

Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters
FELLOWS SELECTION
FINAL 2025 FAQs: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Description: Being selected as a Fellow is the highest recognition conferred by the Wisconsin Academy. Fellows are honored for demonstrating the highest levels of artistic, scientific, written (*letters**) and service accomplishments, or some cross-disciplinary combination of these in their careers; and for their dedication to respectful/civil discourse and public service that benefits the wellbeing of the people of Wisconsin.

**The Letters category is broadly defined and meant to include writers, poets, storytellers, historians, lawyers, philosophers, and those who study or apply language to inform, inspire, or communicate ideas with others.*

What are examples of accomplishments that the Academy typically recognizes?

To glimpse the breadth of the award, see the [list of Fellows](#). A few specific examples include:

- A widely respected leader in the areas of peace and social justice, who influenced subsequent generations through her writing.
- A chemist, entrepreneur, art collector and author who had wide-ranging positive impacts on the state of Wisconsin.
- A story-teller, documentary film-maker and artistic director of theater productions.
- An artist who also founded several organizations that encourage and support other Wisconsin artists.
- A scientist, professor and medical clinician whose work helps minimize the chances of infection in hospital settings.
- An ecologist and environmental educator who greatly influenced public policy, improving the quality of water in and around Wisconsin.

Who can nominate a prospective Fellow for consideration?

The nomination process is open. Therefore, anyone is invited to submit a nomination for a prospective Fellow.

When can I nominate someone to be a Fellow?

Any time. Nominations are accepted on a rolling basis and may be submitted at any time. However, Fellows are typically selected every two years. The nomination period for the class of Fellows inducted in the following year, typically closes in the Fall prior to an induction year. For example, we are accepting nominations for the 2026 Class of Fellows until August 31, 2025. For more information visit our nomination page at wisconsinacademy.org/nominate.

Who selects which nominees become Fellows?

Fellows are selected by the Fellows Selection Committee with approval from the Wisconsin Academy Board. The current committee is comprised of the Wisconsin Academy Board Vice President of Science, Vice President of Arts, Vice President of Letters, two additional board members and three representatives from the previously inducted Academy Fellows.

Do members of the Fellows Selection Committee review and evaluate all nominations or only those in the committee member's area of expertise?

All selection is done by all the committee members; candidate materials are assessed by everyone regardless of the reviewers' particular fields of interests. The committee focuses strongly on potential intersections across the Sciences, Arts and Letters and focuses on the varied contributions of those who serve their fields as well as their work that benefits the people of Wisconsin. The Fellows are valued for their ability to reach a range of people. Thus, a historian on the selection committee is able to appreciate the work of an astronomer or a cellist.

The focus of the Academy is on the “arts, sciences and letters.” Does this mean you have to be an academic to receive serious consideration? (The answer is: NO.)

To be nominated as a fellow, an individual should identify with the sciences, arts or letters.

The individual must also reside in, have, or have had a long-term relationship with the state of Wisconsin. The Fellow's impacts are typically marked by an unusually high order creative productivity in story-telling, writing, poetry; the fine or practical arts; historical analysis; legal or judicial interpretation and/or application; philosophical thinking; discovery; invention; entrepreneurship; technological accomplishment; or public service. To be considered, one must be highly esteemed for their personal attributes (e.g., inquisitiveness, creativity, compassion, leadership, etc.) and professional impact on others, benefitting the welfare of the state.

This suggests a wide range of options— extraordinary legal, social justice, or business leaders, public servants, civic volunteers, inventors, entrepreneurs, story-tellers, artists, teachers and scientists should all be considered as potential Fellows.

Are there specific selection requirements or considerations that reviewers must take into account?

Committee members are guided by the description criteria outlined above.

Though the three vice-presidents represent their areas of interest—Science, Arts, or Letters— each member of the Fellows Selection Committee brings an individual aesthetic, value system, and base of knowledge to choosing Fellows from the nominations. The above description of potential nominees guides committee members in their choices. There is no proportional weighting of these qualities; they will apply differently to varying nominees. The criteria serve holistically as a reminder of **the many forms that excellence can take in the state of Wisconsin.**

Does a potential Fellow need to be a current resident of Wisconsin.

No. But, the individual must have or have had a long-term relationship with the state of Wisconsin.

The term “Fellow” is typically associated with academe. Does the nominee have to be an academic? What portion of current Fellows are not academics?

Roughly half of the 94 Fellows are, or were practicing academics in their careers. The rest exemplify many roles—story-tellers, musicians, executives, curators, poets, public servants and entrepreneurs—though some have academic experience in their backgrounds as well.

Does “lifelong” mean that nominees need to be in the twilight years of their career?

No. Many nominees are in the middle of their active careers, some at a fairly young age.

What is the commitment of the Academy to diversity and how is it demonstrated?

For several years, the Academy and the Fellows Selection Committee have worked very hard to broaden our range and become much more welcoming and inclusive in our programs and outreach to various underrepresented communities. We actively seek nominees from an increasing number of sources around the state, through civic groups, various businesses, non-profit associations, colleges and universities, and by word of mouth. In the selection process, along with its general criteria, the committee considers, for example, gender, age, ethnicity, culture, and statewide geographical distribution.

Are candidates judged against other candidates from their geographic region?

Candidates are not compared or measured specifically against people in their geographical area.

Will nominees be competing with all nominees, or only those in their designated categories?

Candidates are evaluated primarily on their own merit. However, once finalists have emerged there may be some consideration of candidates that fall into the three categories (Sciences, Arts and Letters) or that aren't easily categorized, or have impacts across these areas.