



Tips for Competitive National Leader of the Year Applications

The Omicron Delta Kappa National Leader of the Year program is named in memory of Gen. Russell E. Dougherty, United States Air Force. Gen. Dougherty (University of Louisville, 1947) was one of the Air Force's best thinkers and planners and served as NATO's Allied Command Europe headquarters chief of staff, commander in chief of the Strategic Air Command, and executive director of the U.S. Air Force Association.

Up to six recipients are chosen by the National Awards Committee. The recipient of the Dougherty National Leader of the Year honor receives a \$4,000 award, and each of the top individuals in the five pillars of campus life (academics and research; athletics; service to campus and community; communications; and creative and performing arts) receive a \$1,000 award. The National Leader of the Year (NLOY) program identifies six current undergraduate collegiate members to recognize for their outstanding leadership in one or more of the five pillars of campus life: academics and research; athletics; service to campus and community; communications; and creative and performing arts. These awards are the highest honors awarded to the Society's undergraduate collegiate members.

Note to advisors: Beginning Fall 2022, there is no longer a requirement for students to be the designated Circle Leader of the Year prior to applying for NLOY. Multiple students from one institution may also apply. A student is limited to receiving one award.

All undergraduate members are eligible to apply for NLOY honors. Applicants must be a current undergraduate student at the time of their application but may graduate or transition to graduate school during the selection process.

This document serves as a guide for applicants to submit quality, competitive applications for NLOY consideration. Applicants seeking more information can email programs@odk.org or can [schedule a time](#) to speak with Jamie Bouldin, Director for Membership Services.

Preparing to Apply

Applicants should start early and spend time on their materials to ensure high-quality submissions for these awards. The National Awards Committee is seeking students who have sought out leadership positions on their campuses, made an impact on fellow students as a result of their efforts, and can clearly articulate these experiences on paper and via an interview. These awards are the highest honors given to undergraduate students in Omicron Delta Kappa.

NLOY applications are submitted via Kaleidoscope – the link will be made available on OΔK’s [NLOY page](#) when open. Kaleidoscope allows applicants to stop and save their progress, so the entire application does not need to be completed in one sitting. Applicants are encouraged to work on their written statements in a word processing software which allows them to check spelling and grammar before copying and pasting into the application. This also provides a backup in case there are technical issues with the application while working on the materials. Applicants should also consider having others read their drafts before submission. Poorly constructed essays, or those rife with errors, will be given lower scores.

The essay prompts can be found in the **National Leader of the Year – Review of Application Process** document.

OΔK Involvement

Involvement as an OΔK circle officer, or even as an active member of a circle, is not required for this award. While the Society values members who are highly involved in their local circle, *this award seeks to recognize the most outstanding collegiate leaders in the country.* This does not always mean these leaders are circle officers or highly active members, because they may be very focused on other leadership efforts.

Written Statements

The committee asks different questions for each award to gather information specific to that award which helps in the selection process. Applicants are limited to 500 words per written statement, and should consider focusing on their most impactful collegiate experiences. These should not be recitations of the applicant’s resume, rather a description of the most relevant and meaningful leadership experiences during the candidate’s time in college, and how their efforts contributed to positive change for their peers and the institution.

Applicants may include details on non-collegiate leadership experiences if they feel it strengthens their application or would be particularly relevant to the award they are seeking. An example

would be starting their own non-profit organization which is not tied to their university; however, high school leadership experience will not be considered.

When applying for a pillar-specific award, candidates are encouraged to focus on leadership experiences which are directly relevant to that pillar. For example, being the leader of an intramural team may have been a very meaningful experience to an applicant, but would not necessarily be relevant when applying for the Academics and Research or Creative and Performing Arts award.

Resume

Applicants are strongly encouraged to utilize their on-campus career services department when developing a resume to submit for these awards, to receive assistance and critiques. The resume should primarily highlight collegiate leadership and academic experiences relevant to the awards sought. Work experience and internships may also be included. *Any high school information and experience should be omitted.*

Applicants will only submit one resume for consideration, regardless of the number of awards applied for, so that resume should include information relevant to all awards sought. There is no page limit for the resume; however, applicants should consider that not all experiences will be relevant and should consider omitting experiences not related to these awards. **Resumes must be submitted as a .pdf document.**

References

Applicants should be thoughtful about whom to ask to be a reference for each award. The letter of recommendation should be tailored to the award so the National Awards Committee gets a sense of the applicant's leadership experience in this area. **The same person can serve as a reference for multiple categories, but simply uploading the same letter twice is strongly discouraged.** It is good professional practice to have a discussion with your intended reference(s) to ensure that 1) they are willing to speak well of you, and 2) they understand the requirements for this process.

Examples of a relevant reference for each award are as follows:

- Gen. Russell E. Dougherty National Leader of the Year
 - *Ex: A faculty or staff advisor who has worked with the applicant in multiple leadership roles, or a dean of students who is aware of the applicant's leadership impact across multiple endeavors.*
- Leader of the Year - Academics and Research

- *Ex: A faculty member with whom the applicant has conducted research or published, or a staff member/supervisor from an on-campus tutoring facility.*
- Leader of the Year - Service to Campus and Community
 - *Ex: An advisor from a student organization, or a supervisor from a volunteer experience.*
- Leader of the Year - Creative and Performing Arts
 - *Ex: A faculty member with whom the applicant worked on creative endeavors, or an advisor from an arts-related student organization.*
- Leader of the Year - Communications
 - *Ex: A supervisor from a campus publication, or an advisor who can speak to the applicant's marketing or advocacy efforts.*
- Leader of the Year - Athletics
 - *Ex: A coach, or a staff member whom the applicant worked with on a student athlete advisory board.*

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