



NRHH'S GUIDE TO

OF THE MONTH AWARDS



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For questions about anything in this guide, contact your regional ADNRRH or the NAN!

Citations

This guide was adapted from numerous previous OTM Guides from each of the 8 regions spanning across the past 15 years. We hope this information is helpful to you in your process of recognizing excellency on your campus.

Special thank you to MACURH, SWACURH, and PACURH for their previous guides' influence on making this guide even better!

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What is an OTM?

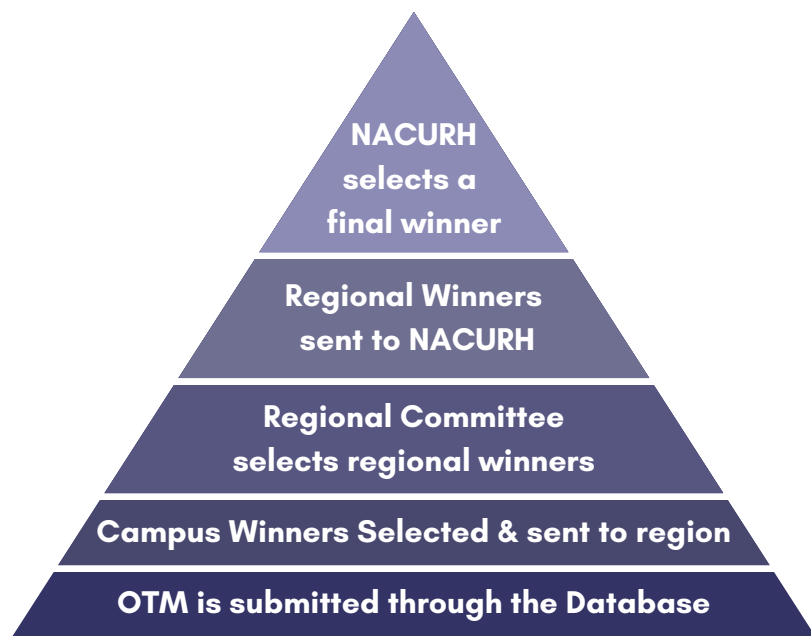
An OTM, or Of-The-Month, is a short-formal recognition essay, in which the writer nominates a person, group, organization, or program to be considered for recognition at the campus, regional, and NACURH levels. In short, an OTM is how campus leaders say “good job” to the person, group, or organization and let other schools know just how good the people, groups, organizations, and programs at their institution are doing! The writer (nominator or author) nominates their subject (nominee) for the (Category) Of-The-Month.

Why write OTMs?

OTMs provide much needed recognition for the valuable efforts and contributions of the many leaders in the residence halls and on campus. Whether recognizing a single leader, a group of leaders, or an effective program thrown by leaders, an OTM serves to congratulate and acknowledge the positive accomplishments while encouraging continued effort and even greater achievement.

Who can write OTMs?

