

September 16, 2009

Two at Whitman Named National Merit Semifinalists

On Wednesday, September 16, approximately 16,000 semifinalists, or approximately one third of the 50,000 high scorers nationwide, were named in the 55th annual National Merit Scholarship program. We are proud that two of them, Sara Ging and Michael Griffith, attend Walt Whitman High School. These scholastically talented seniors were chosen out of an initial 1.5 million juniors across the country who sat for the preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship qualifying test last year and they now have an opportunity to continue in the competition for some 8,200 National Merit Scholarships worth more than \$36 million, which will be offered next spring.

"This is great recognition for all my hard work," said Sara Ging. "I've always studied hard, and this is a great endorsement." Even though Sara is not sure what her college major will be, her heart and mind are set on being admitted to Brown University in Providence, RI, next fall.

"This was an unexpected surprise for me," said Michael Griffith. "My favorite classes at Whitman are physics and chemistry, and while I'm unsure of what my major will be next year, I attribute my diverse interests to the quality of my high school teachers." This past summer Michael got to intern at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratories, where he worked alongside programmers to further his knowledge of a computer language called Python. "By the end of my internship I wrote a computer script that was able to be used at the labs," said Michael. "I thought that was pretty cool. But more importantly, the experience helped me identify a little more closely what I do and do not want to do for a career."

The two Whitman students must now fulfill several requirements to advance to the finalist level of the competition. About 15,000 semifinalists will go on to this level, and approximately half of the finalists will be selected as National Merit Scholarship winners, earning the National Merit Scholar title.



Whitman's National Merit Semifinalists Michael Griffith and Sara Ging take a break from their busy day for a congratulatory moment with Principal James Polansky.

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