

Urbandale High School Student Named National Merit® Scholarship Semifinalist

Urbandale High School senior Thomas O'Donnell has been named a National Merit® Scholarship Semifinalist and will have an opportunity to continue in the national competition

URBANDALE, Iowa – September 14, 2016 – [Urbandale High School \(UHS\)](#) is proud to announce the selection of senior Thomas O'Donnell as a National Merit® Scholarship Semifinalist. Approximately 1.6 million juniors in more than 22,000 high schools entered the 2017 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2015 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®). The nationwide pool of Semifinalists, representing less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors, includes the highest-scoring entrants in each state.

"I feel like becoming a National Merit Scholarship Semifinalist is a recognition of not only the work that I've done but also the work of my teachers and my parents," said O'Donnell. "If it weren't for the time and effort that everyone—including myself and all the mentors I've had—had put into my education, this would be impossible."

Having qualified as a Semifinalist, O'Donnell joins his academically talented peers throughout the nation by having an opportunity to continue in the competition for some 7,500 National Merit Scholarships worth about \$33 million that will be offered next spring. To be considered for a Merit Scholarship® award, Semifinalists must fulfill several requirements to advance to the Finalist level of the competition. One requirement is to submit a detailed scholarship application with information about the Semifinalist's academic record, participation in school and community activities, demonstrated leadership abilities, employment and honors and awards received. In addition, a Semifinalist must have an outstanding academic record throughout high school, be endorsed and recommended by a high school official, write an essay and earn SAT® scores that confirm the student's earlier performance on the qualifying test.



UHS senior Thomas O'Donnell selected as a National Merit® Scholarship Semifinalist

From the approximately 16,000 nationwide Semifinalists, about 15,000 are expected to advance to the Finalist level, and in February they will be notified of this designation. All National Merit Scholarship winners will be selected from this group of Finalists. Merit Scholar designees are selected on the basis of their skills, accomplishments and potential for success in rigorous college studies without regard to gender, race, ethnic origin or religious preference.

“The National Merit Scholarship Program recognizes the nation’s most academically talented students,” said UHS Principal Dr. Brian Coppess. “UHS is always honored when one of our students achieves the distinction so I offer my sincere congratulations to Thomas. In addition to being an exceptional academic, Thomas distinguishes himself by demonstrating great character and is a wonderful role model for UHS students.”

Since 2010, the Urbandale Community School District has been focusing on transforming education in order to increase engagement, improve achievement, encourage collaboration and ignite a renewed passion for learning. Urbandale believes that supporting students in their academic pursuits—be it participating in national academic scholarship programs, excelling in Advanced Placement® (AP) courses, earning college credit through the DMACC Concurrent Enrollment Program or achieving top honors and awards for academic prowess and leadership—is fundamental for preparing students to become college-or-career ready. Urbandale congratulates O’Donnell on receiving this prestigious recognition for his outstanding work ethic, dedication and commitment to setting, achieving and surpassing academic goals. To learn more about how Urbandale is transforming education, visit: UrbandaleSchools.com and follow on Twitter [@UrbandaleSchool](https://twitter.com/UrbandaleSchool).

About National Merit Scholarship Corporation

Established in 1955, National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) is an independent, not-for-profit organization that operates without government assistance. NMSC is exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and contributions to NMSC are tax deductible by the donor. NMSC conducts the National Merit® Scholarship Program and the National Achievement® Scholarship Program—annual competitions for recognition and college undergraduate scholarships. Since its founding, NMSC has recognized over 3 million students and provided more than 407,000 scholarships worth over \$1.6 billion. The honors awarded by NMSC to exceptionally able students are viewed as definitive marks of excellence. Recipients of Merit Scholarship® awards, Achievement Scholarship® awards, and corporate-sponsored Special Scholarships have increased the nation's respect for intellectual accomplishments and have contributed significantly to its talent pool of future leaders. To learn more, visit: www.nationalmerit.org

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About Urbandale Community School District

The Urbandale Community School District includes portions of Des Moines and Urbandale, Iowa. The District serves over 3,900 students in six elementary schools, one middle school and one comprehensive high school. The Urbandale District supports an increasingly diverse student population where 47 languages are spoken. Building on the existing foundation of excellence in education, Urbandale is transforming education throughout the District. By implementing innovative [Quality/Continual Improvement](#) strategies that create learning

environments that more fully engage, challenge and motivate students, Urbandale is taking transformation from theory into practice. Urbandale prepares students for becoming lifelong learners and is a school district that brings learning to life for everyone. To learn more, visit: UrbandaleSchools.com and follow on Twitter [@UrbandaleSchool](https://twitter.com/UrbandaleSchool).

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