

## Committee for Faculty Excellence Annual Report 2013-2014

The committee accomplished several important tasks this year:

Of the \$125,000 Teaching and Productive Scholarship (TAPS) budget, approximately \$102,200 was awarded for domestic travel (includes Canada), \$19,000 was awarded for foreign travel, and \$1425 was awarded for equipment and other research support. Note: as the committee operates on a fiscal year schedule and meets year-round, these totals will not be firm until the end of fiscal year reports.

Approximately 95 grants were awarded to 75 faculty. The average grant was \$1436.

For FY 2014-2015, the committee has decided to lower the eligible amount for grants to \$1750 in recognition of the reduction in departmental travel funds. Faculty who are travelling internationally are eligible to apply for an additional \$250 (for a total of \$2000) to support their work. This will allow full funding for roughly the same number of faculty who received funds this year and should allow us to spread funds to even greater numbers of faculty if it results in a slightly lower average grant size.

The committee also worked to revise the guidelines and application in order to streamline and standardize the application materials, clarify and group all relevant rules together in one place, and make budget calculations easier.

In addition to TAPS grants, the committee reviewed and ranked four sabbatical proposals and received six nominations for the Bank of America Annual Award for Scholarly and/or Creative Pursuits. Four candidates submitted portfolios, and the committee selected Dr. Colleen O'Brien as the award winner for 2014. In addition, we worked with the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs to revise award announcement procedures to enable notice of the award to be publicized widely throughout the university and community prior to commencement, when the award is presented to the recipient. The announcement was made via a press release through the USC Upstate Newsroom, and the story appeared in the news scroll on the main page of the USC Upstate Web site.

The biggest challenge facing the committee this year was lack of unit representation and faculty participation. Committee members varied widely throughout the year as several faculty members cycled onto and off of the committee. Members who served consistently throughout their terms included Stephen Bismarck, Vince Connors, Jan Griffin (Chair 2013), Steve Hyun, Celena Kusch (Interim Chair 2014), Nancy Lambert, Ben Myers, Brigitte Neary, and Lori Tanner (Interim Chair 2013). Three units had less than 50% representation at committee meetings this year (JCBE, SON, and HPPA), and some of these had considerably less than 50%, despite the committee's flexibility in offering opportunities for online attendance and password-protected voting through Blackboard in the case of a schedule conflict.

Service on this committee benefits committee members who gain greater insight into the range of faculty scholarship and other activities performed throughout the university, and it opens new opportunities for collaboration. More importantly, service on this committee ensures that significant faculty development activities and faculty accomplishments are rewarded and supported. Unit representation is absolutely necessary to aid in the comparisons necessary in ranking sabbaticals and selecting the scholarly/creative pursuits award winner. In addition, unit representation is often helpful to address questions of IRB requirements for particular projects and/or to clarify the merits of particular grant applications when the narratives are insufficient. Should this committee fail to achieve a quorum for any given meeting, no TAPS grants could be awarded for that month. Should the failure to achieve a quorum occur in the month when

sabbatical requests are considered, the committee would find itself in breach of its obligations as stated in the Faculty Manual. The committee members have taken this lack of participation quite seriously this year and would like to emphasize the urgency of this problem in the annual report.

Dr. Celena E. Kusch, Interim Chair, Committee for Faculty Excellence