Excellence in Teaching Award

The annual Excellence in Teaching Award recognizes exemplary university instruction by tenure/tenure track faculty. Since our primary mission is to assist students in identifying their talents and interests, and to facilitate students’ intellectual growth through intense practice and effective mentoring, quality university teaching is the most important characteristic of our community of scholars. Outstanding faculty named for this honor will receive a commemorative medallion and a $5000 award.

Eligibility

To be considered for this award a faculty member must be full-time and have completed five years of university service at Sam Houston State University in a tenure-track faculty position. Having been granted tenure is not a prerequisite for consideration; past recipients are ineligible for subsequent awards.

Process

Since the number of nominees has traditionally been several hundred, the committee will “narrow the field” with the goal of enabling a fair and close evaluation by the committee. Subsequently, a final group of three to six candidates will be extensively reviewed by each committee member using the following guidelines:

As a first step in the process, the committee will gather names of the nominees and request from the Registrar’s Office a list of the number of students each candidate taught in the preceding academic year. The committee will compute a relative ratio that will have the number of nominations as its numerator and the number of students in classes as its denominator. This ratio will be used to condense the group of candidates into a cohort of twenty with at least one representative from each college by taking the top ranked candidates in each college.

The committee will invite these remaining candidates to submit a formal statement of teaching philosophy along with a vita, and to request letters of support from colleagues, students, and alumni. The candidates’ departmental chairs will be asked to provide a letter of recommendation that may include rankings of the individual within the departmental faculty by student IDEA scores and FES-chair evaluations during the past five years. The department also will provide syllabi for the preceding academic year. The committee will then evaluate and review these materials to reduce the number to a manageable list of three to six finalists.

The last step in the evaluation process will be classroom visitations to observe each finalist while teaching his/her class(es). When necessary, the committee will agree upon an equivalent evaluation for off-campus or on-line instruction.

Procedure

For each review step the committee, through consultations with the previous year’s committee, will carefully define the evaluation criteria with a weighted scale for each criterion. To take advantage of the diversity of faculty perspective, each committee member may independently set the series of weights for the criteria. To improve the review process, the individual rankings or reviews will be shared with the full committee. Reviewers will be allowed to question and defend criterion weights and results for individual candidates. Openness and free discussion of considerations are important to the process. In order to improve the precision of the collective selection when considering the compilation of all reviewers’ scores, the highest score as well as the lowest score for each candidate will be eliminated prior to computing average scores. Finally, a list of relative ranking and mean score will be posted and debated by the group of reviewers in order to achieve final consensus.

Schedule of Necessary Events

Due to the nature of the open nomination process and the sheer number of nominations typically received, precisely defined deadlines must be maintained.

October 1: Computer Services posts a link and Academic Affairs provides notification to the university community to begin accepting nominations through November 15.

December 1: Committee receives from Computer Services the number of students taught for each nominee and ranks nominees by the ratio: (number of nominations/number of students taught).

December 15: Requests are made to the semi-finalists and their chairs with a due date of January 15.

January 15: Committee begins the first review process and narrows the field.

February 15: Remaining candidates are invited to submit letters of support and the cohort is further reduced to 3-6 candidates.

March 15: Classroom observations are scheduled and visitation begins.

April 7: President is notified of the committee’s selection.

April 15: President informs university community of the Teaching Award recipient.

Note: Where appropriate, such as in the College of Criminal Justice or in large departments in which personnel matters and the faculty evaluation cycle are addressed at the coordinator level, the terms “department” and “chair” should be replaced with the equivalent administrative unit or officer. When appropriate, the Newton Grisham Library should be considered as a “college” such that teaching faculty in the NGL may also be eligible for this award.