

## **RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING DTA COMMITTEE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR 2009-2010**

### **Governance Principles**

1. The committee members strongly believe that the Distinguished Teaching Award is one of, if not the, foremost award 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.

### **Committee membership:**

2. This year, after the unfortunate loss of Professor Thomas Ruehr, we had 5 continuing faculty members (all appointed by the Senate Executive Committee) and 2 student members (appointed by ASI). Last year, the Executive Committee suggested that we expand the number of faculty members to 7 or 8, with only 1 member per college, so that all colleges and professional services are represented.

The size and composition of the committee affects the breadth of perspectives represented, as well as process issues such as setting meeting times, making decisions (e.g., achieving consensus), and influencing the number of committee "visitors" attending finalists' classes. After our experience this year, we considered whether the committee size should be adjusted. It is our opinion that diverse perspectives (e.g., college, pedagogy) are adequately served by a committee of 5 to 6 faculty members plus 2 to 3 student members, and that a larger committee size is likely to suffer from diseconomies of scale that outweigh any benefits from broader college-based representation. Therefore, we recommend that the committee have a minimum of 5 appointed faculty members and a maximum of 6 appointed faculty members in any given year. 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 those exceptional circumstances where an insufficient number of qualified volunteers are available to serve on the committee and reach the minimum size of 5 faculty members, 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 (i.e., having up to 2 committee members from a single college).

The committee members reinforced the desirability of active participation of a range of appropriately qualified and committed student representatives on the committee, in order to ensure that their perspectives are incorporated in deliberations. We believe that it may be advisable to ask ASI to appoint up to 3 (versus the current 2) student representatives to serve on the DTA committee in a particular year. 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 and fully prepared to meet these requirements. If adequate numbers of qualified, committed student representatives are not available, then we would prefer to have only 1 or 2 student representatives rather than achieving a larger number of student representatives by appointing students who would not devote the time and energy to the important evaluation task that the committee undertakes.

3. Historically, all faculty committee members were prior award winners and were volunteers. Last year, the guidelines were modified by the Executive Committee to allow non-award recipients as long as there was evidence of sustained instructional excellence by the

candidate. We want to continue this experiment, but emphasize the importance of only appointing willing volunteers who have clear evidence of sustained instructional excellence.

4. This committee takes quite a bit of time and passion. We want to reinforce the importance of retaining the “voluntary, fully participative” guideline for committee membership. 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 undertaking these tasks.

### **Nominations for DTA Award**

5. Currently, nominations are made exclusively by students or alumni, in an effort to recognize that students are the “consumers” of teaching efforts and are best positioned to assess the quality and effectiveness of an instructor’s teaching performance. Some people in the past have suggested that we accept nominations from deans or faculty members, or perhaps even have a college committee or body select finalists for the award. The committee strongly and unanimously supports the continued practice of requiring that ALL valid nominations be received *exclusively* from current students or alumni.
6. Currently, only tenured faculty members are eligible for the DTA award. After discussing the merits and demerits of part-time or full-time lecturers or untenured faculty members for eligibility for this award, the committee unanimously recommends that only tenured faculty members be eligible for the DTA award. While other instructors on campus clearly have achieved outstanding instructional performance, the differing nature of their professional assignments and other factors caused us to make this recommendation. It should be noted that other recognitions are available on campus for distinctive performance by lecturers or untenured faculty.

### **Evaluation Process**

7. Currently, the committee reviews all eligible nominations and selects the best candidates for finalists, regardless of college, discipline, or gender. Some people in the past have suggested that we consider establishing a “quota” type of system that would, for example, guarantee finalists from each college, each year. The committee members unanimously and strongly rejected this latter notion and recommends that we continue with our current approach.
8. Currently, it is expected that all committee members personally visit classes of all finalists, so that they will have direct experience in observing the instructional approaches used by the finalists in their various course preparations. Some people have suggested that this is excessively time-intensive and that perhaps we can use alternative metrics such as quantitative teaching evaluations or a rotational schedule that has each committee member seeing only a subset of the finalists. Due to the unique nature of the evaluative task at hand, the committee members strongly and unanimously supported the importance of having each committee member visit the classes of each finalist, on a multiple visitation and multiple preparation basis, as practiced currently.
9. This past year, the Distinguished Scholarship Award (DSA, which recognizes research and professional development, rather than teaching, performance) attempted to co-align their time frame with our own. There was some indication that co-promotion of the awards resulted in some confusion by students, who did not understand which award to nominate faculty for. The DSA, unlike the DTA, does not involve visitations to faculty classes and is not constrained to the same temporal schedule (e.g., last 5 weeks of Winter, first 5 weeks of Spring) as the DTA is. We recommend that this year’s experiment of co-alignment of award

promotion cycles with the DSA be ended, and that we revert to a separate promotional approach for the DTA as we have done historically.

### **Recognition**

10. As part of the recognition of instructional excellence achieved by DTA recipients, we recommend the initiation of efforts to collect and post information on all prior DTA recipients on the Senate website. It is recommended that the committee chair and the Senate administrative assistant (currently Gladys Gregory) undertake efforts in this regard. It is recommended that, whenever possible, each prior award recipient have the following items included in his/her listing: photo, name, rank, college/department, academic training (i.e., degree type and issuing university), professional experience (what schools/classes taught), other key awards received, the year the DTA was received, and perhaps a brief listing of representative student comments that were part of the initial nomination materials. The entire listing should comprise approximately one full frame on a computer screen, and listings should be searchable by year, college, and alphabetically. Since collection and preparation of these listings will take some time, we recommend that such listings be prepared in reverse chronological order, starting with the most recent year's award recipients.