

# University of Massachusetts Amherst College Outstanding Teacher Awards

## **Purpose**

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The purpose of the University of Massachusetts Amherst **College Outstanding Teacher Award** is to recognize excellence in teaching and to honor individual faculty members for their teaching accomplishments. This program expands, at the college level, the recognition already provided by the University Distinguished Teaching Award Program. Each college, faculty or school (hereafter referred to as “college”) selects outstanding faculty members thus providing recognition for additional faculty each year.

## **Nature of Award**

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The College Outstanding Teacher Awards are awarded annually. The awardees are recognized at Commencement. Each award consists of \$1,000 (\$500 from the Provost and \$500 from the college) and a commemorative plaque. Each college is encouraged to establish its own award ceremony and to maintain a permanent plaque bearing the name of each recipient and the year of the award.

Initially, the Provost provided \$500 for a single award in each college. In subsequent years, funds have been allocated on a prorated basis so that colleges having more than 100 faculty can receive two awards and colleges having more than 200 faculty can receive three awards.

Any full-time faculty member who has been a member of the college for a minimum of three years and who has taught at least two semesters before being nominated is eligible for this award. Faculty who have received the Distinguished Teaching Award or the College Outstanding Teacher Award within the past seven years are not eligible.

In the event that the college selection committee is unable to select a winner in a given year, the award may be omitted for that year.

## **Committee Selection**

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Each college will establish a broad-based committee to review the files and select the College Outstanding Teacher Award winner. The names of the previous year’s final-round candidates for the Distinguished Teaching Award can be made available to the respective colleges. (For information call Diane Burns at 55142).

Colleges may establish their committees by any reasonable method but should include at least one undergraduate and one graduate student on the committee. For example, one college utilized former recipients of Distinguished Teaching Award, College Outstanding Teacher Award, and the Lilly Teaching Fellowship as committee members. The committees should recognize the necessity for maintaining the confidentiality of nominee files.

## **Criteria For Selection**

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Although there are a variety of elements of excellence in teaching, and outstanding teachers may approach the craft of teaching from different perspectives, researchers have arrived at quite consistent agreement of general characteristics of effective teaching. The following four elements are important and individuals selected for this award should exhibit some combination of these characteristics.

We suggest the following criteria apply in evaluating candidates:

### *Teaching Effectiveness and Creativity*

Evidence that the teacher has developed effective skills in managing the art and craft of teaching. The teacher is enthusiastic, well prepared for class, presents material in an interesting and clear manner, is fair and reasonable in the evaluation of students, and has the ability to encourage and motivate learning in students. The teacher is open to new techniques and approaches to stimulate intellectual growth and to generate active student participation.

### *Impact on Students*

Evidence that the teacher has an interest in students and advisees and is concerned for their educational and personal welfare. The teacher is approachable and available to students in and outside the classroom, and is involved with student activities. The teacher is tolerant of different viewpoints and treats peers and students with respect.

### *Subject Mastery and Scholarship*

Evidence of mastery of the subject matter in courses taught, in scholarship, and in public service. The teacher has the ability to organize, emphasize and clarify ideas, and communicate knowledge beyond the mere exchange of information. The teacher blends new ideas, research and developments into instruction both within and outside the classroom.

### *Contributions to Teaching Mission*

Evidence that the teacher assumes responsibilities on department curriculum, honors, or teaching excellence committees, is involved in supervising graduate students, seeks feedback about teaching quality and is engaged in activities to improve teaching. The latter may include attending seminars, developing special teaching materials or publications, exploring alternative methods, and seeking aid in trying new teaching ideas.

## **Nomination**

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Each college is asked to forward the name of its awardee(s) by March 1<sup>st</sup> to the Center For Teaching, 301 Goodell, (545-1225). In order to meet this deadline, it is suggested that colleges set February 1<sup>st</sup> as their own internal deadline for decision making.