

Being an Effective Nominator

First I would like to thank you for your interest in recognizing a colleague. There are too few individuals among us who take the time and expend the effort involved in doing this, so thank you! I would like to help you by outlining for you the major steps you will need to take in order to submit a nomination.

Writing an effective nomination letter for a colleague in support of their nomination for an award is much like writing a letter in support of a deserving student's receipt of a scholarship or admission to college. The first step is making sure that you understand the purpose of the award and the award criteria. These days this information is readily available on the internet by doing a quick Google search. It is also helpful to see if you can find a list of past award recipients. You may even be able to locate a short award citation summarizing the key accomplishments of past awardees.

Do not hesitate at any point along the nomination process to reach out to person listed as the contact for award committee with any questions you may have regarding the award criteria, etc.

Now you need to make sure your potential award candidate's qualifications fit the award criteria and that their accomplishments are at or exceed those of past awardees. Now it may be that at this point you decide that your candidate isn't a good fit for the award for which you originally intended to nominate them. Your candidate may be too junior or have accomplishments that really aren't a good fit for this specific award. I hope though that you won't jump ship but rather that since you have already done so very much you will make an effort to see if there isn't another award for which your candidate might be a good fit. You may be surprised at what you find.

If you determine that your candidate is a good fit for the award after completing your research, it is a wise idea before you do anything more to discuss a possible nomination with your candidate. Though you may be eager to recognize your candidate, I have found over the years that not everyone wants to be nominated for awards. Your candidate may not want to or be able to do the work that is required to assemble an award nomination package. Generally, a nomination includes a copy of the candidate's resume or curriculum vitae which may need to be modified to meet the peculiar requirements of the specific award in terms of time frame covered, total number of pages, etc. Many award nominations require the candidate to include a statement. For teaching awards, this may mean writing a teaching philosophy. As nominator you will also likely need to obtain supporting letters so you will likely need to strategize and identify letter writers with your candidate first. Make sure that your candidate knows what you need from them and in what form and when you need the information. My advice is to obtain your candidate's cv and any supporting documents well in advance of the deadline so you have ample time to review these.

As the nominator you will of course need to write a letter and for most awards at least one, if not several, supporting letters may be required. I have found it works best to obtain the candidate's cv and statements and share these with the candidate's permission with those whom you are asking to provide supporting letters. Again, be sure to request these letters well in advance of the actual deadline so you have time to deal with any possible problems that may arise such as last minute declinations.

When you contact letter writers requesting supporting letters provide them with the stated award criteria and encourage them to draw comparisons with other teachers they know and with whom they may work or have worked in the past. Provide them with your effective deadline and ask them if they

will be able to meet it. Try to find out if they have any other responsibilities with competing deadlines and find out what if anything you can do to ensure your receipt of a quality letter of support. Depending on the individual's interest and experience you may find it helpful to provide them with a sample letter or to draft a letter for them to use.

Now with the candidates' cv, statements and all the supporting letters in hand, you should be in a great position to write a strong nominating letter. Your letter should serve as a nice bow tying all the information in the various documents and letters together to show the awards committee exactly how your candidate meets and exceeds the award criteria. Explicitly summarize what your candidate's accomplishments are in terms of the stated award criteria. If possible draw comparisons with past awardees, if you are able to, or with other teachers with whom you have worked in the past or which whom you are currently working. I have found it helpful in the past to share a draft of my letter with my nominee. This enabled me to correct errors and to add additional supporting information based on the feedback I received from my nominee that helped me submit a stronger nomination package that made both my nominee and me proud of our effort.

If you follow my advice your candidate's nomination should receive a fair review by the committee. This does not mean that your nominee will necessarily receive the award. Often nominations will remain active for a period of several years. If your nomination is not successful the first time through, ask if you can obtain any feedback. Sometimes the committee chair will reach out to nominators with feedback on how to strengthen the nomination package. I would encourage you to take advantage of the multi-year life of your award nomination by updating the nomination package each year the nomination remains active. Sometimes a committee may be faced with making one award when there are several exceptionally qualified candidates.