Report of the Task Force on Distinguished Alumni Awards  
March 23, 2007

In July 2006, Chair of the Board of Trustees Cynthia A. Baldwin announced the establishment of a task force on distinguished alumni awards. The purpose of the task force is to review the practices and processes with respect to the nomination and awards process to ensure that best practices are being institutionalized.

Chair Baldwin met with the members of the Task Force on Saturday, September 16 to deliver the charge to the group. Members of the Task Force are: Anne Riley (Chair), K. David Boyer, Alvin H. Clemens, Steve A. Garban, David M. Joyner, and Edward P. Junker III; other participants included Paula R. Ammerman, Cynthia A. Baldwin, James S. Broadhurst, Rodney P. Kirsch, Stephen J. MacCarthy, and Roger L. Williams.

History

In 1951, the Distinguished Alumnus Award was proposed by President Milton S. Eisenhower and adopted by the Board of Trustees. In 1956, the Board of Trustees established a similar award, Penn State Woman of the Year, to honor outstanding women graduates of the University. This award was made between 1958 and 1971. In 1972, the Penn State Woman of the Year Award and the Distinguished Alumnus Award were combined.

Paula Ammerman (Director of the Board of Trustees Office) and David Boyer (Society of Distinguished Alumni member and chair of the Penn State Alumni Association Awards Committee), had communicated with Chair Baldwin requesting a possible review of the Distinguished Alumni Awards process. The Distinguished Alumni Award of The Pennsylvania State University is the highest award that can be bestowed upon alumni of the University. Therefore, it is imperative that we seek ways to identify the best candidates for the award "whose personal life, professional achievements, and community service exemplify the objectives of The Pennsylvania State University." These individuals may or may not be readily known to Penn State through involvement with their academic home, the Alumni Association, or with other Penn State affiliated entities.

A review of the Distinguished Alumni Award Process was conducted in 2002 by an ad hoc committee of the Board of Trustees (appointed and chaired by Edward R. Hintz, Jr.). The committee reviewed the history of the award process as well as the current practices. The following questions were a few of the issues explored:

a) Is the nominating form too lengthy and complex that it discourages nominations?

b) How do we evaluate excellence in fields unfamiliar to us? From whom should input be sought from specialists before the selection committee meeting?

c) Are there clear examples of deserving individuals who have not been nominated?

It was generally agreed that:

• The current form used was satisfactory and provides necessary uniformity for the information received.
• It is important to maintain continuity on the Trustee Screening Committee so that those candidates who received favorable consideration, but were not selected, could be reviewed the next year.
• It is important to maintain professional diversity among the members of the Trustee Screening Committee in order to gain a broad perspective of candidates’ areas of expertise.

The findings of the 2002 review confirmed that in compiling the pool, attention should be given to ensure that it adequately reflects diversity with regard to gender, race, etc., as well as college/disciplines. If the list is not representative of alums of diverse backgrounds, the committee members will be informed prior to the meeting.

It was noted that philanthropic activity was not a qualification for the award and steps should be taken to ensure that the award is not perceived as 'purchased.'

• Evaluative comments from the academic deans are helpful. They should continue to be solicited and will be shared with the committee members in the event there is an outstanding question as to a candidate’s involvement with a college, their professional contributions, and other pertinent information.

• Steps should be taken to increase the pool of candidates--suggestions included placing an ad in *The Penn Stater* magazine when the call for nominations are issued and providing direction regarding form availability on web site; and notifying the Alumni Interest Groups (AIGs) of the call for nominations.

• The Trustee Screening Committee reviews and approves the guidelines each year that govern: manner of voting to be used by the committee, number of awards to be given each year, etc.

Those recommendations were put into place following the 2002 review and and have been successful.

**Charge**

In response to the suggestion that additional refinements in the awards process may be helpful at this time, the charge of the Task Force on Distinguished Alumni Awards was "...to review the current awards criteria, nomination and awards process. Are there steps or suggestions that we can implement or incorporate to ensure that we are, in fact, using best practices to identify and recognize the most distinguished alumni of Penn State."

