PACURH OTM Writing Guide

“An OTM is a written statement submitted online that explains how one person/program made a positive, meaningful impact during the month for which it is submitted”
~ Alanna Peebles (Regional OTM Voting Committee Member)

Let’s say there’s been someone or a program on campus that’s been simply amazing. You want to recognize them, but don’t know the best way to go about it. Well, how about submitting an Of-the-Month (OTM) for them? Writing OTMs can be one of the most exciting ways to make someone feel appreciated. However, there is a fine art to writing the best OTMs possible. A benefit of top-notch OTMs includes the chance to continue on to regional and national recognition. Refer to the ABCs of NRHH document for more details on OTMs!

There are two types of OTMs: General and Programs. Each has its own word limit and set-up. For many of the programs, there are some general guidelines that one might want to follow in order to write a quality OTM for their institution.

_____________________________

OTM BASICS - How do I submit an OTM?

All OTM submissions should be made through the OTM database, available online at otms.nrhh.org, and should address/adhere to the following criteria:

1. Go to the NRHH OTM website at: http://otms.nrhh.org
2. Sign-up for an OTM account – it is really easy, and allows for you to edit and track your OTMs! All you need is a name and e-mail address. The current NRHH President or OTM Coordinator will receive an email confirmation regarding your request to create an account. They must authorize your account and approve it before you have full access to your account.
3. **Once your account has been approved**, you may log into your account select “Submit General” or “Submit Program” and that will take you to the OTM submission screen.

4. **Select, from the drop down menu, which OTM category you are writing.** Fill out all of the nominee’s information, and then write your OTM!

---

**Quick guidelines on good OTM writing:**

1. **Ensure that the OTM is month specific.** If the program happened in March, submit that OTM for March. If the person or group’s contributions were mostly in March, submit that OTM for March.

2. **Include as much detail into the OTM as you can,** but make sure when you are describing the OTM that you do not become repetitive.

3. **Define any acronyms** when you use them for the first time to avoid confusion. The only exceptions to this are: RHA, OTM, NRHH, NCC, NACURH, and a region name such as PACURH.

4. **Write your nomination as though someone who has never met or had anything to do with the nominee is reading it.** This is potentially the case with any OTM that you submit, and it should be clear to that person that your nomination is for someone or something that was awesome.

5. **Try to push the word limit.** However, be careful not to surpass the limit, as this can disqualify your OTM. And again, do not become repetitive.

6. **Double-check your spelling and grammar.** If there are many spelling/grammar errors, the OTM becomes difficult to read.

7. **Try to separate your thoughts into paragraphs.** This will help the reader follow the OTM through the entire month without getting lost or confused.

8. **Create an OTM Database Account.** This is super easy, and it gives you the chance to check on the status of your OTMs and to keep track of all the ones you’ve written.

9. **Make sure your OTM is in the correct category.**

10. **Don’t leave any fields on the OTM blank.** Address, phone, and e-mail information important when delivering recognition awards. This information is helpful for when an OTM wins an award, as the winner usually receives a certificate congratulating them.

11. **Submit your OTM before the deadline.**

12. **Have fun,** and never hesitate to recognize someone for his or her accomplishments!

---

“Recognition is the greatest motivator.”

~Gerard C. Eakedale
Listed below are the different categories of OTMs and some useful hints that will make your OTM better:

**Advisor**- Anyone working in a student affairs position advising students.
- How have they helped support your executive board?
- How have they helped support your general body?
- Have they been used in conflict management situations?

The Advisor OTM is designed to recognize those individuals who advise a staff, governing board, campus organization, or other related group in a formal role. The OTM should focus on the individual’s role as an advisor, NOT as a supervisor of a staff or community.

**Acceptable Nominees:** Senior staff advisors to a residential committee, college council, college organization, RHA/NRHH, etc.

**Ineligible Nominees:** Any undergraduate student; submissions emphasizing supervision of multiple people.

**Bulletin Board (Passive Program)**
- Is the bulletin board pleasing to the eye and easy to read?
- Does it help support the community that the BB is placed in?
- Does it get the information out that is posted to the people reading it?
- Is it truly a passive program?
  - Meaning: does it require little or no “person power” to make the program effective?

