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January 22, 2009

Timothy E. McGuire
President
National Merit Scholarship Corporation
1560 Sherman Avenue, Suite 200
Evanston, IL 60201-4897

Dear Mr. McGuire:

On behalf of the 11,000 members of the National Association for College Admission Counseling, we are pleased to share the Report of the NACAC Commission on the Use of Standardized Tests in Undergraduate Admission. The Commission issued its report in September, and the NACAC Board of Directors approved the recommendations contained therein at its subsequent meeting in November, 2008.

The report contains numerous recommendations, one of which pertains directly to the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC), intended to promote best practice with respect to the use of standardized tests in undergraduate admission. This letter initiates our formal follow-up with NMSC.

The Commission identified the following area of concern regarding the misuse of college admission tests:

1. Cease Using Cutscores as Initial Scholarship Eligibility Screen. The Commission called upon the National Merit Scholarship Corporation to cease using non-contextualized PSAT scores as the "initial screen" for eligibility for the National Merit scholar recognition or scholarships. As part of this recommendation, the Commission also called on the College Board to explain why it allows the use of its PSAT as a cutscore, a practice that is at odds with best practices in the use of admission test scores.

The Commission considered the College Board's research on the relationship of the PSAT/NMSQT to academic achievement in high school during its deliberations. While the Commission agreed that the PSAT represents one valid tool to assess academic achievement, it did not believe that the primary findings of the research sufficiently addressed the propriety of the use of the PSAT as the only factor to determine initial eligibility for National Merit Scholarships.

NACAC would like to work with the College Board and the National Merit Scholarship Corporation in their roles as the cosponsors of the PSAT/NMSQT to develop a process that the National Merit Scholarship Corporation could use to mitigate the effects of using a single PSAT score as the first consideration for National Merit Scholarship recognition.

The Commission's work has generated considerable interest among our membership, the media, and the public concerned with admission practice in the United States. We would welcome the opportunity to work with NMSC to ensure that the recommendations provided by the Commission come to fruition.

We have made this letter and other communications related to the NACAC Testing Commission public via the NACAC web site (www.nacacnet.org). With your permission, we would like to make as much of the communications surrounding this report available to the public as possible to ensure an

inclusive and transparent process of following up on the Commission's recommendations. A reply to this communication by March 15, 2009 will ensure that the NACAC Board of Directors can follow up on the Commission's recommendations in a timely fashion. We appreciate your attention to this request and look forward to working with you on these important issues.

Sincerely,



William McClintick
President



Joyce E. Smith
CEO

cc: NACAC Board of Directors
NACAC Commission on the Use of Standardized Tests in Undergraduate Admission
Gaston Caperton, President, College Board