Preparing Successful Award Nominations
More Art than Science

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Why focus on women?

Women disproportionately under-represented as award recipients in science and medicine

Nobel Laureates
in Medicine (1901-2011): 10 (5%) women, 189 (95%) men

IOM Members (2011): 21 (32%) women, 44 (68%) men

NAS Members (2011): 9 (12%) women, 63 (87%) men

Awards/honors figure prominently in:
- enhancing credibility
- career advancement
- obtaining leadership positions

Sources: www.nobelprize.org, www.iom.edu and www.nationalacademies.org
And... sends clear message to young women

Women need not apply

Not Unique to AAMC
Prepare a compelling nomination packet.

As the nominator, **your most important responsibility** is to identify a (woman) colleague who has made significant contributions within the scope of the award.
1. Understand the nomination process

START EARLY! FOLLOW DIRECTIONS!

Read the eligibility requirements carefully- MORE THAN ONCE
- number of nominators/supporting letters
- other supporting documentation
- technical requirements (font, page limits, etc.)

Look into unacknowledged rules – call awarding organization with questions

Check award timelines – give yourself ample time to assemble documents

Award committees rely on concise and complete nominations

Well written nominations allow committees to use their time effectively

Applications may be discarded if you do not follow the instructions

Always confirm receipt of materials
2. Identify the nominee

- Establish benchmarks - Who are previous recipients?
- Match the nominee to the award criteria

Nominating a colleague who has done outstanding work, but does not satisfy the criteria of the award, is a waste of time

- Build libraries of faculty by certain criteria - age, rank, etc.
  - Who are your stars?
  - Who are the “faculty to watch”?
  - Who is receiving awards?

- Seek input from colleagues who are former members of the award committee
Choose nominators and supporters well

• **Prestige** → Ask arbiters of quality in the field
• **Personal commitment** → Lukewarm letters can be damaging
• **Mix of internal and external nominators/supporters**
• **Address different aspects of the candidate’s qualifications**
  
  Each letter should
  
  • enhance/add different information to nomination
  • focus on a certain aspect of the nominee’s work or career
  • discuss the nominee as an arbiter of quality in the field
3. Prepare the Nomination Letter

Nomination letter should be **CONCISE** and address **IMPACT** of nominee’s contributions

- Prepare a **strong opening and closing** statement.
- Provide **specific, meaningful description** of the candidate’s contributions.
- Use **specific examples** of accomplishments.
- Avoid **sweeping generalities** and make every sentence count.
- Address all aspects of the award criteria.
- Watch the superlatives, less is more
It takes a village

Enlist nominee

• update an already prepared letter
• update CV and summary of accomplishments that describe impact of accomplishments overall career impact citations of key publications (journal impact factors)

Solicit chairs/other colleagues who have detailed knowledge of nominee’s contributions

Enlist colleagues who are former members of the award selection committee

Use all current sources of information (i.e., news articles, other nomination letters)
Make the reviewers life easy

• Organize the letter to make it easy to identify accomplishments specific to the award criteria.

• Have nominee/chair/other colleagues read to clarify and strengthen the letter.

• Proofread – grammatical errors and misspelled words detract from the quality of the nomination.

• Review to ensure that you have met the criteria and requirements of the award.
Gender Speak

**Male** applicants are more likely to be described in **AGENTIC** terms:
- Ambitious
- Independent
- Self-confident
- Intellectual

**Female** applicants are more likely to be described with **COMMUNAL** terms:
- Helpful
- Sensitive
- Kind
- Sympathetic

The results have implications for the advancement of women, because research shows that agency is linked with advancement in the workplace.

Watch your language!

Letters for MEN:
- Longer
- More references to CV
- Publications
- Patents
- Colleagues
- Highlight research, skills and abilities → portray men as researchers and professionals

Letters for WOMEN:
- Shorter
- More references to personal life
- Fewer terms of praise
- More “doubt raisers” (hedges, faint praise, and irrelevancies)
  - “It’s amazing how much she’s accomplished.”
  - “She has significant accomplishments ... even though she had a child.”
- Highlight teaching and training → portray women as teachers and students

Don’t take “no” for the final answer

• Be persistent

• Was your nominee a “good fit”?

• Always update nominee’s information