

PROCEDURES OF THE TEACHING AWARDS COMMITTEE

SPRING 2018

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1. Objectives

The main activities of the Teaching Awards Committee (TAC) are

- (1) the preparation of teaching award nominations for college and campus teaching competitions,
- (2) selection of finalists for departmental teaching awards,
- (3) supervision of the TA Teaching Awards Committee (TATAC).

The committee can expand its mission beyond these activities if it so chooses.

For example, it might choose to enter faculty in award competitions sponsored by the American Mathematical Society or other professional organizations.

2. Composition of the Committee

The TAC generally has three or four faculty members, a graduate student, and up to two undergraduates. The faculty members are appointed by the EC. The committee may wish to consult with the Director of Undergraduate Studies and the Associate Chair, perhaps inviting them to serve as nonvoting members of the committee. The designated chair of the TAC is responsible for finding the student members. The Directors of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies can make suggestions of suitable candidates for student members of the committee. The division of labor is at the discretion of the committee chair, but generally the faculty members are charged with writing the cases.

3. Timeline

The TAC should begin its fall activities by late September. Final written nominations are due in the college office (usually) in the first week of January. The Provost's Memo on Campus Awards can be found on the Provost's website:

<http://provost.illinois.edu/awards/campus-awards-programs/>

The LAS Memo on College Awards can be found on the LAS website:

<http://www.las.illinois.edu/faculty/awards/>

These memos indicate the precise deadlines. Nominations are submitted to the college. If successful in the college competition, they are sent on to compete at the campus level. Each nomination must be accompanied by letters of recommendation written by former students. These letters must be requested early enough so that the students have time to get them to the committee before the deadline. It is also

useful to observe nominees in the classroom. These activities must be preceded by the collection of nomination materials so that the cases to be pursued can be selected in an objective manner. In the past, the TAC has done the majority of its work (writing the cases) during December and especially during winter break.

The TAC should begin its spring activities early in the spring semester. The departmental teaching award winners should be selected by March 1, so that the information can be communicated to the Provost's office in time for recognition of the winners at the Campus Celebration of Teaching Excellence, and so that the information is available in time for the department's April Awards Ceremony.

The TATAC meets during the fall semester. The chair of the TATAC is appointed by the Chair of the previous year's TAC and the TATAC is formed by the new Chair. The TAC is responsible for ensuring that this committee is formed and carries out its selection of TA winners in a timely fashion (see section 6). In recent years the TATAC has been fully self-sufficient and run by graduate students.

4. College and Campus Teaching Competitions

4.1. Selection of Nominees.

4.1.1. Teaching Assistants. The TATAC selects up to four graduate students each year to receive a departmental TA teaching Award (see section 6). The TAC typically prepares a teaching award nomination each year for one of the past winners of the departmental TA award. The departmental website contains a list of past winners. Once the pool of students is known, it is important to collect information about teaching from each candidate. The information should include those matters listed in the Provost's memo as this is what must be stressed in building a case. If the student already has a teaching portfolio on file, that may suffice for the purposes of selecting a nominee. Once the information has been collected for all students, the committee selects one or two student and proceeds to build the cases.

4.1.2. Faculty. The TAC should select a faculty nominee by criteria of its choosing. Often the criteria are dictated by the points that must be emphasized in the building of a case (as listed in the Provost's Memo). Departmental teaching awards are currently given to tenured and tenure-track faculty each spring (see section 5). Prior winners of these awards form a natural pool of candidates. Other suggestions include soliciting nominations from faculty and students (via a Memo announcing the awards competition), and reviewing past and present nominations by students. Once a list of potential nominees has been formed, the committee should collect information about the teaching of those faculty for the purposes of selecting a nominee to put forward. When a selection has been made, the building of the case begins.

4.1.3. Specialized Faculty. The procedure here is the same as for faculty. See the Provost web-site for complete information.

4.1.4. Other Award Categories. The awards considered above are those for undergraduate instruction. The Provost's Memo lists other awards for which certain faculty might qualify. Teaching innovation, especially involving the use of technology, is one example. There has also been an award in the past for involvement of undergraduates in research. The Lynn M. Martin award recognizes distinguished teaching by a female instructor. The committee must decide whether it wishes to pursue any of these additional awards, and, if so, how a case might be built.

