



For immediate release

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**COLLEGE BOARD DEPRIVING  
BLACK, HISPANIC, LATINO, INDIGENOUS AND RURAL STUDENTS OF  
NATIONAL RECOGNITION PROGRAM HONORS AND SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES**  
*In response to College Board excluding thousands of students from potential scholarship opportunities,  
students and their parents demand immediate remedial action by College Board*

**Los Angeles, CA**—December 1, 2021-- This morning, on behalf of high school seniors nationwide identifying as Black, Latinx, Hispanic, or Indigenous and seniors from rural communities, attorneys for impacted parents and students sent the College Board a letter demanding “immediate action to cease impeding and effectively denying millions of dollars in scholarships and college recruitment to high-achieving Black, Latinx, Hispanic American, Indigenous students and students from rural communities.” The letter, which was delivered to College Board President David Coleman and company Chief Executive Officer Jeremy Singer, is the last resort for students who have been excluded from College Board’s programs that were specifically designed to increase access for high achieving students from groups historically underrepresented in higher education. The letter was sent as college application season is well underway, with millions of dollars of scholarship money already awarded, and deadlines for admission and remaining scholarship applications and decisions approaching by year’s end.

College Board explicitly manages its National Recognition Programs to create pathways to college for high-achieving African American or Black, Hispanic American or Latinx, Indigenous students, or students who attend school in rural areas or small towns, awarding them academic honors and connecting them with universities and scholarship opportunities across the country. Typically, to qualify for these honors, students must take the PSAT in the spring of their sophomore year or the fall of their junior year and score in the top ten percent for their state. However, due to the incredible difficulties posed by the pandemic for schools trying to administer the tests, College Board offered an additional PSAT date in January 2021 and -- despite promising these test-takers the same scholarship benefits as the fall test-takers -- College Board appears to have ignored any qualifying test results when determining eligibility for the National Recognition Programs. Likewise, College Board ignored and excluded students in the class of 2022 who qualified for National Recognition Programs through their AP scores.

**College Board’s failure to extend these honors to students who took the January 2021 PSAT or who secured qualifying scores on their AP exams has resulted in the exclusion of thousands of high achieving Black, Latinx, Hispanic American, Indigenous and rural**

**students nationwide from scholarship and higher education opportunities specifically designed for their benefit.**

“The College Board’s inexplicable decision to exclude high-achieving Black and Brown students in their National Recognition Programs threatens to close the door on higher education to thousands of seniors nationwide. At a time where the cards are already stacked against these kids having to finish their high school educations in ever-shifting pandemic learning environments, to fail to recognize and honor their achievements and to deprive them of access to millions of dollars of scholarship opportunities is inexcusable. The College Board must take immediate action to redress this harm. Time is of the essence, with these seniors’ college dreams literally hanging in the balance,” said **Melissa Iachán, Counsel at Justice Catalyst Law.**

As an example of the harm these students are experiencing, the demand letter points out that the National Hispanic Scholars Program—a “National Recognition Programs” partner of the College Board—has already finished distributing \$30 million of annual scholarship to members of the class of 2022, despite only having been provided with a partial list of eligible recipients. The high achieving students the College Board excluded from the list likely had no idea that they should have had access to these scholarship and higher education opportunities, as College Board also failed to tell the students themselves that their high AP Scores and/or high January 2021 PSAT score entitled them to benefit from the scholarship opportunities and enhanced college recruiting enjoyed by students who qualify for the National Recognition Programs.

**Anne Holmdahl, Common Sense College Counseling, in Redmond/Sammamish, Washington,** said, “I work with underserved students, and students I have counseled are currently receiving full tuition scholarships at Northeastern University, USC, and many other colleges because of their inclusion in the National Recognition Programs. This year, none of my students who took the January 2021 PSAT and received qualifying scores were contacted by College Board. Neither were the students who qualified for recognition through their AP scores. Without scholarship funds, many of my students will be unable to attend college.”

Similarly, colleges, universities, and scholarship providers have not had access to information regarding thousands of exceptional students who they might otherwise recruit and offer opportunities to enroll in higher education programs.

“In a year when college enrollment in California has dropped for the second year in a row, with the steepest declines in underserved populations up to 15%, it is even more urgent that colleges are able to connect with these students and make them aware of scholarship opportunities through outreach programs like those College Board promotes through its National Recognition Programs. The most disappointing aspect of this situation is that the students these programs are intended to serve are those who are historically less likely to find these opportunities and are often unable to pursue higher education without them.” **Marci Lerner Miller, Partner at Potomac Law Group, PLLC.**

**Bob Schaeffer, Executive Director of the National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest),** which supports the demands in the letter, added, “College Board’s failure to properly identify all students eligible for its National Recognition Programs has also deprived colleges and scholarship organizations of the ability to identify and reach out to these highly qualified students, such as by targeted invitations to apply for programs that facilitate college visits.”

In the demand letter, a copy of which is attached to this release, impacted parents and students plead with the College Board to take immediate action to mitigate the ongoing harm to the many

Black, Latinx, Hispanic, Indigenous and rural students by

- Immediately sending notice to parents, students, colleges, and the Board's "strategic partners" that the National Recognition Program lists are likely missing thousands of qualified and talented underrepresented students nationwide;
- by December 15, providing parents, students, colleges, all scholarship organizations participating in the Student Search Service, strategic partners, high school counselors, and counsel with an updated, accurate and complete list of all qualifying students.

"Colleges will be announcing decisions and scholarship packages in a couple of weeks. There is some hope that if College Board does the right thing and notifies students, schools and colleges right away, some scholarship money can be salvaged, and some January deadlines can be met. Otherwise, opportunities may be lost for an entire class of underrepresented students," added Holmdahl.

Attorneys with Justice Catalyst Law and the Potomac Law Group, PLLC, are representing the students and parents who sent the demand letter.

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