## GMS Instructions for High School and School District Personnel

Thank you for taking the time to nominate students for the Ohio Governor's Merit Scholarship. Please review the following instructions **carefully** before submitting student information into the GMS Portal. Providing accurate information is important so students can receive award notifications on time and without issue.

**Logging into the GMS Portal:**
1. If you have previously set up your account in the GMS portal, you can log in to the portal at https://meritscholarship.ohio.gov/district/ using your district email address. The previous password you used may no longer be active, so you will need to change it by selecting 'Set Password' on the login screen.
   a. Each time you log in, you will need to verify your identity with a Multi Factor Authentication (MFA) code that will be sent to your email.
2. If your high school or district was not activated previously, your district Superintendent will need to log in to the portal at https://meritscholarship.ohio.gov/district/ using their email address and IRN to activate the portal for your high school. (Activate Account) The Superintendent can then add other staff as GMS Admins who will input student data in the portal. If you are selected as a GMS Admin, you will need to log in to the above portal, using your email address. (District Login)

**Selecting Students for GMS Nominations:**
1. The top 5% of students should be determined using the student's rank as of the end of their junior year. Student lists should **NOT** be updated in the event the top 5% of students change due to grades achieved after their 6th semester. Rank is determined by GPA which should be calculated in compliance with state law (ORC3365.05(E)) and guidelines established by the Chancellor for the purpose of implementing the GMS program.
2. Your high school will receive **ONLY** the number of nominations indicated in the online portal. This reflects 5% of the number of juniors in the graduation cohort at the end of the 11th grade as reported in EMIS. ODHE recognizes that your list of the top 5% may be greater (due to ties, ranking procedures, etc.) than the indicated figure. In such cases where ranking results in a tie, the school or district will need to break that tie. Please refer to the official guidance for more information.
3. Do **NOT** communicate to students that they will receive the Governor's Merit Scholarship. The Governor's award letter should be the first communication of their receiving the award.
   a. After the students receive their award letters, school personnel are welcome and encouraged to discuss the scholarship with students and families. ODHE will supply you with a copy of the award letter and instruction sheets that you will be able to use in your communications.
4. Do **NOT** consider a student's stated or unstated post-graduation plans (e.g.: attending an out-of-state college, joining the military, going to a trade school, etc.) when submitting your nominees. The top students should be nominated for the GMS regardless of what their current post-graduation plans are. One of the goals of the GMS is to influence a student's post-graduation decision with the hope of encouraging them to attend a college or university in Ohio. Students **MUST** be allowed to make this choice.

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**Entering Student Nominations into the Portal:**
1. Enter all nominations into the online portal prior to the established deadline of **October 1st**. **Deadlines for student nominations are firm** and necessary to ensure that students receive their award offers with sufficient time to consider their options prior to making any decisions on postsecondary education attendance.
2. Be precise when entering student data into the portal.  The most common reason for students being unable to access their accounts in the GMS portal is incorrect or inaccurate data being entered at the point of nomination.
   a. Make sure there are no spaces or tabs at the beginning or end of any field.  Inaccurately typed information impedes our ability to communicate with students and prevents students from accessing the portal.
   b. Verify student birth dates prior to entering them in the portal.  Student birthdates are part of the verification process to ensure that only nominated students can accept their awards.
   c. If you are adding a list of students using the Upload CSV option, be sure to review the data in the portal to ensure accuracy and that no additional spaces or characters were added during the data transfer.
3. Enter a student's personal (non-school) email address; do **NOT** enter their school district-assigned email addresses.  District email domains have strict firewalls and to ensure emails sent to students are not blocked by those firewalls or other protective features, it is imperative that these domains are not used in the portal.  Also, ODHE will use the email address entered for all future communications (including while the student is enrolled at a college or university), so an email address that may terminate shortly after graduation is not effective for the GMS program.  Please only enter one email address per student.
4. **The GMS portal will close on October 1$^{st}$** and no further nominations or edits will be available after this date.  It is important to have all student information added to the portal accurately by this date.

**Communicating with Students about GMS**
1. Students will be notified of their GMS nomination on November 1$^{st}$.  After this initial award notification is sent, all school personnel listed as GMS admins will receive an email which will include a copy of the award letter and instructions to students.  Once you receive that email, you are strongly encouraged to reach out to each of your nominated students (please check the online portal to verify the correct students' identities) and congratulate them on their award.  You may share the award letter and instructions with your nominated students and families at this time.
2. If any of your students report that they have not received notification of their award, or if they are experiencing difficulties logging into the GMS portal, please direct them to meritscholarship@highered.ohio.gov.  It is easier for us to address problems directly with a student rather than to go through a "middleman."
   a. It is helpful if the student includes their full name, date of birth, and school district or nonpublic high school along with a description of the problem they are experiencing.
   b. Screenshots of error messages are also very helpful.

3.  When a student declines their scholarship, there will not be an opportunity to nominate an alternate student.  Changes to student lists in the portal will not be permitted after award notifications have been sent.
4.  We highly recommend you keep track of the status for your GMS nominees and encourage them to accept their scholarship, so they are not missing out on this opportunity.