



## **CLA Undergraduate and Graduate President's Outstanding Student Award Nomination Form**

Each academic unit may select BOTH a graduating bachelor's degree and graduate degree student to be honored as the President's Outstanding Student graduate from that academic unit at each commencement ceremony. Nominations for the honor are requested from all faculty and advisors within the academic unit. Other university employees familiar with a particular student may also make a nomination, as long as the nomination guidelines are followed. In addition, students may nominate themselves by completing nomination forms available from their advisors.

### **TO BE COMPLETED BY NOMINATOR:**

**Term and Year of Graduation: Spring, 2024**

I have verified that the student I am nominating is listed on the current graduation list (or previous summer graduation list)

### **Academic Unit: (check the applicable college/school)**

- College of Community Studies and Public Affairs
- College of Liberal Arts
- College of Individualized Studies
- College of Management
- College of Nursing and Health Sciences
- College of Sciences
- School of Urban Education

### **Class Standing:**

Undergraduate---→ Major(s):  
 Graduate→ Program and Degree:

<b>Student Name:</b>	<b>Bryant Rooney</b>		
<b>Student ID:</b>	<b>14153989</b>		
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<b>Home Phone:</b>		<b>Cell Phone:</b>	<b>612 500 6947</b>
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<b>Nominator's Name:</b>	<b>Suzanne Nielsen</b>
<b>Nominator's Phone:</b>	<b>612 850 8814</b>
<b>Student's Advisor:</b>	<b>Suzanne Nielsen</b>

Criteria to be used in determining the outstanding student award may include, but not be limited to, the following criteria. **Each academic unit will determine the relative weighting of these criteria and may stipulate additional criteria to be used in the selection process.** Any additional criteria must be publicized to all members of the academic unit, and to students, before the nominating process.

**1. Academic Excellence:** As evidenced by grade point average (g.p.a.) while at Metropolitan State and by comments from Metropolitan State faculty. Bryant Rooney is double-majoring in Creative Writing and English. He will graduate Cum Laude with a 3.72 GPA. From my first class with Bryant in fall, 2021, I knew he knew he was facing some course challenges. My experience teaching alerts me to pay attention to both verbal and nonverbal communication during a 200 minute class. Bryant walked into the room weekly with both feet on the ground. Initially quiet, he quickly risked asking questions, wrote himself notes, engaged thoughtfully in class discussions, participated in various creative writing events, listened with an open ear, and always turned assignments in on time.

Bryant's completed very successfully other courses in the creative writing major with me. This semester he is a co-managing editor of *Haute Dish*, Metro State's literary journal. The tasks and commitment with taking on a leadership role of this magnitude requires someone who excels in several subsets of academic excellence, such as time management, a strength imperative for students who wear many hats, such as Bryant Rooney.

Hats off to Bryant.

**2. Community Service:** As evidenced by participation or leadership in humanitarian, civic, social, religious, and educational groups or organizations while a Metropolitan State student.

**Listed below are community service connections representative of Bryant:**

**a) Personal Care Assistant.** (Bryant works with an eclectic group of people with special needs)

**b) Assisted on a Special Olympics team**

**c) Assisted with *Haute Dish* Magazine** (Bryant is currently the managing editor for *Haute Dish*, and has served as part of the editorial team for two years). I would like to add that Bryant accepted the role of managing editor during his final semester at Metro State. (As if he didn't have enough to do, to include job searching; please send leads to Bryant), Bryant is an exemplary example of unassuming leadership style, a role I knew he would shine brightly in.



- d) Panel Contributor with Oleb Books (Bryant served on a panel of editors open to the public)
- e) Church Service - Elderly care, would sometimes spend times with older people

**3. Academic Innovation in the Educational Program:** As evidenced by use of community resources and creative use of alternative learning strategies (such as assessments of prior learning, theory seminars, independent studies, internships and CLEP tests), or by outstanding performance in case studies, senior and capstone projects, and various community-based projects while a **Metropolitan** State student. Again, Bryant is double-majoring in Creative Writing and English. He works full time. He volunteers hours in his community. He volunteers hours with Haute Dish. His end-of-semester portfolios are notorious for their weight in words. IO asked Bryant to share with me some academic innovation in the educational program(s) and he responded below:

- For my recent game class I worked with my peers creating a game that establishes a understanding of what it is like living in Section A housing.
- My commitment to better improving my writing and establishing an in-person writing group.
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**4. Professional Accomplishments:** As evidenced by titles, promotions, awards, and other types of recognition achieved in the workplace, and by participation or leadership in various professional or trade groups or organizations while a **Metropolitan** State student.

