



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 19, 2021

Contact: Lynne Baker

847.831.8024

Lynne.Baker@illinois.gov

**ILLINOIS STUDENT ASSISTANCE COMMISSION ANNOUNCES 2021-22 ILLINOIS STATE SCHOLARS
More Than 16,640 High School Students from 676 Schools Recognized for Exceptional Academic
Achievement**

CHICAGO – The [Illinois Student Assistance Commission](#) (ISAC) is pleased to announce the 2021-22* Illinois State Scholars. These top performing students are selected annually based on their ACT or SAT exams and sixth semester class rank and are recognized for their exceptional academic achievement. Illinois State Scholars rank in approximately the top ten percent of graduates from Illinois high schools.

State Scholars are usually announced in early December, however the postponement or cancellation of spring 2020 college entrance exams due to the COVID-19 pandemic delayed this year's announcements until complete data was available.

"In a year when students and families across the state and the nation have faced unprecedented personal and financial challenges as a result of the pandemic, we could not be more proud of the continued focus, dedication and achievements of our State Scholars," said Eric Zarnikow, executive director of ISAC. "We also want to recognize the invaluable support of families, mentors, teachers, school counselors, and others, who are themselves dealing with the challenges of the pandemic and yet have remained dedicated to assisting students and helping them move forward on a path to meet their educational and career goals."

While the Illinois State Scholars recognition is a non-monetary award, recipients receive a congratulatory letter from ISAC, a Certificate of Achievement and statewide media recognition. An official [Illinois State Scholar badge](#) can be downloaded by honorees to display on their online profiles and social media platforms, and share with high school counselors, colleges, employers, family members and others. An [online listing of Illinois State Scholars](#) is available on ISAC's website. ***Note that the Program announces honorees based on the year they would begin any postsecondary education, not based on the year they graduate from high school.**

ISAC encourages all students, including State Scholars, to complete their 2021-22 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®), or if eligible, the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid, if they have not done so already. The FAFSA is used to determine a student's eligibility for federal and most state and institutional financial aid available for postsecondary education, including two- or four-year degree programs, certificates, and some vocational programs. The Alternative Application is a pathway to state

--more--

financial aid for qualified undocumented students, and for transgender students who are not eligible for federal financial aid because they did not register for selective service.

In addition to supporting workshops offered by local high schools, ISAC offers free online [Financial Aid Application Completion Workshops](https://studentportal.isac.org/Events), <https://studentportal.isac.org/Events>, to help make it faster and easier for students to complete a financial aid application. Online workshops offer personalized help through the chat function so students can complete the application during the workshop. Bilingual assistance is available. Students and families can also get free one-on-one assistance from their local [ISACorps member](https://studentportal.isac.org/isacorps), <https://studentportal.isac.org/isacorps>, recent college graduates trained to serve as near-peer mentors to assist high school students and their families with college planning and financial aid. [ISAC's Student Portal](https://studentportal.isac.org/), <https://studentportal.isac.org/> offers a host of free tools and resources to help with college planning and the financial aid process, as well as financial literacy and career resources. ISAC's free text messaging service, [ISAC College Q&A](https://isac.org/collegeqa), isac.org/collegeqa allows students to get answers to college and financial aid questions from ISAC experts. ISAC also offers free assistance through the agency's call center, 800.899.4722 (ISAC), and its Online Chat service.

About ISAC

The mission of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) is to provide Illinois students with information and assistance to help make education beyond high school accessible and affordable. ISAC provides comprehensive, objective, and timely information about education and financial aid for students and their families—giving them access to the tools they need to make the educational choices that are right for them. Then, through the state scholarship and grant programs ISAC administers, ISAC can help students make those choices a reality. Find us at isac.org and follow us on [Facebook](#) @ILStudentAssistance, [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) @ISACfinaid and on [YouTube](#).

###