

June 1, 2016

Excellence in Physics Education Award

Sponsored by the APS Forum on Education

Purpose: Recognizes and honors a team or group of individuals (such as a collaboration), or exceptionally, a single individual, who have exhibited a sustained commitment to excellence in physics education. Such a commitment may be evidenced by, but is not restricted to, such accomplishments as:

- A specific program or project that has had a major ongoing influence on physics education at the national level.
- Outstanding teacher enhancement or teacher preparation programs over a number of years.
- Long-lasting professional service related to physics education that has had a demonstrated positive impact.
- Outreach programs.

The Award: The Excellence in Physics Education Award will be presented annually at the April Meeting of the APS. The award consists of a \$5,000 monetary award, a certificate citing the achievements of the group or individual, and an allowance for travel expenses to the meeting where the award is presented. (Registration fees will be waived.) The awardees will be asked to present invited talks at the April Meeting.

Establishment and Support: This award was proposed by the APS Committee on Education, adopted by the APS Forum on Education in 2003, and established in 2006 after an endowment was raised. The first award was made in 2007. The endowment was supported by the Richard Lounsbery Foundation, Vernier Software, WebAssign, Physics Academic Software, the Forum on Education, and numerous individuals who are listed on the award web page <http://www.aps.org/units/fed/awards/education.cfm>.

Rules and Eligibility: The award may be given for, but is not restricted to, such accomplishments as: a specific program or project that has had a major ongoing influence on physics education at the national level; outstanding teacher enhancement or teacher preparation programs over a number of years; long-lasting professional service related to physics education that has had a demonstrated positive impact; outreach programs.

Nominations are active for three years and may be updated while still active. A nomination is dropped if the candidate has not been chosen by the end of the third review cycle. A new nomination must be submitted at that time for further consideration; there is no waiting period.

Nominations are open to groups from all nations, regardless of the geographic site at which the work was done. Membership in the APS is not required for nomination or selection. The nomination deadline is July 1.

Selection Committee Membership: The committee consists of 5 members: a chair, a vice chair, 2 regular members, and a member from the most recent award. Each member serves a two-year term except for the most recent awardee, who serves a one-year term. The vice chair is a first-year member who becomes chair in the second year. Each year, a new vice chair, a new regular member, and one of the most recent awardees are

appointed by the Chair of the Forum on Education, no later than March 1, and the names are submitted by the FEd Chair to the APS Honors Programs Administrator.

Responsibilities of the Committee: The committee is to review the nominations and provide their recommendation and a brief report to the APS Honors Programs Administrator by September 1. There is no travel involved; all of the work is done via email and videoconference (which can be arranged by APS). The recommendation for the award winner should include a proposed citation and a justification for the award selection. The accompanying report should include a list of those candidates considered for the award and should mention any issues associated with the award. The recommended recipient must be approved by the APS Council before the award is official.

Recruitment of nominations is also a major responsibility of the selection committee. While members of the selection committee cannot directly contribute to a nomination, they should encourage others to nominate deserving individuals for the award. They should make clear to those from whom nominations are solicited that their candidates will be considered on an equal basis with all other nominations. The final act of the selection committee should be to identify candidates for nomination and to contact their home institution to encourage nomination in the next award cycle. The selection committee should also forward the names of those candidates to the FEd Chair so that the FEd can directly encourage their nomination.

FAQs and Guidance for the Selection Committee:

1. At its April 2016 meeting, the Forum on Education Executive Committee re-affirmed its intention that this award should normally be given to a team or group in order to distinguish this award from AAPT awards that go to individuals. The group need not be a formal collaboration but could be several individuals who, collectively, have led an effort or contributed to a project's success.
2. At its April 2016 meeting, the Forum on Education Executive Committee approved an ongoing travel allowance of \$2000 for all awardees combined. The travel allowance will be paid from the Forum's annual budget, not the endowment. In any given year, the Executive Committee can, at its discretion, approve a travel allowance in excess of \$2000 if. This arrangement shall remain in effect until the award endowment reaches \$200,000, at which time the endowment can begin to pay for travel.
3. The minimum level of excellence and significance to be worthy of the award is a judgment call that is best determined from the combined experiences of the selection committee members. They make the determination of excellence. Candidates worthy of the award should exhibit excellence in physics education for a sustained period of time. As rough guidelines, the program should be one of the best in the country in their relevant area, as determined by the selection committee, and sustained excellence would involve exhibiting excellence over a period of at least 5 years.
4. Programs can be considered even if they only address a narrow branch of physics. The guidelines state that the key determinants are excellence in physics education and sustained commitment.

5. New nominations as well as active nominations from the past two years should be considered equally; newer nominations should not receive preferential treatment over other active nominations.

6. While the selection committee should be aware of previous awardees, they should not compare current nominees to past winners. The sole determinant for award selection should be excellence in physics education and sustained commitment, and award selection should not involve a comparison to the qualifications of previous award winners. Previous awardees are listed on the award web page

<http://www.aps.org/units/fed/awards/education.cfm>

7. The selection committee is not required to make an award and can decline to do so if, in its judgment, none of the nominees meet the criteria for the award. This happened in 2012, when no award was made.

8. To ensure an adequate pool of qualified nominees, the selection committee can and should actively solicit nominations for the award.

9. Under current nomination guidelines, self nominations are neither officially encouraged nor disallowed. If the Forum or the selection committee actively solicits nominations, it should be stated that self nominations are acceptable, but that such self nominations should include at least two, but not more than four, seconding letters from individuals who are not part of the nominee team.

10. The Forum should not influence the work of the selection committee once it has been appointed. In situations where the guidelines are not clear enough, the selection committee is empowered to make decisions at its discretion. The APS staff is available to the selection committee for clarification of the rules if needed.