NRHH Of the Month (OTM) Writing Guide

“Don’t worry when you are not recognized, but strive to be worthy of recognition”
-Abraham Lincoln
Why We Write OTMs

An OTM, short for “Of the Month” is utilized to recognize individuals, groups, programs, and their contributions to the residence halls.

With recognition being one of the two core values that NRHH chapters focus on, OTMs are the primary way for members to recognize others. Having an intimate description of how awesome their achievements are, is what really makes people feel appreciated, and encourages them to keep up the great work!

OTM's are a great way to recognize members in our communities for doing a fantastic job in all aspects of their lives. Honestly, an OTM can be written about anything: a friend who is always studying, a great program hosted by a Resident Assistant (RA), a professor, a coworker who made your day by bringing you coffee...the possibilities are endless!

Active Member OTM Requirements

Across the country, each membership installs a different expectation for their members, and how OTMs are handled/recorded.

According to the University of Wyoming, NRHH, Upsilon Omega Chapter Constitution, last amended on 28 October 2014, to retain the title “Active Member”, at least one Of the Month (OTM) should be written and submitted per month. Active Membership is important, especially when discussions regarding the awarding of NRHH “swag”, voting rights, etc.

Another section of the constitution outlines the requirement for Active Alumni Members’ OTM requirements: at least one Of the Month (OTM) should be written and submitted per month. Again, this ensures voting rights are retained.

OTMS ARE DUE FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING, NATIONAL RESIDENCE HONORARY CHAPTER BY 11:59PM ON THE 4TH DAY OF EVERY MONTH.
**Tips and Tricks for Writing Better OTMs**

- **Offer:** Give information. It is the writer’s responsibility to explain what the nominee has done: specific accomplishments, details, examples, and personal experiences. The reader will not know something, unless it’s specifically stated in the OTM.

- **Translate:** Make no assumptions. It is crucial to explain acronyms, people, and events. Acronyms should be written out the first time they are used. People should be translated with their title(s) and involvement. Non-obvious titles should be explained as well. Events need to be fully clarified; readers won’t necessarily be familiar with traditional programs, etc.

- **Magnify:** Why should people care? Before starting, ask yourself “why does this subject (person/group/program) deserve recognition?” When writing, never forget the answer to that question. Always focus on the reason for nomination and ensure that readers will see that focus. Emphasize the outstanding accomplishments and avoid unrelated filler, such as “[nominee] is also a great student”.

- **BE MONTH SPECIFIC.** If an OTM is written about achievements from last semester, last month, etc, the OTM is ineligible to win at campus level, or any other higher level.

- Have a focus
- Know your subject
- Show; don’t tell
- Use engaging adjectives
- Make it unique
- Try your best to meet the word count
- Proofread!
- Use paragraphs where possible
Category Details

General Category: These OTMs are utilized to recognize individuals, groups, and their contributions to the residence halls. General OTMs should focus on the specific contributions of the individual or group, and how their actions and effort were outstanding. There is no structure for writing these OTMs, just write your OTM. It can be written like a school paper, a short story, or a newspaper column. Keeping it between the 200 chapter required minimum word count, and the maximum 600 word count, write as much or as little as you need.

Program Category: These OTMs recognize the achievement of programs and how the events contributed to strengthening a community, and enhanced residents’ lives. The focus of these OTMs should be the number of residents impacted, and the significance/lasting results of that impact. These OTMs are structured with six fields addressing specific program information. The structure assists in reading and understanding programs for the potential implementation at other schools. The maximum word count is 1,400.

Category Descriptions

General Category:

♦ Advisor: Any individual who directly advises a residence life organization and has made outstanding contributions to the organization(s). The individual may be the main advisor or the graduate advisor. Examples include, but are not limited to: RHA Advisor, NRHH Advisor, Hall Senate Advisor, etc.

