



NEWS RELEASE

For additional information, please contact David Jespersen by phone (402-471-4537) or email (david.jespersen@nebraska.gov)

OCTOBER 27, 2026

Five Nebraska Students Named 2026 U.S. Presidential Scholars

Five Nebraska students have been named U.S. Presidential Scholars. U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon announced the full class, recognizing 161 high school seniors for their accomplishments in academics, the arts, and career and technical education fields.

The Nebraska scholars include:

- James C Fletcher Jr., Litchfield – Litchfield Public High School (Scholar for U.S Presidential Scholar in Career and Technical Education.)
- Ava Jule Goodwin, York – York High School (Scholar for U.S Presidential Scholar in Arts.)
- Gary John Hao, Omaha – Millard West High School
- Rikhil Chowdary Jasti, Lincoln – Lincoln East High School (Scholar for U.S Presidential Scholar in Career and Technical Education.)
- Maeve Rose Wharton, Omaha – Marian High School

“These students represent the exceptional caliber of character and intellect that our nation’s future demands,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon. “On behalf of President Trump, I congratulate each Scholar who never gave up, the families who believed in them, and the communities who guided them. As you forge your next paths, continue to aim higher, leverage your extraordinary talents, and boldly assume your responsibilities as leaders.”

The White House Commission on Presidential Scholars selects scholars annually based on their academic success, artistic and technical excellence, essays, school evaluations and transcripts, as well as a demonstrated commitment to community service and leadership.

Of the 3.9 million students expected to graduate from high school this year, more than 6,700 candidates qualified for the 2026 awards determined by outstanding performance on the College Board SAT or ACT exams or through nominations made by chief state school officers.

The 2026 U.S. Presidential Scholars are comprised of one young man and one young woman from each state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, and U.S. families living abroad, as well as 15 chosen at-large, 20 scholars in the arts and 20 scholars in career and technical education.

Since 1964, the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program has honored over 8,800 of the nation’s top-performing students. The program was expanded in 1979 to recognize students who demonstrate exceptional talent in the visual, literary, and

performing arts. In 2015, the program was again extended to recognize students who demonstrate ability and accomplishment in career and technical education fields.

A complete list of 2026 U.S. Presidential Scholars is available at the [U.S. Department of Education website](#).

####

David Jespersen
Public Information Officer, Nebraska Department of Education
402-471-4537
david.jespersen@nebraska.gov
[@NDE_News](#)