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TO: Academic Senate

FROM: Mike Geringer, Chair, Distinguished Teaching Award Committee

RE: Report for Fall Quarter, 2007, of the Distinguished Teaching Awards Committee of the Academic Senate

The bulk of the DTA committee's work happens in Winter and Spring quarters, so we met twice during fall quarter, on Monday, 24 September and Friday, 5 October, 2007. The first meeting was conducted along with Senate Chair Bruno Giberti and the focus of this initial meeting was Dr. Giberti's concerns about the mandate and process of the committee. The committee agreed to subsequently consider the issues raised by Chair Giberti during this session.

The second committee meeting included only the committee members. Committee members were introduced and the mandate of the committee was discussed, especially in light of issues raised by Dr. Giberti. The members reviewed the DTA process, both historically and as proposed for the 2007-2008 academic year. We agreed to again have a 6-week nomination process (October 22-November 30), with all nominations being made electronically. We agreed to accept all nominations from qualified nominators (current and past students), even if some requested information was missing from the nomination materials, in order to increase the data available for our deliberations. We agreed on elements of an advertisement process to enhance broad exposure for the award. Committee Chair Geringer and Academic Senate Administrative Assistant Gladys Gregory subsequently collaborated to ensure that electronic, print and other agreed modes of promotion were implemented in an effective and timely manner. Geringer circulated a revised letter to be sent to DTA finalists in January. DTA committee members reviewed and commented on these drafts and they are now prepared for use subsequent to our meeting to select Finalists, tentatively scheduled for Friday, 11 January, 2008. The committee also agreed on a basic process for the remainder of the DTA nomination, review, and recommendation activities. A description of the Committee's criteria and process has now been posted to the Academic Senate's website.

The student representatives provided interesting suggestions for improving the visibility of the award, including establishing a presence on Facebook.com. They suggested that almost all students have a Facebook account, making this an attractive venue for encouraging increased nominations, so we would like to pursue this option for next year. It was also suggested that perhaps the nomination period could be extended through examination week next year, in order to provide additional opportunity for time-pressured students to nominate deserving faculty.

At the request of Senate Chair Bruno Giberti, we discussed the appropriateness of modifying the committee's composition to include a sixth (or possibly a seventh) faculty member, in order to include one from each of the 7 colleges. The notion was to provide an opportunity for each teaching college to be represented. However, in light of the effective functioning of the committee at its current size of 7 members and particularly given the difficulty of finding qualified volunteers to serve on the committee and fully complete the extensive amount of work required as part of the committee's activities, the committee members unanimously recommended that no changes be made at this time. It was noted that non-represented colleges in a particular year already have priority in appointments for the subsequent year, so any potential exclusionary effect on any particular college as a result of nonrepresentation on the committee may be limited.

Senate Chair Giberti also suggested that we consider accepting nominations from other than students and alumni (e.g., from faculty, staff, deans). The committee discussed this issue at length, both in person and via email. Essentially, the committee members felt very strongly that one of the great positives of the current process is that this is a student-nominated award. It was felt that introduction of nominations from people who are not the recipients of the educational experience (i.e., current and past students) was more likely to introduce political or other non-instructional elements into the process, as well as detracting from the student-generated nature of the process. There was absolutely no support from committee members to veer from the current policy of only accepting nominations from current and past students. In fact, it would not be an overstatement to say that members were extremely passionate in their defense of the student-nominated nature of the award.

Senate Chair Giberti also suggested that the committee consider whether non-tenure track or non-tenured probationary faculty might be considered for the award, in addition to tenured faculty. This issue was also discussed at length. Members did note that lecturers already have a separate award that is issued each year, and there was not strong sentiment in support of inclusion of these non-tenure track personnel in the DTA process (especially since many of the lecturers are on a quarter-by-quarter assignment, which could seriously compromise efforts to visit their classes in-person during Winter and Spring quarters as part of the teaching assessment process). The issue of probationary tenure-track faculty was also discussed. The feeling of members was a bit mixed on changing criteria to include such faculty. At the end of the discussion, members essentially felt that inclusion of probationary faculty might produce some politicization of the process, which is something that all members wished to avoid (and, it should be noted, the committee members have history dating back some 20 years with the committee and we collectively feel that the committee is exemplary for avoiding politicization in our processes). The committee members also felt that probationary faculty who are exceptional teachers would be likely to receive nominations on an on-going basis after tenure, so their exclusion would be short-term at worst. However, the committee members agreed that this could be a topic for further review if there was strong sentiment voiced about it.

Senate Chair Giberti also expressed strong concern that one college (Architecture) had not had a recipient of the DTA award for many years. The committee members agreed that this appeared to be unusual. Senate Chair Giberti asked campus statistician Steve Raines to examine historical data to see if any underlying biases might be evident. At the time of this memo, no response has yet been received from Professor Raines.