♦ Executive Board Member: This category recognizes outstanding contributions of an Executive Board Member, of a member school’s residence life organization, and the work of the board member within the Executive Board, and across residence halls on their campus. Examples include, but are not limited to: Executive Board Members or Chair Positions in RHA, NRHH, RAC, etc.
First Year Student: This category includes first year students who excel in adapting to a new environment within their residence hall, takes an active role in their community, and positively impacts those around them. The nominee must be in their first year at their current institution. Submission in this category may emphasize academics, leadership, involvement, and contributions to their community/floor/hall/organizations/etc. Individuals that would be eligible for nomination in any other category are ineligible for nomination in the First Year Student Category. Examples may include, but are not limited to: freshman, transfer students, non-traditional students, etc.

Institution Faculty/Staff: This category includes individuals outside of residence life who aid students in their academics and/or personal affairs. This category is intended to recognize institutional faculty who have made a contribution to the residence life community both in and out of the classroom. Examples include, but are not limited to: Professors, instructors, teaching assistants, counselors, custodial/maintenance staff, dining services staff, health services, etc.

Organization: Any organization that has actively contributed to the student leadership, recognition, or other aspects of residence life. Emphasis should be placed on the successes of the organization as a whole, not just a few members. It should detail how the organization has helped the campus in general, and the residence life community. Examples include, but are not limited to: Hall Senates, NRHH Chapters, any organizations outside of Residence Life that positively impact resident students, etc.

Residence Life Faculty/Staff: This category includes individuals who aid residents within the housing campus community. This category is intended to recognize the Residence Life Faculty/Staff who are not eligible for the Resident Assistant category, and who have made contributions to the Residence Life community. Examples include, but are not limited to: Residence Coordinators (RC’s), Graduate Residence Coordinators (GRC’s), Residential Life Office Secretaries, etc.
Resident Assistant: Any individual within a residence hall student staff who has worked with/impacted residents on their floor, or in their hall. Nominees should have gone above and beyond the duties as outlined in their job description to support residents in the communities in which they work, as well as residence life organizations, and/or made outstanding contributions to the hall in which they work. 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. Examples include, but are not limited to: Resident Assistant, Conference Assistants, Desk Assistants, Senior Resident Assistants, etc.

Residential Community: This award should emphasize what the community has done, and how it has supported others (both within and outside of their community). The community being recognized must not be an official campus organization. The submissions should illustrate what brings a group of individuals together, and how they worked as a group to accomplish their goals. Communities that would be eligible for nomination in any other category are ineligible for nomination in the Community category. Examples include, but are not limited to: halls, floors, complexes etc.

Spotlight: This category includes anything that does not fall under any of the other categories that you feel is worth of an OTM recognition. Individuals or groups that would be eligible for nomination in any other category are ineligible for nomination in the Spotlight category.

Student: This category includes any individual enrolled as a student at the institution who has made outstanding contributions to the residence halls. Nominees could include, but are not limited to: students who have made a contribution to their floor, hall, organization, etc. through leadership, motivation, programming, volunteering, and/or being a role model for other residents. This OTM may address several areas of student life such as: academics, leadership, involvement, etc. Also of importance is how the nominee has balanced their roles as a leader, as a student, and displays good academic choices. Advisors, executive board members, first year students, and anyone that can be classified as being in the resident assistant category are not eligible for an award in this category.
Program Category:

♦ **Community Service Program:** A service or philanthropic program that benefits a group, charity, or other organization. The program should focus on the importance of the residents giving back to the communities in which they live. Examples include, but are not limited to: drives, fundraisers, days of service, etc.

♦ **Diversity Program:** A program that promotes and educates about diversity and understanding. This program illustrates the importance of promoting diversity in the residence halls, as well as embracing diversity in the everyday lives of the residents.

♦ **Educational Program:** A program meant to educate residents about a topic, issue, or idea. Programs nominated for this category can include, but are not limited to: academic success, learning a new skill, promoting global citizenship, etc.

♦ **Passive Program:** Any program that does not require anyone to actively run it for people to participate. This category is intended to recognize residential programming that occurs through: bulletin boards, newsletters, pamphlets, etc.

