



**UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY**

President's Award

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Writing a Support Letter

1. Assessing the Request

To assess your nominee's request for a letter of support, please note the following criteria for the President's Award:

1. Demonstrated leadership on university or faculty-based committees, groups or organizations
2. Contributed to the development and enhancement of co-curricular activities at the university
3. Worked to improve the quality of the student experience at the university
4. Demonstrated a commitment to the local, provincial, national and/or international community through volunteer work
5. Contributed to a sense of community and pride at the University of Calgary
6. High academic achievement as demonstrated through GPA, course grades, publications, conference presentations, research engagement, academic prizes and awards, etc.

The committee will consider the overall quality of the contribution and to assist the committee in ranking students, numeric values are assigned. These values are only used for guidance purposes. Nominees will be scored by the committee on each of the criteria listed above (scores will range from 0-5 with five as the highest score). Although it is not necessary to demonstrate leadership in all of the areas listed above, the scoring structure will give preference to those students whose nominations best exemplify the criteria.

Academic achievement is assessed from a holistic perspective, and a number of factors may be considered in addition to GPA. These could include pass/fail courses, publications, conference presentations, or academic prizes and awards (for example, for MD students who have pass/fail grades or graduate students in thesis-based programs). GPA calculation (if applicable) will be based on the student's current program only.

2. Accepting the Request

If you choose to write a letter of support for your nominee, it is recommended that you request additional information. Ask your nominee to give you specifics on what leadership skills to comment on. Understanding where their application is already strong, may help you focus on where to comment and allow you to add a personal touch to their letter.

A good letter will take time to write, make sure you have the time available and set aside to complete this.

Advice for a Meaningful First Support Letter

As a primary nominator, you will be requested to submit a first support letter and coordinate two additional support letters. For details on the submission process, see section three below, "The Online Submission Process". To provide a strong first support letter, it is important to know your audience. The President's Awards applications are reviewed by a committee, which includes:

- The Vice-Provost (Student Experience)
- The President of the Students' Union or designate
- The President of the Graduate Students' Association or designate
- A faculty member
- A distinguished alumna/alumnus

As you write your letter, consider yourself as a member of the selection committee, what would you look for? How does this person measure up to their peers or prior students? Using the award criteria of leadership - be concise, give specific witnessed examples, and provide context for your support. The committee will also include representatives outside of your discipline, so ensure what you write makes sense and can be scored appropriately by them.

Secondary Support Letters

Nominees must have two secondary support letters in addition to the primary nominator's letter. For the secondary support letters, writers should provide the following information:

1. State how well you know the applicant and provide context and in what capacity you are writing the letter.
2. Group your comments according to the criteria of the award by using headings and include comments on specific skills.
3. Use comments to complement the rest of the application (ex. Shimizu (n.d.) "if the student has a straight A+ transcript and gave a great presentation in your class, use the space to comment on their communication skills if the transcript is already provided in the application.")
4. Give anecdotal support to affirm your statements. Give more than adjectives.
5. Point out key features of the application that may be missed by a reader (presentation prize, departmental award).
6. Draw comparisons to their peers or counterparts over the years.

3. The Online Submission Process

The primary nominator must be a University of Calgary faculty member, staff member, or student and must use an @ucalgary.ca email address. Package requirements are listed below:

Submission Requirements

1. Obtain the consent of the student whose name you are putting forward.
2. Submit a short statement (up to 500 words) illustrating why the student should receive this award for excellence in student leadership.
3. Provide a letter of support.
4. Coordinate two additional letters of support from a faculty, staff, student or community member.

5. At least one of the three letters of support must be from a University of Calgary faculty member (this condition is satisfied if the nominator is also a faculty member).

Submitting a Nomination Package:

1. Go to ucalgary.ca/student-services/presidents-award/nominate-a-student
2. Click on the red “Online nomination form” button
3. Complete all relevant fields
4. Click the “Submit” button at the bottom to save your form
5. Note - the letter writers of the secondary supporting letters can directly submit their letters online using the same nomination form

4. The Selection Procedure

Each committee member will individually review the nominee’s application and supporting documents and will rate them numerically on a scale of 0 to 5 for each of the criteria listed above under “Assessing the Request.”

Reference

Shimizu, G. (n.d.). Tips for scholarship applications including writing reference letters. Retrieved October 29, 2012, from http://grad.ucalgary.ca/sites/grad.ucalgary.ca/files/awards_supervisor_scholarship_workshop.pdf.