

# How to Write Winning Nomination Letters for Faculty Honorifics

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Nomination letters are more than endorsements; they are persuasive narratives that can elevate a faculty member's career. This guide provides 12 tips aimed at helping faculty and department chairs craft compelling, evidence-based letters that resonate with selection committees.

## 1. START WITH A CLEAR NARRATIVE

Tell a story, don't repeat a résumé.

- Frame the nominee's journey with a compelling arc: challenge, innovation, impact.
- Organize around themes (e.g., mentorship, leadership, innovation, research impact), not chronology.
- Ask yourself: What is the central story that you want to tell about this scholar?

**Example:** "Dr. Buckeye's groundbreaking work on AI ethics reshaped industry standards and led to policy adoption by three major tech firms."

## 2. UNDERSTAND AND ALIGN WITH AWARD CRITERIA

Mirror the language and priorities of the award.

- Review the award's website and eligibility requirements.
- Ensure both the nominee and the nominator meet any stated qualifications.
- Use keywords from the award description to frame your case.

**Example:** If the award values "transformative teaching," show how pedagogy changed student outcomes or institutional practices.

## 3. EMPHASIZE IMPACT — PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Impact is the heartbeat of honorifics.

- Describe the broader impact of the nominee's work, including how it has influenced their field, advanced knowledge, or contributed to the institution's mission.
- Highlight influence on students, peers, institutions, and broader communities.
- Include future potential: What doors has their work opened?

**Example:** "Buckeye's curriculum design has been adopted by five universities, transforming how data science is taught nationwide."

#### 4. SHOWCASE WHAT SETS THEM APART

Distinction matters.

- Go beyond productivity, what makes this nominee exceptional?
- Is their work interdisciplinary, community-engaged, or pioneering in a niche field?

**Example:** “Unlike most scholars in their field, Dr. Buckeye integrates indigenous knowledge systems into climate modeling, offering a radically inclusive framework.”

#### 5. USE MEASURABLE EVIDENCE STRATEGICALLY

Numbers support, not substitute, your case.

- Cite metrics like citation indices, journal rankings, or prestigious grants.
- Avoid listing publications, focus instead on why they matter.

**Example:** “Dr. Buckeye’s article in Nature has been cited over 500 times and spurred a new line of inquiry in quantum computing.”

#### 6. WRITE FOR A BROAD AUDIENCE

Assume the committee is smart, but not specialized.

- Many individuals on the selection committee are likely to be in adjacent disciplines, but not the exact same fields as you or the nominee. Avoid jargon and translate complex ideas into accessible language.
- Define key terms or theories if central to your case.

**Tip:** Imagine explaining the nominee’s work to a colleague in a different department.

#### 7. ILLUMINATE PERSONAL QUALITIES AND PROFESSIONAL CHARACTER

Honorifics often recognize the person behind the achievements.

- Highlight traits like integrity, resilience, generosity, and mentorship.
- Share how the nominee’s character has shaped their relationships, collaborations, or institutional culture.
- Use stories that reveal their values in action.

**Examples:** “Dr. Buckeye’s unwavering commitment to equity has made them a trusted mentor for first-generation scholars and a catalyst for inclusive departmental reform.”

“Buckeye’s inclusive leadership style transformed departmental culture and increased retention of junior faculty.”

## 8. PROVIDE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES AND ANECDOTES

Show, don't just tell.

- Replace general praise with concrete stories or outcomes.
- Use student testimonials, institutional changes, or community impact.

**Example:** “Under Dr. Buckeye’s mentorship, five of their PhD students have secured tenure-track positions at R1 institutions.”

## 9. DEMONSTRATE BREADTH OF CONTRIBUTIONS ACROSS ACADEMIC ROLES

Showcase excellence in multiple dimensions of academic life.

- Include teaching, service, leadership, and community engagement.
- Emphasize how the nominee balances and integrates these roles.
- Tailor emphasis based on the award’s priorities.

Checklist:

- Research excellence
- Teaching innovation
- Mentorship
- Institutional leadership
- Community impact

## 10. HIGHLIGHT BROADER INFLUENCE

Think beyond the university.

- How has the nominee shaped their discipline, policy, or public discourse?
- Include leadership roles, invited talks, or media presence.

**Example:** “Buckeye’s op-ed in The Atlantic sparked national debate on algorithmic bias and was cited in Senate hearings.”



## 11. ENCOURAGE COMPLEMENTARY LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Supplemental letters can reinforce and expand your case.

- Ask colleagues or collaborators to write support letters.
- These should highlight different dimensions of the nominee's impact.

**Tip:** Mention these letters in your nomination to show broad endorsement.

## 12. CLOSE WITH CONFIDENCE AND CLARITY

End strong.

- Summarize why the nominee is a standout candidate.
- Express enthusiasm and conviction in your endorsement.
- Proofread carefully; typos and unclear phrasing can undermine credibility.

**Tip:** Keep the letter focused and readable; unless stated otherwise, aim for 1–2 pages.

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Contact Travis Sheffler ([sheffler.5@osu.edu](mailto:sheffler.5@osu.edu)), Director of Faculty Honorifics, for additional guidance on writing strong nomination letters.

