

Thriving as Leaders Award Submission Gouge
Updated 5-18-26

1. **Executive Summary:** This document is intended to provide general information and feedback to nominators of the U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association Thriving As Leaders Award Program, with a focus on two awards, the Alumni Outstanding Achievement - Professional (non-athletic) award and the Volunteer Leadership and Service award. This feedback is being provided per the request of various alumni and to provide lessons learned from the 2025 cycle. The USNA Alumni Association Thriving As Leaders Award Program was established in 2024, and this document is intended to also assist in “spreading the word” on the awards process.

The document provides an overview of the five Thriving As Leaders Awards, discusses the Awards and Selection Committee composition and review process, and gives focused feedback to assist nominators in package submittals of two out of five of the awards.

2. **Disclaimer:** This document is intended to provide tips and best practices to help nominators prepare strong submissions. It is offered as guidance only and does not guarantee that any nominee will be selected. It is the responsibility of the nominator to follow the current guidelines. For the most up-to-date information on the Thriving As Leaders Awards, visit <https://www.usna.com/Thriving-As-Leaders-Awards> .

3. **Awards Categories:** The USNA Alumni Association Thriving As Leaders Award Program has five awards including:

- a. Alumni Outstanding Achievement Professional Non-Athlete (paid work)
- b. Volunteer Leadership Service
- c. Alumni Outstanding Achievement Professional Athlete
- d. Alumni Outstanding Achievement Amateur Athlete
- e. Alumni Outstanding Achievement Superintendent's Outstanding Alumni Performance Award

4. **Awards Review Process:**

- a. **Alumni Outstanding Achievement Award Professional Category (Non-Athlete)**

- i. **Overview**

1. The AOA-P Award recognizes and celebrates the achievements of alumni in their paid work across all industries, sectors, and spheres of human endeavor.

ii. **How the Process Works**

1. **Nomination Submission**

Nominations are submitted for consideration.

2. **Committee Review**

The Awards and Selection Committee carefully reviews all eligible nominations.

3. **Evaluation Criteria**

Each nominee is evaluated against the following standards:

- a. The achievement is noteworthy within the nominee's profession.
- b. The achievement is significant among USNA alumni.
- c. The achievement inspires esprit de corps among fellow alumni.
- d. The achievement represents a specific act of distinction rather than a cumulative career.
- e. The achievement provides meaningful benefit to the nominee's organization or profession at the time it occurred.

4. **Selection**

After thoughtful deliberation, the Committee selects up to four recipients annually whose accomplishments best reflect the spirit and standards of the award.

b. **Volunteer Leadership Service Award**

i. **Overview**

1. The VLS Award recognizes and celebrates those Association members, including our non-voting members, who are "thriving as leaders" in volunteer roles and unpaid work all over the world. This award is open to all Association members, including non-voting members.

ii. **How the Process Works**

1. **Nomination Submission**

Nominations are submitted for consideration

2. **Committee Review**

The Awards and Selection Committee reviews all eligible nominations.

3. **Evaluation Criteria**

Each nominee is evaluated against the following standards:

- a. The nominee's actions are noteworthy within the community or communities being served.
- b. The nominee's leadership and service constitute an important contribution or meaningful benefit to the community.

- c. The nominee's actions inspire a sense of esprit de corps among fellow alumni who learn of the quality of leadership and service demonstrated.
- d. For non-voting members of the Alumni Association, the qualifying leadership and service must directly benefit the alumni community.

4. **Selection**

Following thoughtful deliberation, the Committee selects up to four recipients annually whose leadership and service best reflect the spirit and purpose of the award

c. **Alumni Outstanding Achievement Professional Athlete**

i. **Overview**

- 1. The AOA-A Award recognizes and celebrates the athletic achievements of USNA alumni in professional athletics.

2. **How the Process Works**

a. **Nomination Submission**

Nominations are submitted for consideration.

b. **Committee Review**

The Athletic and Scholarship Programs Board of Trustees Awards Committee reviews all eligible nominations.

c. **Evaluation Criteria**

Each nominee is evaluated against the following standards:

- i. The achievement is noteworthy within the nominee's athletic community.
- ii. The accomplishment occurred within a five-year span of the nominee's athletic career.
- iii. The achievement represents a significant accomplishment among USNA alumni and within the broader athletics community.
- iv. The achievement evokes a sense of esprit de corps among fellow alumni.

d. **Selection**

Following careful evaluation and deliberation, the Committee selects up to one recipient each calendar year whose athletic achievements best reflect the purpose and standards of the award.

d. **Alumni Outstanding Achievement Amateur Athlete**

i. **Overview**

- 1. The AOA-A Award recognizes and celebrates the athletic achievements of USNA alumni in amateur athletics. **Note:** Up to one Amateur Athlete award may be presented each year. If no Professional Athlete award is selected in a given year, up to two Amateur Athlete awards may be conferred.

ii. **How the Process Works**

1. **Nomination Submission**

Nominations are submitted for consideration.

2. **Committee Review**

The Athletic and Scholarship Programs Board of Trustees Awards Committee reviews all eligible nominations.