4.2. Preparation of Teaching Award Nominations. There are no formal procedures for building a case other than paying careful attention to the criteria listed in the Provost's memo for each award. The following list suggests some relevant factors which the committee may wish to take into account: Classroom visitations help to identify unique teaching styles and methods and give a sense of how the instructor relates to his or her students. The person(s) writing the case may wish to set up a time to talk one-on-one with the nominee. This can give extra insight into teaching philosophy, innovations, etc.

As of 2018, the Provost web-site lists five items which must be included in the nomination. These are a cover page with signatures, a nomination letter, a teaching and learning philosophy written by the candidate, a longitudinal ICES profile, and two letters from students.

The nominees must request the ICES profiles through the Math dept. office, currently through Jane Bergman. Allow time for them to arrive. The committee may choose to use this information in the selection process, since low ICES scores can negatively influence a case (unless a special explanation is included).

Each case must include two letters of support from current or past students. The Provost's office recommends that letters be solicited from both current and former students, including alumni. The committee may ask the nominee for names of former students, but the nominee should not personally contact any students. The committee may add names of its own choice to the list. Letters from alumni who are now professionals can be especially influential. The committee may receive more than two letters, but it can include only two in the nomination. The committee may wish to use information obtained in the additional letters.

The nominee must write a statement of teaching philosophy. The ideas expressed in this statement may be useful in deciding how to craft a specific case.

The strongest cases are those which integrate the various elements listed above. For example, a peer review that strengthens points in the statement of philosophy can be a strong point. It is useful to have the student letters in hand when writing a case because reference to them can be made in the nomination letter. They may also give insights into the instructor that don't come out in any other way. The best guide to writing a good case is to read several of the award winning cases from the past. Copies of prior nomination papers are available in the Associate Chair's office. A list of previous department winners of the College and Campus awards can be found on the Faculty Honors webpage at:

<https://math.illinois.edu/academics/instructional-awards>

It is important to request the student reference letters early and to obtain commitments from students to write letters before they leave campus for winter break. The Provost's memo contains a sample request letter. The undergrads on the committee are sometimes good people to ask for such commitments. The committee should have contact information (e-mail and phone) for students who will write a letter of support so that they can be reached over the break. Reminders may be necessary. The committee should solicit more letters than it needs.

5. Departmental Teaching Awards

5.1. History. Beginning in the academic year 2007-2008, the department instituted the following departmental teaching awards:

- Distinguished Teaching Award in Mathematics for Tenured Faculty

- N. Tenney Peck Teaching Award in Mathematics
- Distinguished Teaching Award in Mathematics for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty

The N. Tenney Peck Teaching Award is funded by an endowment created by former Associate Dean Emily Peck in honor of her husband N. Tenney Peck, a former member of the department. It is given to a tenure-track faculty member. The Distinguished Teaching Award in Mathematics for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty is given to a member of the department's instructional staff, including lecturers, instructors, and departmental postdocs. The committee should formulate appropriate selection criteria.

5.2. Selection of Nominees. The TAC should select the winners of these awards in the spring semester. As this is a purely internal department competition, there is no need to prepare detailed cases. Winners of these awards are likely candidates for the college and campus competitions in subsequent years, and hence selection criteria should coincide with those in the Provost's Memo, with one exception. The Provost's Memo strongly discourages the nomination of tenure-track faculty for the campus teaching awards competition. Some of the criteria mentioned in the Provost's Memo (e.g., Other contributions to improved instruction, such as developing courses and curricula, mentoring graduate teaching assistants, leading workshops on pedagogy, and advancing the scholarship of teaching and learning) may be less relevant for tenure-track faculty, in view of their short length of service at UIUC. It may be more useful to view the N. Tenney Peck award as an indication of excellent teaching in the short term, with promise for future contributions of the sort emphasized in the campuswide competition.

6. Supervision of the TA Teaching Awards Committee

The TA Teaching Awards Committee is responsible for conducting the department awards competition for TAs. This activity traditionally takes place during the fall semester and must be completed by the winter break, and preferably by the fall Thanksgiving break. The TAC from the previous year selects a chair for the TATAC; the chair is typically recruited from past winners of the TA award. The chair is typically recruited from past winners of the TA award, and often from the winners in the previous year. The TAC is responsible for ensuring that the TATAC conducts its competition in a timely fashion. The TATAC's rich tradition as a TA-run committee should be maintained. As of 2004, the TATAC is expected to choose up to four winners. The funding for these awards comes from the H. R. Brahana Math Prizes fund (for the first two winners), and from the College of LAS (for any remaining winners). The TATAC requires two faculty participants. The chair of the TAC can help in finding these two members if necessary.