On November 22, 2021, Bryant wrote me an email that included the following: I came to Metro state because I believed that it would fuel my love of writing and this class felt like a positive catalyst for that step forward. I enjoyed challenging myself when it came to revising my stories. "The Giant of Split Rock" and "Fog Road" were both two stories that came to me, through songs, and when I laid them out in their first draft, I threw it down on paper, saturated in my emotions. Revising these pieces have not been easy for me. However, I am proud to say my first creative writing publication, "The Giant of Split Rock," was written in my first class while at Metro."

**5. Other:** As evidenced by other relevant information, such as personal characteristics, family commitments and future academic plans.

I am including a piece that Bryant wrote when he first declared Creative Writing as his major. The piece is titled *The Giant of Split Rock*. It is a heart-felt piece that was published in Haute Dish, Spring, 2022.

### *The Giant of Split Rock*

By: Bryant Rooney

Our mother, before she passed away, used to tell us Celtic fables and myths. Mine and Tommy's favorite story was the legend of how the Giant's Causeway was built. The story of two giants, one in Ireland (Fionn) and the other one in Scotland (Benandonner). There was



an unfinished bridge between them. These stone columns were made of volcanic rocks from the earth. Our mother never used science to explain column formation for her stories. In her stories these stones were made from sand, molded by giant hands, and skipped across the water, bonding together to form the bridge.

The story of Fionn and Benandonner had many versions, like most Celtic Myths, yet our mother decided she would create her own version of the two giants. She told us that the Giants were brothers, that had been separated from birth. Fionn Mac Cumhaill, the Irish giant, was trying to unite the two together, so he tried to build a bridge. Our mother died before telling us if that giant Fionn was able to build his bridge. It is safe to say that he was unable to unite with his brother.

I got a call from my brother Tommy back in December. It had been a few months since we last talked, not since our father's funeral, in the early Autumn, just moments before the colors of the leaves changed. He wanted to talk to me near the rocks below Split Rock. It was a place we used to play as kids with our parents. His voice over the phone did not reflect any joy at that reunion. I did not want to wait too long to see him. I drove through the night, through five hours of snow that covered highways and winding roads just to get to Tommy.

Tommy was sitting on a small rock that appeared from the water, his body facing the Split Rock lighthouse that towered above the lake, and a shot gun barrel rested underneath his chin. Tommy was a leg stretch away from the shoreline. The rock Tommy sat on looked like the basalt rocks of the Giant's Causeway.

I walked between birch trees whose leaves had fallen since the coming winter. Small clusters of leaves matted the ground and mixed with the snow. My feet crunched against the frozen brown leaves, leaving fissures along my wake. I felt like the giants from those stories, standing atop a piece of earth, and on the other side, another giant sat. He was not paving a basalt bridge to connect us together. I sat on the edge of Superior, only a small gap of water that divided me from the rock that my brother sat on.

The rock that my brother sat on was covered in snow and clusters of ice that hung like a chandelier around his rock. He sat there with the butt of the shot gun resting between his legs as he sat cross-legged on the ground.

"Hey Jack." He said as holding the gun tightly in his hands.

"Hey Tommy. What are you doing with that gun?"

"You know me, Jack. I'm always thinking."

"You can talk to me Tommy. I don't want you to do something foolish."

We were twins, kinda like the cities, and kinda like the giants. We were shitty twins. People would ask us if we spoke at the same time or finished each other's sentences. We didn't. Tommy had more physical memories of our father's presence than I did. Tommy's broken nose was the most noticeable memory that set us apart. Our addictions made us similar also. I love alcohol, love it so much Tommy was often the one to pull me from the bar. My father was the same way. Without Tommy, I wouldn't have been able to overcome my problems. But I could never help Tommy. Tommy's addictions were not just pills. There were things you could not simply pull from his hands.

Tommy looked at me, his sapphire eyes were empty. A small dust of snow began to fall. We listened to the sounds of lapping ice crystals sounding like cracking knuckles against the shore. We watched it recede, the water and ice, replacing the old with the new.



"I was thinking about Dad again. When Mom died, he changed, Jack. He died with her; a new man took his spot. A demon from hell," Tommy said as he chewed at his nails. There was not much left to chew. He always had that nervous habit, it came when Dad changed, even the memory of our father brought back old habits. He rocked softly back and forth and swirled the snow into manic piles around him. The topic of Dad was always Tommy's weakness. He loved Dad more than I loved Dad; Dad loved me more than him.

"Dad's dead. We don't have to be afraid of him. You don't have to be afraid of him. We can get you help, I'm here for you Tommy."

