



2026 STUDENT LIFE

Leadership Awards

2026 Ohio State Leadership Awards Descriptions

- All applications, nominations, and supporting documents must be submitted by 11:59 pm on Wednesday, January 28, 2026.
- All letters of recommendation must be submitted by 11:59 pm on Friday, January 30, 2026.
- Note: letters of recommendation can only be submitted **after** the corresponding application has been submitted. The recommender link will auto-generate in the application confirmation email. Applicants should forward link to their recommender well in advance of the deadline.

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS-----

Boehm Holistic Wellness Leadership Award (sponsored by the Student Wellness Center)

Sponsored by the Student Life Wellness Center, this award recognizes Buckeyes who have promoted holistic wellness through leadership.

Students may apply on their own behalf or be nominated by a faculty/staff/student

Application Requirements: Online application

The Celena Irby Award (sponsored by Student Life Disability Services)

This award is presented to a student employee of Student Life Disability Services (SLDS) who has demonstrated a positive attitude, given exemplary assistance, and provided dedicated service to students with disabilities. Nominations may come from any student served by Disability Services, Disability Services student employee or Disability Services staff member. No more than one nomination per person will be accepted (i.e., one person cannot nominate several individuals).

Students may apply on their own behalf or be nominated by a faculty/staff/student

Application Requirements: Online application

Community Engaged Leader Award

This award is designed to recognize the efforts of students at The Ohio State University who have demonstrated excellent commitment to community engagement and ethical service work. The committee will recognize those students who have demonstrated leadership at the college level and who demonstrate potential for great leadership in community engagement at Ohio State and after graduation. A successful applicant will articulate how their definition of “community engagement” has evolved since beginning college and will have a deep connection to the work of global citizenship. This award is developed in memory of Connor Jones, who was a fierce advocate for Buck-I-SERV Alternative Breaks and community engagement efforts at Ohio State and was deeply committed to the impact that college students can and should have on their community.

Students may apply on their own behalf or be nominated by a faculty/staff/student

Application Requirements: Online application



2026 STUDENT LIFE

Leadership Awards

The Dick Maxwell Award (Sponsored by Student Life Disability Services)

The award is presented to a staff or faculty member who has made an outstanding contribution to a student with a disability or to Disability Services including: Significantly improving or enhancing the quality of the higher education experience in ways that make a substantial difference for a student with a disability, or contributing to outstanding and sustained improvement in the services provided by Disability Services, or their department with respect to students with disabilities. All full-time or part-time faculty and staff members at The Ohio State University are eligible to receive this award. Any student, faculty or staff can nominate a person or department for this award. You may also submit your nomination statement in audio format: email the audio file to Dylan Delay at delay.14@osu.edu. The nominating statement should include specific examples of the contributions that the nominee has made.

Staff can apply on their own behalf or be nominated by faculty/staff/students

Application Requirements: Online application

Dr. Ellamae Simmons Award

Born in 1918 in Mount Vernon, Ohio, Dr. Ellamae Simmons dreamed of becoming a physician. She was initially denied from Ohio State's nursing program because of her race but ended up joining the Red Cross and served in the U.S. Army Nursing Corps for more than three years during World War II. Following the war, she applied again to Ohio State and was accepted to the Biological Sciences program. Dr. Ellamae Simmons went on to earn her Masters in Social Work from Ohio State, and her medical degree from Howard University. This award, which includes a monetary award, recognizes students who have demonstrated exceptional leadership and service – with particular regard to issues at the intersection of race and gender. This award comes with a scholarship award.

Students must apply on their own behalf. They may be nominated but must still complete the application themselves.

Application Requirements: Online application, resume, and recommendation or nomination letter

Kaplan Humanitarian Award

The Kaplan Humanitarian Award was first awarded in 1961 to honor Rabbi Harry Kaplan who served as director of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation for 34 years and whose love for all people has helped make Ohio State a world-class leader in higher education. This award, which includes a monetary award, is given each year to acknowledge students whose efforts, on behalf of intercultural, interfaith and/or interracial understanding, have made a distinctive contribution toward achieving the ideas for which Rabbi Kaplan stood. Applicants must be in good academic standing with at least a 2.5 GPA.

Students must apply on their own behalf. They may be nominated but must still complete the application themselves.

Application Requirements: Online application, resume, and recommendation or nomination letter



2026 STUDENT LIFE

Leadership Awards

Outstanding First-Year Student Award

This award is designed to recognize the early accomplishments of first-year students at The Ohio State University. Any undergraduate, first-year student (no more than one completed semester at the time of application) is eligible for this award. Applicants must be in good academic standing with at least a 2.5 GPA. The period of eligibility includes involvement/experiences from Summer 2025 to present. The committee will recognize those students who have demonstrated leadership at the college level and who demonstrate potential for great leadership at Ohio State. A successful applicant will articulate how their definition of “leadership” has evolved since beginning college, demonstrate involvements that align with personal values, describe responsibilities and accomplishments related to involvement, and illustrate awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses.

