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Distinguished Graduate Award Program

Overview

The Distinguished Graduate Award was established in 1998 to honor living graduates who have demonstrated a lifetime commitment to service, personal character and distinguished contributions to our nation. On 12 May 2017 the Alumni Association Board of Trustees formalized the program by approving the Distinguished Graduate Award Program Guidelines resolution.

Description of the Award

The Distinguished Graduate Award (DGA) is given annually to a living graduate of the United States Naval Academy nominated by a member of the Association and selected by the DGA Selection Panel.

The recipient will receive a medal and is expected to attend the DGA Ceremony.

Eligibility Criteria

A nominee for DGA must be a living graduate of the United States Naval Academy who has made a distinctive contribution to his or her field or community such as military service in any branch, government service, business, education, science, technology, medicine, sports, philanthropic works, humanitarian works, contributions in the arts, or to society at large with a discernible embodiment of the Naval Academy mission. That mission is "To develop midshipmen morally, mentally and physically and to imbue them with the highest ideals of duty, honor and loyalty in order to graduate leaders who are dedicated to a career of naval service and have potential for future development in mind and character to assume the highest responsibilities of command, citizenship and government." As the Naval Academy is and will remain an institution that graduates leaders of character and accountability, the DGA Selection Panel will strive to select graduates who have demonstrated the utmost integrity in their chosen fields. In addition, nominees should be able to demonstrate sustained, active support for the Naval Academy mission through volunteer activities or active engagements with the Naval Academy, Naval Academy Alumni Association, Naval Academy Foundation, or other supporting entities within the Naval Academy community.

Nomination Procedure

Any Association member can nominate eligible graduates for the DGA. All nominations must have the endorsement of a class president, chapter president, or SIG president. Each nomination for DGA must be routed through the nominee's class president for their information and review. Nominations are due each year by 15 October to be considered for the following year's award.



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Submissions should be made to DGA@usna.com consistent with the DGA Nomination Guidelines promulgated each year by the Alumni Association and Foundation.

Nomination packages will clearly state that the nominee agrees to be nominated for the award and will make every effort to attend the DGA ceremony. Nominees should further understand that their packages will be vetted to take into consideration all publicly available information.

A member of the DGA Selection Panel may not be nominated or receive the award during his or her time serving on the Panel and for a period of two years after terminating service on the DGA Selection Panel.

Military officers, elected officials, political appointees, and Senior Executive Service still serving on active duty, holding public office, or still working for the government shall not be eligible prior to their 45th year from their graduation from the Naval Academy.

Distinguished Graduate Award Selection Panel

DGA Selection Panel Mission Statement: To select living graduates of the United States Naval Academy for the Distinguished Graduate Award.

DGA Selection Panel Composition: The DGA Selection Panel will consist of the following voting members:

- 1) Chair of the Panel will be a non-board, at-large member of the Alumni Association appointed by the Chair of the Alumni Association Board.
- 2) Superintendent, U.S. Naval Academy.
- 3) President and Chief Executive Officer, U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association and Foundation.
- 4) Two (2) members of the U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association Board of Trustees nominated by the Alumni Association Board of Trustees Nominating Committee and approved by the Alumni Association Board of Trustees.
- 5) One (1) member of the U.S. Naval Academy Foundation Board of Directors appointed by the Foundation Board Chair.
- 6) One (1) member of the Naval Academy Foundation Athletic and Scholarship Program Board of Trustees appointed by the Athletic and Scholarship Program Board Chair.
- 7) Two (2) members of the Alumni Association, appointed by the Alumni Association Board of Trustees Chair, who are not members of the Boards of the Alumni Association, Foundation or Athletic and Scholarship Program.

DGA Selection Panel Assignments and Term Limits:

DGA Selection Panel members, including the DGA Selection Panel Chair, will be assigned to serve a term no less than two (2) years and no more than three (3)



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years with no eligibility for reappointment for additional terms to the DGA Selection Panel. The Selection Panel remains empowered to address DGA issues as may arise, until establishment of a new Selection Panel by the Chairman of the Alumni Association Board of Trustees.

Although DGA Selection Panel members will be eligible for only one term on the panel, a prior serving DGA Selection Panel member may serve a second three-year term as the DGA Selection Panel Chair.

The Superintendent and the CEO, Alumni Association will serve on the DGA Selection Panel for the duration of their tenure in their respective positions.

The Chairman of the U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association Board of Trustees may serve as a non-voting member of the DGA Selection Panel.

Recipients of the DGA will not be eligible to serve on the DGA Selection Panel until two (2) years after the date of receiving the DGA.

When appointing members to the DGA Selection Panel the Foundation, the Athletic and Scholarship Program (A&SP) Board leadership, and the Alumni Association Board of Trustees Chairman will strive to ensure the composition of the DGA Selection Panel reflects the overall diversity of the Alumni Association membership with regard to race, gender, and class year. In addition, they will ensure the DGA Selection Panel is comprised of members who have chosen various career paths, services, and warfare specialties. A current roster of DGA Selection Panel members will be provided to the Alumni Association Board of Trustees' Nominating Committee to assist them in selecting DGA Selection Panel members.

