



ULTIMATE GUIDE TO WRITING OTM'S

<http://otms.nrhh.org>

Written by Joseph McKenna, IACURH AD-NRHH Spring '02
Revised by Erik T. Elordi, Vandal Chapter President Spring '03
Revised by Nicci Virell, Vandal Chapter OTM Coordinator Fall '04
University of Idaho

Why should you write OTM's?

OTM's are a way to recognize others. Recognition is a wonderful way to show appreciation and support to your Hall, Resident Assistants, Communities, Students, and Advisors for their hard work. Making people feel appreciated and supported will encourage them to continue going above-and-beyond, and will inspire them to do even more in the future. Lack of recognition can lead to negative leadership in the future by making people feel unappreciated and not supported. Recognition will help the quality of leadership grow with no boundaries. In addition, writing an OTM is not very time-consuming.

Steps for writing an AMAZING OTM

The following guidelines will help you set-up and write an amazing OTM.

1. Starting an OTM

Start an OTM by choosing your candidate. Think about the past month and reminisce about what went extraordinarily well and who went above-and-beyond. If you need help, ASK OTHERS what they had observed during the past month. Other people are great resources because they can add to the SCOPE and QUALITY of the OTM; they act as another set of eyes and can give you details that you might not have seen. Usually there are many people, programs, and groups worthy of an OTM, but never get recognized, so utilizing other people can help recognize those who deserve it.

Strive to get as many people and programs recognized each month with an OTM, but do not OVERSTRETCH yourself. Make sure you ask for help when you need it. Co-writing OTM's is a great way to save time, but still write that AMAZING OTM. If you have trouble remembering what happened during which month and who went above-and-beyond, keep a list of the people, groups, and programs that deserve recognition so that when the end of the month comes, writing an OTM is faster and easier.

2. Choosing the Type and Category

After you have chosen the candidate, the next step is to choose the appropriate type of OTM and the category it fits into. Follow the category guidelines very carefully so that your OTM is judged in the correct category. If, for example, a Resident Assistant was nominated in the Spotlight Category, the OTM would have to be reconsidered, losing valuable time and effort in the process. When writing the OTM in a certain category, STRESS how that person, group, or program is EXTRAORDINARY. Did they go above-and-beyond their job requirements? What is so SUPER cool about this group? What made the program so AMAZING?

TWO Types of OTM's

- a. **Program OTM:** the Program OTM's recognize an AMAZING Program or Event. There are 4 categories of Program OTM's:
 1. Social
 2. Educational
 3. Community Service
 4. Diversity

b. General OTM: the General OTM recognizes a specific person or group of people. There are 7 categories of General OTM's:

1. **Advisor:** Advisors do an extraordinary amount of work that goes unseen. This award applies to all Residence Hall Advisors, as well as Advisors of campus organizations. This includes GARD's, AC's, RHA Advisor, and NRHH Advisor. House Directors and Area Assistants can fit in this category if you are describing their hard work as an advisor; otherwise, they can be written under Resident Assistant. Did your advisor help you with something super important?
2. **Community:** A "Community" OTM can be written about a hall, an area, a specific floor, a club or organization, and any residence hall group that has worked together during the month to do something totally amazing.
3. **Executive Board Member:** E-Board members are amazing leaders in the residence halls. They work hard to keep the halls a fun place to live. This award applies to RHA and NRHH E-board members, not hall E-Board members.
4. **National Residence Hall Honorary Chapter:** Has your NRHH Chapter been super busy recognizing others, putting on programs, and doing community service projects? In this category, you can recognize the entire chapter for their hard work within the halls.
5. **Resident Assistant:** Resident Assistants work very hard in creating a community, a home away from home, within the residence halls. Did your RA or a fellow staff member do something extra special and totally amazing? Did they do something ABOVE-AND-BEYOND?
6. **Spotlight:** Candidates in this category can include a maintenance worker, a food service worker, a professor, a student body Senator, a housing employee, or anyone who does not fit within the other categories. They must have clear contact with or influence in the residence halls
7. **Student:** Students within the residence halls include any resident and Hall E-board members. Be sure to include all activities and positions this person may have, along with their academics and other extra efforts within the residence halls.