Students must apply on their own behalf. They may be nominated but must still complete the application themselves.

Application Requirements: Online application or nomination, resume, and recommendation or nomination letter.

Outstanding Senior Award

The Outstanding Senior award is among the highest honors conferred to undergraduate student leaders. This award recognizes less than 1% of graduating seniors who excel in leadership, service, and scholarship throughout their tenure at Ohio State. Applicants must be in good academic standing with at least a 2.5 GPA. Any undergraduate student who graduates in Spring, Summer, or Autumn of 2026 is eligible for this award. A successful applicant will articulate what involvement/service/research/employment/study has made the most significant impact on their life, how they have contributed to a community during their time at Ohio State, what challenges they faced during their time as a college student, and how involvement has influenced their plans after graduation.

Students must apply on their own behalf. They may be nominated but must still complete the application themselves.

Application Requirements: Online application, resume, and recommendation or nomination letter.

Outstanding Graduate/Professional Student Award

Among the highest honors conferred to graduate and professional students, this award recognizes those who have made outstanding contributions in leadership and service outside their academic program. Students should also have demonstrated the ability to balance scholarship with their leadership and involvement. Eligibility includes graduate and professional students who are currently enrolled in an academic graduate or professional program. Applicants must be in good academic standing with a 3.00 GPA or equivalent. A successful applicant will articulate what they have learned about “leadership” that positions you to be a leader within your community or professional field – and how you have made a significant contribution to a community during your time as a graduate/professional student.

Students must apply on their own behalf. They may be nominated but must still complete the application themselves.

Application Requirements: Online application, resume, and recommendation or nomination letter.



2026 STUDENT LIFE

Leadership Awards

Outstanding Green Buckeye Award (sponsored by Student Life Sustainability)

This award was established in 2011 by the Office of Student Life and the President's and Provost's Council on Sustainability. The award is now presented each year by Student Life Sustainability. This award recognizes undergraduate, graduate or professional students who have shown outstanding leadership in furthering sustainability efforts at The Ohio State University. Candidates are evaluated based on demonstrated leadership, scale of environmental impact, creativity and innovation and measurable results.

Students may apply on their own behalf or be nominated by a faculty/staff/students.

Application Requirements: Online application

Outstanding Student Advocate Award (sponsored by Student Life Disability Services)

Established in 2017, the Outstanding Student Advocate Award is presented to an Ohio State student (undergraduate, graduate or professional) who has been an exemplary advocate for disability access and inclusion.

Students may apply on their own behalf or be nominated by a faculty/staff/students.

Application Requirements: Online application

Patricia M. Carlton Award (sponsored by Student Life Disability Services)

The Patricia M. Carlton Award is to honor a non-traditional student who has shown achievement academically while balancing a career and family life, or who is returning to school for the first time/after time away. This award is in recognition of the unique challenges an adult learner with a disability faces.

Students may apply on their own behalf or be nominated by a faculty/staff/students.

Application Requirements: Online application

Stanley D. Gottsegen Leadership Award

The Stanley D. Gottsegen Leadership Award recognizes one student leader annually who has demonstrated outstanding involvement in co-curricular activities with a scholarship award. Students must be current undergraduate juniors or seniors involved in one of the following organizations: Undergraduate Student Government, Ohio Union Activities Board, Greek Governing Councils, Makio, or Ohio Staters, Inc. Students must apply on their own behalf. This award comes with a scholarship award.

Students must apply on their own behalf. They may be nominated but must still complete the application themselves.

Application Requirements: Online application, resume, in-person interview (letter of recommendation or nomination not required. Interviews will be scheduled with finalists after an initial review of applications)

Outstanding Student Veteran Award (sponsored by Military and Veterans Services)

Established in 2025 by the Office of Student Life and Military & Veterans Services, this annual award honors one student—undergraduate, graduate, or professional—who is currently serving in the U.S. Military or has completed their service. The recipient is recognized for outstanding campus leadership and significant contributions to the military-connected community at The Ohio State University. Selection is based on demonstrated leadership, involvement, and measurable impact within the university community.

Students can apply on their own behalf or be nominated by faculty/staff/students

Application Requirements: Online application



2026 STUDENT LIFE

Leadership Awards

Willie J. Young, Sr. Staff Impact Award (sponsored by Willie J. Young Sr. Off-Campus and Commuter Student Engagement)

Sponsored by Willie J. Young Sr. Off-Campus and Commuter Student Engagement, this award will focus on professionals whose commitment to a student or group of students exemplifies what it means to care for, mentor and support students in the face of adversity. This award is in memory of Willie J. Young Sr., who took care of students and colleagues alike with care and without judgement. Winners of this award will embody those values in how they support students.

