named U.S. Presidential Scholars.

NOMINATION REQUEST

Once again this year we are again asking each of you to nominate students from your jurisdiction as candidates for the 2016 Scholars program. Last year, we asked you to nominate up to five males and five females. This year, we request your nomination of up to 20 students: 10 males and 10 females.

We encourage you to nominate students who demonstrate outstanding scholarship but who might not otherwise be nominated through the current SAT/ACT, Arts, or CTE recognition processes. All high school seniors graduating between January and June of 2016 who are U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents and who attend public, parochial, or independent schools, as well as those who

are home-schooled, are eligible. The candidates will go through the application process, and, as in the past, the 2016 U.S. Presidential Scholars will be selected by the Commission on Presidential Scholars and receive the Presidential Scholars Medallion at a ceremony in their honor in Washington, DC.

It may be helpful to consider the following questions as you contemplate the selection of your nominees:

1. What about the student makes him or her stand out as having outstanding scholarship?
2. Were there special challenges or hurdles this student has overcome while still achieving high academic success?

In addition, it may be useful for you to know that the reviewers will be considering the following categories when evaluating the nominees at the semifinalist and Scholar evaluation levels:

- Involvement and Service (in school and community)
- Leadership and Character
- Writing samples
- Academic achievements
- Discretionary points for extraordinary achievement, heavy workload, family responsibilities, or obstacles overcome.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) NOMINATION REQUEST

In addition to those nominations, we are also asking each of you to nominate additional students from your jurisdiction to be included as candidates for recognition for excellence in career and technical education. This year, we request your nomination of up to five students in CTE. Please see the attachment for suggested criteria.

We are proud this new component of the program will honor students “on the basis of outstanding scholarship and demonstrated ability and accomplishment in career and technical education fields.”

All high school seniors who are participants of a CTE program graduating between January and June of 2016 who are U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents and who attend public, parochial, or independent schools, as well as those who are home-schooled, are eligible. The CTE selection process will evolve after this initial year, but for this inaugural class of scholars, candidates who are nominated and choose to apply and whose applications are complete will automatically become semifinalists. All 2016 U.S. Presidential Scholars will be selected by the Commission on Presidential Scholars and will receive the Presidential Scholars Medallion at a ceremony in their honor in Washington, DC.

To learn more about the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program and the Commission on Presidential Scholars, please visit our Web site at: www.ed.gov/psp.

NEXT STEPS

In order for students to be considered for recognition in 2016, we need all nominations from CSSOs by October 15, 2015. Please have your program contact or other designee connect with the

U.S. Presidential Scholar program staff before the nomination due date, as we will have follow-up instructions for submissions. All nominees will be announced and invited to apply in mid-January 2016 by the U.S. Presidential Scholars program office; therefore, you do not need to contact the candidate. Completed applications will be due in February 2016, and Scholars will be announced at the beginning of May 2016.

Once our program office has connected with your program contact, we will need the following information:

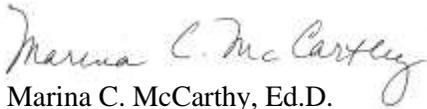
- Name
- Home mailing address
- High school name and mailing address
- High School CEEB code

However, due to privacy concerns, we will need to work with your point of contact so that the information can be submitted securely.

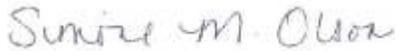
In summary, we would welcome your nomination of up to 10 males and 10 females AND up to five additional students for the CTE recognition component. Please have your program contact reach out to Executive Director Simone Olson at (202) 205-8719 or Simone.Olson@ed.gov for further instructions. Simone is also available to answer any questions.

We look forward to recognizing another remarkable class of U.S. Presidential Scholars with you.

Sincerely,



Marina C. McCarthy, Ed.D.
Chair
Commission on Presidential Scholars



Simone Miranda Olson
Executive Director
U.S. Presidential Scholar Program

Attachment