Time to Shine: Making the Most of an AALAS Award Nomination

By Jane Olin, DVM

AALAS values outstanding performance by its members and gives recognition by presenting annual achievement awards. The five AALAS awards are the Pravin N. Bhatt Scientific Investigator Award, Nathan R. Brewer Lifetime Achievement Award, George R. Collins Education and Training Award, Joseph J. Garvey Management Award, Charles A. Griffin Award. A glance at the list of past award winners shows a veritable who’s who of AALAS stars.

Each of us knows someone who is a leader in our facility, local branch, or on a national committee who is deserving of recognition by their peers. This year take time to celebrate your colleagues by nominating someone for an AALAS award.

Details on the awards and selection criteria are found on the AALAS website under the Get Involved tab.

Shine On

When submitting a nomination or a letter of support, it is crucial to make your submission shine and show off your nominee to their best advantage. Nomination packets are composed of a nomination form, nomination letter, several reference letters, and the nominee’s resume or CV.

The Awards Selection Committee uses the award criteria to score the submissions based on the information provided in the nomination packet. A candidate might be outstanding in their field, but if the nomination packet does not thoroughly demonstrate their accomplishments, the scores will not be as high. Use the following suggestions to create a top scoring submission.

Nominator Form

- Provide an overview of the nominee’s accomplishments by thoroughly and accurately completing the form.
- If you don’t know something, try to find out the information by asking the person’s colleagues or AALAS staff. Don’t leave fields blank.

Nomination Letter

- Review the award information with special attention to the description and criteria. Each award has unique criteria, and some include specific characteristics a successful candidate should demonstrate. Tailor the nomination letter to the award.
- Write a real letter on institutional or company letterhead formatted as a traditional business letter and attach the signed, scanned letter to the nomination. The letter format helps organize your thoughts and adds extra style and formality.
- Explain and include evidence of the nominee’s accomplishments as they pertain to the award criteria. Highlight a few things about the nominee that show how they excel at those activities. Do not restate the entire resume.
- Use specific personal examples to show how the nominee’s accomplishments impacted the workplace, institution, community, or AALAS overall.
- Keep the letter to 1-2 pages long.
Nominee’s Resume

- Of course, you would like to keep this whole process a surprise, but you should get a copy of the nominee’s resume to help you compose your letter and to share with the references.
- A complete and detailed resume/curriculum vitae shows the candidate’s career history and accomplishments summarized in one place.
- Encourage your nominee to have a resume that is accurate, up-to-date, and nicely formatted.
- In addition to education and career details, it should include local/national AALAS awards, professional affiliations, publications, presentations, and volunteer and leadership positions held as well as special work responsibilities such as IACUC or EHS.

References

- Recruit a diversity of references. Preferably not all co-workers. Consider professional associates, supervisors, investigators, or AALAS colleagues. Three to five are recommended.
- Personally contact the references in advance to confirm they are willing to support your nominee. Share the award criteria and the candidate’s resume.
- Ask them to write a real letter, as described above.
- The AALAS office will reach out to the references listed on the nomination form, but they should already be prepared for the call.

Final Steps

To be nominated, both the nominator and the nominee must be current national members of AALAS. The completed nominator form (available on the AALAS website) plus your nomination letter are submitted to the AALAS office through email by April 1, 2021. The AALAS office will contact the nominee to ensure that they accept the nomination and to request a copy of their resume or curriculum vitae. Then the AALAS office contacts the references listed on the nominator form to complete the reference forms and provide a letter of support. All materials must be received at the AALAS office by April 15, 2021.

The AALAS office distributes the assembled packets to the Awards Selection Committee (ASC) for review. The AALAS office compiles the scores from the reviewers, and the ASC is notified of the overall results. In circumstances where there is a tie or very close scores, the ASC will re-review the packets and discuss the rankings to determine a winner. The ASC presents the results to the AALAS Board of Trustees for final confirmation.

The awards are presented at the AALAS National Meeting Opening General Session. In addition, award winners are featured on signage in the convention center, in the meeting’s Final Program, in the Opening General Session program, and in the December issue of LAS Pro.

Recommended Reading:

Format for Curriculum Vitae for Award Nominations.  
Jane Olin, DVM, diplomate ACLAM is a Vice President at Edwards Lifesciences in Irvine, CA and serves on the AALAS Awards Selection Committee.