



## If at first you don't succeed...

**E**ach October, the selections of the 60 students for the next year's Leadership Academy classes are made from the hundreds of applications that are received at NALC Headquarters. This is not an easy task, as there are many more highly qualified applicants than the spaces we have to fill. Although a very conscientious effort is made to select the four "best" candidates from each NALC region, when the selections are announced, there is always some difference of opinion and second-guessing that occurs. Some of this is because folks do not always agree on the qualities that define the "best" applicant. Some of it is because the selection process itself is a bit of an unknown.

In this article, I'd like to remove a bit of the mystery behind the selection process by explaining some of the things that are taken into consideration when the selections are made. Hopefully, those who have applied and have not yet been selected, as well as those considering applying in the future, will have a better understanding of what they can do to improve their chances of being selected for an upcoming class.

**While the process is subjective, there are some standard qualities and skills that are considered when making the selections. These are:**

- Active involvement in the local branch or state association, including regular attendance at branch meetings and participation in branch committees, programs and events.
- Participation in NALC programs such as the e-Activist Network, COLCPE, Carrier Corps, food drive and MDA and actively promoting these among co-workers.
- Volunteering time and effort for community or other organizations such as the PTA, Boy Scouts, town councils, school groups, church committees or service organizations.
- A demonstration of a solid work ethic. The willingness to take on projects, tasks or assignments and see them through to completion is important. So too are that applicants demonstrate that they are dependable, reliable and trustworthy, and don't give up in the face of adversity and don't get angry and sulk when things don't go their way.

- Good writing and computer skills. This includes the ability to communicate clearly in writing and use a computer to create written documents, presentations and e-mail.
- Public speaking experience. This could be speaking at union meetings, work stand-up talks or other forums such as school board meetings, community service or fraternal organizations or participation in speaking groups such as Toastmasters.

While no applicant is required to meet every one of these benchmarks to be chosen, those selected for past classes have shown strengths in most of these areas. Those with pending applications, as well as those who are thinking of applying in the future, should consider what steps they can take to "beef up" their résumés. If writing or computer skills are not your strong suit, most community colleges or local adult education programs offer classes on these subjects. If you have a fear of public speaking, or just want to improve what speaking skills you have, we would strongly recommend Toastmasters, "a non-profit organization developing public speaking and leadership skills through practice and feedback in local clubs since 1924."

Additionally, Leadership Academy candidates are encouraged to become as actively involved in their branch and state associations as they can. Volunteer to help out whenever and wherever you see an opportunity. Find someone in your branch, or who is otherwise available to you, whom you respect and who demonstrates the qualities listed above and ask them to mentor you. Call your NBA and let them know you are interested in becoming more involved in the union and ask what you can do to help.

**As noted in my previous article, the applications of those who applied for the 2011 classes but were not selected will be considered automatically for the 2012 Leadership Academy. You will no longer need to submit another essay or application form, but you may update any relevant information, such as additional experience or change of mentor. Any additional information must be post-marked by Sept. 30.** ☒