

TO: Section Secretaries
FROM: Kenneth A. Ross, President
DATE: September 26, 1995
SUBJECT: The Fifth Annual Distinguished Teaching Awards

This is the time to prepare to solicit nominations for the fifth annual Awards for Distinguished College or University Teaching of Mathematics.

Since last year's administration of these awards seems to have generally gone very smoothly, the procedure for this fall's solicitation has been changed in only three aspects (in particular, no changes have been made in the proposed letter calling for nominations and the nomination form):

(a) The second paragraph of item 4 in the instructions below is new to make clear the consequences of late submission of packets on Section awardees.

(b) The last sentence of item 5 has been expanded to emphasize the importance of checking that a nominated candidate still meets all eligibility criteria.

(c) Item 8 is new.

With these three changes the process of making these awards then consists of the following steps:

1. Please solicit early this fall nominations by sending a letter, such as the enclosed one (1996 XYZ Section Awards . . .), together with the enclosed "Nomination Form" at least to all chairs and MAA representatives of departments in the mathematical sciences in your Section or preferably to all members of your Section. Publicize the nomination process in any additional ways you believe to be appropriate, for example, in your Section Newsletter and the local news media. Please feel free to change this letter in any way you desire. The only items which cannot be changed (since they have been set nationally) are the eligibility rules, the guidelines for nominations, the date by which the Section winner has to be selected (February 1, 1996), and the Nomination Form.

Items you may wish to change include, for example, the date at which the nominations have to be returned to you (the enclosed letter proposes January 1, but you may wish to set it earlier or later). The only thing you need to be sure of is that there is enough time for your Section Selection Committee to decide on the Section awardee prior to February 1.

You may also prefer to have only one copy (rather than the proposed six) sent to you and make yourself the copies needed for distribution to the members of the Section Selection Committee.

It is also left to your Section to decide whether a nominee should be made aware of the fact that he or she has been nominated. This is why the enclosed letter is silent on this point.

You also may wish to consider adopting for your Section the policy followed by the national committee not to consider for awards files which significantly exceed the prescribed limits and, if so, include such a statement in your letter to department chairs.

2. Appoint a Section Selection Committee (it might be advisable, although not necessary, to do this prior to step 1).

It is recommended that this Committee consist of three to five people and not be the Executive Committee of the Section. Members of the Executive Committee, however, should have the possibility of making nominations, especially if it appears that some obvious candidates have not been nominated by anyone in the Section.

Members of the Section Selection Committee cannot receive the Award. It is, therefore, recommended that the members of the Section Selection Committee be chosen so that few, if any, are eligible for the Award. This would include prior years Section awardees, members of the Section teaching less than halftime, mathematicians who are now administrators, those recently retired from teaching, employees in industry, government, or other non-teaching positions, etc. They should, however, be strongly committed to excellence in teaching and preferably include present or former college mathematics teachers from two-year colleges, four-year colleges, and Ph.D. granting institutions.

In response to an inquiry by a Section whether current executive officers of a Section should be declared ineligible for nomination, the national committee did not favor such a rule since, if the Section Selection Committee is appointed as suggested in the previous paragraph, there is no need to exclude the current executive officers from nomination. Nevertheless the national committee permits a Section to adopt such a rule within the Section if it so desires.

3. After a Section Selection Committee has been appointed, request that its members agree on a procedure to select the Section awardee. This procedure should be in place prior to the time they are sent the nomination packets. It should not require a meeting of the Section Selection Committee although the Committee can, of course, decide to meet. A typical procedure might be for each member of the Committee to rank the nominees,

then communicate their ~~rank~~ ranks to the Chair of the Committee; if necessary, the Chair of the Committee can arrange a telephone conference call among the members of the Committee to agree on the awardee.

4. The Section Selection Committee communicates the name of the awardee to the Section Secretary. The Section Secretary then sends a copy of the nomination packet prior to February 1, 1996 to

Professor Gerald L. Alexanderson, Secretary
Mathematical Association of America
Department of Mathematics
Santa Clara University
Santa Clara CA 95053

who in turn forwards it to the National Selection Committee.

It is important that the packets are sent on time. Names of awardees submitted late to Professor Alexanderson are not considered for national awards. This year there were three such late submissions which deprived the Section awardee of the opportunity to be considered for one of the national awards.

5. Section Selection Committees are encouraged to designate some or all of those not chosen as a Section award winner as candidates to be renominated the following year. For those so designated, a letter should be written to the nominator asking him or her whether the nominator is willing to renominate the candidate, whether he or she is still eligible, (in particular, whether he or she is still a college or university teacher assigned at least half-time during the academic year to teach a mathematical science) and, if so, to update the file if necessary, but not requiring a new file to be submitted.

6. The Section Secretary, perhaps together with the other officers of the Section, arranges for the awardee to be honored at the Section meeting in the Spring. It is recommended that a ceremony honoring the awardee be listed as a separate item in the program of the Section meeting and not be considered just part of the business meeting. The ceremony might be held in conjunction with a banquet. To increase interest in the ceremony, it is desirable to keep the name of the awardee secret until the time of the ceremony. An appropriate certificate to be presented to the awardee on this occasion will be sent to you by the Secretary of the Association at least four weeks prior to the time of the ceremony. In addition the Section Secretary arranges for appropriate publicity in the media to appear at the time of the Section meeting. Furthermore, the appropriate officials in the institution of the awardee should be notified.

7. The names of those nominated who did not win the award should, for a great variety of reasons, not be made public.

8. Sections are urged to invite their awardees to make a presentation at a subsequent Section meeting. This could either be a short talk on what they perceive to have been the reasons for their successes as a teacher or a lecture on a mathematical topic.

9. If you have any questions on any of these items, please feel free to contact directly the chair of the National Selection Committee:

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