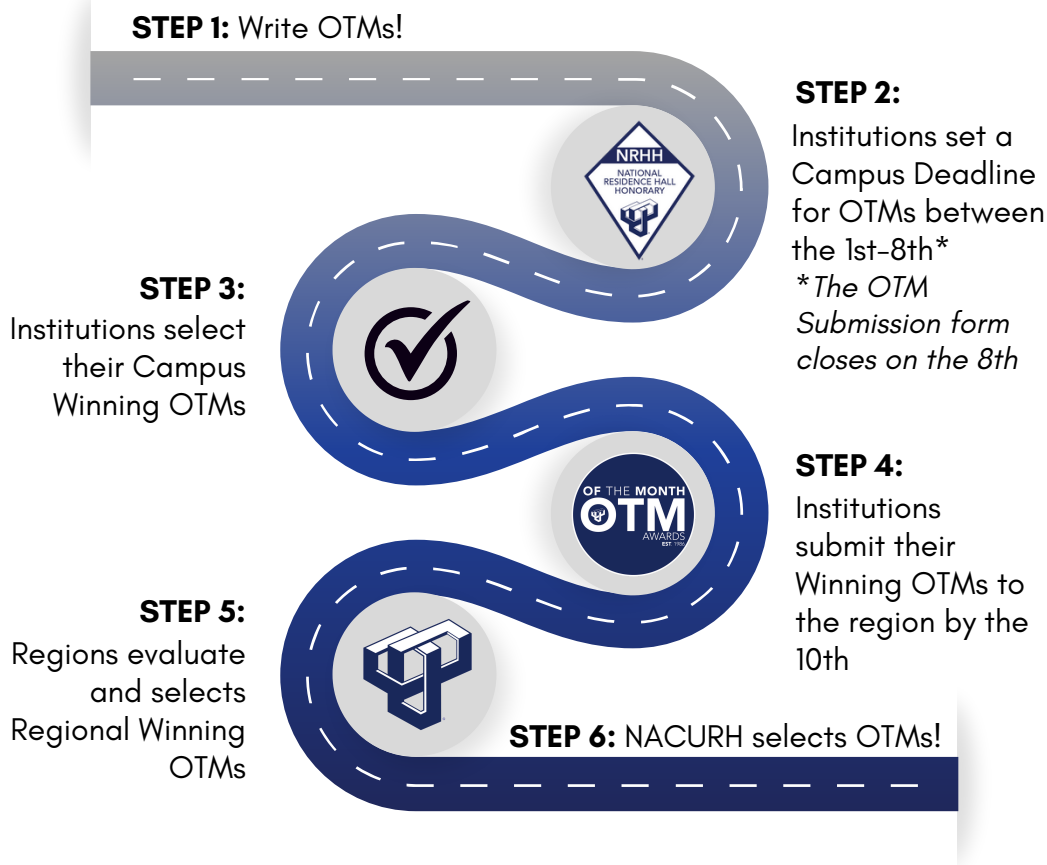
Anyone at an institution is eligible to write or be nominated for OTMs! Because of this, OTMs can be promoted in so many different ways to increase campus participation. Consider how your organization role models support of the OTM system and encourage others to write OTMs through incentives, rewards, and/or shoulder-tapping.



Life of an OTM

An OTM's life depends on its success. Each OTM that is submitted can be selected as a winner and then sent up to the next level. With less nominations at each level, this results in one NACURH winner in each category each month!

Understanding the OTM Timeline



The OTM Timeline can be quite confusing to those that aren't familiar with the OTM process! It may be easier to focus on the pieces that are most important to success at the campus level.

OTM Category Overview

There are 18 different categories of OTMs. These categories are divided into 2 very broad groups: General OTMs and Program OTMs. General OTMs include those focused on Housing Impact, Campus Impact, and Leadership Impact, while Program OTMs covers the 6 program categories.

Campus Impact

- Institution Faculty/Staff
- First Year Student
- Student
- Organization

Housing Impact

- Resident Assistant
- Student Staff Member
- Graduate Assistant
- Residence Life Professional Staff
- Residential Community

Housing Leadership Impact

- Executive Board Member
- Advisor

Program

- Educational Program
- Empowerment Program
- Passive Program
- Recognition Program
- Service Program
- Social Program

The 18th category (Spotlight) is a catch-all category for nominations for anything not fitting in the above categories.

OTM Descriptions

Advisor

- This category works to recognize the impact any individual who directly advises a residence life organization has made on the residence hall communities. Submissions will highlight outstanding contributions to the organization(s) and residence halls.
- *Examples: NRHH Advisor, RHA Advisor, Conference Advisor, etc.*

Educational Program

- This category works to recognize the importance of using programming space to educate members of the residential life community. A program meant to educate residents about a topic, issue, or idea.

Empowerment Program

- This category works to recognize the importance of programming focused on student empowerment. A program that promotes student reflection, uplifting others, and mentorship. This program illustrates the importance of promoting community engagement in the residence halls and broader community as well as embracing the empowerment of residents to act upon their best interests.

