

Feedback on faculty awards

Ken Saladin

Sent: Friday, October 02, 2009 8:57 AM

To:

Lee Digiovanni

Cc:

Andrei Barkovskii

Attachments:

Lee,

I offer this feedback on changes in the faculty awards -- hurriedly, trying to get out of town on a trip (so please excuse any typos; I'm rushing off to my last predeparture class); I won't bother to list points of agreement, but only points on which (on admittedly cursory thought) I disagree. I write as a recipient of the Excellence in Research and Publication Award and Distinguished Professor award.

Excellence in Teaching

I would keep the 3-year requirement for demonstrating excellence in teaching. I would prefer to see that someone has at least that much of a track record on teaching in the GCSU environment, to our type of students, and accumulates some teaching performance data, before singling one out for the award.

I would also keep the 5-year interval between eligibility in order to prevent the possibility of the award becoming "monopolized" by one or two outstanding teachers. Someone who's been here 10-15 years might have an unreasonable advantage over someone who's been here only 2-3 years. I think the interval helps to ensure that junior faculty, among others, get a chance and aren't buried under perennial recommendations for a few long-established, popular, well-known faculty.

Excellence in Research/Publication

Perhaps an either/or wording would be best here -- to allow the award for a publication resulting from a collaborative project, OR an award to the faculty member for a body of published works rather than a single publication. I won this on the basis of one book, but I think that a faculty member who has published a number of peer-reviewed articles in a given year should be just as eligible based on that collective body of work even if no one of them alone might have won against a book.

I would also support a motion that a candidate (or collaborative team) be allowed to submit all works produced in a 2-year period rather than in a single year. This would be a better picture of a person's publication effort and scholarly merit. But if this is done, I would suggest also that a single person/team who wins one year may not submit or be nominated in the next year (but could submit two years out). This would help to ensure that the same publication is not considered twice, particularly since committee membership turnover might mean there are people on the award committee who would not recognize or remember that the same publication already won once.

Distinguished Professor Award

If it is not already stipulated, I would suggest this be stipulated as a once-in-a-lifetime award and that it call for rank at Associate Professor level or higher, so that nominees are people who have proven to have sufficient peer approval to have risen in academic

rank from entry-level. Notwithstanding popularity, I don't think a person should get this twice or more.

Thanks for your consideration of these thoughts.

Ken Saladin

Dr. Barkovskii and FAPC,

I am concerned about a recommended change in the Excellence in Research Award. While I think I fully understand the nature of the change, I do not agree with it, and hope you would consider these points as you move forward with the issue.

1. A publication award, as suggested with this change, recognizes a major achievement. I like the idea of this. And it should be a book of wide/critical acclaim or a tier-one, peer-reviewed journal publication I would think. However, in my discipline, writing a book is not standard if one is involved in the scholarship of discovery. Additionally, given the million dollar grants and laboratories that I would have to compete with to get my work published in such a venue, laboratories that contain a dozen or more postdocs, PhD graduate students and cutting edge facilities, as well as the infrastructure for research we can only dream about here at GCSU (not to mention the near total release from teaching that faculty at R1 universities enjoy), it is extremely unlikely that I, or any scientist at a COPLAC institution, would have his work included in a tier-one level publication such as Science or Nature. So with the suggested revision of this award, I and essentially all scientists at GCSU, would be barred from an Excellence in Research Award (ERA), because only the highest quality publications would be recognized.