Staff can apply on their own behalf or be nominated by faculty/staff/students

Application Requirements: Online application

Willie J. Young, Sr. Student Impact Award (sponsored by Willie J. Young Sr. Off-Campus and Commuter Student Engagement)

This award will focus on students who have had a positive impact on their off-campus community. This award is in memory of Willie J. Young, Sr., who exemplified what it means to engage and support those in our community with care and without judgement. Winners of this award will embody these values in how they positively impact their off-campus community.

Students can apply on their own behalf or be nominated by faculty/staff/students

Application Requirements: Online application



2026 STUDENT LIFE

Leadership Awards

STUDENT ORGANIZATION AWARDS -----

Application Requirements: Online application form completed by a member of the organization or a peer. Organizations must be Active or Pending with Ohio Union & Student Activities to be eligible to win an award.

Boehm Holistic Wellness Leadership Award (Sponsored by the Student Wellness Center)

Sponsored by the Student Life Wellness Center, this award recognizes student organizations who have promoted holistic wellness through leadership.

Outstanding New Student Organization

Ohio State believes in the value of student organizations and celebrates the new organizations formed each year. We recognize that the achievements of established student organizations and new student organizations differ and seek to celebrate the extraordinary effort and accomplishment of student organizations that have high achievement in their first year of operation. This award recognizes new student organizations that make extraordinary contributions to campus and their members through membership development, programming, commitment to academics, and/or active citizenship in their first year of registration.

One award will be given to the most outstanding new student organization. Other outstanding applicants may be given the title of Honorable Mention.

Student Organizations must have first registered with the Office of Student Life within the last 12 months to be eligible for this award.

Student Organization of the Year

Formerly the Outstanding Overall Student Organization Award, the Student Organization of the Year Award is not application-based. Organizations who apply for and are outstanding applicants for the Student Organization Excellence Awards will be considered for the Student Organization of the Year Award.



2026 STUDENT LIFE

Leadership Awards

Student Organization Excellence Awards (sponsored by Ohio Union and Student Activities)

The success of student organizations contributes to helping students Engage, Learn, and Thrive. The excellence awards are designed to recognize student organizations whose work over the past year demonstrates notable accomplishments in Finances, Operations, Relationships, and Membership, the four domains within the Student Organization Framework. Applications should demonstrate examples of work in the category on or after January 1, 2025 that have taken place by the time the application is submitted.

- **Finances:** Student organizations are expected to be financially self-sustaining which includes the generating and spending of funds, establishing fiscal policies and procedures, and using financial resources ethically in ways that are aligned with the organization's purpose and goals. Demonstrated excellence in finances and financial management can take many forms including but not limited to creating and maintaining operation and program budgets, establishing financial procedures, roles and accountability, maintaining accurate records, generating funds to meet organizations goals, and utilizing university funding resources. The application should explain how the selected activity demonstrates the organization's creative approaches to managing their finances effectively.
- **Operations:** An organization's operations are the structures and procedures that allow the organization to function efficiently. Demonstrated excellence in organization operations can take a variety of forms, including but not limited to establishing officer reporting lines and role responsibilities, managing communications methods, accounts, and content, monitoring constitution and governance process, engaging in strategic planning and goal setting, initiating leadership transitions and having a transition plan, coordinating meeting and activities for the organization, keeping accurate organization records, and complying with university policy. The application should explain how the selected activity demonstrates the organization's structures and processes to manage their overall operational effectiveness.
- **Relationships:** Student organizations have an opportunity and obligation to connect with others, whether that be other student organizations, our campus, or broader communities. Demonstrated excellence in organizational relationships can take many forms including but not limited to engaging with external stakeholders (other organizations, campus departments, local community members), building and maintaining relationships and engagement with alumni, identifying purposeful partners and building long-lasting partnerships, engaging in partnership with an inclusive and open mindset, community building with others, sharing organization information with others through intentional marketing and community outreach, and contributing positively to the overarching Ohio State campus culture. The application should explain how the selected activity fosters engagement and contributes to communities larger than themselves.
- **Membership:** Student organizations are expected to provide positive experiences to the members from start to finish. Demonstrated excellence within Membership can take a variety of forms including but not limited to the intentional recruiting and onboarding of new membership, investment in member retention, engaging in leadership development for members, supporting member wellness and safety, celebrating and valuing individual differences, hosting intentional meetings and activities, participating in philanthropy and service opportunities, and recognizing members for their individual success and engagement with the organization. The application should explain how the selected activity has created opportunities for their members to learn about their own strengths and abilities, gain confidence, and build a sense of community.