Executive Board Member

- This category works to recognize the 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 within their residence hall.
- *Example: NRHH President, Hall Council Secretary, NCC, etc.*

First Year Student

- This category works to recognize the impact a first year student (first-time first-year student, transfer student, or non-traditional student) has made on the campus community in and/or outside of housing campus communities. Submissions may also highlight the academic achievements, involvement, and contributions to the campus community.
- *Example: Residents, Neighbors, Hall Council Members, Hall Representatives*

Graduate Assistant

- This category works to recognize the impact that housing graduate assistant (GA) staff have on the housing campus communities. This category is intended to highlight the achievements of GAs who have gone above and beyond the duties as outlined in their job description to support housing campus communities.

OTM Descriptions (continued)

Institution Faculty/Staff

- This category works to recognize the impact that institution faculty or staff have on individuals outside of residence life who support students in their academics and/or personal affairs. This category is intended for individuals who have made a contribution to the campus community inside and outside of the classroom.
- *Examples: Professors, Dining Staff, Custodian Staff, Academic Advisors, etc.*

Organization

- This category works to recognize any residential life organization that has actively contributed to the student leadership, recognition, or other aspects of on-campus life during the month of nomination. Emphasis should be placed on the successes of the organization as a whole, not just a few members and should detail how they have helped their residence life community.
- *Example: RHA, NRHH, Hall Council, Student Government, Campus Activities Board*

Passive Program

- This category works to recognize residential life programming that does not require anyone to actively run it for participation. Submissions can focus on the outreach, impact, and achievements of the program.
- *Example: Bulletin Boards, Mail-box Stuffers, Door Dec Flyers, Door Hangers*

Recognition Program

- This category works to recognize programs that focus on recognition. This category is intended to highlight the importance of recognition across the residential housing community.
- *Example: End of Year Banquet, Kudos, Pass the Thing, Shoutouts*

Residence Life Professional Staff

- This category works to recognize professional staff members who aid residents within housing campus communities. Emphasis should be placed on the impact that the nominee has had on the residential life community and the students within it.
- *Examples: Resident Director, Coordinator, Assistant Director, Director, etc.*

Resident Assistant

- This category works to recognize Resident Assistants (RAs) or equivalent who impact individuals within housing campus communities. This category is intended to highlight the achievements of RAs who have gone above and beyond the duties as outlined in their job description to support residents in the communities and should focus on the accomplishments within the RA role.

OTM Descriptions (continued)

Residential Community

- This category works to recognize the impact that residential communities have on students living on-campus. This category is intended to highlight the achievements of the community (not programming) and how the communication has benefitted the residents living within it.
- *Example: Hall, Floor, Pod, Wing, Building, Complex, Community*

Service Program

- This category works to recognize the importance of service initiatives in residential life. A service or philanthropic program benefiting a group, charity, or other organization. The program should focus on the importance of the residents giving back to the communities they live in.

Social Program

- This category works to recognize the importance of programs that promote social interaction and engagement within the residential community. Any social program that focuses on resident interaction and their ability to meet new people.

Spotlight

- This category works to recognize the impact of anything that does not fall under any of the other categories that have made notable contributions to the campus community. Individuals or groups that would be eligible for nomination in any other OTM category are ineligible.
- *Example: Local Business, Campus Mascot, RA Team, Class Study Group*

