

February 2, 2006

TO: Saeed Mortazavi, Chair
Academic Senate

FROM: Ann Diver-Stamnes, Chair
Faculty Awards Committee

RE: Recommendations from the Faculty Awards Committee

In 2002, the Faculty Awards Committee (which I chaired) put forward some recommendations for the Senate to consider in regard to the Outstanding Professor Award. At the time, several of us from the committee met with the subcommittee in charge of faculty awards issues; however, the subcommittee was undergoing a change in leadership, and the issues we raised were lost in that transition. In May, 2004, I again submitted a letter to the Chair of the Senate, putting forward a variety of recommendations from the Committee. To my knowledge, none of these recommendations has been considered. Service on the Faculty Awards Committee is problematic in that we have very few guidelines from the Senate for how we should be conducting our work (e.g., how do we operationalize a *substantial record of superlative teaching*, are FERP faculty members eligible for the award, etc.). The award, which lacks both visibility and prestige at this point, is in danger of becoming focused on lifetime achievement as opposed to excellence in teaching. For example, this year, because we have no clear guidelines from the Senate, we accepted files nominating FERP faculty and had no files nominating full-time teaching faculty. When the award is granted to a faculty member who is retiring and no longer fully invested in teaching at HSU, it serves to further reduce the award's visibility.

Our experiences this year again highlighted the problems with the award, including the lack of guidance from the Senate in regard to criteria for granting the Award to a faculty member, the resultant variability in committee members' translations of the criteria for granting the award, its lack of visibility, the poor timing of the nomination process, and the Award's seeming lack of prestige on our campus. As a Committee, we are requesting that these issues be placed on the Senate's agenda for consideration and action. The following recommendations, made originally in 2002, repeated in 2004, and expanded on this year, are offered in the hope that we can spark some interest and action around them over the course of the next academic year.

The committee recommends:

- The Senate must more clearly define what constitutes a substantial or demonstrable record of superlative teaching.
- The Outstanding Professor Award should be limited to tenured, non-FERP professors.
- A Lifetime Achievement Award should be initiated for those faculty members who are at the end of their careers and who have made strong contributions over time.
- HSU should initiate a new award for assistant professors who are showing excellence in teaching – perhaps entitled the Promising Educator Award. We agree that having more opportunities for faculty to be recognized would be healthy for the institution and for morale among faculty.
- HSU should initiate an Outstanding Lecturer Award to honor lecturers in regard to their teaching excellence. They make incredible contributions to the institution but are not eligible for any such recognition.
- The visibility of the Outstanding Professor Award needs to be increased. We suggest that this could occur in a variety of ways including:
 - The recipients of the award should mentor new faculty the year after they receive the award, receiving assigned time for this endeavor. Mentoring would include reciprocal classroom observations, one-on-one discussion and analysis of those observations, advice and assistance, etc. This mentoring would provide new faculty the opportunity to receive the kinds of support necessary for fostering excellence in teaching early in their careers.
 - The knowledge of the award and the awardees needs to be increased. At this point, few people know who has received the award once the ceremony is over. We see the possibility for departments to capitalize on greater awareness of the award and its recipients in such areas as increased departmental prestige, recruitment of majors, fund-raising, etc. One suggestion from the 2002 meetings was to create a medallion or other visible symbol that would be affixed to the awardees' office doors clearly stating that this person was the Outstanding Professor for a specific year. A former committee member in 2002 recommended that multiple medallions be given out in the first year to the current awardee and all previous ones.
- The files for the Outstanding Professor Award should be due in January or February. This would serve to increase the number of files the committee receives and would remove it from the prime RTP letter writing time. Spring semester is still early enough in the year that the committee would be able to review the files and make a recommendation to the Senate. The early due date is a legacy of the

previous system when the files of award recipients on each campus were sent forward for a system-wide competition. This no longer occurs so no reason exists for the early October deadline. Changing the file due date to spring would serve an additional purpose of having the recipient announced later in spring semester so that the individual would be honored throughout the following academic year. Currently, the award is announced in January or early February, meaning that half of the year in which the person is the Outstanding Professor has already passed. This change would put the award in sync with the academic year in which the person is being honored (i.e., recipient announced in late spring as the Outstanding Professor for the following academic year).

- The nomination process needs to be modified. We recommend that students, staff, faculty, or administrators nominate a faculty member for the Outstanding Professor Award by submitting a short statement describing why the person should be considered. We are in agreement that such nominees should be asked if they would like to be considered for the award and, if so, requested to submit a portfolio as they do now which includes the initial letter of nomination, vita, letters of support for the nomination (solicited by the nominator), and student evaluations for the last 3 years. (Currently, we do not specify how many years of student evaluations individuals should submit in their portfolio which leads to wide variability across files. We recommend inclusion of evaluations for the last 3 years which provides ample evidence of their teaching effectiveness.) We believe that if the initial nomination process were simpler and could be accomplished through a short letter of nomination, more people would consider making nominations.
- The files of highly qualified nominees should be carried over to the next year's pool. The committee has grappled over the years with the difficulty of making choices among the well-qualified nominees. Currently, we verbally encourage individuals to resubmit their files for consideration the following year. It would very much simplify the process if as a matter of standing policy we were able to carry highly qualified nominees over to the next year. That is, if we have 3 highly qualified candidates and choose one, we would like to be able to notify the two who did not receive the award that - with their permission - their files would be retained for screening the following year.
- Barring action on these issues, we recommend a moratorium on the award until such time as the Senate can consider how to address the problems inherent in this award process.

We were successful in one endeavor, and that was our recommendation that the Outstanding Professor Award recipient be honored at a dinner in the same way in which the Scholar of the Year is honored. However, this year, as you know, the recipient of the award, Stone Brusca, has declined to participate in the dinner due to conflict with the administration. It seems a shame that his

accomplishments not be recognized and that he receive the award via campus mail. I would like to suggest that the Senate consider having faculty honor him at a function we organize on his behalf this semester.

Finally, it may be helpful for the Senate to clarify the purpose of this award in terms of whether it is faculty honoring one of our own for outstanding teaching, or rather it is an institutional award. After it was announced that Dr. Brusca was this year's recipient of the Award, I was contacted by the President about "how the process (of selection) might be improved." He asked me to meet with Dean Howard and Provost Vrem to discuss having the Faculty Awards Committee "seek the input of the candidates' Deans and the Provost before a recommendation is reached." The Senate may want to consider the potential politicization of the Outstanding Professor Award which I believe would occur if chosen nominees must be vetted by administrators prior to being given the award.

We on the Faculty Awards Committee continue to be excited about the prospect of making changes to increase the visibility and prestige of this award and to broaden the opportunities for faculty to be recognized for their excellence in teaching.

Please let me know if you or others on the Senate would like to discuss any of these recommendations. I thank you for considering them.