To: Deans, Directors, Department Heads and Chairs, and Faculty Members  
From: Katherine Newman, Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs  
Subject: Exceptional Merit Nominations for Non-Unit Members

The program for recognizing and rewarding exceptionally meritorious achievement by tenure-system faculty is entering its fourth year. The program abides by terms negotiated with the Massachusetts Society of Professors (MSP) for members of the bargaining unit, and I have already sent you guidelines and a form to be used for nominating unit faculty. Last year saw 117 nominations of unit faculty and 8 nominations of non-unit faculty. Almost 80% of all nominees, unit and non-unit, received awards totaling $282,000. This year I am making available a total of $500,000. Salary increases resulting from the awards will take effect spring semester, 2015.

In addition to recognizing unit faculty, program recognizes and rewards exceptionally meritorious achievement by our non-unit faculty—typically heads, chairs, deans, directors, and vice provosts. The award criteria for non-unit faculty are identical to those for unit faculty. They permit individual increases to permanent base salaries, ordinarily in the range of $5,000 to $10,000 but with a maximum award of $20,000, awarded only in extraordinary circumstances.

Eligibility & Criteria

Awards will be granted to tenure system faculty members based on exceptional, meritorious performance leading to achievement of national or international renown. National or international renown may be demonstrated in research, teaching, or service, and special consideration will be given to instances in which an individual’s salary is lower than salaries at peer universities. Tenure system faculty members in all disciplines will be considered, and the measures of national or international renown will be those appropriate to the respective disciplines. No individual may receive more than one exceptional merit award in any three-year period. Because this is the fourth year, first-year recipients are again eligible.

The program’s criteria require that “the measures of national or international renown will be those appropriate to the respective disciplines. Evidence of national or international renown may include but will not be limited to awards such as those tracked by the Association of American Universities or comparable national or international distinction.” Those who are nominating colleagues for an exceptional merit award should provide a discipline-specific context so that reviewers of nominations understand how to assess the achievement of “national or international renown.”
For an individual faculty member’s initial award of exceptional merit, accomplishments while at the University shall be considered. If a faculty member gained national or international renown before joining UMass, she or he may be considered, but the record since hire must justify the award of exceptional merit. Likewise, past accomplishments that have been previously recognized by comparable salary increases to those being considered in this exceptional merit process (e.g., retention, anomaly) will not ordinarily be considered for an exceptional merit increase. One can gain national and international renown in research, teaching, or service before building an overall record sufficient to justify promotion to associate or full professor or the award of tenure.

Process

1. Any faculty member, chair, dean, or department personnel committee may nominate an eligible non-unit, tenure-stream faculty member. Such faculty members may nominate themselves. All nominations must use the attached form (“AY2014-2015 Nomination for Exceptional Merit, Non-Unit Faculty”), which differs from the form used to nominate unit faculty. Nominations should summarize the evidence that confirms national or international renown. Nominations must be made on the digital nomination form and must be accompanied by a current, abbreviated CV (no more than two pages).

2. No later than Monday, November 4, send non-unit nominations by e-mail to the Office of the Provost (Academic.Personnel@umass.edu).

If you have any questions about this process, contact Associate Provost John Bryan (JohnBryan@provost.umass.edu).