**Review**

The Task Force met in September, November and January and reviewed the historical summary prepared in 2002 as well as the findings of the ad hoc group. Additionally, the current materials were reviewed including the form; the call for nomination letters; communications with the academic leadership council; award guidelines; and the number of awards annually.

The source of the nominations was also reviewed to determine if nominations are coming from within the University (members of President's Council or Academic Leadership Council [ALC]). Has there been a change in the source of nominations over the past several years? It was reported that in 2001, of 64 candidates for the award, 41 were nominated from within the University and of the 23 external, 7 were from Society of Distinguished Alumni (SDAs) and three were from members of the Board of Trustees. In 2006, of the 71 candidates nominated for the award, 39 were
nominated from within the University and of the 32 external, nine were from SDAs and three were from members of the Board.

A summary of nominations submitted/awarded for six years was provided for the information of the group:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award Year</th>
<th># New Nominations</th>
<th># Total Nominations</th>
<th>Total Selected</th>
<th>New</th>
<th>First Year Carry Over</th>
<th>2nd Year</th>
<th>3rd Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>8 (1 from 2000 award)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A review of forms from other universities for similar awards (including criteria) was conducted (Texas A&M; Arkansas State University; University of Wisconsin; UCLA; Ball State University; Ohio State University; University of Hawaii). Similarities included nominee information required (name, address, title, occupation, employer, degrees earned from institution as well as other degrees, family information, service to institution/community/professional accomplishments). In almost all of the institutions, members of the alumni council, board of directors, etc., are excluded. Variances noted were length of nominator or supporting statement. (In a few instances, number of pages, type size, and line spacing were specified).

Based on the findings of the review and discussion by the task force, a new form was developed (copy attached). Changes included the elimination of redundant supporting statements; enhanced form to be "user friendly" and in a modified style; and word limitation for supporting statements.

Considerable deliberation occurred regarding ways to enhance the pool of candidates. There were several options considered including:

- maintaining a listing of all recipients of the Alumni Fellow Award and the Early Achiever Award--information can be provided to the Academic Leadership Council (ALC) at the time the call for nominations is issued to remind ALC members of individuals from their academic unit who received these awards.
- ALC should be encouraged to solicit feedback/names from senior faculty members of former students (Evan Pughs, retirees, etc.) as they are the holders of the "family trees" of their former students and their accomplishments. Again, this reminder could be included with the call for nomination materials.
- The University President should encourage ALC to identify candidates for the award (Vice President for University Relations can deliver this message via participation in an ALC meeting early in the academic year).
- Every effort will be made to encourage the submission of nominations via personal contacts such as the Society of Distinguished Alumni, Alumni Interest Groups, etc. The Executive Director of the Penn State Alumni Association is encouraged to promote visibility for the award via ListServs for groups.
• SDAs can be encouraged to submit nominations via the SDA Executive Board and leadership communications.
• Additionally, the Board of Trustees members should be encouraged to provide names of possible candidates for the award. The research to compile the necessary information for completion of the form can be conducted by the Board of Trustees Office and University Development research office.

Summary of Recommendations

The Task Force on Distinguished Alumni Awards recommends the adoption of the following as measures to enhance and build upon the best practices and processes with respect to the nomination and awards process for the Distinguished Alumni Awards:

1. The Distinguished Alumni Award is the highest award that can be bestowed upon an alum of The Pennsylvania State University. Therefore, it is imperative that we seek ways to identify the best candidates for the award ‘whose personal life, professional achievements, and community service exemplify the objectives of The Pennsylvania State University.’ In order to preserve the integrity of the award and its distinction, it is recommended that the number of awards be limited to approximately eight per year. The Trustee Screening Committee will recommend the actual number to be awarded at the time the slate of candidates are presented.