♦ **Social Program:** Any social program that focuses on resident interaction, and their ability to meet new people and socialize. Programs in this category can range from being a floor social program to a campus-wide program.
Examples of Regional Winning OTMs (2014-2015)

Written by Ms. LeAnne Hazard for the category of Resident Assistant, about her partner, Mr. Austin Segrave. August 2014. 587 words.

Second year Resident Assistant (RA), Austin Segrave, is definitely the best RA partner that I could ever have. After working with Austin last year through the University of Wyoming Residence Life and Dining Services department, I have gotten to know him pretty well. This year, he helped take my visions for our floor, and make them into a reality. We worked diligently together from the very beginning of training, and eventually were able to make our hopes of winning the “Directors Cup” for the best decorated floor in the Downey Hall community into a reality. I honestly couldn’t have done it without his positive attitude, his ability to put up with me, and his awesome dedication. Not only has Austin impressed me through working on floor-related projects, he also helped decorate the main lobby of Downey Hall for opening. When other members of our team were pre-occupied with personal conflicts, Austin, Nate (the Senior Resident Assistant), and myself were all able to work together to decorate the entire lobby. Although we were exhausted and frustrated with the other members of our team, Austin was able to keep us together and get the job done. Even further, Austin committed to volunteering for the set up and tear down of the Craig Morgan stage. Craig Morgan was the performer chosen by the Residence Life and Dining Services (RLDS) staff to perform for “Cowboy Connect”. Cowboy Connect is a RLDS sponsored event that aims to get freshman involved with each other during move-in weekend. Austin signed up for both set up and tear down, knowing very well that set up would occur the day prior to a full day of “Move-In” commitments, and that tear down would occur immediately following the Move-In commitments. Move-in at the University of Wyoming requires approximately 11 hours of engagement. After completing her Move-In commitments, Austin attended the concert, and then stayed after the Craig Morgan concert at 9:30pm to start tearing down the stage. By 10:30pm, less dedicated “volunteers” began to disappear. Austin, however, refused to let his lack of sleep get the best of him. As the projected four hours it would take to tear down the stage turned into five, six, and ultimately nine and a half hours, Austin did not let his spirits dwindle, and powered through the night. After being awake for over 24 consecutive hours, Austin remained dedicated to the efforts of the remaining volunteers tearing down the stage, and without him, nine and a half hours would have easily turned into twelve or more. Even further, Austin woke up bright and early the next morning to take Residents to the opening Wyoming Cowboys football game with me. Although we were both exhausted after the weekend’s activities, Austin stayed strong and helped me through the exhaustion with a positive attitude.
Furthermore, Austin helped with the setup and execution of another Cowboy Connect event, the “Welcome Foam Party”. Although he was not scheduled to work the event, Austin worked with the Residence Hall Association members to adequately mount the foam machine into a functioning position. Austin is always willing to step up to the plate to do what it takes to get the job done—I admire his work ethic and willingness to help others, even under extreme conditions. As Austin’s RA partner, I am excited to work with him in the coming year and continue to grow our friendship. I know I can always count on him when things get tough. Thank you Partner, I couldn’t do this year without you!

Written by Mr. Stanley DeVore for the category of Faculty/Staff, about his academic advisor, Dr. Pamela Langer. February 2015. 595 words.

Seldom in the course of an individual’s education is a professor encountered whose passion for their instructional work is extraordinary. One such professor in my sixteen years of education is Dr. Pamela Langer of the Molecular Biology Department at the University of Wyoming. Dr. Langer teaches Clinical Biochemistry—a course that focuses on a myriad disorders and the basic biochemical and physiological concepts at their roots. In Spring 2014, I had the opportunity to be one of her students; however, in Spring 2015 I have been fortunate enough to observe the inner workings of an outstanding professor from the perspective of one of her Teaching Assistants (TAs). In just February alone, I have seen Dr. Langer not only spend an astonishing amount of effort into the course, but also volunteering her time to help me develop my personal instructing skills.

