

Background for Task Force President's Awards for Excellence in Teaching

The Office of the Vice Provost for Student and Faculty Success is responsible for the President's Awards for Excellence in Teaching. Each fall semester a memorandum signed by the President goes to the ten deans requesting that they "initiate the faculty and student-based process developed by your school or college to select the recipient of the award." The Joint Health Sciences Departments also selects a recipient, which makes a total of eleven awards annually. The selections are forwarded to the Office of the Vice Provost for Student and Faculty Success who handles all congratulatory correspondence and administrative arrangements. These awards are presented in the spring at the annual Faculty Awards Convocation, which is coordinated by University Events.

The President's Awards were first presented in 1991. The history statement commonly used follows:

The President's Awards for Excellence in Teaching were established by UAB former President Charles A. McCallum in 1990 to recognize exceptional accomplishments in teaching. Recipients are chosen from each of the twelve schools and the Joint Health Sciences Departments. Each faculty member so honored receives a cash award and a crystal apple that stands as a symbol of his or her achievement. Financial support for these awards is derived from the Fund for Excellence, which includes gifts from members of the UAB President's Council.

Each award winner receives a \$2500 cash award, which goes through payroll and is subject to withholding the usual deductions, and the crystal apple with engraved base.

As stated earlier, the selection process used by each unit was developed by the unit. In the first year, deans were told that no standardization of the process across school lines was involved, so each unit could do this its own way. Therefore, we can assume that thirteen different criteria and processes are used. The following are some examples:

A) Once the correspondence is received from the president, the dean names the selection committee and notifies them by memo. The committee consists of the three most recent winners of the award along with the current president of the student association. The chair is the member who has served the longest and who will rotate off the committee the following year. The chairperson contacts all faculty and students (usually via email) requesting nominations. When the nominations are received the committee meets to determine the most viable candidates using the following criteria: number and strength of nominations received, primary faculty appointment within the school/unit, full-time status (adjunct and part-time faculty are not eligible), has not won the award within the last three years. The semifinalists are then notified by the committee chair and asked to submit documentation to support their selection. The documentation requested encourages delineation of teaching activities for the past three years in academics, the community, continuing education, etc. The documentation is made available to all members of the committee for review. The committee meets to choose the finalist. The name of the winner is forwarded in writing to the dean for submission to administration.

This procedure is modified on two occasions: First, if the president of the student association is away from the Birmingham area, the dean will name another officer to serve on the committee. Secondly, if a recipient from the past three years is no longer on faculty, the committee will begin the process one member short, and the longest standing faculty member will serve as chair. Once the semifinalists have been chosen, the dean will appoint a replacement faculty member to assist with the final selection.

B) When the President's letter is received to begin the process, each department chair is asked to submit a nominee from his/her department. The chair is responsible for developing the departmental process and criteria for selecting the nominee. The chair will submit a 1-2 page write-up on the nominee to the dean. Other support materials (letters of support, course evaluations, etc.) can be submitted. An ad hoc committee consisting of the associate deans and the president of the student association review the nominees and submit a recommendation, in ranked order, and all nomination material to the dean. The dean submits the name of the recipient to the administration.

C) Nominations are received from students via ballots at the end of each academic term during the year. Students are informed of the award and told that they can nominate any school faculty member. Ballot boxes are placed throughout the school's buildings. Ballots are tallied and kept on file in the dean's office. When the president sends the memo requesting the process to begin, the school's committee on teaching is presented with the nominations from the terms of the previous year. The committee decides the criteria for a faculty member to be on the "short list." When the short list is finalized, the committee notifies each faculty on the list asking each to submit significant qualitative indicators of teaching (student evaluations, course syllabi, letters of support, etc.). The committee requests grade distribution information for the year from the registrar. When all data is received, each committee member receives copies for review. The committee meets, discusses each person on the short list, and decides on a winner. The chair of the committee gives the name of the winner to the dean. The dean submits the name of the winner to administration. The name of the winner is kept confidential for appropriate notification by the president.