


December 14, 2007

TO: Deans
Department Chairs
Directors of Graduate Studies

FROM: John T. Ho 
Interim Vice Provost for Graduate Education and
Dean of the Graduate School

SUBJECT: Excellence in Teaching Awards for Graduate Teaching Assistants

The Graduate School is pleased to announce the annual competition for Excellence in Teaching Awards for Graduate Teaching Assistants. All full-time graduate students who have been involved in teaching at this University for the equivalent of at least one academic year (does not have to be during consecutive semesters) and who are enrolled in the Spring 2008 semester are eligible to be nominated for this special recognition.

The nomination of individuals for this award may be conducted in any manner you deem appropriate in accordance with the guidelines attached to this memo. You may not nominate again someone who has previously won the Excellence in Teaching Award. However, graduate students who previously received only Honorable Mention under this recognition program, and graduate students who have never received either an Award or Honorable Mention, are eligible for nomination this cycle. Please forward copies of the guidelines and nomination form to all faculty you deem appropriate. The guidelines and nomination form are also available online at: <http://www.grad.buffalo.edu/forms/faculty/eta.pdf>.

- **Nominations must be channeled through the appropriate College/School Dean's office for his/her endorsement. Academic Deans should notify their faculty of the date by which nominations and supporting materials must be received in the academic dean's office.**
- **Nominations are due in the Graduate School by Friday, February 15, 2008.**

The Graduate School will be hosting the Teaching Awards Presentation Ceremony at 3:00 p.m. on Friday, March 28, 2008 in the Center for the Arts.

If any faculty would like to examine copies of exemplary dossiers from previous cycles, or should you have any questions regarding this competition, please contact Ms. Sue Adinolfi at 645-6240, or by e-mail adinolfi@buffalo.edu.

Attachments (3)
cc: Dr. Myron A. Thompson
Ms. Sue Adinolfi

**GUIDELINES FOR THE GRADUATE SCHOOL'S
EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARDS
FOR GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS
2007 - 2008**

NATURE OF THE AWARD

The University at Buffalo is committed to providing all of its students with high-quality instruction. Therefore, the nature and quality level of teaching provided by graduate students is of prime importance.

In the interest of encouraging and recognizing graduate students who have developed and demonstrated exceptional competence in teaching, the Graduate School and the Graduate Student Association have established the Excellence in Teaching Awards for Graduate Teaching Assistants.

ELIGIBILITY

All current full-time graduate students who are formally matriculated in a degree program and who have been involved in teaching at the University at Buffalo for the equivalent of at least one academic year (does not have to be during consecutive semesters) and who are enrolled in the Spring 2008 semester are eligible to be nominated for this award. All teaching assistants who supervise laboratory sections, recitation sections, or their own courses, are equally eligible.

SELECTION CRITERIA

All of the following three criteria will be used in the selection process:

1. **Teaching Competence:** The nominee must perform superbly and creatively in the classroom or laboratory. (Evidence from quantitative assessments of teaching and/or summaries of qualitative evaluations, information in the sponsor's nomination letter, and course materials).
2. **Mentorship:** The nominee must be concerned with the intellectual growth of individual students and must measurably facilitate their growth. (Evidence of accessibility outside of the classroom and a description of mentoring activities and effectiveness should be included in the candidate's personal statement and in a nomination letter from the candidate's sponsor/teaching supervisor).
3. **Academic Standards and Requirements:** The nominee must set high standards for students and help them achieve academic excellence. (Evidence from duties and responsibilities, course materials presented, degree of course difficulty, contributions to the course, and related information and analysis included in sponsor's nomination letter).

NOMINATION PROCESS

The nomination process will be coordinated at the decanal level. Any member of the faculty may initiate a nomination.

- Please contact your academic dean's office for information regarding the date by which nominations and supporting materials must be received in the academic dean's office.
- **All nominations must be received in the Graduate School in 408 Capen Hall by Friday, February 15, 2008.**

The awards will be presented at the annual Graduate School Excellence in Teaching Awards Ceremony to be held on Friday, March 28, 2008.

Please contact Sue Adinolfi at 645-6240, or by e-mail at adinolfi@buffalo.edu if you have any questions. This information can also be found at: <http://www.grad.buffalo.edu/forms/faculty/eta.pdf>.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS:

MATERIALS TO BE PROVIDED BY THE CANDIDATE'S SPONSOR:

A. **Nomination Form/Cover Sheet:** The nomination form/cover sheet with **all sections** completed including the two required signatures.

