



St. Olaf College Alumni Awards

Distinguished Service Award

Information Packet

Distinguished Service Award (DSA) Qualifications

The Distinguished Service Award honors alumni who have chosen to carry the St. Olaf mission statement of living a life of worth and service with them after graduation. The strongest nominees will be those that have distinguished themselves in this life-long pursuit to serve, choosing to make community and/or religious involvement a priority in his/her life. At least some, if not all, of this service must include the advancement of the programs and mission of the St. Olaf College.

Candidates are judged in two primary categories:

- A. Community service and/or religious involvement
- B. St. Olaf involvement

A. Community Service and/or Religious Involvement

The successful candidate for the DSA has used talents or skills in or beyond profession to the benefit of community through voluntary involvement in projects which seek to better the quality of life through human services, the arts, recreation, religion, education or other pursuits.

Use of professional and personal skills in community or public service takes many forms. Community service may be considered the extension of the candidate's professional and vocational abilities in service of many types.

Successful candidates could also have provided service and commitment to religious ideals, whether through active work in religious organizations (ministry, education, volunteer work, board, or congregational committee work) or through other demonstrated involvement in the strengthening of religious ideals and evidence of moral sensitivity.

The receipt of awards and honors for community service is viewed as reinforcement and recognition of valuable contributions, but not the sole evidence of commitment.

B. St. Olaf Involvement

While many alumni have distinguished themselves in profession and community, it is the achievement of distinction **as St. Olaf alumni** that set apart the recipients of this award.

Primary consideration will be the nominee's contribution in time, talents, or resources to the advancement of the programs and mission of the College. These individuals have demonstrated significant service and consistent loyalty to St. Olaf and have set outstanding examples to their community and peers.

Service to St. Olaf includes, but is not limited to the following examples: alumni club leader, class fund agent, class correspondent, former Alumni Board member, reunion planning volunteer, encouragement and/or identification of prospective students, assistance to students or alumni in careers or new communities, financial support, working on behalf of St. Olaf groups on tour or on off-campus study, serving as a resource for St. Olaf, assistance in obtaining grants, guest lecturing, etc.

Recipients of the Distinguished Service Award are individuals who exemplify the spirit of St. Olaf.

Additional Qualifications

A. Advanced Education, Publications, Honors

Achievement in this area can strengthen a nomination because of the evidence it gives of commitment to life-long learning, professional accomplishment, or service. However, since St. Olaf is an undergraduate institution, it would be inappropriate to consider a candidate with only a bachelor's degree less deserving of an award. This information is usually, and oftentimes best, included in the nominee's resume/CV.

B. Letters of Support

Nominations for the Distinguished Service Award must include three letters of support, highlighting what distinguishes the nominee. Two letters must concentrate on the nominee's contributions to his/her community, religious organization, philanthropic efforts, or ways in which the nominee adds value to others' lives. A St. Olaf staff member, highlighting the connection between the college and the nominee, should write the final letter. This letter could focus on any or all of the following ways St. Olaf alumni contribute to the college community: alumni club volunteer, class fund agent or correspondent, Alumni Board, financial support, reunion committee, encouragement and/or identification of prospective students, assistance to students or alumni in careers or new communities, working on behalf of St. Olaf groups on tour or off campus study, etc.

Those people directly in contact with the nominee write the most effective letters of support. For example, fellow volunteers and project managers know the most about community contributions; fundraising, alumni, and admissions staff members usually have the best information on an alum's relationship with the college.

Though three letters of support are required, the strongest applications are those that include additional letters that reaffirm the nominee's distinguishable qualities.

C. Secondary Considerations

Secondary considerations are taken into account only after the selection committee has discussed each candidate and voted on finalists. The intent is to balance the slate of recipients. In the event of a concentration of finalists in the same city, profession, class year or gender, the committee may choose to defer some of the candidates to the following year.

D. Eligibility

1. Current members of the staff, faculty, or Board of Regents, whether part-time or full-time, are not eligible to receive the award.
2. Only living candidates are considered. In the event of the death of a candidate between notification of the award and the award ceremony, the award may be given posthumously with the permission of the family and the selection committee.
3. Since "alumni" includes those who attended St. Olaf, not just those who graduated, the award is open to graduates and former students.

