2013-14 Student Award Selection Committee Report

In 2013-2014, the Student Award Selection Committee comprised the following members: Sayed Ali, Maia Cucchiara, Alexander Davies (student member), Elizabeth Groff, Edward Latham and Rick Ridall. We did not create any subcommittees this year, nor were there any other structural changes to the committee. The committee met twice, once in February and once in March. Prof. Ali was not able to attend the latter meeting, due to a scheduling conflict created by an out-of-town conference.

At the February meeting, we interviewed and auditioned five candidates for 2014 Student Commencement Speaker. Minutes were not recorded at this meeting. When the voting ended in a tie, we scheduled a follow-up run-off between the finalists, attended by Alexander Davies, Edward Latham, and Rick Ridall. The run-off was captured on video by Dean Ives, and sent to the remaining members of the committee; a final selection—Katie Johantgen—was made via email ballot. The selected candidate was then formally recommended to the Board of Trustees via a written report prepared by the committee chair and presented by Dean of Students Stephanie Ives at the next Board meeting. The Board unanimously accepted the committee’s recommendation.

At the March meeting, we evaluated dozens of files for the six Memorial Awards, and selected candidates for each award. Although minutes were not recorded at this meeting, a number of committee members voiced concerns about the efficiency and time-intensive nature of the selection process. Subsequent to this meeting, the committee chair met twice with members of a student team under the direction of the Dean Ives that was in the process of preparing an online portal for submission of Memorial Award applications that will address the concerns voiced by the committee. This portal should be available before the 2015 cycle.

In addition to the initiative to streamline the Memorial Award application and evaluation process, the committee considered ways to streamline or clarify the Commencement Speaker application process. The committee was made aware, through the office of the Dean of Students, that several Commencement Speaker applications were not successfully received this year, due to a technological glitch. If the Commencement Speaker applications can not be folded into the Memorial Awards portal, then the
committee and the Dean of Students have placed a special emphasis on making its process more transparent and seamless next year, with multiple levels of follow-up to ensure thoroughness.

Respectfully submitted,

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