

**DISTINGUISHED TEACHING AWARD COMMITTEE
CAL POLY, SAN LUIS OBISPO
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

(updated on May 22, 2026)

Governance Principles

The committee members strongly believe that the Distinguished Teaching Award is one of the foremost awards 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.

Membership

In general, faculty representatives on the committee should be former recipients of the Distinguished Teaching Award, preferably one from each college. In 2008, the guidelines for committee membership were modified by the Academic Senate Executive Committee (EC) to allow non-award recipients to serve on the committee as long as there was strong evidence of sustained instructional excellence, as determined by the EC, by the committee member(s) in question. As per the current guidelines, if no prior Distinguished Teaching Award recipients from a particular college are available and willing to serve, the Executive Committee in consultation with the Distinguished Teaching Awards (DTA) Committee Chair may appoint a faculty member from that college who has a clear and compelling record of sustained, outstanding instructional performance. (If non-award recipient committee members are nominated by students for the Distinguished Teaching Award, the Academic Senate office will notify the DTA Committee and appoint new committee member(s), as needed.) Ex officio (voting) members shall be two Associated Students, Inc. representatives. These students will have at least junior standing and will have completed at least three consecutive terms and 24 semester units at Cal Poly with at least a 3.0 grade point average.

The size and composition of the committee affect the breadth of perspectives represented, as well as process issues (setting meeting times, visiting classes, making decisions, achieving consensus). It is our opinion that to account for diverse perspectives (college, pedagogy), the objectives of the award committee would be optimally served by a committee of 5 - 6 faculty members plus 2 student members. Larger committee sizes would likely suffer from diseconomies of scale outweighing any potential benefits from broader college-based representation. 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 the exceptional circumstances where an insufficient number of qualified volunteers are available to serve on the committee, 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.

The committee members reinforce the desirability of active participation of appropriately qualified and committed student representatives on the committee, in order to ensure that their perspectives are incorporated in deliberations. 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 the committee entails, and that all such student appointees are fully prepared to meet these requirements.

Because service on the committee is time-consuming, we want to reiterate that membership be voluntary and emphasize that all members recognize that committee membership requires that each member participate fully in the collective work of selecting finalists and recommending awardees. 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 undertake these tasks.

Responsibilities

The Distinguished Teaching Awards Committee, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, shall complete the charges assigned to the committee by the Academic Senate Executive Committee, which includes, conducting the selection process and judging potential candidates for the Distinguished Teaching Award in accordance with the special rules and procedures developed by the Distinguished Teaching Awards Committee and approved by the Executive Committee. Final recommendations regarding the Distinguished Teaching Award recipients will be submitted to the President through the Academic Senate Chair.

Timeline

Below is the tentative timeline for Academic Year 2026 – 27.

- Fall Semester
 - Call for nominations goes out: Week 2
 - Nominations deadline: Week 6
 - Reminders would be sent out in Week 4s and 5.

- Nominations are processed and organized and shared with DTA Committee: Week 8
- DTA Committee shortlists finalists and sends Senate office: Week 10
- Senate office receives additional materials from finalists and shares with DTA Committee: Week 12
- DTA Committee visits classes of finalists: Weeks 13 – 15
- Spring Semester
 - DTA Committee visits classes of finalists: Weeks 1 – 7
 - DTA Committee meets to shortlist recommendations for awardees, and communicates with Academic Senate Office: Week 8

Nominations

Nominations are sought each Fall term from students or alumni, the "consumers" of teaching efforts who are best positioned to assess the quality and effectiveness of an instructor's teaching performance. The committee strongly supports the continued practice of requiring that all valid nominations be received exclusively from current students or alumni.

Eligibility for DTA

At this time, only tenured faculty members are considered eligible for the Distinguished Teaching Award. Previous DTA committees have recommended that only tenured faculty members be eligible for the DTA award, making the argument that while other instructors on campus might clearly have achieved outstanding instructional performance, the differing nature of their professional assignments and other factors caused them to make this recommendation. The discussion on the topic of the scope of the DTA is ongoing at the Academic Senate Executive Committee.

Evaluation

The committee reviews all eligible nominations and selects the best candidates as finalists, regardless of college or discipline. It is expected that all committee members personally visit classes of all finalists teaching in person and/or virtually visit the classes of finalists teaching online, so they will have direct experience in observing the instructional approaches used by the finalists in their various course preparations. Due to the unique nature of the evaluative task at hand, the committee members strongly support the importance of having each committee member visit the classes of each finalist, on a multiple-visitation and multiple-preparation basis.

Reporting

The DTA Committee Chair, with the help of the Academic Senate office, will include supporting information in its recommendation. If such information is readily available, the supporting information should include each recommended recipient's name, department, college, rank, curriculum vitae and background biographical data, a statement supporting a case for the recommended recipient's excellence above other nominees, and copies of the nominations received by the Academic Senate in support of the recommended recipient. The Office of the President 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 at Cal Poly, we recommend that information on prior DTA recipients continue to be published on the Senate website.