2. In regard to changing the award to one for a publication: This seems to privilege certain types of scholarship over others. Moreover, for many in the sciences, a process whereby a pattern of scholarship unique to one's discipline was recognized would be preferable to one for a single publication. By my thinking there is no reason to elevate a particular publication when one has a body of research to offer, but this award would seem to do just that. Indeed, for a few of us who consider ourselves teacher-scientists, publications in any or all of Boyer's areas of scholarship (e.g., scholarship of discovery or the scholarship of teaching and learning), as long as the scholarship is central to one's academic discipline though of a pedagogical nature, should be considered. Additionally, if one were to receive extramural grants in support of any of the areas of Boyer's scholarship, these should be considered. Presentations at meetings, particularly national and international meetings, should count too although prestigious, peer-reviewed publications and scholarly books should perhaps weigh more. And don't forget scholarship that involves students! This marginalization troubles me personally, as one who distributes his efforts between biological research and SOTL activities related to teaching biology I would never have a chance to compete for such an award unless all these areas are considered. So I suggest that the totality of one's scholarship in a time period should be considered; call this an Excellence in Research: Overall Scholarship Award (EROSA) rather than Excellence in Research: Publication Award (ERPA). (Please note I am not talking about a change to the Distinguished Professor Award that also examines one's teaching and service contributions.)

3. I think a reasonable compromise would be the following:

a. Retain the current ERSA, but broaden it as above... (EROSA). Why include SOTL? Yes, while we do have a separate SOTL award it is uniquely BOR-based though. Plus should the time spent doing high-quality, SoTL penalize you for a regular scholarship award? I think not.

b. Institute the publication award as well (ERPA). We should recognize outstanding scholarship in publication and this will level the field for those who write books as their scholarship. In fact, books might even start to take precedence over peer-reviewed

publications because of the difficulty in publishing in tier-one peer-reviewed journals.

Lastly, as I just alluded, the publication award might skew the selection of awardees toward only those that write books, because WE ARE LIMITED in what we at GCSU can accomplish in the sciences (probably in other areas as well), limited by funding, time, talent and resources for the traditional scholarship of discovery research. Nevertheless, this is precisely what we are expected to pursue because it provides the students that we involve in our research the perfect student-centered approach to learning science, and isn't that why we are here? Isn't that our Public Liberal Arts Mission, to provide the very best individualized instruction? Well yes, having students participate in science is the gold standard in our field. So, by this rationale, scholarship that involves students should be a factor as well.

My remedy? Please reconsider your proposal and preserve the current ERSA award (and broaden it too... EROSA) as you begin a new ERPA that recognizes publication excellence.

Thank you for considering this request,

Dr. Mike Gleason
Associate Professor of Biological and Environmental Sciences
University Senator, CAPC

ee,

I have never had a chance to speak with you personally, but I do listen carefully in the far corner of the room during Faculty Senate Meetings. My reason for contacting you is to request having the Faculty Affairs Policy Committee consider proposing to discontinue Faculty Research and Publication Awards. Of course, if one brings up a "beef" then one should propose an alternative to recognizing faculty research. I do have a suggestion at the end of this message. Since I came to GCSU in 1999, I have served on the Faculty Research Committee, the research committee Anne Gormly formed to review research and scholarship, and have had experience reviewing both proposals for internal research grants and applications for the Excellence in Research and Publication. I have also received both grants and an Excellence in Research and Publication Award. During my tenure at GCSU I have published over 25 papers and was responsible for the only standard NSF research grant awarded to GCSU in the last ten years. I only list this experience since I think it gives me a perspective on this issue. Furthermore, creative accomplishments and research (scholarship of teaching and learning as well as "traditional" research) are vital to our mission. These activities directly infuse new information into the classroom, increase the reputation of both faculty and students OUTSIDE of GCSU and are essential for getting our students into graduate programs.

Below are some of the major reasons we could do without Excellence in Research and Publication Awards:

1) Creating a culture of support for creative and research activities:

There appears to be no collective spirit in support of creative and research activities on this campus. Since I have been here, I have witnessed some individuals fail to recognize that research is acceptable in the area of scholarship of teaching and learning and just as valuable as the results garnered from "traditional" research. In the climate of increased teaching loads and faculty service, some individuals feel highly defeated that they lack the time and energy to keep their creative accomplishments and research going at a level needed to remain professionally established. Yes we teach, but we also serve our students by introducing them to our peers and colleagues within our academic fields so they can get into graduate school. The only way to do this is to remain active and keep visible in your field. Creative and research activities of faculty are essential to keeping the conduit open for our students. The lack of a supportive culture for creative and research activities pulls us behind other COPLAC institutions and private liberal arts institutions. Having individual awards for Excellence in Research and Publication does not help create a cooperative culture and only creates division among colleagues.

