Advice to Those Seeking ACM Senior Member

By Susan H. Rodger, Chair of the ACM Senior Member Committee

ACM Senior member started in 2006 to recognize those ACM members with at least 10 years of professional experience in the computing field and five years of continuous professional ACM membership who have demonstrated performance that sets them apart from their peers. As Chair of the Senior Member committee, we have seen many well qualified candidates over the years whose nomination failed due to the lack of information provided. The committee would like to give feedback on how to provide an effective nomination.

Demonstrated Performance:
The criteria for senior member list several areas for which a senior member must have demonstrated performance in one of more of those areas. The demonstrated performance should be explained well with specific examples. For example, saying that a nominee has good project leadership is not specific enough. Give details on the project such as the name of the project, depth and length of time on the project, number of people the nominee supervised on the project, and/or the impact of the project. If there is impact outside the member's organization, then provide details on that.

Accomplishments:
For accomplishments, be sure to include a summary of overall accomplishments and details on key accomplishments. For example, saying the member has "published many papers in journals and at conferences" is lacking details. It would be more specific to say the number of papers published, the research area and to give a few examples of the nominee's key papers by giving the title, the conference and the importance of the papers.

Note that statements are expected to contain all the details within the statement. URLs to additional information will not be read.

Endorsements:
For endorsements, the choice of an endorser is important. The endorser should know you well and know of your work. Although not required, we recommend having one endorsement from an ACM Member or an ACM Advanced Grade Member. If you do not know an ACM senior member, then an endorsement from someone who has been in the computing industry for over five years is much stronger than someone who has only been in the computing industry one or two years. An endorsement from a higher ranking position or supervisor is stronger than an endorsement from someone who is in a lower ranking position from you. A letter from a colleague at the same rank is good if that colleague is well established or regarded. An endorser should briefly state who they are, their relationship to the nominee and how long they have known the nominee.

The endorser should be sure to include concrete details on why they think the nominee has fulfilled the requirements. Brief endorsements with little detail, only stating that you think this candidate is qualified for this award, or only restating the candidates accomplishments are weak endorsements. Consider the following weak endorsement.

"I have known the candidate for one year. The candidate has technical project leadership and has published over 20 papers in journals and conferences. They also have several professional contributions to professional societies and has served on at least ten
conference committees. I believe the candidate meets the technical leadership, technical contributions and professional contributions criteria of Senior Member."

This endorsement is weak because the endorser has not known the candidate very long, does not explain in what role they know the candidate, and gives no details on the publications or professional contributions. This endorsement uses many of the key words listed under the criteria for senior member, but is lacking in specific details.

We hope that these guidelines along with the instructions on the ACM Web site will help candidates and their endorsers prepare stronger nominations.

[Susan H. Rodger was a member of the ACM Senior Member Committee from 2006-2013, and chair of the committee from 2012-2013.]