[School logo]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Contact: (NAME)

(DAY, DATE) (HIGH SCHOOL)

 (PHONE)

**[HIGH SCHOOL NAME] RECOGNIZES 2023-24 ILLINOIS STATE SCHOLARS**

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

(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 2023 have been designated as Illinois State Scholars.

The [Illinois Student Assistance Commission](https://www.isac.org/) (ISAC), the state’s college access and financial aid agency, presents this prestigious recognition of academic achievement to exceptional Illinois high school students annually. This year, more than 16,700 honorees join the other outstanding students who have been honored since the designation was first introduced in 1958.

*(QUOTE FROM PRINCIPAL/SCHOOL COUNSELOR)*

(*OPTIONAL* *based on school policy regarding online publishing of student names: LIST ALL STUDENTS’ NAMES AND HOMETOWNS: The following [High School name] students were named 2023-24 Illinois State Scholars: [list names])*

“On behalf of ISAC, congratulations to all of the outstanding students selected as 2023-24**\*** Illinois State Scholars,” said ISAC Executive Director Eric Zarnikow. “Students and families faced numerous challenges over the last two years with remote learning, among other financial and personal difficulties. As we continue to recover from the pandemic, these academic achievements are a credit to the hard work and dedication of the student scholars and their families, and to the support provided by teachers, mentors, counselors, and communities in helping students meet their goals and find success as they advance on their education and career paths.”

The Illinois State Scholar designation is a non-monetary award. Each State Scholar will receive a congratulatory letter and a Certificate of Achievement from ISAC. Additionally, awardees can download an official Illinois State Scholar Program badge to display on their online profiles, social media platforms, and share with their high school counselors, colleges, employers, family members and others. **\*Note that the Illinois State Scholar 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 high school students to complete the 2023-24 [Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)](https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa), or for eligible undocumented students, the [Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid (Alternative Application)](https://www.isac.org/AlternativeApp). The FAFSA is the application used by students and families to apply for federal and most state and institutional financial aid for most postsecondary education, including career and technical education, certificates, and two- or four-year degree programs. The Alternative Application offers a pathway to state financial aid for eligible Illinois undocumented students who are not eligible for federal student aid.

Students and families can get assistance with the higher education planning and financial aid process by attending a [free college application, financial aid, financial aid application completion, or related workshop](https://studentportal.isac.org/Events) held by ISAC and/or our partners, or by connecting with an ISACorps member in their area. The ISACorps are recent college graduates who are trained to serve as near peer mentors to middle and high school students and families in Illinois, helping them navigate the postsecondary planning and financial aid process. A new program, called the [First Generation Scholars Network](https://studentportal.isac.org/FirstGen), offers support and assistance to students transitioning to or in their first year of college who will be the first in their family to earn a degree. Bilingual assistance is available. For more information or to find your local ISACorps member, visit [studentportal.isac.org/isacorps](https://studentportal.isac.org/isacorps).

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

Students can also utilize the [ISAC Student Portal](https://studentportal.isac.org/) for free tools and resources to search for colleges and scholarships, explore careers, find internships and summer jobs, apply for ISAC financial aid programs, get quick tips about college planning and financial aid from [ISAC College MinuteTM videos](https://studentportal.isac.org/blog/), connect with First Generation Scholars Network mentors, and more. The [ISAC College Q&A](http://www.isac.org/collegeqa) free text messaging service allows students and families to get answers to their college and financial aid questions sent directly via text from ISAC experts. ISAC also offers free assistance through the agency’s call center, 800-899-4722 (ISAC), and its Online Chat service.

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