

APS Awards for Teaching and Extension

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The APS Council has approved in principle a proposal from the Teaching and Extension committees that the Society establish two new awards, the APS Excellence in Teaching Award and the APS Excellence in Extension Award. These awards would be made as part of the Awards and Honors Program and would recognize a level of achievement comparable to the level of research achievement associated with the Ruth Allen Award. The Teaching and Extension committees would like to explain why we proposed the establishment of these awards.

Few would dispute the importance or relevance of teaching and extension as areas of professional activity in plant pathology. Many members of APS hold positions with considerable—even dominant—responsibilities in teaching or extension. In these areas, however, recognition for outstanding performance is limited and accomplishment may add little to a plant pathologist's reputation, especially at the national or international level. The creation of APS awards for teaching and extension not only would honor the recipients for their contributions but also would reaffirm the Society's belief that teaching and extension are significant activities in plant pathology.

We are aware of potential objections to establishing APS awards for teaching and extension. One is that too many awards dilute the prestige of each. This criticism perhaps is justified for some societies, but the number of persons receiving awards in the APS Awards and Honors Program for the 10 years from 1975 to 1984 totaled 129, or about 13 a year. At this rate, honoring two more persons a year specifically for teaching and extension would not detract from the established awards and would be consistent with the attitude that the number of awards should be limited.

A corollary idea is that the awards be given for achievements and contributions that significantly further the main missions of the Society. What professional activities, then, are most important in furthering the major goals of APS? Teaching, research, and extension certainly come to mind, as do service to APS and other organizations, administration, and other scholarly activities. Have these various areas of endeavor been adequately recognized in the Awards and Honors Program? Perhaps not. Of the six awards administered by APS, four (Ruth Allen, Lee M. Hutchins, Campbell, and CIBA-Geigy) are specifically for research accomplishments. To be sure, several recipients have been active in teaching or extension, but the criteria by which the recipients are chosen are clearly based on research.

One may argue that teaching and extension awards are not

needed because the Fellows Award and the Award of Distinction recognize all areas of endeavor in plant pathology. Certainly, teaching and extension activities have been recognized, as is evident in the brief biographies published as part of the Awards and Honors Program. However, neither the proposed teaching and extension awards nor the established research awards duplicate the level of achievement recognized by the Fellows and Distinction awards or diminish their prestige. These latter two awards continue to be the highest honor bestowed by our Society, whereas teaching, extension, and research awards recognize specific areas of achievement.

Definition of selection criteria for the teaching and extension awards is not easy, as these two areas typically do not lead to long resumes or other easily documented indicators of accomplishment. To a considerable extent, the judgment of the selection committees would determine who receives the awards. With these considerations in mind, the Teaching and Extension committees proposed the following selection criteria and guidelines.

For the APS Excellence in Teaching Award, classroom teaching, at either the undergraduate or the graduate level, will be emphasized. The development, delivery, and effectiveness of the courses taught by the nominee will be of central importance, and the extent and nature of the nominee's teaching responsibilities will be considered in relation to the mission of APS. Activities related or contributing to teaching, such as research, thesis advising, undergraduate student advising, and publishing textbooks, will not be emphasized. No one needs more paperwork, but documentation of teaching excellence will be required for each nominee. Otherwise, the selection committee would have difficulty comparing nominees in an equitable manner. The following kinds of documentation will be needed (we recognize that some may not be equally appropriate for all nominees): a list of courses taught by the nominee; statements from the nominator, the nominee, three colleagues, and at least three present or former students explaining the outstanding nature and success of the nominee's teaching accomplishments; a summary of standardized teaching evaluations; a summary of activities related to teaching such as authorship of textbooks or student advising; an indication of any previous recognition for outstanding teaching; and a curriculum vitae and other appropriate supporting materials.

For the APS Excellence in Extension Award, all aspects of plant pathology extension will be evaluated. The award will be given to an APS member who has demonstrated excellence in extension plant pathology. The Extension Committee is presently working in cooperation with the Awards and Honors Committee to finalize the selection criteria for the award. Whereas the exact selection criteria have not been fully developed, they will probably include material such as a critique describing the nature, scope, and relevance of the nominee's contribution in extension plant pathology, a biographic sketch, and supporting materials describing the nominee's programs, activities, and accomplishments in: training programs; extension publications and communications; membership and participation in and recognition by state, regional, and national professional and honor societies; leadership roles in local, regional, and national academic and/or professional organizations; and specific examples of the impact the nominee's programs have had on individuals, groups, regions, etc.

Although we may be a little biased, the Teaching and Extension committees feel that the establishment of these awards would be appropriate. We thank the APS Council for considering and approving these awards in principle, and we look forward to recognition of the recipients' achievements by all APS members.