2) Difficulty in recognizing what excellence is among diverse academic fields:

Committees reviewing applicants for the Excellence in Research and Publication awards have always been awkward. How do you decide, among the diverse range of disciplines, which set of publications is "better"? This has never be resolved and I don't think there is a way to do it. Since that is the case, shouldn't we consider just not having awards recognizing individual achievement?

Let's make this a three-point "sermon". This last point includes examples I would rather have kept confidential among the Faculty Affairs Policy Committee.

3) The Excellence in Research and Publication Award provides a backdrop for episodes of "Faculty Behaving Badly"

During my tenure on the Research Committee I had the following occur: 1) my Chair asked why his entry was not successful and implied being slighted; 2) a second member

within my Department asked when decisions would be made and commented that he always applied because he wanted the money and he should be awarded for doing research; and 3) the committee had the experience of at least one, usually more, applicants going to see some member of the administration complaining. I was never more appreciative of having tenure. I never asked if fellow committee members shared these same experiences in their own Departments.

Last year was the first year applicants could not self nominate. Previously, the policy of nominating yourself was the only way one could be considered for the award. One year I was joking with a colleague at Arizona State University that I lacked the ability to nominate myself for the award or else I would do so to get out of the typical, messy experience of deciding on "winners" (see Point 2). My ASU colleague turned around and nominated me and I ended up being one of the three Excellence in Research and Publication "winners". As a result, I don't remember the pleasant experience of being recognized, but rather remember the disdain shown to me by my colleagues in this Department. I am now more careful not to be snarky and joke regarding some issues. Also, new last year was making membership to the Excellence in Research and Scholarship Committee an elected chore. Sadly, within my own Department, that chore fell upon a nontenured faculty member who has since left. This may have been one, of several, reasons he departed. Enough said.

Nomination and service on research committees has always been done based on "perceived" vs. actual experience. I have yet to see anyone ask someone to provide any kind of CV or credentials as evidence for the ability to serve on any of the research committees. What I have seen is new faculty members put on these committees. Some of them have outstanding experience. Others are simply put on to check off "university service" on their end of the year evaluations.

It would be nice to go to Faculty Senate meeting this year where my fellow Departmental member WOULDN'T ask about faculty awards.

ALTERNATIVES TO EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION AWARDS:

I commend the Library for having a display of faculty publications and artistic works. I noticed that people examined the display and were actually interested in what their colleagues in other areas were accomplishing. This is one step. I loved looking at the displays and actually went back to my office and downloaded a few of the papers posted to read. By the way, none of those papers were by my fellow science geeks.

One means of promoting and recognizing faculty research could be having a yearly publication where faculty work with our PR crew to produce pieces on their research. Faculty publications and presentations could be listed. I know we had the old "research newsletters" but what I am proposing is a new beast. This new publication could be distributed during orientations as well as Fallfest and Springfest. One reason I went to the UW-Oshkosh was because I was sent a wonderful publication showcasing faculty and student research. I can remember reading those articles and wanting to take classes from the faculty showcased in the publication.

A faculty research publication could also be helpful when recruiting donors and the Foundation could distribute copies. I can envision Amy or Lee saying "I could tell you what our faculty and students do, but why don't you read for yourself some of the exciting things our students and faculty accomplish together at GCSU".

I would be happy to discuss any of these points with you and others. More than anything, I want to see a cohesive group of faculty on this campus dedicated to artistic endeavors, creative writing, and both scholarship of teaching and learning and

"traditional" research. Our students would be the biggest winner and as an institution we would come closer to the liberal arts ideal we thrive to achieve.

Cheers,

Melanie

P.S. Did I mention I want world peace too