Tommy's tears fell to the snow, leaving their impressions upon the stone beneath it. "You're lucky that you were able to just sever those ties. I wish I could do that. He always wanted me to be like you. You dated good catholic girls. I hid like a coward under the bleachers with Henry Collins," Tommy said. I could hear his heart break like twigs underneath a boot. "You ain't a coward."

"Are you telling me you didn't look at me the way Dad did when he found out about me? I still hurt from Dad's revelations."

We watched from a distance as heavy waves began to smash into the cliffs below the lighthouse. We listened to the heavy impressions, the sound reminiscent of fists against ribs, and cracking thunder snapping like Tommy's nose.

"I'm sorry I didn't stop him. I was afraid," I said like a pleading child.

"Jack, you couldn't do anything. He was a real giant. We didn't stand a chance," Tommy said reassuringly.

The tears began to form in my eyes. I let Tommy see in my face that I loved him. Our love was formed through pain and cemented by each other. Nothing could break that, not even our dad's hands. Tommy had a place in my heart that no one else could ever fill.

"You're my brother. I would never treat you like Dad did. I just wanted you to speak to me. I just wanted you to know I loved you no matter the circumstance. I failed you, and I...I..." I said whimpering the words, impossible to say everything I wanted to say.

"I love you too Jack," Tommy said looking toward the Split Rock Lighthouse that was resting like an eagle's nest atop the cliffs. To Tommy and me, that lighthouse was always a beacon. We loved it here, it brought us back to the times with our mother, and a time before our father changed. One could argue he was always that way.

"So, tell me," Tommy said, chocking back the tears to better control the flow. "Date any good catholic girls?"

"Naw, just bad atheists."

Tommy and I sat there in awkward silence for a brief moment before Tommy started to roll back in laughter.

"Forget about Dad. Mom is rolling around in her grave. She is up there in heaven begging all of them saints to forgive her foolish son."

We both started laughing. The joyful tears falling uncontrolled. I reached into the frigid waters and pulled from the small clusters of smooth rocks from underneath the water. I blew into my hands to warm from the instantaneous cold that numbed my fingers. When they were efficiently warmed, I threw the stones against the endless waves of Superior. As I threw my stones, the frigid wind blew against my face, and the tears formed into crystals. I screamed louder than the waves as I hurled my stones. When I threw my stones, they broke through each of the waves that came. In the beginning it was only a few skips



but as I continued to scream, the numbers began to grow to ten skips and then thirteen. I screamed with everything I had. My breath was visible like winter fire. I was a giant screaming into the sky. The tears fell from my face like frozen rain drops. Tommy was no longer crying. He was only calm and happy to see me. He did not skip stones. He held onto that shotgun, not willing to part with it, like I did with my stones.

"There, you see that! I broke through," I said, holding up a fist into the air proudly.

"Ya, I saw it, Jack."

"Fear my pebbles, all ye waves that break," I said shouting to the heavens and fell backward on the shoreline. The snow around me flew away. Tommy sat alone on his rock. He was still, not even his breath was visible in the presence of the frozen winters of Lake Superior. "Come on Tommy, let's go home. You will feel better when we get out of the cold." I said holding out my hand for him to take. I stared at that division in the rock that separated us. "No Jack, we both know I can't leave," Tommy said peacefully. "I am the Giant of Split Rock. I am kind of like a fable from one of mom's stories. But Jack, you managed to be more than a story. You are a glowing beacon; bright enough for the two of us. I can't let you take my place on this rock, I was forged upon these shores. You gotta move forward Jack. Be more than a memory."

"I can't go on without you, Tommy. Twins go into the world together; they should be able to leave it together." I pleaded. But Tommy held up his hand as a parting gesture. The rock that was coated with soft snow began to melt as a warm Spring wind blew across the water. "Thank you, Tommy. I love you," my voice clutched in my lungs. Tommy began to fade, just as the images of snow did across the landscape. The rock he sat on melted with him. The flowers and trees bloomed as the warm wind carried the snow back into the clouds. The clouds moved away. Leaving only the sun.

"No Jack, we both know I can't leave," Tommy said peacefully. "I am the Giant of Split Rock. I am kind of like a fable from one of mom's stories. But Jack, you managed to be more than a story. You are a glowing beacon; bright enough for the two of us. I can't let you take my place on this rock, I was forged upon these shores. You gotta move forward Jack. Be more than a memory."

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#### **TO BE COMPLETED BY CHAIR OF NOMINATION REVIEW COMMITTEE:**

**This student has been designated a**

- Recipient of the President's Outstanding Student Award
- Finalist for the President's Outstanding Student Award
- Nominee for the President's Outstanding Student Award

by the Outstanding Student Award Nomination Review Committee.



Signed:

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(Chairperson of the President's Outstanding Student Award Nomination Review Committee)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_