

—President's Message

“Your friend's honor should be as precious to you as your own.”

—From Pirkei Avot [“Ethics of Our Fathers”]

When you think about it, much of what OSA does—enabling members to publish in a reputable journal or present at a top conference; soliciting invited papers and presentations on exciting research; providing opportunities to serve as a reviewer, editor, or on a conference or governance committee; or advocating on behalf of our community—is about helping people earn recognition in their fields and advance their careers.

Progress as an OSA volunteer can follow a typical trajectory: for example, good authors are asked to review; good reviewers are asked to be topical editors; good topical editors are asked to be editors-in-chief; good editors-in-chief are asked to serve on the Publications Council. And through each activity, individuals carry the stamp of OSA—the better OSA looks, the better they look.

The easiest—and perhaps most overlooked—way to serve our society, help others gain recognition and advance the careers of our members is to nominate a colleague for an OSA award. We bestow many awards each year to members at all stages of their careers, and are blessed with an abundance of deserving candidates. But what holds the effort together is having members step forward and nominate a peer, as the vast majority of OSA awards require.

In this effort, we should think broadly about what it means to be a “peer.” Of course, established people can and should nominate younger folk to help them advance their careers. But all too often, early-career members may feel that they’re “not worthy” to nominate a more distinguished person. To anyone so hesitating, I say: Just go for it! My own first nomination, done anonymously, was for someone 30 years older and infinitely more accomplished than me. They won the honor, and I felt great helping!

As I write this, OSA has recently announced the distinguished 2016 winners of 19 prestigious awards and medals (to be featured in next month's issue of *Optics & Photonics News*). It is not too early to be thinking about 1 October, when most of the nominations for next year's awards are due. Importantly, there's the opportunity, even sooner, to nominate an OSA Fellow. OSA names dozens of Fellow members every year; indeed, the society is committed to broadening the definition and profile of its Fellows. This is my May column, and the Fellows nomination deadline is 15 June—plenty of time to pull together a strong package!

Finally, never assume someone is already an awardee. I was elected an OSA Fellow in 1997, but I couldn't believe that the famous Sir Peter Knight became a Fellow in the same class—somehow, no one had thought to nominate him earlier. I felt like the rookie Chicago Bulls basketball player who scored one point the same night that Michael Jordan scored 69, and told the press that “Michael Jordan and I combined for 70 points.”

It's like the lottery; you have to play—nominate someone—to win. And OSA loves to make lots of winners.



OSA

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Respectfully and warmly submitted,

*Alan Willner,
OSA President*