Committee Chair Geringer also agreed to explore further this matter of potential under-representation of candidates from certain colleges in the DTA process. He worked with Gladys Gregory to obtain raw data from the past 10 years for which full nomination data were available. After receiving these data, Chair Geringer prepared a tabular presentation and preliminary written analysis of the results. Chair Geringer's preliminary observations included the following:

1. **NOMINATIONS:** The number of nominations by college varies considerably in absolute terms (and on a year-by-year basis). Overall, for the 10 years examined, the percentage of nominations/total nominations by college ranged from a low of 1.8% for Education to highs of 25.8% for Science and Math and 25.1% for Liberal Arts. The implication is that "underrepresented" colleges may need to do something to increase the number of valid nominations, as the students as a whole are nominating many faculty but not equally by college.

Note: It is difficult to get a sense of proportionality in terms of percentage of qualified faculty being nominated, though, as the number of tenured, non-prior-recipient faculty per year is not readily available and is likely to vary on a year-by-year basis. That means some of the variation may be attributable strictly to variations in the number of qualifying faculty that can become nominees. Of course, there can also be differences in student perception of overall quality of education across colleges. There may also be an effect associated with more students taking common classes (e.g., GE or support classes) from colleges with high levels of service-based courses (e.g., CLA, CSM) than from the more focused polytechnic colleges (e.g., Agriculture, Architecture, Business, Engineering, Education).

2. **FINALISTS:** When selecting Finalists from the nominations, the variability among colleges is much lower than in nominations, suggesting a moderating effect of the DTA committee in its detailed evaluations of the nominations themselves.

The range of the ratio of Finalists to nominees ranges from a low of 10.7% for the College of Agriculture to a high of 16.7% for the College of Education. Overall, there were 89 Finalists, 682 nominees, and a 13.0% ratio of Finalists/nominees. Colleges below the average included Engineering (12.5%), Architecture (12.2%), Science & Math (11.4%), and Agriculture (10.7%). Colleges above the average included Education (16.7%), Liberal Arts (16.4%), and Business (13.8%)

3. **RECIPIENTS/NOMINEES:** When looking at the proportion of nominees who ultimately receive the award, the variability among colleges also tends not to be as great as the variability across colleges in terms of the proportion of nominees. The range is from 0.0% for Architecture to 8.3% for Education, though both of those suffer from small numbers effects. Overall, the percentages go from a high to a low as follow:

- Education 8.3%
- Liberal Arts 6.4%
- Engineering 5.7%
- Agriculture 4.1%
- Business 3.1%
- Science & Math 2.3%
- Architecture 0.0%

Clearly, various colleges have experienced extended periods of drought in terms of having one or more of their members selected for the award. Colleges that have had periods of at least 6 consecutive years without an award recipient include Architecture (10 years), Education (9 years), Business (7 years) , and Science and Math (6 years).

Colleges have also experienced periods of drought in terms of having any finalists, including 8 years for Education, 5 years for Architecture, and 3 years for Business. It may be worth noting that the College of Architecture has had a finalist selected for *EACH* of the past 4 years, one of only 4 colleges to have such a situation (Agriculture, Business, and Education have had at least one of those years without a Finalist). It may also be worth noting that 2 of the College of Architecture finalists chose to remove themselves from the process, eliminating their ability to be selected as the DTA recipient for the respective year.

4. IMPORTANCE OF PERSPECTIVE & SMALL NUMBERS EFFECTS: Please note that if one of the Architecture finalists had received the award, then Architecture would have had the highest percentage of recipients/finalists, at 16.6%. Similarly, except for 2003-2004 when Science and Math had 3 recipients, they had a recipient/nominee ratio of 0.6%. The absence of a single recipient by Business would have resulted in a recipient/nominee ratio of 1.5%. So this suggests the advisability of maintaining perspective in the analysis, and recognizing the effects associated with small numbers.

5. NOT IN THE DATA - as Chair Geringer reviewed the data on nominations, Finalists, and recipients, he noted that it was very common for many of the ultimate recipients of the award to be people who had been nominated several different years and, often, had been a Finalist repeated times before ultimately being selected for the award.

Regarding committee composition and process, the participation of students on the committee remains a promising enhancement. In the recent past, it had proven difficult to obtain willing, participating student volunteers to serve on the committee. However, we had a positive experience with two outstanding representatives of ASI in 2004-2005, one of two representatives in 2005-2006, both representatives last year, and the participation of two more students in this year's process. It appears that priority registration status is helping to attract and retain good students for this time-consuming committee (the time commitment in Winter and Spring quarters for observations of award finalists and meetings involves a minimum of 30 to 40 hours of time committed to this process). The input of the students has been highly valuable, and their role is particularly appropriate in this student-nominated award for teaching excellence.

Committee members were to pick up the package of nomination materials from Gladys Gregory beginning on Monday 3 December. We received 263 electronic nominations this year (versus 243 last year), including 120 eligible and valid nominations (versus only 75 last year), so it appears that an active promotional campaign across campus during Fall quarter 2007 may have had a positive impact on nominations. Nominations were received for qualified faculty from all 7 academic colleges. The committee members will review nomination materials during the break period and meet on Friday, January 11 to select Finalists for this academic year's DTA process.