

**GUIDELINES FOR THE  
UNIVERSITY-WIDE DEPARTMENTAL TEACHING AWARD  
(UDTA)**

**DESCRIPTION**

One University-wide Departmental Teaching Award is presented each year in honor and recognition of a department/unit within the University of Nebraska that has made a unique and significant contribution to the teaching efforts of the University and which has outstanding *esprit de corps* in its dedication to the education of students at the undergraduate, graduate, or professional levels.

Twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) is awarded to the honored department. These funds may be used in whatever manner the department sees fit. For example, funds could be used to support travel to a conference of a pedagogical nature, to purchase instructional equipment, or to improve the physical surroundings of a classroom or student resource center. The faculty members of the chosen department are honored at an awards ceremony in the spring.

**ELIGIBILITY**

Most commonly, a teaching excellence award will be given to a department. However, because of the diversity of programs within the University, there are instances in which the department is not the most appropriate unit for receiving an award (e.g., in some interdisciplinary or professional degree programs). While it will be possible for these programs to be considered for an award, it will be the responsibility of such units to make a defensible case for their inclusion. Non-departmental units should make a special effort to justify why their unit is appropriately included in the competition for this award. No programs will be excluded from consideration. Professional degree programs in fields such as law, architecture, and medicine will compete on equal footing with traditional baccalaureate and graduate degree programs. In the remainder of these guidelines, the term “department” refers to the nominated unit. Normally, nominated departments will be considered as a whole. For example, graduate and undergraduate missions would not be considered separately. However, if a nominated department believes it has a mission that merits special consideration, it may make such a request. Again, it will be the responsibility of such units to make a defensible case.

**COMMITTEE and NOMINATIONS**

The first screening of nominations will be done at the campus level. Each Chancellor will establish a campus committee to screen the nominations received. The number of departments nominated as finalists will be limited to four from UNL and two from each of the other three campuses. Each Chancellor will have the responsibility for the development of a process for the screening of nominations to select those to be forwarded to a University-wide Awards Selection Committee. The selection procedure of the screening committee will emphasize the outstanding contributions made by the department to the institution’s dedication to the education of students. Each Chancellor will forward the finalists to the Awards Selection Committee in care of the Office of the Provost accompanied by a cover letter of endorsement from the chancellor or vice chancellor. Any nomination not chosen may be resubmitted by the campus the following two years.

The Provost appoints a University-wide selection Committee to review the nominations from the campuses and ultimately submit their recommendations to the Provost. The six-member committee consists of faculty nominated by the Academic Vice Chancellors, including two members from the UNL and UNMC campuses and one from the UNK and UNO campuses. Committee members will serve staggered three-year terms.

## **NOMINATION MATERIAL REQUIREMENTS**

***Nomination materials must be submitted on a CD in .pdf format with all materials in a single file to the Chancellor's office by October 24, 2011.***

**1. Completed nomination form** (see enclosed insert).

**2. Nominating document.** The main body of the document will be **limited to ten pages and the text should not exceed 4,500 words**. Although there is no formal prescribed format for the body of the nomination document, each nominated unit should include its history, role/mission, future plans, and strengths. Evaluation guidelines must be flexible enough to accommodate the many teaching missions across the University. It is not possible to specify inclusive criteria for teaching excellence that would apply to all departments or programs.

Within this framework, the general criterion should be the “instructional culture” of the nominated department (or other unit). “Instructional culture” implies an attitude toward teaching ingrained in the entire department. This should be reflected in many ways, including the regular program review process, outcome assessment data, and the program’s reputation outside the institution. Having a few “superstar” teachers is not sufficient to earn a nominated department the award. Instructional quality should be emphasized, not instructional quantity. Data, such as student credit hours per full-time equivalent, are inappropriate, except insofar as these show that high quality is maintained in such a milieu. *Key Criteria to be considered when preparing the nomination are discussed on the following page.*

**3. Supporting materials, not to exceed 30 pages** in order to accommodate the difficult task of the Selection Committee.

***Nominations exceeding documentation guidelines will be returned to the Chancellor's Office for submission under the above stated guidelines.***

### **UNIVERSITY-WIDE DEPARTMENTAL TEACHING AWARD**

***By October 24, 2011, send nominations on a CD in .pdf format with all materials in a single file to:***

***UDTA Campus Screening Committee  
c/o Office of the Chancellor on the respective campus***

***UNK: 1000 Founders Hall 68849      UNL: 201 Administration Building 68588-0419  
UNMC: 5001 Wittson Hall 68198-6605      UNO: 201 Eppley Administration Building 68582***

Chancellors will forward their selected campus nominations and their endorsement to the Provost's Office by November 21, 2011.

**UNIVERSITY-WIDE DEPARTMENTAL TEACHING AWARD**  
**KEY CRITERIA TO BE CONSIDERED WHEN PREPARING NOMINATION**

The key criteria that should be followed in all nomination materials are provided below. These are meant to be heuristic; the list is not complete. Although most of the questions on the checklist are "generic," it will be difficult for some units to answer all of them and there is no implication that every criterion will be appropriate to every unit. The list may be thought of as a set of possible criteria that should be considered, if appropriate. It is intended as a device to assist departments in preparing applications and defining their instructional cultures and is helpful to the awards selection committee during deliberations.

1. *How do you demonstrate esprit de corps in the dedication to the education of students?*
2. *How does the nominated department use incentives (promotion and tenure, salary increases, teaching awards, etc.) to encourage teaching excellence?*
3. *What efforts do the nominated department make to develop good teaching (colloquia, "teaching circles," mentoring, graduate teaching assistant training, etc.)? How is your curriculum innovative? Identify and describe examples of innovative teaching within the unit. Include grant support specific to improved or innovative teaching.*
4. *Do faculty participate in conferences, etc., in which the primary focus is on instruction?*
5. *What contribution does the nominated department make to scholarship on instruction (research, textbooks, etc.)? What is the impact of these contributions?*
6. *Is effective use made of new technologies or methods in the classroom?*
7. *What support is there for students (advising, mentoring, honors programs, student association, internships, etc.)? Are students trained in the modes and styles of communication appropriate to the discipline?*
8. *What is the quality of the major or program? This may be assessed through accreditation programs, performance on national tests, graduate or professional school placement, employment, alumni surveys, student ratings, external reviews, student evaluations, testimonials, etc.*
9. *What is the quality of the nominated department's program for non-majors (if applicable)? Is it taken seriously? Are experienced faculty involved? Are faculty rewarded for this work? Are there an adequate number of courses? Is the curriculum well planned? What reputation does it have with other departments? What are the results of student ratings, external review, testimonials, etc.?*
10. *What is the quality of the graduate or professional program (if applicable)? This may be assessed through such factors as accreditation, curriculum development, quality of student research, external support for research or professional service, student participation in national meetings, student publication, student employment after graduation, student ratings of the program, alumni surveys, external reviews, testimonials, etc.*
11. *If part-time faculty, graduate teaching assistants, non-tenure-track instructors, etc., play a role in the nominated department's teaching, how are they brought into the "instructional culture"?*
12. *What is the quality of teaching in "outreach" programs or other off-campus activities that may be part of the department's instructional mission?*
13. *Non-departmental units applying for this award should make a special effort to justify why their unit is appropriately included in this competition.*