

## **DISTINGUISHED TEACHING AWARD COMMITTEE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Governance Principles**

The committee members strongly believe that the Distinguished Teaching Award is one of, if not the, foremost award on this campus, particularly given that the CSU's mission is primarily teaching-focused. In that spirit, we strongly embrace the principle that the committee be run in an objective, apolitical, non-departmentally-biased, consensus-driven manner.

### **Committee Membership**

For 2009-2010, the Distinguished Teaching Award committee has 6 faculty members (all appointed by the Senate Executive Committee) and 2 student members (appointed by ASI). The prior year, we had 5 faculty members and 2 student members. In 2008, the Executive Committee suggested that we expand the number of faculty members to 7 or 8, only 1 per college, so that all colleges and professional services are represented. In the past, we have also reinforced the desirability of student participation in the committee, in order to ensure that their perspectives are incorporated in deliberations.

The size and composition of the committee affects the breadth of perspectives represented, as well as process issues such as setting meeting times, making decisions (e.g., achieving consensus), and influencing the number of committee "visitors" attending Finalists' classes. After our experience last year and this year, we have considered whether the committee size should be adjusted. It is our opinion that diverse perspectives (e.g., college, pedagogy) are adequately served by a committee of 5 to 6 faculty members plus 2 to 3 student members, and that a larger committee size is likely to suffer from diseconomies of scale that outweigh any benefits from broader college-based representation.

We recommend that the committee have a minimum of 5 appointed faculty members and a maximum of 6 appointed faculty members in any given academic year. For colleges not represented in a particular year, it is recommended that a rotational approach be adopted whereby suitable candidates would be appointed from non-represented colleges in the next appointment cycle, if appropriately qualified candidates from the non-represented colleges are willing to serve. In those exceptional circumstances where an insufficient number of qualified volunteers are available to serve on the committee and reach the minimum size of 5 faculty members, we recommend that the Executive Committee consider making an interim, 1-year appointment of an appropriately qualified, willing volunteer from a college already represented on the committee (i.e., having up to 2 committee members from a single college for the year involving an interim appointment).

The committee members reinforced the desirability of active participation of a range of appropriately qualified and committed student representatives on the committee, in order to ensure that their perspectives are incorporated in deliberations. We believe that it may be advisable to ask ASI to appoint up to 3 (versus the current 2) student representatives to serve on the DTA committee in a particular year. However, as is the case with faculty representatives, we want to ensure that such representatives voluntarily serve on the committee and are aware of the workload commitment that the committee entails, and that all such student appointees are fully prepared to meet these requirements. If adequate numbers of qualified, committed student representatives are not available, then we would prefer to have only 1 or 2 student representatives rather than achieving a larger number of student representatives by appointing students who would not devote the time and energy to the important evaluation task that the committee undertakes.

Historically, all faculty committee members were prior award winners and were volunteers. In 2008, the guidelines were modified by the Executive Committee to allow non-award recipients to serve on the committee as long as there was strong evidence of sustained instructional excellence by the candidate. We want to continue this experiment, but emphasize the importance of only appointing willing volunteers who have clear evidence of sustained instructional excellence. We should also note the logistical complexity of appointing non-award recipients. Such committee members may also be eligible for nomination by students for the Distinguished Teaching Award. This situation, which was encountered in fall quarter of 2009, requires careful management due to potential conflicts of interest (e.g., a nominee should not be simultaneously assessing potential candidates for the award when the candidate list includes him/herself), impact on deliberation processes (exclusion from committee deliberations of the committee member who is also a nominee, unless or until that committee member removes him/herself as a candidate for the award or unless or until the other committee members, in their deliberations, determine that the committee member is not selected as a finalist for the award), and subsequent size of the committee (e.g., removal of a committee member for some or all of the process if the member is nominated, and potentially chosen as a finalist, for the award).

The committee takes quite a bit of time and passion. We want to reinforce the importance of retaining the “voluntary, fully participative” guideline for committee membership. We do not encourage the appointment of members who are not aware of the workload and who are not committed, in a voluntary and complete manner, to fully undertaking these tasks.

### **Nominations for the Distinguished Teaching Award**

Currently, nominations are made exclusively by students or alumni, in an effort to recognize that students are the “consumers” of teaching efforts and are best positioned to assess the quality and effectiveness of an instructor’s teaching performance. Some suggestions have been received in the past that nominations be accepted from deans or faculty members, or perhaps even have a college committee or body select finalists for the award. The committee strongly and unanimously supports the continued practice of requiring that ALL valid nominations be received *exclusively* from current students or alumni.

Currently, only tenured faculty members are eligible for the DTA award. After discussing the merits and demerits of part-time or full-time lecturers or untenured faculty members for eligibility for this award, the committee unanimously recommends that only tenured faculty members be eligible for the DTA award. While other instructors on campus clearly have achieved outstanding instructional performance, the differing nature of their professional assignments and other factors caused us to make this recommendation. It should be noted that other recognitions are available on campus for distinctive performance by lecturers or untenured faculty, and that untenured faculty members who achieve sustained excellence in their teaching endeavors will be eligible for this award once tenure is received.

### **Evaluation Process**

Currently, the committee reviews all eligible nominations and selects the best candidates for Finalists, regardless of college or discipline. Some people in the past have suggested that we consider establishing a “quota” type of system that would, for example, guarantee Finalists from each college, each year. The committee members unanimously and strongly rejected this latter notion and recommend that we continue with our current approach.

Currently, it is expected that all committee members personally visit classes of all Finalists, so that they will have direct experience in observing the instructional approaches used by the Finalists in their various course preparations. Some people have suggested that this is time-intensive and that perhaps we can use alternative metrics such as quantitative teaching evaluation or a rotational schedule that has each committee member seeing only a subset of the finalists. Due to the unique nature of the evaluative task at hand, the committee members strongly and unanimously supported the importance of having each committee member visit the classes of each finalist, on a multiple visitation and multiple preparation basis, as practiced currently.

### **Reporting Process**

The DTA Committee Chair, with the help of the Academic Senate office, will include supporting information in its recommendation. The supporting information should include, if such information is readily available, each recommended recipient's name, department, college, rank, curriculum vita and background biographical data, a statement supporting a case for the recommended recipient's excellence above others nominees, and copies of the nominations received by the Academic Senate in support of the recommended recipient. The President's office will forward this information, exclusive of any protected information, to public affairs and other entities as necessary.

### **Recognition**

As part of the recognition of instructional excellence achieved by DTA recipients, we recommend the initiation of efforts to collect and post information on all prior DTA recipients on the Senate website. It is recommended that, if adequate resources are available for the undertaking, then the committee chair and the Senate administrative assistant (currently Gladys Gregory) undertake efforts in this regard. It is recommended that, if possible, each prior award recipient have items such as the following included in his/her listing: photo, name, rank, college/department, academic training (i.e., degree type and issuing university), professional experience (a brief review of what schools/classes taught), other key awards received, the year the DTA was received, and perhaps a brief listing of representative student comments that were part of the initial nomination materials. The entire website listing for an individual award recipient should comprise approximately one full frame on a computer screen, and listings should be searchable by year, college, and alphabetically. Since collection and preparation of these listings will take some time and other resources, we recommend that such listings be prepared in reverse chronological order, starting with the most recent year’s award recipients.