The Bulletin Board OTM is designed to recognize outstanding bulletin board displays in the residential halls. In recent years, this OTM category has come to include passive programs that have taken place in the residential halls.

**Acceptable Nominees:** Bulletin boards in residential halls, window displays, Awareness program displays, passive programs involving flyers or posted materials.

**Ineligible Nominees:** Fully planned programs that have a designated time frame.

**Community**- Any residential or working community, such as wings, halls, floors, complexes, executive boards, RA Staffs, etc.
- What has this community done well?
- What has this community done to support others (persons or other communities)?

The Community OTM is designated for groups of individuals not recognized as official campus organizations. Possibly the broadest OTM category, a Community OTM should illustrate what brings a collection of individuals together and how they worked together as a group to accomplish their tasks during the month of nomination. A strong community does not have to be location-specific.

**Acceptable Nominees:** Residential floors, wings, halls, complexes… etc.; two or more individuals united by a common task/assignment/purpose.

**Ineligible Nominees:** Individual people; groups recognized as official residence hall organizations.

**Executive Board Member**- A member of an executive board from a residential life organization.
- How have they helped the board?
- What have they done to go above their duty as an executive board member?
- What have they done to help the body?
To be eligible for this category, an individual must serve on the Executive Board of a campus RHA or NRHH. The OTM should focus on the individual’s work within and related to that role, and should illustrate how this person has gone beyond the basic requirements of that position.

**Acceptable Nominees:** RHA & NRHH Executive Board Members.

**Ineligible Nominees:** Executive members of any other residential committees; submissions not focused on Executive roles.

---

**Faculty/Staff**- Individuals who aid students in their academics, which includes professors, instructors, teaching assistants, counselors, and other academic affairs staff (Residential life staff can either fit under advisors or spotlight).

- How has this person helped the students?
- How has this person helped the community?

The Faculty category was created to recognize university faculty who have made a contribution to the on-campus living community both in AND outside the classroom. Residence Life employees such as Resident Directors/Deans, Assistant Resident Directors/Deans, and Residential Life office staff are NOT eligible for this category.

**Acceptable Nominees:** Individual University faculty who assist with Residence Life organizations

**Ineligible Nominees:** Undergraduate students, Resident Directors/Deans, Assistant Resident Directors/Deans, Residential Life Administrative Assistants…etc.

---

**First Year Experience**- Students who have either lived in the halls for less than one year, or started their first year involvement in hall government.

- How has the student gone above and beyond their role as a student?
- How have they impacted their community?
- Are there Specific examples of unusual or extraordinary tasks addressed by the nominee?

The First Year Student category recognizes students (including transfer students) in their first year at the university. In addition to the normal challenges of adapting to a new environment, these nominees have taken an active role in their communities and positively impacted those around them. Submissions in this category may emphasize academics, leadership, involvement, and much more.

**Acceptable Nominees:** Students (including transfers) in their first year at the university.

**Ineligible Nominees:** RA staff members; campus-wide Executive Board Members; multiple people.

---

**Organization**- Outstanding residential life organizations for the month. OTMs should not highlight the efforts of a few individuals, but the organization as a whole.

- What has this organization done to help your campus, community, RHA, and NRHH chapters?

The Organization OTM category recognizes the work done by official residence life organizations as a whole, not just the accomplishments of a few members. Eligible nominees must be recognized as organizations by the university and/or fit the criteria for classification as an official organization. Organizations typically have written policies and/or a constitution. Less formal groups of people should be nominated under the Community OTM category.

**Acceptable Nominees:** RHA; NRHH; residential committees; associations; formal residential life organizations, RA staffs (as a whole)

**Ineligible Nominees:** Informal groups; individual people.

---

**Resident Assistant (RA)**- Students who live and work in the halls to improve the community.

- How has this RA gone above and beyond their normal roles as a RA?
- How has this RA helped to support their residents?
- How has this RA kept their involvement around campus?

