



National Leader of the Year – Steps to Apply

When considering applications for the six National Leader of the Year awards, the National Awards Committee reviews personal essays, a resume, an unofficial transcript, and a recommendation. All materials are submitted through Kaleidoscope, an online scholarship and award application platform. Each award title below is hyperlinked to the online application. **Applications close Friday, Dec. 8, at 11:59 p.m. EST.**

- [Gen. Russell E. Dougherty National Leader of the Year](#)
 - *This award is designed to honor the top student leader within Omicron Delta Kappa's undergraduate membership. This person often has multiple significant leadership positions, and their leadership has created positive change on their campus and the community.*
- [Leader of the Year - Academics and Research](#)
 - *Leadership in this pillar can be demonstrated by holding positions in academic organizations, delivering research presentations, submitting research publications, participating in undergraduate research projects, teaching, or tutoring.*
- [Leader of the Year - Service to Campus and Community](#)
 - *Leadership in this pillar may be demonstrated through serving in student government or other collegiate organizations, creating or leading a community service program, or other involvement in campus-wide initiatives such as task forces and committees.*
- [Leader of the Year - Creative and Performing Arts](#)
 - *Leadership in this pillar may be demonstrated through serving as the director or creator of an arts production, leading an arts-related student organization, or curating student art shows.*
- [Leader of the Year - Communications](#)
 - *Leadership in this pillar could include, but is not limited to, serving as an editor for a campus media outlet (newspaper, radio/TV, or yearbook), leading marketing efforts for organizations, or developing podcasts, blogs, and social media to support causes important to students and the campus.*
- [Leader of the Year - Athletics](#)

- *Leadership in this pillar may be demonstrated through serving as a team captain, instructor, coach, or trainer and other leadership positions, such as a role on a Student-Athlete Advisory Council.*

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 seeks students who have sought out leadership positions on their campuses, impacted fellow students due to their efforts, and can clearly articulate these experiences. These awards are the highest honors given to undergraduate students in Omicron Delta Kappa.

Kaleidoscope allows applicants to stop and save their progress, so the application does not need to be completed in one sitting. Applicants are encouraged to work on their written statements in a word processing software that allows them to check spelling and grammar before copying and pasting into the application. This also provides a backup in case the application has technical issues 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.

Application Process

All applications ask for the following information:

- OΔK information
- Contact information
- Demographic information (optional)
- Educational background
- Document upload: resume and unofficial transcript (required); portfolio and links to other work (optional)
- Recommendation contact information

Written Statements

All applications include the following prompts. Each written statement has a limit of 500 words:

- Please describe your life experiences and how your background and personal values have led to your current goals.*
- Outline your career goals. How has your collegiate leadership experience impacted these goals? How do you plan to represent the OΔK values (collaboration, inclusivity, integrity, scholarship, service) in your professional life?*

Then, depending on the award category, an applicant will see the following additional prompts:

Gen. Russell E. Dougherty National Leader of the Year Prompts

- *Please describe your most significant leadership experiences and why those experiences have been unique, impactful, and outstanding. How have you demonstrated the five OΔK values of collaboration, inclusivity, integrity, scholarship, and service?*
- *Describe the changes or impact within your campus as a result of your collegiate leadership experiences. How have you improved the collegiate experience for your fellow students, both present and future?*

National Leader of the Year Pillar Awards Prompts

- *Please describe your most significant collegiate leadership experiences within this pillar.*
- *Describe the impact you feel you have made within this pillar on your campus. How has your leadership improved the experience of other students and created change within the campus community?*

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, but instead 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 seek. 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 directly relevant to that pillar. For example, being the leader of an intramural team may have been a significant experience for an applicant but would not necessarily be relevant when applying for the Academics and Research or Creative and Performing Arts award.

Recommendations

Applicants supply the name and email address of a reference, who will then receive an email from Kaleidoscope asking them to submit their recommendation online. **Please note that each award application requires a reference**. For example, if a member applies for both the Dougherty National Leader of the Year award and the National Leader of the Year for Academics and Research, two (2) references would be required.

While Kaleidoscope will send reminders if the recommendation has not been submitted, it is ultimately the applicant's responsibility to check in with their reference to ensure this is completed on time. **Applications are not considered complete and will not be reviewed until the reference submits the recommendation.** Applicants can view the status of their application within Kaleidoscope, including whether their recommendation(s) have been completed.

If the references encounter technical issues with Kaleidoscope, they should contact help@mykaleidoscope.com and programs@odk.org for assistance.

Applicants should be thoughtful about whom to ask to be a reference for each award. The recommendation should be tailored to the award so the National Awards Committee can understand the applicant's leadership experience in this area. **The same person can be a reference for multiple categories, but uploading the same recommendation information 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 the applicant worked with on a student-athlete advisory board.*

OAK 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 focus on other leadership efforts.

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.* The same resume may be submitted for multiple award applications.

Selection

Applicants will be notified of their status before the end of spring 2024 and should check the email address they provided in the application. Reminders from Kaleidoscope to complete the application before the deadline will come from help@mykaleidoscope.com, so be sure to allow emails from that address or keep an eye on spam/junk folders.

Have questions? Applicants seeking more information can email programs@odk.org or schedule time to speak with Jamie Bouldin, Director for Membership Services, [here](#).