

Module 1: Building Our Cultures of Nomination

There are many opportunities where you can support a culture of nomination for important awards that recognize faculty excellence across a range of fields and disciplines. **Disciplinary society awards** recognize contributions to a specific field. **High visibility national science and agriculture awards** recognize contributions that advance science or its applications in service to society. **International agriculture research awards** recognize achievements that impact humanity by alleviating hunger and poverty. This “honorifics toolkit” is intended to be an e-notebook built on modules outlining a series of best practices to assist faculty who have received honors, as well as leaders such as deans, directors, and department heads/chairs in developing a culture of nomination for honorifics and recognize honorifics as a significant peer-reviewed scholarly achievement and academic metric.

A thoughtful strategy can create a positive culture of nomination, increasing the number of successful faculty nominations for honorifics. At the outset, we recognize that every institution in the South is different and that a one-size-fits-all approach to developing a culture of nomination is unlikely to succeed. Some of our institutions have more developed nomination cultures that can serve as role models and provide best practice in engaging nominators and identifying nominees. Successful strategies can also motivate intercollegiate teaming as many nominators or letter writers come from colleges other than the colleges of agriculture and can create powerful collaborations that build bridges across colleges to set up more robust honorific pipelines in your university. Similar benefits can accrue as we work with faculty at other universities across the region and nation.

Helpful Groundwork to Develop a Culture of Nomination

Initiating annual conversations with current national or disciplinary fellows at your university is an excellent starting point. Meeting with faculty to learn about their motivations and value propositions will help you grow the culture. Especially valuable is meeting with faculty at your campus who have already been recognized and awarded an honorific, including faculty in other colleges. These faculty are key to your success as they will serve as the “sponsors” who will write nomination letters and gather the required materials. These faculty often view nominations as a way to elevate the institution and are usually happy to participate

as a part of their professional duties. It is important to reinforce that the college's interest is long term and that you are willing to support and assist them throughout the process. Engaging current fellows at your campus can be as simple as hosting an annual lunch, which serves to recognize the fellows and encourage interaction. This can be followed with a research forum that includes a panel discussion to keep honorifics front and center in the minds of faculty. These approaches need to be a faculty-oriented activity where faculty, not the dean's office, are the highest priority. Keeping the focus on the faculty and recognition of their research excellence is a key motivator and driver. Understanding their drivers and value propositions will help you grow the culture.

Individual and group meetings with past honorees can generate insights into how the dean's office can support a culture of nomination. It's important to have an open mind, and ask questions like "Is there anything we can do to help?" and "How can we make the nomination process easier for you?" Asking these questions in the context of specific societal honorifics will help focus the conversation on the specific requirements of nomination packets for those awards. Creating transparent nominator-nominee pairings has been an effective strategy in developing nomination packets.

Identifying Nominees for Honorifics

Developing criteria to identify outstanding faculty as potential nominees may vary across institutions. Examining the accomplishments of past awardees provides a good first "search image" to identify potential nominees. Publication metrics can be effective indicators to identify the faculty who could be strong candidates for nomination. However, it is critical to recognize that disciplines vary widely, especially in terms of publications. Publication metrics can be obtained from a variety of sources such as Academic Analytics, Google Scholar, ORCID, ResearchGate, Microsoft Academic, and Scopus. Both the publication of papers as well as citation indices are informative metrics. Again, remember to keep disciplinary differences in mind and compare faculty within disciplines rather than across disciplines to avoid bias. To adjust for disciplinary bias, consider including roughly the same number of faculty from each tenure home (department) and use stratified sampling approaches. This initial analysis might encompass the top ~20% of your total faculty. Creating summary documents is useful to

nominators so they can quickly and accurately look at a broad range of faculty as a roster of potential nominees to consider.

Coordinating Nominations: Details Depend on Your Culture

Departmental award nomination committees, consisting of three to five accomplished faculty members can provide guidance to the Department Heads/Chairs for nominations for internal faculty awards designed with faculty retention in mind (e.g. university-level recognitions and honors) as well as national/international awards (e.g. AAAS Fellows, Borlaug World Food Prize, NAS Prize in Food and Agriculture Sciences, etc.), and disciplinary society awards. The departmental nomination committees set a schedule for meetings, nominee selections, and nomination package development aligned with relevant award submission deadlines in order to facilitate the timely preparation of competitive nomination packages. The departmental nomination committees also serve as a conduit of official information concerning faculty nominations to the department heads and college administration to facilitate college support for nomination package development and to provide a higher degree of transparency for the award nomination process within the college. Departmental nomination committees can provide for better faculty buy-in and participation and for greater success for our faculty.

Dean's office support at your institution will depend on what your faculty request, and what you can provide. Some examples of support roles for the dean's office might include:

- Organize an annual group meeting of honorees (this can be a celebration of recent honorees, coupled with a working session to assign upcoming nomination responsibilities)
- Confirm eligibility status of potential external letter writers (this is usually a quick search of an online membership directory)
- Provide lists of faculty who qualify for honorifics (this can be gleaned from Academic Analytics, or research metrics from other third-party curated sources such as Google Scholar or Scopus)
- Maintain a spreadsheet of nominations in play for the current nomination cycle (this can be a weekly update as a reminder of where all nomination packets stand)

- Archive strong nomination/support letters that can be shared with nominators and nominees
- Facilitate discussions between nominators and nominees, for honorific awards that are not confidential (this can be as simple as an introduction via email, after which each pair works together on their packets)

Set Goals and Celebrate Successes

Building a culture of nomination is a combination of short- and long-term strategies that begins straight-forward honest communication with your most productive faculty. Honors can (and should be) viewed as a scholarly activity on par with publications and grants. All three are peer reviewed activities and the result of faculty teamwork. It's important to evaluate where you are starting and then set realistic goals that can build over time as the result of consistent attention and activities. Remember to celebrate successes at every stage, both internally within your university as well as externally with press releases.

Leverage Our SAAESD Network

Our SAAESD network creates excellent opportunities to share best practices, as well as challenges we face, as we build our respective cultures of nomination. As with any initiative at a university, growing pains are inevitable. Should you have questions, or want to use your SAAESD colleagues as a sounding board for ideas, please reach out to Gary Thompson so he can connect you with one or more SAAESD honorifics liaisons. SAAESD honorifics liaisons have specialized experience in developing cultures of nomination at one or more of our member universities. Several of them were involved in developing this module, and would be pleased to engage with you as you develop a culture of nomination at your institution.