

Annual Undergraduate Awards Program – Judging Criteria

This document provides information about the current process and judging criteria for the Sigma Gamma Tau Annual Undergraduate Awards Program:

The selection of the national winner is a highly challenging task since the candidates are generally outstanding AE students. We have three judges, and they are experienced in judging technical competitions. As the application form indicates, the following items are the criteria for evaluating the credentials and qualifications of the nominees. Note that this is an unordered list and does not imply importance.

- Grade Point Average
- Rank in graduating senior AE class (if available)
- Academic honors and distinctions (such as membership in honorary societies)
- Extracurricular activities (both engineering and non-engineering activities; and length of service in each)
- Technical achievements such as special projects, technically related hobbies, published papers, etc. (with emphasis placed on engineering creativity used)

Almost all of the applicants score well in the first three bulleted items. In most years, these three are not significant discriminators among the majority of the candidates since most of the candidates are of very high quality. We have found the parameters that stand out for the top applicants is usually the students' emphasis on the 'volunteer' type work they do that is covered in the extra-curricular activities as well as technical achievements, employment & summer jobs, and their essay.

In general, candidates that distinguish themselves show evidence of longer duration participation in extracurricular activities (i.e., a deeper involvement and dedication to those activities, regardless of whether they are engineering or non-engineering). They also present a record of special projects, internships/co-op rotations, and paper publications or presentations at conferences. An essay that shows a clear vision for academic and career goals is also a major factor in rising above the other candidates.

As a pointer to candidates, the application should provide clear, concise statements that communicate academic honors and distinctions as well as the importance of those honors (e.g., "John E. Doe Scholarship recipient - one of only three sophomores in the College of Engineering so honored"). If one is an officer in a society (e.g., SGT, AIAA) note that position ("President 2019-2020"). If the candidate took a role of responsibility in a special project, clearly note the nature of that role ("Coordinated with five local airframe manufacturers to develop the awards package for the AIAA Region X Student Paper Conference"). If they were Chief Engineer for the DBF competition, explain that role ("Organized design reviews with the technical leads, acted as liaison with the academic advisor"). Also note every single paper and/or presentation at a conference. Industry internships and co-op rotations are common among most candidates but also set those who have them apart from those who do not. The essay acts as an important discriminator for a crop of very close candidates. A successful essay shows evidence of a clear vision for academic and career goals, and should also be well-organized, spell-checked and (at least mostly) correctly punctuated.

Our assigned criteria to the three judges are to be fair, and to consider only the application form and transcript for judging the applications.

This document was authored by Dr. Mohammad Sadraey, National Vice President, who was responsible for the Annual Undergraduate Awards program during 2018-21, and was presented as a report to the 2021 Convention.