[School logo]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Contact: (NAME)

(DAY, DATE) (HIGH SCHOOL)

 (PHONE)

**[HIGH SCHOOL NAME] ANNOUNCES 2021-22 ILLINOIS STATE SCHOLARS**

**Illinois Student Assistance Commission congratulates [xx number] [HIGH SCHOOL NAME] students for their exceptional academic achievement**

(CITY or TOWN), IL – [High School name] Principal [Name] is pleased to announce that [xx number] students from the [High School name] graduating class of 2021 have been recognized as Illinois State Scholars.

The [Illinois Student Assistance Commission](http://www.isac.org/) (ISAC), the state’s college access and financial aid agency, presents this important recognition of academic achievement to exceptional Illinois high school students annually. This year, more than 16,640 honorees join the other top students who have been honored since the designation was first introduced in 1958.

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.

This year’s Illinois State Scholars represent approximately the top ten percent of high school seniors from 676 high schools across the state. Illinois State Scholars are chosen based on a combination of exemplary ACT or SAT test scores and sixth semester class rank.

*(QUOTE FROM PRINCIPAL/SCHOOL COUNSELOR)*

*(OPTION: LIST ALL STUDENTS’ NAMES AND HOMETOWNS: The following [High School name] students were named 2021-22 Illinois State Scholars: [list names])*

“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 and a personalized Certificate of Achievement. Honorees can also download a digital [Illinois State Scholar badge](http://www.isac.org/studentportal/badge) that can be displayed on their online profiles and social media platforms, and shared with high school counselors, prospective colleges, employers, family members and others. Visit ISAC’s website for a complete [list of the 2021-22 Illinois State Scholars](https://www.isac.org/students/before-college/college-career-planning/state-scholar/). (**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.)**

All students, including Illinois State Scholars, are encouraged 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 vocational education,

certificates, and two- or four-year degree programs. The Alternative Application is a pathway to state 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.

*(IF YOUR HIGH SCHOOL HAS OR WILL BE OFFERING FINANCIAL AID COMPLETION WORKSHOPS FOR STUDENTS, YOU MIGHT MENTION THAT HERE)*

ISAC offers free online [Financial Aid Application Completion Workshops](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 can also visit the [ISAC Student Portal](http://www.isac.org/studentportal) for college planning, financial aid and financial literacy information and free tools, as well as for information on how to contact the [ISACorps](https://studentportal.isac.org/isacorps), a group of recent college graduates who act as near-peer mentors and provide one-on-one assistance and mentoring. Students can also get answers to their college-going and financial aid questions sent directly to their phones by signing up for [ISAC College Q&A](http://www.isac.org/collegeqa), ISAC’s free text messaging service. In addition, ISAC offers assistance through the agency’s call center, 800.899.ISAC (4722), and its Online Chat service via the ISAC Student Portal.

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