Residential Advisors are eligible for this category. TV interns, Senior RAs, and Programming Interns are also eligible for this category as well. The OTM should focus on the nominee’s accomplishments within the RA role, but may also include other roles or responsibilities taken on during the month of nomination, such as involvement in other organizations.

**Acceptable Nominees:** Resident Advisors and Residential Life Interns
**Ineligible Nominees:** Everyone else; Senior Staff; multiple people.

**Spotlight-** Someone or something that does not fit in the above categories; cannot be an advisor, executive board member, resident assistant, or student.
- Only submit under this category if it does not fit under any other category

The Spotlight OTM category exists to recognize those individuals or groups that do not fall into any other OTM category. These nominees are not students, but still impact the on-campus living community and often go unrecognized. Spotlight OTM nominees can’t be eligible for nomination in any other category.

**Acceptable Nominees:** Residential Life Administrative and Fiscal Assistants, Construction workers, Dining Services staff, Residential Security Officers, Academic Advising offices, Campus Community Center Residential Life Advocates,
**Ineligible Nominees:** Individual undergraduate students, organizations, advisors, etc.

**Student-** Someone who has made a contribution to residential life and is employed as a student at the university or college. Executive board members, advisors, and resident assistants are not eligible.
- How has this student balanced their roles as a leader and a student?
- What has this person done to stay involved in the campus community, area community, RHA, and NRHH?
- Does this student display good academic choices?

The Student OTM category recognizes the exceptional performance of an individual student. This OTM may address several areas of the student’s life, including academics, leadership, involvement, and more. It is important to emphasize what the nominee has done during the month of nomination to distinguish it from other months and how that has impacted others, if applicable.

**Acceptable Nominees:** Any enrolled undergraduate or graduate student at a university.
**Ineligible Nominees:** Non-students.

“People often say that motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing – that's why we recommend it daily.”
~Zig Ziglar
Here are some of the ways schools around the region have improved OTM submissions and quality:

1. Let OTM writers pick out a trinket or gift to give their nominee along with the OTM
2. Advertise the writing or winning of an OTM with t-shirts
3. Require those who receive program funding from RHA to write an OTM
4. Keep a running total of how many OTMs have been written or won, and enter the writers into a drawing for a cool prize or gift card. The more OTMs someone writes or wins, the more chances they have to win a prize or a gift card
5. Publicly present certificates and/or gifts to OTM winners to congratulate them!
6. Put together a presentation about the process of submitting and writing quality OTMs, and present this to RAs, Hall Council, RHA, NRHH members, and any other significant groups on campus.
7. Send gifts to winners and writers! Add cute catch-lines and puns (i.e.: Send a mini-Spanish dictionary and say, “OTM winner? Now you’re speaking my language!”) Be creative and have fun with it!
8. Start this early on so you can create a culture of OTM recognizers early on!

“You have to think anyway, so why not think big?”
~Donald Trump

I wish you all the best of luck in your journey to writing awesome OTMs! If you have any questions about what was written in this document, please contact the Associate Director of NRHH at: pa_adnrhh@nacurh.org

This document was brought to you by the 2010-2011 PACURH Regional OTM Voting Committee, which is made up of...

1. Beth Gawne- Chair (Associate Director of NRHH- University of Washington)
2. Bryan Forsberg (Central Washington University Alumnus)
3. Eric Tress (Western Oregon University)
4. J.R. Guzmán (University of California, San Diego Alumnus)
5. Amy Funk (Western Oregon University)
6. Angela Galipeau (Central Regional Communications Coordinator- San Francisco State University)
7. Sarah Mruz (Gonzaga University)
8. Anh Pham (University of California, Riverside)
9. Hosna Omarzad (San Jose State University)
10. Samuel Yellin (University of British Columbia)
11. Nathan Lehrman (Central Washington University)
12. Alanna Peebles (University of California, Santa Barbara)
13. Kristin Robinson (San Jose State University)
14. Meghan Jones (Central Washington University)
15. Lynn Huynh (Humboldt State University)