The Chairman of the US Naval Academy Alumni Association Board of Trustees will have the authority to appoint substitute members to the DGA selection Panel in emergent situations where selected DGA Selection Panel members are unable to participate in the scheduled annual panel meeting. In the event a selected Panel Member is unable to complete their term, the Chairman will appoint another member, representing the same source as the departing member, for completion of the departing member's term. Alumni and the Alumni Association Board of Trustees will be informed of the DGA Selection Panel periodically, as appropriate via updated postings on website and other various media as appropriate when any changes occur.

Distinguished Graduate Award Selection Panel Process

Graduates nominated, but not selected in the current year, are eligible for a total of three consecutive years with the same nomination package. Nominators must only submit a new nomination cover letter each year the graduate is eligible in that three (3)-year period in order for his or her package to again be reviewed by the DGA Selection Panel. Nominations that carry over should have a current year cover



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letter routed through the chapter or class president and an updated executive summary provided, if desired.

If the DGA Selection Panel considers a nominee for three consecutive years and that nominee is not selected, the nominee may not be considered the next (fourth) year. After a one (1) year non-consideration period, the nomination can be resubmitted for an additional three (3) years. There is no restriction on how many times a graduate can be considered by the panel.

The DGA Selection Panel will use a selection process of ranking nominations to select awardees based on a consensus ranking process.

The DGA Selection Panel should select up to four (4) graduates for the award each year.

The DGA Selection Panel will announce to the Alumni Association each year the manner that nominations will be received and will promulgate with sufficient time the deadline for submitting nominations for consideration by the DGA Selection Panel.

The DGA Selection Panel shall assess all reasonably and publicly available information with respect to each nominee in its deliberations each year, whether that information is in the nominations packages or not.

Panel Meetings and Documentation

The Chairman of the USNA Alumni Association Board of Trustees will promulgate a precept letter to the DGA Selection Panel. The DGA Selection Panel will convene annually in December to review nominations and select awardees.

The DGA Selection Panel serves autonomously from the Alumni Association, Foundation, and A&SP Boards and will not discuss their deliberations outside the DGA Selection Panel. The DGA Selection Panel shall report DGA selections directly to the Alumni Association Board of Trustees Chair.

The DGA Selection Panel Chair should be prepared to discuss the number of nominations considered and a synopsis of the selected recipients' qualifications with the Alumni Association Board of Trustees Chair as soon as possible after their deliberations.

DGA Timeline

June: Precept letter promulgated

July – October: Call for nominations



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October 15: Nominations due

December: Selection Panel convenes and selects Distinguished Graduates

December: BOT Chair, Alumni Association & Foundation President/CEO, Superintendent, DGA Selection Panel Chair notify/congratulate selectees

December: DGA Program Manager notifies nominators of non-selectees; DGA Program Manager notifies past DGA recipients of new selectees

December: Announcement of DGA selectees to all Alumni Association & Foundation boards; class, chapter, parent club, and SIG leadership

January: Selectees publicly announced

Late January/Early February: Selectee bios posted to Alumni Association & Foundation website

March/April: Ceremony and related events

Relinquishing the Award

Alumni previously awarded the honor may elect to relinquish their DGA awardee status, by written letter to the Chair of the Alumni Association Board of Trustees. In response to an awardee's request to relinquish their award, or in the event of a revocation (described below), their name and likeness will be removed from all Naval Academy DGA materials.

Revocation of DGA Status

As the Alumni Association's highest honor for alumni, DGAs are expected to live by the Naval Academy's core values and reflect the highest ideals of honor, character, and integrity. Should negative information come forward questioning a DGA honor, character, and integrity that either loses trust within the Alumni Association or discredits the Naval Academy community, either after selection or that may have occurred before selection, a review of DGA status is to be accomplished by this procedure:

- The Chair of the Alumni Association Board of Trustees may refer an issue concerning a DGA to the current selection panel. The current selection panel may also initiate a review on its own.
- The Chair of the Alumni Association Board of Trustees shall simultaneously send any issue referred to the selection panel, including any materials the panel may consider in its review, to the DGA in question. The DGA's nominating source and endorser shall also be notified.



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- The selection panel shall review the situation for the DGA in question. The panel is encouraged to inquire, if possible, with members of the selection panel in place when the DGA was selected. The DGA in question, his or her nominating source, and his or her endorser shall be given the opportunity to furnish materials and/or make statements to the selection panel relevant to the review before the panel makes a recommendation to the Board of Trustees.
- The selection panel chair shall present to the Board of Trustees a recommendation to retain or revoke the DGA status of the DGA in question. The selection panel chair is encouraged to report initially to the Board of Trustees Executive Committee, for possible questions or clarification in advance of discussion with the entire Board.
- A vote of 3/4 of the Board of Trustees is required to revoke DGA status. Revocation will take effect immediately.

Declining the Award

If an individual declines to accept the Distinguished Graduate Award, their action is considered final for that calendar year. They remain eligible to be re-nominated for the award in subsequent years, subject to the normal nomination and selection process.