2026 STUDENT LIFE

Leadership Awards

Outstanding Student Organization Program (sponsored by Ohio Union and Student Activities)

Ohio State student organizations host thousands of events throughout the academic year, contributing not only to the student experience of their own members, but to the campus community as well. Outstanding programs promote the mission of the organization, meaningfully involve members in the planning and execution of the event and make a lasting impact on membership and/or the campus community. Successful programs will align with the Student Organization Framework.

Both collaborative and non-collaborative (i.e. programs run by a single organization) are eligible to apply. Collaborative programs have two additional questions.

Outstanding Green Buckeyes – Sustainable Student Organization Award (Sponsored by Student Life Sustainability)

Sponsored by Student Life Sustainability and in its inaugural year, this award is presented to a student organization that has shown outstanding leadership in furthering sustainability efforts at The Ohio State University. Candidates are evaluated based on demonstrated leadership, scale of environmental impact, creativity and innovation and measurable results.

Risk Reduction Leadership Award (Sponsored by Risk and Emergency Management)

The Risk Reduction Leadership award recognizes student organizations who demonstrate exceptional commitment to create a safe, welcoming and supportive environment within the Ohio State University community. This award honors student organizations who proactively identify and mitigate risks and contribute to a culture of safety through intentional planning, education, and action.



2026 STUDENT LIFE

Leadership Awards

NOMINATION-BASED AWARDS -----

Nomination Requirements: Online nomination form completed by a university faculty member, staff member, or current student on behalf of another. Self-nominations are not accepted in this category.

Outstanding Mentorship Award (sponsored by Buckeye Leadership Fellows)

Buckeye Leadership Fellows foundationally believes in the impact it makes through leadership and helping others. We work to build communities and mentorship opportunities for those around us, to be stronger together. This award recognizes individuals who go above and beyond to foster mentorship for those in their lives. This individual embodies leadership, empathy, and embraces taking the path less traveled. They go above and beyond in their duties and help create personal and professional development opportunities for those on campus. To recognize that our Buckeye Nation extends beyond the university, this award is presented in two categories

- **Faculty/Staff Mentor:** Individuals nominated in this category should be faculty or staff at the university
- **External Mentor:** Individuals nominated in this category should have roles outside of the university but be nominated for their work in supporting a current Ohio State student

Outstanding SEE Student Employee Award (sponsored by Buckeye Commons)

On-campus student employment is one of many ways for students to get involved at Ohio State and build skills that will serve them throughout their lifetimes. Sponsored by the Student Employee Experience program and Buckeye Commons, this award is selected based on nominations received from supervisors or co-workers and recognizes the contributions of student employees in Student Life offices. Recipients have gone above and beyond their basic job responsibilities and made significant contributions to their offices. Assistantship appointments are not eligible for this award.

Outstanding SEE Supervisor Award (sponsored by Buckeye Commons)

Sponsored by the Student Employee Experience program and Buckeye Commons, this award recognizes Student Life staff who supervise students. These supervisors use employment as a means to teach leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving. These supervisors have gone above and beyond in their efforts to use campus employment as a means to develop student leadership.



2026 STUDENT LIFE

Leadership Awards

Student Organization Individual Contribution Awards (sponsored by Student Activities)

This award recognizes those students, faculty, and staff who have made extraordinary contributions to a student organization through their involvement, leadership, and dedication to the organization and its mission. Recognizing that organizational success requires individual contribution in a variety of formats and at all levels, this award is presented in four different categories:

- **Emerging Leader:** Individual Contribution Awards recognize those who have made extraordinary contributions to a student organization through their involvement, leadership, and dedication to the organization and its mission. Recognizing that organizational success requires individual contribution in a variety of formats and at all levels, this award is for new or returning members who demonstrate meaningful commitment and contribution to the organization. Note: Individuals may not be in an executive board position within the organization to be eligible for this award.
- **Positional Leader:** Individual Contribution Awards recognize those who have made extraordinary contributions to a student organization through their involvement, leadership, and dedication to the organization and its mission. Recognizing that organizational success requires individual contribution in a variety of formats and at all levels, this award is for students who hold a position of leadership within the organization.
- **Advisor:** Individual Contribution Awards recognize those who have made extraordinary contributions to a student organization through their involvement, leadership, and dedication to the organization and its mission. Recognizing that organizational success requires individual contribution in a variety of formats and at all levels, this award is for student organization faculty or staff advisors. Note: Individuals must be a listed advisor or co-advisor who is employed by the university as a faculty or staff member.

All award applications and recommendation forms are available online starting January 7, 2026 at:

go.osu.edu/leadershipawards