

## Myths and Realities about the AGU Awards and Honors Nomination Process

**Myth:** The nomination itself doesn't really matter. The candidate's own accomplishments, like number of publications or h-index, determines who wins and loses.

**Reality:** The nomination packet is essential for a strong nomination. The best nominating packets link the accomplishments of the candidate with the expectations of the award, with a compelling, engaging narrative. The letter should lay out the candidate's credentials, but also why you and other supporters view this person as outstanding and worthy of a major award.

**Myth:** The reason why current awardees are mostly male is because this reflects the demographics of the most senior and accomplished scientists. It will naturally change as the diversity of the field increases.

**Reality:** Yes, the diversity of our field is weighted toward junior people, but this is not the only issue. A study of the Goldschmidt award for geochemistry found many senior women *who had never been nominated* had records equivalent or superior to the records of men *who had won* this prestigious award.

**Myth:** You should not ask to be nominated. If you are qualified, someone will take the lead and submit a nomination on your behalf.

**Reality:** If you think you are qualified for an award, ask a colleague to nominate you. Do not assume that you will be nominated just because you are qualified. Many highly qualified candidates are not nominated, and thus never win awards. A friendly request, and an offer to help out, can increase your likelihood of being nominated. Your engagement also helps the AGU by increasing the scope, diversity and quality of the nominated pool of candidates.

**Myth:** Only AGU Fellows can submit nominations for AGU Fellows

**Reality:** The AGU encourages all members to submit fellow nominations. Both fellows and non-fellows regularly submit nominations, with similar levels of success rates. In fact, in 2013, the success rate of non-fellows submitting nominations was higher than that of AGU Fellows.

**Myth:** Only senior scientists can nominate for major awards

**Reality:** The AGU encourages all members to submit award nominations, including junior scientists. Women are especially encouraged to submit nominations: although women account for about 24% of AGU membership, only 14% of nominations are submitted by women, and most of these are for male colleagues.

**Myth:** Only senior scientists should write support letters

**Reality:** A strong nomination packet can include senior, junior, and peer-level support letters. It is true that engaging senior scientists may strengthen a nomination, because they are more likely to have read and written more nomination letters, and may have insights that would present the candidate in a competitive manner. However, review panels value multiple perspectives on the candidate, and junior scientists (e.g. former students or post-docs) offer a high-value input into the review process.

**Myth:** If a junior person wants to submit a nomination, he/she should have a senior person sign the nomination letter.

**Reality:** Junior scientists are encouraged to submit nominations, either solo, or with other co-signers. Any nominator should take time to understand the award criteria, and build a case for the candidate. Strong nominations usually include a mix of letters, so a junior nominator would be encouraged to engage senior letter-writers and/or co-signers, and senior nominators are encouraged to engage junior colleagues.

**Myth:** The nomination process should be secret - the candidate should never know whether or not he/she was nominated

**Reality:** The AGU does not require or expect nominations to be secret. It is well-established that secrecy in salaries adversely affects women (the motivation for a 2014 U.S. law protecting workers who discuss their salaries). In a similar vein, transparency in the awards nominations would very likely benefit underrepresented groups. Transparency can also lead to stronger nominations, by ensuring access to an up-to-date CV and the candidate's own thoughts on their accomplishments. Most scientists also feel good to have been nominated by a colleague, even if they don't win.

Still, some AGU nominators have personal preferences about submitting confidentially, and some non-AGU awards (MacArthur, Heinz, etc.) require that nominators keep a nominations secret from the candidate. Thus, scientists are encouraged to keep an up-to-date CV, research description and publications on a website to support peers in preparing secret nominations, even though such secrecy is not required by AGU.