3. **Evaluation Criteria**

Each nominee is evaluated against the following standards:

- a. The achievement is noteworthy within the nominee's athletic community.
- b. The accomplishment occurred within a five-year span of the nominee's athletic career.
- c. The achievement represents a significant accomplishment among USNA alumni and within the broader athletics community.
- d. The achievement evokes a sense of esprit de corps among fellow alumni.

4. **Selection**

Following careful evaluation and deliberation, the Committee selects up to one recipient each calendar year whose athletic achievements best reflect the purpose and standards of the award.

e. **Superintendent's Outstanding Alumni Performance Award**

i. **Overview:**

1. This award is presented to a living alumnus who has served on the USNA faculty or staff during any portion of the selecting Superintendent's tenure, reflecting their significant contribution to the institution's academic and leadership community during that period.

ii. **How the Process Works**

1. **Nomination Development**

Nomination criteria are developed by the USNA staff

2. **Nomination Submission**

The nomination is submitted by the USNA Chief of Staff for consideration

3. **Selection**

The award is awarded once during the Superintendent's tenure in recognition of distinguished service that has meaningfully advanced the Academy's mission.

Note: The Distinguished Graduate program is independent of the Thriving as Leaders award process.

Awards and Selection Committee:

5. **Mission:** The Awards and Selection Committee shall assist the Alumni Association's Board of Trustees in fulfilling its responsibilities to select individuals for Alumni Association-sponsored awards except for the Distinguished Graduate Award, and to serve other selection functions as may be assigned by the Board.
6. **Composition:**
 - a. **Trustees:** At least 4 sitting trustees, representing 3 of 4 affiliates; one trustee serves as Chair
 - b. **At-Large Members:** At least 3 regular members, not sitting trustees, or serving on another Board committee
 - c. **Associate Member:** One (and only one) USNA parent associate member.
 - d. **Staff Liaison:** Non-Voting Member

For more information on the Awards and Selection Committee, reference the Board of Trustees Operating Manual Appendix D: https://www.usna.com/file/wes-folder/bot/bylaws-and-operating-manual/Operating-Manual-_Approved-by-the-Board-as-of-11-19-25.pdf

Feedback from 2025 TAL Submissions

Disclaimer: This document is intended to provide tips and best practices to help nominators prepare strong submissions. It is offered as guidance only and does not guarantee that any nominee will be selected. It is the responsibility of the nominator to follow the current guidelines. For the most up-to-date information on the Thriving As Leaders Awards, visit <https://www.usna.com/Thriving-As-Leaders-Awards> .

1. **Make sure your nominee is eligible and willing to be nominated:** Nominees must consent to being nominated and, for AOA awards, must be regular members in good standing. VLS nominees must be regular or associate members in good standing. Confirm with your nominee that they meet these criteria (see <https://www.usna.com/Thriving-As-Leaders-Awards> for additional details).
2. **Be Specific and Provide Evidence:** Strong award packages highlight concrete statistics, facts, and figures, making the nominee's impact clear and concise. The most compelling packages back up every claim with measurable results, specific examples, and evidence of success. Rather than broad statements like 'He/she is a strong leader,' illustrate exactly how that nominee demonstrated leadership and created meaningful, tangible outcomes. In addition, ensure that you use accurate wording when promoting the nominee's accomplishments. For example, if you state that the nominee is the "first or only" person to accomplish something in their field, do your due diligence to confirm the accuracy.
3. **Keep It Clear and Concise:** Answer each question completely without unnecessary 'fluff'. Focus on the nominee's most significant accomplishments and avoid unnecessary detail or jargon. Reviewers often have limited time, so a well-structured, easy-to-read package will stand out far more than one that is long but unfocused. Prioritize quality over quantity. Reviewers may not share the same background or insider

knowledge as you. Clearly explain the context so the nominee's achievements are easy to understand.

4. **Clarify the Nominee's Role:** Clearly show what the nominee actually did and how they contributed to the outcome. Were they directly responsible for the achievement, or did they lead and manage a team to success? Was it their idea or initiative that sparked the change? Tell the story of how the nominee's leadership, decision-making, or innovation played a direct role in achieving the accomplishment.
5. **Use Testimonials and References:** Including short quotes or references from colleagues, supervisors, or community members can add credibility and provide a different perspective on the nominee's impact. Select testimonials that are specific and highlight measurable results rather than generic praise. This helps validate the nominee's achievements.
6. **Avoid external links to content outside the form:** Keep all material in the nomination form itself. Ensure the submission is self-contained and complete. Only information included within the nomination package will be considered by the committee.
7. **Avoid Repetition:** Each question is designed to highlight a different aspect of the nominee's achievements. Don't simply repeat the same example or wording; use new, varied examples that showcase the nominee's full range of impact.
8. **Provide Complete Submissions:** The nomination form in most areas allows up to 400 words. However, this last cycle, several nominations only had one sentence for the 400-word section, and the one sentence did not always answer the question. Brief is good, but one sentence does not necessarily make a competitive submission, especially when two records are placed "side by side" to determine an awardee.
9. **Resubmissions:** Don't just cut and paste what you did last year. Make changes. Update your package and make it stronger.
10. **Multiple Nominators:** Listing multiple nominators for a single package is acceptable, so long as contact information is provided for each nominator. Each co-nominator should be prepared to be contacted by the committee to confirm their nomination.