Between Spring 2014 and now, Dr. Langer has completely revamped her Clinical Biochemistry course to include more active learning, from which students greatly benefit due to a more engaging learning format. For a certain class period in early February, despite the fact she already had materials prepared, Dr. Langer spent several hours the evening before changing the activities to make them more engaging for students. I was amazed by how a professor can dedicate that much time to changing already-prepared materials for the benefit of her students.

An active learning component that Dr. Langer incorporates into Clinical Biochemistry are “Human Illustrations”, which are plays written personally by Dr. Langer with the goal of helping students understand certain biochemical concepts. For the first human illustration called “B12, SAM, and the Folates” which emphasizes Vitamin B12 and Folate metabolism, Dr. Langer added several parts to the script that she had written for the smaller Spring 2014
class. Once again, she spent several hours one evening writing more roles into the script so more students could participate! In doing this, Dr. Langer took into account the talents and preferences of individual students, such as adding roles for a student wanting to wear a Wonder Woman outfit and another who excels at rocking the saxophone. In addition to rewriting the script, she has already committed several hours to rehearsals although the play will not be performed until March. Her passion for instructing pathological biochemistry is evident in the preparation of “B12, SAM, and the Folates.”

Lastly, Dr. Langer has assisted me personally in many ways in February. First, she has helped me become a more adequate TA for the course by emphasizing my own learning and comprehension of course material. Because of Dr. Langer, I now have a tendency to look deeper into the topics, which allows me to more effectively assist students in discussion sections. Second, Dr. Langer gave me the opportunity to research, write, and instruct a portion of a lecture on “Performance Enhancing Drugs.” With her guidance, I have become more confident in my instruction skills and my ability to convey foreign material to college upperclassmen. Third, Dr. Langer has volunteered her time to be my “adopted” advisor—she has counseled me in many of my academic choices over the past few months. In February specifically, she has provided valuable feedback on my personal resume, and with her direction I was able to redevelop it in a way that makes me appear much better on paper.

Dr. Langer is a very passionate individual as demonstrated by the countless hours of work she has put into her Clinical Biochemistry course and me as an individual. I wish more professors worked with as much fervor and excitement as her.

How to Submit OTMs

⇒ Create an account at otms.nrhh.org (you do not HAVE to, unless you’re a member of NRHH)

  Select “University of Wyoming”

  Select your default submitting organization.

  Fill out your personal information

  Submit

  Your account must be approved by the Vice President of Recognition.
⇒ After you’ve been approved, log into your account again at otms.nrhh.org (this is only required for NRHH members. You do NOT need to log in to submit an OTM; however, it is preferred that you do so).

⇒ Under “OTM Submissions”, select which type of OTM you would like to submit (either General or Program)

⇒ Enter all of your Nominee’s information with as much detail as possible

  Name

  Address (the more information, the better)

  Try for mailing addresses

  Room numbers

  Floor/Building

  Email Address (they will receive an email of their OTM the evening OTMs are due)

⇒ Type your OTM in a separate word document first. This will allow you to spell check your OTM prior to submission, and in case you hit “backspace” too many times, you will not lose all of your hard work filling in the OTM description!

⇒ Click “submit”.

⇒ Give yourself a “self high-five”! Thank you for submitting an OTM!

From there, the OTM committee will read through all of the OTMs for the month, and pick one submission per category to win at the Campus Level. The Vice President of Recognition formally submits the OTMs, and then the Regional OTM committee votes on the OTMs to go to the National Level.
Searching for Past OTM Submissions

If you add too much information to the search menu, your search will return no results. The best bet is to follow the instructions below for on-campus OTMs. You can search other schools/regions, etc. but keep in mind that your search may be TOO specific sometimes!

You do not need to be logged into your account to search OTMs.

⇒ Open the page otms.nrhh.org

⇒ On the left hand task bar, under “Search OTMs”, click the link for “Advanced Search”.

⇒ Fill in the fields as follows

⇒ The Month and Year can be changed to whatever you are hoping to view. This is where you can tell if your OTM has won on the Campus, Regional, or National levels!