Tips for Writing a Successful NPSS Award Nomination

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The purpose of this document is to describe how to prepare your nomination in a way that maximizes its chances of being selected. First, the nomination must be compliant with the IEEE Policy on Award Limitations, which states "Normally, an individual shall receive only one honor in recognition of a given achievement, unless the significance of the achievement is such as to merit subsequently a higher award. A higher award may be given in the following year or thereafter."

In the hierarchy of NPSS awards, IEEE level awards are considered higher than NPSS Society level awards, which are considered higher than NPSS Conference level awards. Technical Committee awards with a prize amount greater than $2K are considered Society level awards. Within a given award category, generally, the higher the monetary value, the higher the level of the award.

If an individual being nominated for any of our NPSS awards has already received any type of IEEE award for the same or similar work, the nominator must explain why the achievement for which the individual is being nominated is significantly different than that for which the previous award was given.

When applying for a lower level award, it will be the judgment of the NPSS Awards Committee to determine if the achievements are sufficiently different as to merit consideration for the lesser award.

When writing the award nomination, the most important thing to realize is that the NPSS is involved in a wide range of technical activities, many of which are highly specialized, so your challenge is to write the nomination so that Award Committee members can understand your nominee's contributions. While the seven members of the Awards Committee cover many technical fields, you can be certain that most, if not all, of the Committee members work *outside* of the field that your nominee has made contributions to.

Thus, a detailed description of technical accomplishments, while useful, is far from sufficient, as most of the Award Committee members are unable to evaluate de novo the importance of the work. Most Awards Committee members want to see some technical detail, but what they really look for is concrete and *quantitative* evidence of "impact"— how much has the nominee caused a paradigm shift or changed the way that others in the field perform their work? In short, it is better to focus on impact than technical detail.

Evidence of impact can come in many forms. Some of the easiest quantitative metrics can be taken from their publication record. The total number of publications are moderately helpful, but a much more valuable quantitative metric is the h-index (obtainable from the Web of Science), which is a measure of how many highly cited papers a person has published. Thus, giving the titles of and number of citations to the nominee's ~5 most highly cited papers is much more valuable than a long litany of their publications with no measure of their impact.

Money can also provide a useful quantitative metric. If the nominee's work has been incorporated in commercial products, an estimate of the annual sales of the products is quite helpful. Similarly, the monetary value of projects that they have lead or grants they

have received gives a measure of the value or impact of their work. The number of employees reporting to them is also a useful indicator.

Another evidence of impact is whether the technology / method developed by the nominee supplanted previous technologies / methods. Quantitative evidence for this might be the number of citations to old technology dropping sharply as the number of citations to the new technology rises.

Almost all nominees work in a collaborative environment, which implies that it can be difficult for the Committee to distinguish the contributions by the nominee from the contributions by the collaborators. A *brief* description of the nominee's role (project leader, responsible for one of the four major components, etc.) helps the Committee understand how much credit they should derive from a collaborative effort.

For applicants in the early stages of their career, the committee tends to look at the same sort of things that you probably look for when you read a recommendation letter for a student. Hearing that somebody was "among the top five students that I have supervised in my twenty year career" says much more than that they are "an outstanding student."

Finally, answer all of the questions and provide *all* of the data requested.