Student

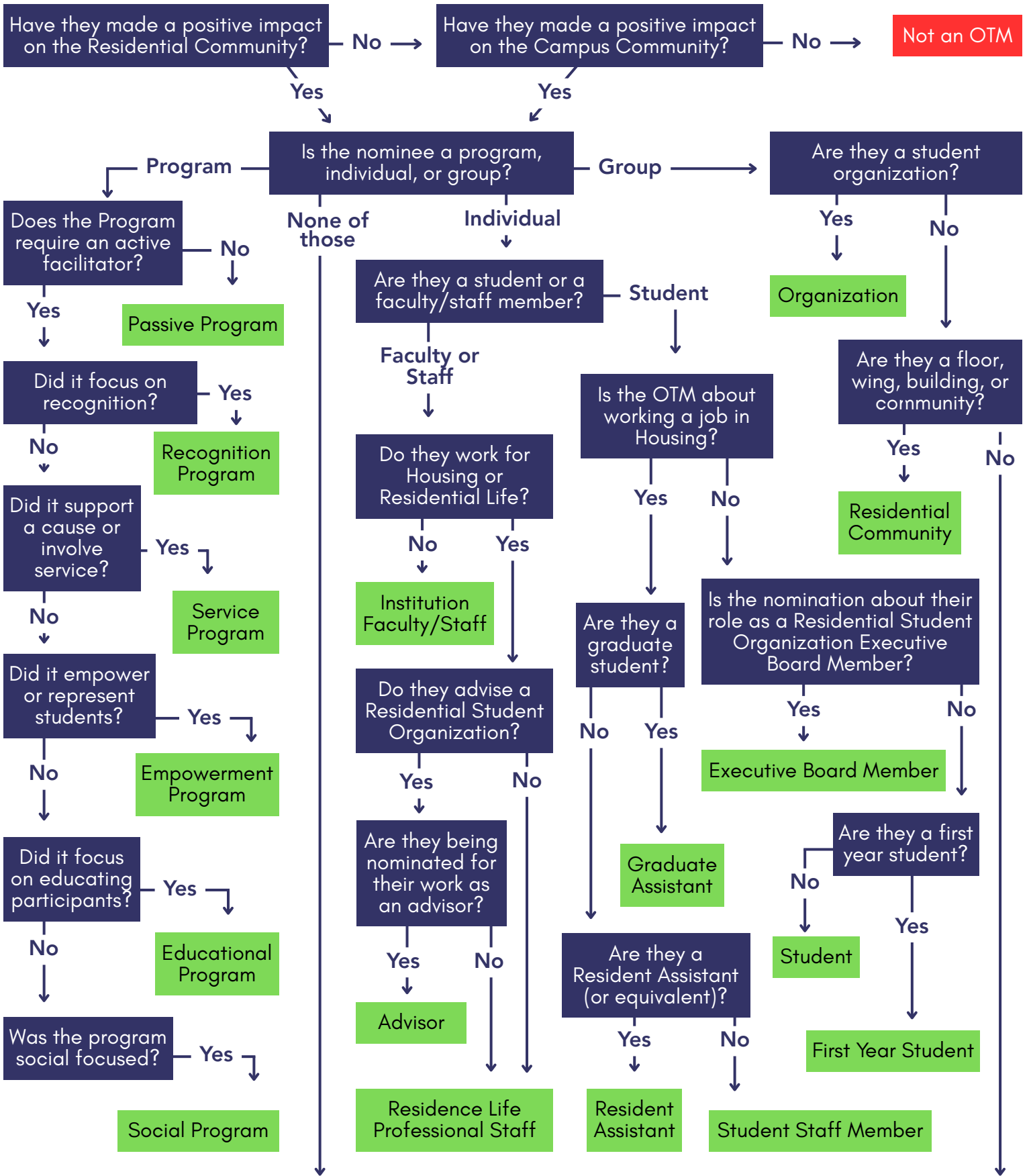
- This category works to recognize the impact enrolled students have on the campus community in and outside of the residence halls. This category is intended to highlight several areas of student life such as academic, leadership, involvement, etc.

Student Staff Member

- This category is intended for individuals who have made a contribution to the residential community. This category is intended to highlight the student staff members who have gone above and beyond the duties as outlined in their job description.
- *Example: Desk Attendant, Desk Supervisor, Front Office Assistant, Student Janitor*

Start Here!

