

CMU Distinguished Thesis Award

CMU nominates students with outstanding theses for the annual Midwest Association of Graduate Schools (MAGS)/ProQuest Distinguished Master's Thesis Awards. The purpose is to recognize and reward distinguished scholarship and research at the master's level.

Nomination Deadline for the Spring 2026 awards: Oct. 15, 2025

Two of four broad categories alternate each year:

- Odd years are: 1) Social Sciences, 2) Mathematics, Physical Sciences, and Engineering
- Even years are: 1) Biological and Life Sciences 2) Humanities

- For this cycle, CMU can nominate one student thesis in 'Biological and Life Sciences' (e.g. Biology, BCMB, Exercise physiology, Chemistry (if Biochemistry), Physics (if Biophysics), possibly others) and one in 'Humanities' (e.g. History, Music composition written thesis, possibly others) to MAGS.

Eligibility for Spring 2026 Award:

- The thesis must contain original work that makes an unusually significant contribution to the discipline.
- Original works submitted 'in lieu of thesis' may not be nominated.
- The effective date of degree awarded is between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2025.
- If the nominee is selected to represent CMU, the thesis must be in, or added to, the ProQuest database.
- **Since the intent is to recognize scholarship by students who are pursuing their first graduate research degree, individuals who received a Ph.D. (or comparable research degree) in any discipline prior to the writing of the master's thesis are not eligible. However, recipients of a first professional degree awarded prior to the writing of the thesis may be nominated.*

Nomination Process

- Each CMU graduate program can nominate ONE thesis per broad category [1) Biological and Life Sciences; 2) Humanities] for a total of two nominees.
- The primary criteria are described as the 'unusually significant contribution to the discipline'. Therefore, the student-written abstract and letter of support should both emphasize the contribution the thesis makes to the discipline, the level of scholarship, and potential impacts beyond the discipline.
- Programs will submit the Office of Graduate Studies nomination form that contains the following two items:
 1. A 300-word abstract of the nominated thesis, written by the student, that includes the relevant background, the work's purpose, hypotheses/ research questions, methodology, results related to hypotheses, conclusions and significance of the research.
 - Write a new abstract for this nomination so it can be understood by a broad audience since nominations will be reviewed by people with backgrounds related, but not identical, to the nominee's area.
 - Include the title of the thesis and name of the student, but not the name of the University.
 2. A support letter from the advisor may also include resulting publications and presentations (or the promise thereof). The letter should provide insight on the level of scholarship and research demonstrated within the thesis, and it should explain how this

original work makes an unusually significant contribution to the discipline, as well as any impacts beyond the discipline.

- The support letter must include a blank spot labeled for the signature of the Interim Director of the Graduate Studies. If the nominee is chosen to advance to the MAGS competition, the Office of Graduate Studies will have the interim director sign the letter.

Note that Graduate Studies has access to theses electronically, so the thesis is not needed to nominate a student. Nomination packets are due by 5pm, October 15, 2025 via DocuSign. Eligible students with a complete nomination packet will be evaluated by a panel of faculty from the University.

Award Details

CMU may nominate one candidate for the award in each disciplinary category each year. The student ranked highest in each discipline by the committee will be forwarded to MAGS as the CMU nominee. The top-ranked student in each area will receive a CMU Distinguished Thesis Award at a Spring event and \$200.

If a CMU student is selected by MAGS, travel expenses to the 2026 MAGS Annual Meeting will be covered by CMU. The MAGS awardees are honored at the annual meeting each Spring. The 2026 meeting will be at the Kansas City Marriott at Country Club Plaza on March 25-27, 2026. Each recipient of a MAGS award will receive a \$750 honorarium. The faculty mentor will be invited to attend the presentation ceremony, but their expenses will not be covered.