2. Effective with the call for nominations issued in August 2007, begin utilizing the new form developed and proposed (based on a review of other institutions) which provides for elimination of redundant supporting statements; enhanced format to be "user friendly" and in a modified style; and word limitation of supporting statements. [See Appendix I]

3. Enhance the pool of candidates for the award by implementing the following measures:
   -- Track Alumni Fellows/Early Achievers. The Board of Trustees Office will provide a listing of this information to the Academic Leadership Council (ALC) at the time of the call for nominations.
   -- Encourage ALC to solicit feedback/names from senior faculty members of former students (Evan Pughs, retirees, etc.). The Board of Trustees Office will include this recommendation in the ALC memo [it is recognized that professors are the holders of information to formulate "family trees" of their former students].
   -- The University President will encourage ALC to identify candidates for the award. The Vice President for University Relations will meet with ALC at a regularly scheduled meeting early in the academic year.
   -- Every effort will be made to encourage the submission of nominations via personal contacts such as the Society of Distinguished Alumni, Alumni Interest Groups, etc. The Executive Director of the Penn State Alumni Association should promote visibility for the award via ListServes for groups. SDAs will be encouraged to submit nominations via the SDA Executive Board and leadership communications. Additionally, the Board of Trustees members will be encouraged to provide names of possible candidates for the award. The research to compile the necessary information for completion of the form can be conducted by the Board of Trustees Office and University Development research.

"The true measure of a university's greatness can be found in the achievements of its alumni." It is hoped that the implementation of the above recommendations will but swell the fame of The Pennsylvania State University.
Nominations are currently being solicited for The Pennsylvania State University's Distinguished Alumni Award for the year 2007.

**Purpose of award:**

Established by the Board of Trustees in 1951, the Distinguished Alumni Award is the highest honor that The Pennsylvania State University bestows upon an outstanding alumna or alumnus. The award salutes the achievements of outstanding alumni whose "personal lives, professional achievements, and community service exemplify the objectives of their alma mater." The award is an engraved bronze medallion, matching pendant, and framed inscribed certificate.

**Eligible nominees:**

All graduates of the University, who have received a first or bachelor's degree, or an advanced degree, and former students (who have attended full-time as a degree seeking student and satisfactorily passed a minimum of one semester) are eligible for consideration of the award. However, current members of the Board of Trustees, current employees of the University, and current officers and members of the Executive Board of the Alumni Association are not eligible for the award.

**Method of nomination:**

The Board of Trustees encourages all interested to submit a nomination by completing and returning the attached form by October 13, 2006. The form is also available on Penn State's Website at http://www.alumni.psu.edu/awards/individual/distinguished.htm. This form alone will be used by the Board of Trustees in determining individuals to receive the Award, and, therefore, should be filled in as completely as possible. The recipients will be determined by ballot at the January 2007 Board of Trustees meeting.

**Method of award recipient selection:**

The Chair of the Board will appoint a Selection Committee to review all recommend a slate of candidates to the full membership of the Board of Trustees. The recipients will be determined by ballot at the January Board of Trustees meeting.

**Announcement and recognition:**

Following selection, public announcement will be made. The awards are presented on the occasion of the Alumni Reunion Weekend activities, typically held June of each year.
Nominee Name: __________________________________________________________

Home Address: ___________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

Telephone: ___________________________ E-mail: ________________________________

Year(s) graduated or attended Penn State: _______________________________________

Degree(s) Earned: ___ Bachelor's ___ Master's ___ Doctoral

Major or Majors: ___________________________ College or Colleges: _________________________

Other education: ______________________________________________________________

Business title/ Address: ___________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

Telephone: ___________________________

Nature of business/ Profession: _____________________________________________________________

Information about nominee's family: (partner's name, partner's business/ profession, etc., number of children, name[s] and age[s] of children):

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
Memberships or directorships:

Current and past Penn State activities:

Penn State fraternity, alumni, or other awards:

Business/professional honors, awards or achievements:

Community service, honors, and awards: (Include civic, religious, youth and philanthropic activities):
Nominator's statement regarding why the nominee, other than professional or personal accomplishments and activities reflected elsewhere in this form, should be selected as a distinguished alumna/alumnus:

Information about person completing this form:

Name: ______________________________________
Address: ______________________________________
Telephone: ______________________________________
Signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

Return To: Board of Trustees
The Pennsylvania State University
205 Old Main
University Park, PA 16802
OR Submit Electronically to: pra4@psu.edu
Nomination Deadline: October 13, 2006