3. Filling in Information

After deciding which candidate and category you want to write about, you need to fill out the appropriate information for the person, group, or program you are recognizing. To do this, it is recommended that you interview the person or group involved, so that you can record the correct information. If you want to keep it a secret until they receive an award certificate, talk to others and try to get accurate information. Be as complete as possible.

4. Writing the OTM

There are not many limitations on OTM's. Let your CREATIVITY run wild. Go the extra mile for the person or group that already went there. In a general OTM, you have 600 words to use. It is recommended that you have an introduction, body, and conclusion, just like an English Paper. The introduction should give a complete background about the person, group, or program that is being written about, and why they are so AMAZING. The body will give all the details. Make sure you are THOROUGH. The conclusion should summarize the body, cap things off, and leave the reader with a lasting impression of why he/she/they are so AMAZING.

Like an English paper, AVIOD spelling and grammatical errors like the plague. You will not be "docked" for these, but it will help the OTM look more professional, easier to read and follow, and more thoughtful. If the OTM is hard to decipher, it is twice as hard to judge.

LASTLY and MOST IMPORTANTLY, make your OTM MONTH SPECIFIC. What is month-specific you may ask? Month-specific is writing the OTM with events that happened within that certain month. For example, if you are writing about how SUPER your RA was during October, make sure to include only those things that happened in October, and not things that happened the month or year before. An OTM, a.k.a. Of the Month, needs to be only about the month it is written for.

5. Writing a program OTM

It is a very simple process when writing a Program OTM. You start by doing the above steps, but in the actual writing of the program OTM, there are topics you need to cover, including the origin of the program, a short description, program goals, positive and lasting effects of the program, a short evaluation, and how it can be adapted to other campuses. The online form separates these topics for your comfort. When writing a program OTM, make sure you have interviewed the coordinator of the program or are co-writing it with them. This is EXTREMELY helpful when describing the details of the program, evaluating it, and adapting it to other campuses. Answer all the topics to the best of your ability and make sure you put some thought into adapting the program to another campus.

After you submit your OTM, what happens next?

After you submit your OTM by the 7th of every month, your OTM could go all the way to nationals! All OTM's are collected for the month and organized into the appropriate categories. The NRHH Vandal Chapter members will get together and judge them on the specific criteria, outlined above. The OTM Coordinator will recognize each OTM nominator and nominees for their efforts. The NRHH members will judge the OTM's and choose the best from each category to be sent to the regional level; we are part of the IACURH region.

At the regional level, the best OTM's from approximately 30 schools compete for the best in each category. Regional level OTM's are judged by the Associate Director of NRHH (AD-NRHH) for IACURH and his/her committee. Regional OTM winners will receive a surprise award at the Golden Joes, along with a certificate from the AD-NRHH.

After the winners are chosen regionally, they are forwarded onto the national level. The National NRHH Office is in charge of judging the OTM's won from each of the 8 regions. Here your OTM would compete against the best in the 7 other regions for the grand title of NATIONAL OTM. It is very difficult to win National OTM's; we have won a few in the past year. Each National winner receives a pin and certificate for their greatness.

What makes OTM's stand out at the school, regional, and national levels?

Basically, OTM's win because they share certain similar characteristics. All acronyms need to be spelled out, so that everyone understands what is what. Acronyms such as RHA, RA, and AC are not universal; expect the reader to know nothing about your school when you write the OTM. Also, DO NOT MAKE UP INFORMATION. Tell the truth but do not embellish it. Make the person or group sound like they are SUPERMAN or WONDERWOMAN, and the program to be like a day at DISNEYWORLD. Making a difference is a HUGE deal, so show it in your OTM.

Reminders:

Make sure to have your OTM's submitted to <http://otms.nrhh.org> by 11:59pm the 7th of each month for the previous month's outstanding person, group, or program!

Additional Resources or Information

Vandal NRHH Web page: <http://www.reshalls.org/nrhh>

National NRHH Web page: <http://www.nrhh.org>

Anthony Wilen, NRHH President: 885-9611 or wile7406@uidaho.edu

Nicci Virell, OTM Coordinator: 885-7519 or vire1125@uidaho.edu