OTM Flow Chart



Spotlight (the OTM subject does not fall under any other category)

Writing General OTMs

How the OTM is written is just as important as who or what the OTM is written about. The most deserving subject could be buried by a poorly written, unfocused, lacking OTM. It is the responsibility of the writer to ensure that the OTM selection committees are fully aware of the contributions made by the nominee and why those contributions deserve recognition. When you are writing, always remember to:

Offer	Translate	Magnify
Information, Details, Examples, and Experience	Acronyms, People, Events, and Titles	Accomplishments, Actions, and Merits
Give information. It is the writer's responsibility to explain what the nominee has done, specific accomplishments, details, examples, and personal experiences. The readers will not know something unless it is specifically stated in the OTM. Be specific. Use examples; avoid generalizations.	Make no assumptions. It is crucial to explain acronyms, people, events, and titles. People should include their title(s) and involvement. Do not assume titles will be understood. Events need to be fully clarified; readers won't necessarily be familiar with traditional programs, etc.	Why should people care? Before starting, ask yourself, "Why does this subject deserve recognition?" While writing, never forget your answer to that question. Always focus on that reason and ensure that readers will see that focus. Emphasize the outstanding accomplishments and avoid unrelated filler.

While 300 words may seem like a lot, you may find that using the tips above should set you well into the 300-600 range—which OTMs must be in for regional and NACURH recognition. Many subjects can hold deep significance to the writer and conveying that significance helps get longer, better OTM Submissions.

Writing Program OTMs

Program OTMs are formatted and submitted slightly different. While they can use the acronym explained above, Program OTMs differ from General OTMs in that, instead of having a single 600-word field, there are three fields addressing more specific information as follows:

Goals and Brief Description	Reflection on Impact	Recommendations for Improvement and Considerations for Adaptability
<p>Outline the happenings of the program. Be very specific. Highlight the unique aspects of the event that were successful and explain EVERYTHING.</p> <p>Explain, in detail, the programs objectives. DO NOT simply list them. Evaluate the program's ability to achieve these goals, including successes and shortcomings.</p>	<p>What will attendees take away from the program? What impacts did the program have on the community?</p> <p>Was the program a success? Evaluate the turnout, participation, and value of the program.</p>	<p>This section is really up to the opinion of the writer and aims to have information shared regarding how others can do this program as well or better.</p> <p>Address the issues of cost, location, and relevance to others. Provide tips for easy implementation and ideas for others to add their own flare to the program.</p>

Each of these fields require a minimum of 100 words for regional and NACURH consideration. While 100 is the minimum, 300 is the maximum. This allows for ample space to elaborate and share the best details about the specific program.

Taking your OTM to the NACURH-level

Nothing shows appreciation quite like recognition at the NACURH-level, but with only one NACURH winner in each category each month, it's quite a task. Here are some easy tips to ensure that your OTM has a fighting chance at the NACURH level:

Substance		
Criteria	Tips for Success	Avoid
OTMs should be filled with achievements and recognizable characteristics.	It is imperative to select a deserving nominee. Think of your typical 5-paragraph essay. If you can't easily name three "topics" for your body paragraphs, pick a new nominee.	Avoid non-achievements, such as: personal characteristics, traits, or scholastic success (i.e. "[name] is also a great student")
Month Specificity		
Criteria	Tips for Success	Avoid
Only achievements in the month of nomination are relevant.	Before writing, make a list of recognizable achievements for your nominee. Review and cross off those not within the month of nomination.	Avoid statements like "[name] has been an amazing leader in NRHH all year!"
Adhere to the Category		
Criteria	Tips for Success	Avoid
All substance in the OTM should directly adhere to the category description	Review the criteria for the category before writing your OTM. Eliminate any achievements that don't follow the category.	Avoid common mistakes like a nominee for Spotlight OTM that could fit in another category.
Word Count		
Criteria	Tips for Success	Avoid
Quality OTMs are thorough & complete. More words allow for more details and achievements.	Get as close to the word limit as possible without adding fluff. General OTMs: 500+ Words. Program OTMs: 250+ in each field.	Avoid repetitive sentences and unnecessary description for the sake of add words. If you can't fill a complete OTM, consider a different nominee.
Formatting/Spelling/Grammar		
Criteria	Tips for Success	Avoid
OTMs should be formatted in an easy to understand manner.	Use paragraphs; type the OTM in a word processor with spell check; use clear sentences with minimal run-ons.	Avoid one chunk of text for 500-600 words; avoid bulleted lists; avoid acronyms.

