Dear Superintendent:

On behalf of the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars and the United States Department of Education, it is our pleasure to congratulate you. A student (or students) from your school district has been selected as a candidate for the United States Presidential Scholars Program. Detailed information on this prestigious program can be found on our website, http://www.ed.gov/programs/psp/index.html (case sensitive).

The U.S. Presidential Scholars Program was established in 1964 by Executive Order of the President to recognize and honor some of our nation’s most distinguished graduating seniors. In 1979, the program was expanded to recognize students who demonstrate exceptional scholarship and talent in the visual, creative, and performing arts. Annually, up to 141 students are chosen from among outstanding graduating seniors to become U.S. Presidential Scholars, one of the nation’s highest honors for high school students.

Scholars are chosen on the basis of their accomplishments in many areas – academic and artistic success, leadership, and involvement in school and the community – and represent excellence in education and the promise of greatness in America’s youth. They are invited to Washington, DC in June to participate in National Recognition Weekend, which includes many enrichment activities and events and culminates with the presentation to the students of the Presidential Scholars medallion during a ceremony sponsored by the White House.

A letter of invitation to apply for this year’s competition was mailed directly to the student(s) in your district, along with instructions for accessing application materials online through our electronic application, PSAonline. Informational letters similar to this one are also being provided to the appropriate principal(s) and guidance counselor(s). Among the materials a student must submit to apply for the program is a Secondary School Report that must be completed by a school official. We have requested the help of the principal(s) and school staff in making sure that this report and all necessary accompanying materials (transcripts, school profile) are completed and submitted by the deadline.

For a student to be eligible for selection as one of the 500 semifinalists, and ultimately as a Scholar, the application materials, including essays, self-assessments, secondary school reports, and transcripts, must be received no later than 5:00 p.m., central time, February 23, 2012. If the school chooses to submit part or all of the application materials on behalf of the student, this deadline still applies and will be strictly enforced, regardless of who sends the materials. Students who are selected as Semifinalists and Scholars will be listed on our website (address noted above). Semifinalists will be posted in early April, and Scholars in early May.

It is our hope that all candidates will take the opportunity to submit an application for consideration. We wanted you to be aware of this important opportunity, and we hope that you will lend your support to your student(s) and school staff and encourage them to submit an application to this prestigious program.

Thank you for your support of the United States Presidential Scholars Program, and congratulations on this achievement in your district. If our staff can provide additional information or be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us at 319/341-2PSP (341-2777).

Sincerely,

Marina C. McCarthy, EdD
Chair
The Commission on Presidential Scholars

Simone M. Olson
Executive Director
U.S. Presidential Scholars Program

Enclosures: Fact Sheet
Candidate Roster

The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.
THE UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM

FACT SHEET

The United States Presidential Scholars Program was established in 1964, by Executive Order of the President, to recognize and honor some of our Nation’s most distinguished graduating high school seniors. In 1979, the Program was extended to recognize students who demonstrate exceptional talent in the visual, creative and performing arts. Each year, up to 141 students are named as U.S. Presidential Scholars, one of the Nation’s highest honors for high school students. The Scholars represent excellence in education and the promise of greatness in young people. In honoring the U.S. Presidential Scholars, the President of the United States symbolically honors all graduating high school seniors of high potential.

Students have the opportunity to become U.S. Presidential Scholars based on two paths of accomplishment. The majority of the Scholars are selected on the basis of broad academic achievement. Approximately twenty additional students are selected on the basis of their academic and artistic scholarship in the visual arts, the performing arts, or creative writing.

Each year some 3,000 candidates are identified for the academic component of the program, based on having scored exceptionally well on the SAT or the ACT. Eligible students are U.S. citizens and legal permanent U.S. residents graduating or receiving a diploma between January and August of the current program year, who have taken the SAT or ACT Assessment on or before the preceding October. Students meeting these requirements are automatically considered for participation. Initial inclusion in the pool of eligible candidates is determined by the information (e.g. graduation year) provided by the student on his/her SAT or ACT test registration.

Test scores in each of the states/jurisdictions are reviewed, and the total SAT score is compared to the ACT Sum of Scores. Each student’s highest test score (in a single test administration) is identified; duplicates and/or lower scores are dropped. In each state, scores are ranked from high to low. Approximately twenty females and twenty males are selected as candidates from each state, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and from families of U.S. citizens living abroad. In addition, each Chief State School Officer (CSSO) may nominate one male and one female candidate, based on their outstanding scholarship, residing in the CSSO’s jurisdiction. Students are considered in their states of legal residence, unless they have lived abroad for two years or more. Candidacy materials are mailed to students for participation in the program. Application is by invitation only; students do not apply individually to the program, nor do their schools nominate them.

For the arts component of the Program, students are initially selected based on their artistic ability. Students must register for and participate in YoungArts, a national program identifying and recognizing young people demonstrating excellence in the arts. Upon completion of the YoungArts program, the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts nominates approximately 60 students who meet the U.S. Presidential Scholars candidacy requirements. Candidacy materials are mailed to those selected students, inviting them to apply to the program.

To confirm their interest and assist in the selection process, all academic and arts candidates complete and submit candidacy materials for review, including essays, self-assessments, secondary school reports and transcripts. A review committee of qualified individuals experienced in secondary and post-secondary
education evaluates candidates on their academic achievement, personal characteristics, leadership and service activities, and the quality and content of their essay.

Approximately 500 candidates are named semifinalists, and their names and supporting materials are forwarded to the Commission for further review.

In April, the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars reviews the applications of all semifinalists, applying the same criteria used by the review committee. The Commission selects up to 121 Academic Scholars and up to 20 Arts Scholars.

All scholars are honored for their accomplishments during the National Recognition Weekend, held in June in Washington, D.C. During this trip, U.S. Presidential Scholars are guests of the Commission and enjoy an expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., to meet with government officials, educators, authors, musicians, scientists and other accomplished people. Scholars have the opportunity to visit museums and monuments, and to attend recitals, receptions and ceremonies. To commemorate their achievement, the Scholars are awarded the Presidential Scholars Medallion at a ceremony sponsored by the White House.

Each U.S. Presidential Scholar is asked to identify the one teacher who has most influenced him or her, and the selected educators are also invited to attend the recognition events. These distinguished professionals are honored for their efforts at a special reception, and presented with the Teacher Recognition award.

Since 1964, this unique federal program has honored more than 6,000 U.S. Presidential Scholars, who have demonstrated scholarship, leadership, artistic excellence and selfless service to others. The work of the Commission on Presidential Scholars, on behalf of the President and his Administration, reflects recognition of the immense value and potential of our Nation's youth, and a deep commitment to ensuring that every child in America receives the benefits of a world-class education.

For general information about the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program, please contact 202/401-0961 or http://www.ed.gov/programs/psp/index.html (case sensitive). For general information on the Arts component of the program, please contact the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts at 1-800-970-ARTS or http://www.youngarts.org. For specific questions regarding the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program application, contact 319/341-2PSP (319/341-2777) or PSP@act.org.