**1996 Original Criteria for the Presidential Awards for Outstanding Teaching**

**Faculty Criteria**

We are pleased to be part of the effort by the University to recognize and encourage distinguished teaching. Having considered issues of criteria, eligibility, and process during the course of this semester, we write now to convey our recommendations and elements of the reasoning which produced them in the hope that they can be implemented this academic year.

The following procedures we propose are geared to secure a visible place for teaching awards on our campuses, and to achieve the goals of inclusiveness, thoughtful participation, and efficient administration:

1. Number of the Award: At the conclusion of each academic year, the University should award up to five (ordinarily no fewer than three) teaching awards. A larger number, we believe, would dilute the symbolic value of each tribute; a smaller number would be insufficient to a community of our scale. Whether the full complement is utilized should depend on the number of compelling nominees.

2. Recognition: A suitable framed certificate or plaque should accompany a wash award of $5,000 per recipient. The ceremony either should be incorporated into Commencement or held in a highly publicized venue at the close of the academic year. Our preference is for the former. Commencement would provide a well-attended, prestigious setting with students, alumni, parents, and faculty in the audience. At this occasion, the time devoted to presenting the awards could be relatively brief, but the symbolic impact would be high.

3. Eligibility: Eligible faculty should include all full-time colleagues as well as clinical and part-time instructors who have a significant relationship to the teaching program. We favor an inclusive pool because the University has many effective teachers whose links to the University vary in intensity and duration. Ordinarily, teaching awards would be made to individuals. From time to time, however, prizes might be awarded to collectivities which make special contributions to campus pedagogy.

4. Distribution: There should be no a priori allocation across ranks, schools or fields should be mandated, but the selection committee should take into account the desirability of a distribution which reflects the diversity of the University. In particular, we are keen to see these awards appreciate excellence in teaching graduate and undergraduate students in both the Arts and Sciences and the professional schools. In any given year, but especially over time, care must be taken to give recognition to teaching at these levels and locations.

5. Criteria: We recognize, of course, that outstanding teaching neither is fixed in form and venue nor easily assessed. Yet irrespective of whether instruction takes place in lecture courses, seminars, or laboratories (or whether it is pitched at introductory or advanced levels), exceptional pedagogy is marked by the active, critical role of the instructor whose demanding presence fosters critical thinking and inspires students to engage the quest for knowledge as a value and as a craft. We considered, but put aside, the suggestion that one or more awards be reserved for pedagogical innovation. While this achievement might provide the basis for an award, the institutionalization of this criterion would introduce an element of undesirable rigidity into a system whose effective functioning depends on the exercise of flexible judgment.

6. Nominating Procedures: We strongly urge that the initiation of these awards and opportunities for nominating candidates be publicized widely in our student, faculty, alumni, and administrative communities. Any member of the University, from the most junior to the most senior, should be eligible to nominate. To be considered, these nominations would have to be made in the form of a detailed letter. The selection committee would screen these nominations and send those supported by sustained reason, hence which are prima facie persuasive, to the relevant unit of the University with a a request that a full dossier--including teaching evaluations, a letter of support from the chair or dean, and other germane material--be assembled and transmitted to the committee.

7. Selection Procedures: The Teaching Awards Committee would recommend awards by selecting from among the full complement of nominations supported by informed dossiers. These materials will stay on file.

8. Timing: Ordinarily, an announcement including a statement of aims, criteria, and procedures should be distributed by Thanksgiving. Nominations should be due by February 10, dossiers by March 1, and awards decided by the end of that month. During this academic year, a strong and visible campaign of publicity should be deployed by the first week of the Spring semester.

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December 5, 1995

**Graduate Criteria**

We heartily endorse the recommendation of the Katznelson Committee that the recognition of outstanding teaching be extended to include recognition of the contributions made by the graduate student members of the Columbia community. In general, we would like the process of selecting and honoring graduate students to parallel the process for faculty. Because the committee was constituted relatively late this year, we recommend streamlining the nomination process this one time in order that the first graduate awards can be offered at the same time as the first faculty awards.

Below are our recommended procedures. Unless specified otherwise, we assume congruence with the procedures and assumptions of the committee on Faculty Teaching Awards.

1. Composition of the Committee: The Committee on Graduate Teaching Awards will typically consist of five faculty and three graduate students chosen to represent the various areas of the University where graduate students do significant teaching. Graduate student membership will usually include one representative from the Humanities or Social Science departments within the Arts and Sciences, one member from the Natural Sciences or Engineering, and one from the professional schools.

2. Number and Nature of the Awards: Three awards, each of $2,500, should be awarded at a public occasion at the end of the academic year, preferably at Commencement or at the same ceremony where faculty teaching awards are distributed.

3. Eligibility: Graduate teaching will be inclusively defined to include student officers holding the rank of TA1, TA2, Preceptor, and Associate III who perform significant teaching duties. In cases where the nature of the graduate student's individual and independent teaching contribution might not be clear, letters of nomination should specify the exact nature of the graduate student's duties and achievements as an instructor.

4. Distribution: As with faculty awards, no a priori allocation across schools or fields should be mandated, but there should be sensitivity to the desirability, over time, of recognizing different kinds of graduate teaching as conducted in the various parts of the University.

5. Criteria: Outstanding teaching by graduate students will, as with the teaching of established faculty, take many forms. In general, the committee wishes to recognize teaching marked by the active and critical engagement of the teacher with his or her students in exploring a domain of knowledge and marked, as well, by the demanding nature of these pedagogical interactions.

6. Nominating Procedures: Nominations for graduate student teaching awards should be requested by Provostial letter from all members of the Columbia community, including, but not limited to, faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates in all branches of the University in which graduate students serve as officers of instruction. Consideration should be given to mailing these letters in conjunction with the letters requesting nominations for faculty awards. Nominations should be made in the form of a detailed letter outlining the nature of the outstanding teaching contribution made by the nominee. These letters of nomination will be screened by the selection committee, and for the most promising candidates, full teaching dossiers will be requested from the appropriate program or department. Dossiers will consist of teaching evaluations, syllabi, class observation reports, further letters of support, or any other material deemed relevant.

Because the committee feels strongly that graduate student teaching awards should first be given in the same year as the faculty awards are initiated, we are recommending that, for the academic year 1995-96 only, nominations for this award will be solicited solely from department and program heads. This will allow the selection process to be completed by May 1.

7. Selection Procedures: The Committee on Graduate Student Teaching Awards will select up to five winners from among those whose nominations are supported by full and persuasive dossiers.

8. Timing: Ordinarily, the work of this committee will parallel that of the Committee on Faculty Teaching Awards. Letters requesting initial nominations should be sent out to allow at least three months to be devoted to the various stages of the nomination and selection process. This should be completed by April 20 of each academic year.

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