Submitting OTMs

OTMs are submitted on the OTMs website (otms.nrhh.org) through the OTM Database. Once on the submission form, the following fields are required on all OTMs

- Your Name
- Your Email
- Your Organization (Residence Hall/Campus Organization)
- Your Institution
 - If your institution is not on the dropdown list, contact the NACURH Associate for NRHH.

It is highly recommended to make an account on the OTM Database! This will allow you to see your past nominations, edit nominations (until the submission window closes), and even auto-fills some of the above information for your nomination!

The next page will ask you to select the category. Once selected the category description and eligibility will display to help ensure your submission is put in the correct category!

General OTMs

Once having selected a General OTM Category, you will fill in the submission page with the following fields:

- Nominee's Name
- Nominee's Email
- Nominee's Organization (Residence Hall/Campus Organization)
- The BODY of the OTM
 - Please explain the outstanding contributions of the nominee during the month of nomination, i.e., how the nominee addressed recognition, motivation, and support for you or your organization (min. 300 words, max. 600 words)

NOTE: You can include multiple emails!

Program OTMs

Once having selected a Program OTM Category, you will fill in the submission page with the following fields:

- Program Title
- Person in Charge (or organization)
- Person in Charge's Email
- Target Population (in numbers)
- Number of People in Attendance
- Date(s) of the Program
- Number of People to Organize
- Cost of the Program
- The 3 Sections of the Program OTM
 - Goals and brief description of program (min. 100 words, max. 300 words)
 - Reflection on impact of program (min. 100 words, max. 300 words)
 - Recommendations for improvement and considerations for adaptability (min. 100 words, max. 300 words)

Navigating the OTM Database

As of October 2025, the NACURH Associate for NRHH, Justin Luster, in coordination with the NRHH Board of Directors (NNBD) and the OTM Database Task Force, has officially launched the new OTM Database developed and owned by NACURH!

Logging In/Signing-up

For a quicker OTM writing and submission experience, it is highly recommended to make an account! You can easily do this using the sign-up feature in the top-right corner. You'll input your name, email, select your institution, and create a password!

Searching the Submissions Database

All OTMs are viewable by anyone visiting the OTM website! We hope that users can read other OTMs to get inspiration for writing their own OTMs, details on amazing programs happening across NACURH, and maybe even take some ideas back to your own campus!

Individuals can search the Submissions Database by visiting the Search OTM Submissions page. There are three (3) search fields that work alongside the six (6) filters to help you find what you're looking for! You can use any of the search bars and filters in combination to help narrow your search.

The search bars will search the following parts of an OTM:

- Whole nomination information
- Author
- Nominee

The filters will help narrow down results based on:

- Month
- Year
- Category
- Region
- Institution
- Award Status

OTM Traveling Award

The OTM Traveling Award was created to recognize member institutions that do an excellent job recognizing programs and individuals on their campus all year. Each institution that participates in OTMs is automatically in the running for this award. Institutions earn points by submitting campus winners and winning regional and/or NACURH-level OTMs. The breakdown is as follows:

Campus Winner: 5 points

Regional Winner: 10 points

NACURH Winner: 25 points

Points are calculated for each affiliation year from April to March of the following year.

OTM Resources

All NRHH's Resources can be found on the Resources page of the NRHH website under the About section!

- [NRHH Website](#)
- [NACURH Website](#)

Such resources include:

- [OTM Administrator Guide](#)
- [OTM Voting Rubric](#)
- [OTM Publicity Templates](#)
- [Writing a Program OTM](#)
- [5-Paragraph OTM Writing Method](#)

Each region may also have their own resources to help promote the OTM process!

For questions about anything in this guide, contact the NAN or your ADNRRH.

