Guidelines for Writing Strong Award Nominations

Remember Your Audience

As you write your nomination, keep in mind that the selection committee reviews a large number of nominations, sometimes using a matrix with specific criteria. Your goal is to write a clear, direct, easy to read explanation of why your nominee deserves the award. Delivering the information well will allow the committee to judge the candidate, not the writing.

Use Keywords from the Award Criteria

It should be easy for the reviewers to see how the individual or team meets the award criteria. As you review the award criteria to determine whether the individual or team meets the criteria for the award, note any keywords, such as "initiative," "creativity," "exceptional effort," or "meritorious service." Use these keywords to introduce specific examples of outstanding behavior.

Note: *Even if they are not specifically mentioned in the award criteria, you might also identify examples of behaviors that reflect the Aggie Core Values.*

Provide Necessary Background Information

Remember that the selection committee does not know your nominee. Include any relevant information about the nominee's job duties that will help the committee understand how the nominee has gone "above and beyond".

Note: *Provide only an overview and relevant details, not a comprehensive list of job duties. A lengthy job description will distract from the purpose of the nomination.*

Give Specific Examples

Creative writers are told to "show, not tell," and researchers have to provide data to prove their claims. When you write a nomination, you are making a case for your nominee, and you want the committee to see what you see. Instead of general statements about your nominee's great traits, focus on how the individual's work and behavior reflect those traits:

- Describe how the nominee's work performance reflects specific Texas A&M University Core Values.
- Recount a situation in which the nominee has served as a role model and/or mentor for others.
- List activities that demonstrate a pattern of professional development over time.
- Detail specific accomplishments and their impact.
- Explain how the nominee has exhibited service to the university or the community.

Too General:	More Specific:
"Mary exemplifies the Core Value of Respect because she treats everyone equally."	"By organizing trainings and a lecture series that featured speakers of different cultural backgrounds, Mary showed her respect for the unique individuals on her team and reflected the variety of the university community."
"Quan is a true team player who knows what it takes to get the job done."	"Quan realized some of our monthly reports were being prepared manually, so he took it upon himself to automate the process. Quan even went as far as to train our team on Microsoft Access with specific emphasis on how to apply the tools and techniques to our needs. He put together a terrific training session with handouts and notes that we continue to use as reference materials."

Prioritize the Strongest Examples

Don't save the best for last. A reader's attention is most focused at the beginning of a document. Provide the strongest evidence—the topics that speak most directly to the award criteria or the ones that have the strongest examples—at the beginning, so that you convince the committee before their interest begins to wane. This is particularly important when materials are reviewed electronically.

Start a New Paragraph When You Start a New Idea

Long paragraphs lose readers. Shorter paragraphs make it easier for a reviewer to read quickly and still absorb the information. When you include multiple examples of excellence in one paragraph, make sure they communicate a unified idea, e.g., "initiative." Be sure to introduce each paragraph with a clear topic sentence: "Over the past year, Letitia has frequently taken initiative to advance department projects such as…"

Make Every Word Count

Your nomination narrative should be easy to read and comprehend. Descriptive or flowery language often distracts from the meaning of a sentence and slows a reader down. While you focus on your specific examples,

- Avoid empty words and phrases (e.g., "gets the job done," "for the most part," "raised the bar")
- Limit your use of adjectives (e.g., "great," "excellent," "stellar")
- Avoid phrases that focus on you as the writer ("I feel," "I truly believe," "In my opinion")

Shorter, focused sentences will represent your nominee more efficiently, and with more impact.

Too wordy:	More concise:
"Quan realized some of our monthly reports were being prepared manually, so he **took it upon himself** to automate the process. **Quan even went as far as to train** our team on Microsoft Access-with specific emphasis on **how to apply** the tools and techniques **to** our needs. He **put together** a **terrific** training session with handouts and notes that we **continue to use** as reference materials." (66 words)	"When Quan realized some of our monthly reports were being prepared manually, he **took the initiative** to automate the process. **He trained** our team to use Microsoft Access with specific emphasis on the tools and techniques **that fit** our needs, and **created** an **effective** training session with handouts and notes that we **now** use as reference materials." (57 words)

Proofread for Grammar, Spelling, Typos, and Editing Errors

While no one should lose out on a reward because of someone else's grammar, there will be many excellent nominations, and first impressions count. Having to read through errors slows down reading, diverts reader attention from all of your great examples, and might influence the reviewer subconsciously. Check for grammar and spelling errors, typos, autocorrect errors, and any words that might have been left behind during a cut-and-paste.

Note: *An additional set of eyes can help. Consider asking a colleague to help you proofread. Microsoft Word's Editor tool (on the Review tab) can also be useful. Always give it one more read before you click to submit.*