

Three Beaufort County School District students were recently announced as finalists in the National Merit Scholarship Program.

Caleb Henry is a senior at Beaufort High, Dillon Watkins is a senior at Bluffton High and Grace Frederick graduated a year early from Bluffton High. The three students will compete with other national semifinalists for 7,600 college scholarships worth more than \$31 million.

“These are all outstanding students, and we wish them well as they move forward in this prestigious national scholarship competition,” said Superintendent Frank Rodriguez. “We’re very proud of them.”

More than 1.5 million high school students from about 21,000 American high schools entered the 2021 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. About 16,000 semifinalists were announced today.

To become a finalist in the next stage of the national competition, each semifinalist and his or her high school must submit a detailed application that provides information about the student’s academic record, participation in school and community activities, demonstrated leadership abilities, employment and honors and awards received. In addition, each semifinalist must have an outstanding academic record throughout high school, be endorsed and recommended by a high school official and write an essay.

Three types of National Merit Scholarships will be offered in the spring of 2021. Each finalist will compete for one of 2,500 National Merit Scholarships that will be awarded on a state-representational basis. About 1,000 corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards will be provided by approximately 220 corporations and business organizations for finalists who meet their specified criteria. In addition, about 180 colleges and universities are expected to finance college-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards for finalists who attend the sponsor institution.

The National Merit Scholarship Corp. is a nonprofit established in 1955, and its scholarships are underwritten by NMSC with its own funds and more than 400 businesses and higher education institutions.