

**For Immediate Release**

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## Media Release

### **Academic Magnet's Jenny Yao Named 2018 U.S. Presidential Scholar**

Office of Strategy and  
Communications

*Ann Webb of Wando earned semifinalist honors in this year's U.S.  
Presidential Scholars Program*

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**Charleston, SC** – For the first time in three years, Charleston County School District (CCSD) has a United States Presidential Scholar: Academic Magnet High School (AMHS) senior Jenny Yao. The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) made the announcement last week. Adding to the excitement for CCSD, Ann Webb of Wando High School (WHS) joined Yao on the list of semifinalists for this year's U.S. Presidential Scholars Program.

Yao is one of three U.S. Presidential Scholars from South Carolina; Webb and Yao are two of 13 semifinalists from the state, and two of 630 semifinalists from around the nation that advanced to the final round of the 2018 U.S. Presidential Scholars Competition.

"I am incredibly humbled to have been selected as a U.S. Presidential Scholar and to represent Academic Magnet and the state of South Carolina on the national stage," said Yao.

According to the USDOE, only 5,300 of the nearly 3.5 million high school seniors were identified as candidates for the program.

Yao, who will attend Harvard University in the fall, earned an expenses paid trip to Washington, D.C., and will join 160 more U.S. Presidential Scholars at the National Recognition Program (which is sponsored by the White House). The ceremony is set for June 24, 2018; each honoree will receive the U.S. Presidential Scholar Medallion, as well as meet with government officials, educators, and other dignitaries.

"Once again, we have the honor to celebrate Jenny Yao, 2018 AMHS graduate and scholar, musician, and humanitarian," explained Academic Magnet Principal Catherine Spencer. "To be named among the top 161 high school seniors nationwide as a finalist for the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program is a credit to her exceptional commitment and talent. We are so proud to call her our own!"

Thanks to Webb, Wando has a semifinalist in the U.S. President Scholars Program for the second year in a row. She will attend Princeton in the fall.

"I'm extremely honored to be recognized by the U.S. Department of Education in this way, and to have made it this far in such a prestigious program," Webb said. "I feel very blessed."

"It is with great honor that we recognize and congratulate Wando senior Ann Webb for being selected as a semifinalist for the 2018 U.S. Presidential Scholars Competition," WHS Principal Dr. Sherry Eppelsheimer stated. "She is an excellent example of what it means to be a Wando Warrior; she is a distinguished and accomplished young lady. She represents our future leaders of America well."

Since Yao earned finalist status, her sponsor, AMHS's Director of School Counseling Deborah Ware, was named a 2018 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program Distinguished Teacher.

"Jenny is an excellent representative of the kind of students who attend Academic Magnet, and this award sets high standards for those who will follow her," commented Ware. "I have been personally affected by Jenny's enthusiasm for learning and her compassion for others informs me about how to engage with future students. She is a truly amazing human and we are fortunate that she chose to attend AMHS."

This is the fifth year in a row Academic Magnet has had at least one student reach the semifinalist stage of the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program.

The United States Presidential Scholars Program was established in 1964, by [Executive Order of the President](#), to recognize and honor some of the nation's most distinguished graduating high school seniors. In 1979, the program was extended to recognize students who demonstrate exceptional talent in the visual, creative and performing arts. In 2015, the program was again extended to recognize students who demonstrate ability and accomplishment in career and technical education fields.

Each year, up to 161 students are named U.S. Presidential Scholars, one of the Nation's highest honors for high school students. The Scholars represent excellence in education and the promise of greatness in young people. In honoring the U.S. Presidential Scholars, the President of the United States symbolically honors all graduating high school seniors of high potential. Application is by invitation only; therefore, students may not apply individually to the program, nor may their schools nominate them.

"I want to congratulate this year's class of Presidential Scholars on their achievement and also thank their parents, teachers and other academic advisors who have helped guide them along the way," said U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. "These students have pushed themselves to be the best they can be,

and I am certain that devotion will serve them well as they continue their individual learning journeys."

For more information about Webb and Yao, please contact the Office of Strategy and Communications at (843) 937-6303. To learn more about the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program, contact the U.S. Department of Education's Press Office at (202) 401-1576.

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#### **About the Charleston County School District**

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools that span 1,000 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 86 schools and specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.