Information and Hints for Nominators of Alumni Award Candidates

- A. The nomination must be kept secret from the candidate to avoid offending nominees who do not receive awards. Many fine people are nominated and no one wants anyone to feel they've "lost" if they are not selected. Nominations initiated or completed by candidates are submitted to the Selection Committee but receive less serious consideration.
- B. Nominations are considered for three (3) years. Additional information may be submitted any time during the three years to the Alumni Office. If a nominee is not selected in the first year, their chances in subsequent years is increased if updated materials are submitted.
- C. The greatest single downfall of nominations is lack of adequate information in the categories of consideration: Professional Accomplishment, Community/Religious Involvement, or St. Olaf Involvement. Don't assume the committee knows the information, even about alumni involvement; please detail it!
- D. In addition to the nomination form (included in this packet), nominators shall provide letters from several individuals who will attest to the accomplishments, contributions, and involvements of the nominee. Consider soliciting letters from co-workers, supervisors, community leaders, pastors, and fellow alumni to substantiate the nomination, especially when the nominator is a close family member. If you are a friend or colleague making the nomination, family members may be good sources of additional information if you can be sure they will keep the nomination confidential. If you have questions about completing the nomination form or the letters of support, you are encouraged to contact the St. Olaf College Director of Alumni and Parent Relations at 1520 St. Olaf Ave., Northfield, MN 55057 or by calling the toll free number 888-865-6537.

Do not include reference information without reference letters! Because the Alumni Office staff must remain impartial, they are not able to do research on candidates. The research task is the job of the nominator.
- E. Please type or neatly print the nomination material. The Selection Committee reads everything; please make it as easy as possible for them.
- F. For consideration by the Selection Committee, completed nominations must be received by the Alumni Office by January 15.
- G. There is a big time gap between the selection of candidates and the availability of their names to the public and nominators. After the selection meeting, the slate is proposed to the Alumni Association Board of Directors for their approval at their spring meeting. If approved, the slate goes to the Board of Regents in May. If approved again, the slate is final and the candidates are invited to come to campus to receive the awards. When all candidates have replied, their names are available to the public.

Statement of Purpose

The St. Olaf Alumni Awards are given to nominated alumni who exemplify the ideals and mission of the College. The statement, which accompanies the award, is:

The Board of Regents of St. Olaf College and the St. Olaf College Alumni Association, in recognition of outstanding achievements, bestow the St. Olaf Alumni Awards on those alumni whose accomplishments have brought honor to self and to the College; whose service and leadership have exemplified its ideals; and whose concern for St. Olaf has supported and strengthened its program.

A. The Alumni Awards serve several purposes:

1. To honor alumni who exemplify fulfillment of the College mission
2. To inspire students and other alumni through role models
3. To exhibit and publicize the success of the College program as reflected in its alumni
4. To encourage support of the College program from alumni and parents who, through the achievements of alumni, are reminded of the strengths and benefits of St. Olaf's liberal arts program.

B. The mission of the college serves as a framework for selecting Award candidates:

St. Olaf, a four-year college of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, provides an education committed to the liberal arts, rooted in the Christian Gospel, and incorporating a global perspective. In the conviction that life is more than a livelihood, it focuses on what is ultimately worthwhile and fosters the development of the whole person in mind, body, and spirit.

Now in its second century, St. Olaf College remains dedicated to the high standards set by its Norwegian immigrant founders. In the spirit of free inquiry and free expression, it offers a distinctive environment that integrates teaching, scholarship, creative activity, and opportunities for encounter with the Christian Gospel and God's call to faith. The College intends that its graduates combine academic excellence and theological literacy with a commitment to life-long learning.

St. Olaf College strives to be an inclusive community, respecting those of differing backgrounds and beliefs. Through its curriculum, campus life, and off-campus programs, it stimulates students' critical thinking and heightens their moral sensitivity; it encourages them to be seekers of truth, leading lives of unselfish service to others; and it challenges them to be responsible and knowledgeable citizens of the world.

C. Award candidates are selected primarily through the evaluation of the individual's accomplishments and qualifications. Secondary consideration is given to the balance among recipients in a given year.