



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ILLINOIS STUDENT ASSISTANCE COMMISSION ANNOUNCES 2020-21 ILLINOIS STATE SCHOLARS
More Than 17,577 High School Students from 726 Schools Recognized for Outstanding Academic
Achievement**

CHICAGO – The [Illinois Student Assistance Commission](https://www.isac.org/) (ISAC) is pleased to announce the 2020-21* Illinois State Scholars: outstanding high school seniors who are recognized for their superior academic achievement. Illinois State Scholars, who rank in approximately the top ten percent of graduates from Illinois high schools, are selected annually based on their ACT and SAT exams and sixth semester class rank. In this 61st year of the program, ISAC is celebrating all of our State Scholars with [two videos](https://bit.ly/2LftKgW) (<https://bit.ly/2LftKgW>) that highlight some of our exceptional Illinois students.

*** 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.***

“On behalf of ISAC, we congratulate the 2020-21 Illinois States Scholars,” said Eric Zarnikow, executive director of ISAC. “In watching interviews with some of our State Scholars, I’m consistently impressed with the passion, focus, organization, and dedication of our State Scholars. It is a credit to these students--as well as to their support systems and to our schools--that so many of them are not only driven to achieve but also reflect a true love of learning and a desire to use their education to make the world a better place.”

Each Illinois State Scholar receives a congratulatory letter from ISAC, a Certificate of Achievement and statewide recognition in traditional and social media outlets. Honorees can download an official [Illinois State Scholar 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. An [online listing of current Illinois State Scholars](https://bit.ly/2Reh1IY) (<https://bit.ly/2Reh1IY>) can be found on ISAC’s website.

“A lot of colleges and universities take note of the fact that these students are State Scholars,” said Dennis Gutowski, College and Career Counselor at Thorndale High School in South Holland, Illinois. As a testament to their achievement in high school, Gutowski says, the State Scholar designation suggests that these students will also likely be successful in the colleges or universities they choose to attend.

ISAC encourages all students, including State Scholars, to complete their 2020-21 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) as soon as possible. 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 vocational education.

Students and families can get assistance with the financial aid and college-going process by attending a [free workshop or presentation](#) by ISAC or one of its partners, or by contacting their local [ISACorps member](#), one of a group of recent college graduates trained to serve as near-peer mentors to assist students and families with college access and financial aid. See studentportal.isac.org/ISACorps. Students can also visit the [ISAC Student Portal](#) , studentportal.isac.org, for college planning, financial aid and financial literacy information and free tools, and can get answers to their college-going and financial aid questions sent directly to their phones by signing up for [ISAC College Q&A](#), isac.org/collegeqa, ISAC's free text messaging service. ISAC also offers assistance through the agency's call center, 1-800-899-4722 (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 on 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, including the state's flagship Monetary Award Program (MAP), ISAC can help students make those choices a reality. Find us at isac.org and follow us on [Facebook](#) (@ILStudentAssistance), [Twitter](#) and on Instagram @ISACfinaid.

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