B. **Letter of Nomination:** A letter (specific to the candidate) from the candidate's sponsor/teaching supervisor should be included addressing how the candidate's performance specifically fulfills each of the award selection criteria:

- teaching competence
- mentorship
- academic standards and requirements

The selection committee is especially interested in learning about the teaching culture and the normal duties of teaching assistants in the candidate's department as a baseline for understanding the candidate's particular qualifications. Your own observations, assessment and judgment – together with those of other faculty members in the department – should help convey a clear picture of the candidate's exceptional contributions to teaching at UB.

C. Copy of candidate's current **unofficial transcript**.

D. Course Information:

1. A listing of courses taught and the number of students enrolled in each.
2. A specific description of the candidate's teaching **role** and **duties** in each course/section.
3. An indication of the candidate's precise **responsibilities for grading**, together with grade distributions **only for those grades the candidate was responsible for assigning (if any).** **DO NOT INCLUDE ANY INDIVIDUAL STUDENT NAMES IN YOUR GRADING MATERIALS.**
4. Course/section evaluations, both quantitative and qualitative. Tabulations and graphical representations of the data are encouraged. **If quantitative data cannot be provided, please include an explanation of the reason(s) such data cannot be provided.**

MATERIALS TO BE PROVIDED BY THE CANDIDATE:

E. Curriculum Vitae: A current vitae that includes information regarding the nature and amount of teaching experience, attendance or presentations at workshops or conferences on teaching methods, and any other information relevant to the awards program.

F. Personal Statement: The candidate should submit a two page, double-spaced statement describing: (1) teaching approaches in the classroom or laboratory; (2) philosophy of mentoring and methods used to mentor individual students; (3) academic standards and requirements, including methods used to evaluate student performance and the reason those methods were selected.

G. Course Information: The candidate should include a syllabus for each course or laboratory taught **only if he/she created the syllabus.** A description of the candidate's responsibilities (design of experiments, design of case studies, design of PowerPoint or other presentations, etc.) for the course(s) should also be included. The candidate should include a short description of any/all innovative or extraordinary aspects of the course he/she has adopted to improve the educational experience for the student.

PLEASE SUBMIT AN ORIGINAL AND EIGHT (8) COPIES OF ALL NOMINATION MATERIALS.

IF STUDENT TESTIMONIALS/LETTERS ARE INCLUDED, PLEASE LIMIT TO 3 PER COURSE. PLEASE NOTE: Testimonials/letters should be from students in the course(s) taught by the candidate, not from fellow graduate students.

***PHOTOCOPY ALL MATERIALS DOUBLE-SIDED
AND CLIP TOGETHER***

PLEASE – NO STAPLES OR BINDERS

Additional Information and Suggestions from the Excellence in Teaching Awards Committee

- Successful dossiers include UBCATS and other teaching evaluations in addition to course syllabi.
 - It is extremely difficult to adequately judge teaching competence, mentorship or academic standards in the absence of full documentation.
 - Some dossiers fail because faculty claims are not documented or supported by additional student commentary.

- Successful dossiers will contain contextual information regarding the course(s) that the nominee teaches or assists. This helps evaluators better understand the nominee's performance expectations, degree of responsibility, and original contributions to large, team-taught courses across disciplines.

- Successful dossiers include nomination letters and student statements that specifically address the 3 categories upon which judgments are made:
 - (1) Teaching, e.g. innovation, interactive engagement, revision, improvements based on feedback, direct statements from students about their experience with the course(s).
 - (2) Mentorship, e.g. evidence that the candidate reaches beyond the material or the course to teach the whole person; indications that the candidate him/herself is a role model who students look up to.
 - (3) Standards, e.g. performance standards or learning goals stated in the syllabus, explanatory statements about how students are judged, statements on student evaluations of the sort "Hard but fair grader."

- Evaluators find grade distributions over the course of the candidate's teaching career especially helpful in judging how students perform under the aegis of the candidate.

- While good anecdotes make a dossier stand out, letters are most useful if they address questions of teaching philosophy or ideals, in addition to descriptions of how the candidate carries out his/her work.

- The physical make-up of the dossier is important. Adhere to the request for double-sided photocopying. No staples, binders, or decorative devices should be used in submitting a dossier. Evaluators are interested in content, particularly as a candidate reflects an overall departmental ethos of best practices in teaching, both in theory and practice, as well as tangible documentation.