

2.1.5 Staff Recognition Award Program

Program Objective

The objective of this program is to establish a formal mechanism for recognizing staff whose contributions have made a significant positive impact on the University or the broader community while supporting the university's mission and strategic priorities. Whereas merit increases are intended to reward staff for their sustained performance of regularly assigned duties, this recognition program is more strategically focused. It recognizes the contributions of employees that are above and beyond the normal scope of their job responsibilities.

This award is among the highest honor a staff member can receive from the University. Commitment to the university's mission and strategic priorities, including service, life-long learning, and achievement of the highest standards of excellence are cornerstones of this program.

Section I Eligibility

All current full- and part-time staff who have completed at least one year of service with the University may be nominated for this award. Ineligible for participation in the program are employees in the following categories:

- Senior-level staff such as members of the President's Staff and the Academic and Administrative Leadership Group
- Faculty
- Employees with a temporary, term, or casual appointment
- Student employees

Previous award recipients are subject to a five-year waiting period before they may be nominated and/or considered for a second award. Award recipients must be on the University payroll at the time of the award ceremony in order to receive the award.

Section II Awards

This program is designed to recognize two staff members annually who have demonstrated extraordinary leadership, service, and/or achievement in the area of education or community building. The awards associated with these achievements are the *Lifelong Learner Award* and the *Distinguished Citizen Award*.

A. Lifelong Learner Award

This award recognizes a staff member who has demonstrated a commitment to continuous learning, self-renewal, and professional development. The focus of learning should transcend the specific requirements of the individual's current job responsibilities. Though the award is given annually, activities documented on the nomination form will likely address learning over a longer period.

Demonstrating lifelong learning may include a documented history of

- Continuous pursuit of new knowledge and skills, such as acquiring new skills demanded by new technologies, changed work practices, and/or the requirement to be multi-skilled
- Participation in an apprenticeship, licensure program, or mentoring relationship (beyond the requirements of the nominee's job) to facilitate his/her own learning
- Completion of a degree program or learning project that reframes or revitalizes the staff member's career
- Involvement in self-study for the purpose of self-discovery or exploration; actions untaken to challenge him/herself and others to develop intellectually, personally, and spiritually while demonstrating the importance of lifelong learning

1 Nature of Award

Awardees receive a \$2,500 St. Thomas budget, which they may use to fund their own professional development or donate in their own name to a St. Thomas scholarship fund. Alternatively, awardees may donate a portion of the award to a UST scholarship fund and use the remainder for professional development. An awardee must use the funds during the calendar year in which the award is granted.

B. Distinguished Citizen Award (OR Community Building Award)

This award honors a staff member whose contributions reflect the qualities of good citizenship, such as providing service to others and advancing the common good for the campus and broader communities by enhancing the quality of life for others. Typically, an individual selected for this award meets two or more of the following criteria. He or she

- Is recognized as a positive role model and mentor in the campus community; enhances the quality of work-life in ways that make a significant difference for others; creates programs that bring together faculty, staff, and students.
- Engages in activities that help foster or create an inclusive and collaborative work environment that supports full utilization of all St. Thomas employees while fostering, encouraging, and supporting diversity.
- Performs an extraordinary act or service in the community, which could include acts of heroism, humanitarianism, charity or other forms of outstanding service. The service performed must be voluntary--not as paid work--and judged meritorious. The service can be within the last year or over a period of years.
- Makes a significant difference in the campus or greater community through a conscious commitment to public service; exhibits enthusiasm, energy, and determination in initiating positive change and heightening awareness of public service initiatives; recommends opportunities to others and encourages their participation.

1 Nature of Award

This award is in the form of a recognition leave, which provides an awardee 40 hours of paid time off to engage in community activities with a non-profit organization of his/her choosing. An employee who is awarded a recognition leave must work with his/her supervisor to determine when the office workload and departmental/unit coverage permits use of the leave. This paid leave time may be used at one time or incrementally during the calendar year in which the award is granted.

Section III Application, Nomination, and Selection Process

Nominations are solicited using the [Staff Recognition Awards Form](#). Any St. Thomas staff or faculty may nominate at any time during the calendar year an eligible staff member for one of the two awards. There shall be a special push for nominations from August through October with a November 15, deadline. All nomination materials must be submitted by the deadline.

A. Nomination Process

Using the award criteria as a guide, all nominations are typed and provide specific examples of the nominee's achievements and contributions that reflect the principle criteria and attributes stated above. Most successful award nominations are

- at least a few paragraphs long and provide details of the nominee's achievements and/or contributions
- accompanied by a minimum of three letters of recommendation from St. Thomas faculty or staff who know the nominee best and are familiar with his/her achievements and contributions

B. Selection Process

The Staff Recognition Awards Review Committee will review nominations and decide which nominations of an employee best meet the principle criteria of the award categories. The two Executive Vice Presidents, in collaboration with the Associate Vice President for Human Resources, shall make the decision if the committee is in a deadlock. If all nominations fail to meet the criteria in either award category, an awardee shall not be selected for the year.

Section IV Recognition Ceremony

Award recipients shall be honored each year at the University's Annual Faculty and Staff Recognition Ceremony. In addition to the specific award discussed in Section II above, recipients in each award category shall receive a honorary plaque, have their photograph displayed on the Human Resources Department website as an award recipient, and an article placed in the *Bulletin Today* recognizing this great achievement.

SECTION V Program Funding

This awards program is funded by a budget administered by the Vice President for Business Affairs/Chief Financial Officer.