

Academic Awards Discussion

There are a growing number of concerns that I see, hear or faced around the organization of our Association's academic awards. The concerns tend to relate to the service commitments to these committees, the organization of awards to winners, and the general perceptions around the granting of awards. I think as a group we need to consider some of these issues and determine how we as a scholarly association would like to proceed.

Currently CASEA has two academic awards:

- Margaret Haughey Masters Award
- T.B. Greenfield Dissertation Award

Both are integral parts of the traditions of this Association.

Both of these awards are competitive.

Both are determined through committee deliberation.

Committee Determination:

- In the past, both the Greenfield and Haughey awards chairs have been volunteer positions. Last year at the CASEA AGM 2010 it was suggested by me that the CASEA Past President could take on the role of the Greenfield Chair in order to ensure that the Chair would rotate over time but have an acknowledged regularity in leadership. There was no formal motion made in this regard, however, and the Haughey Masters award Chair remains a volunteer position not necessarily connected to the CASEA executive.
- Committee representatives of both award committees are determined by the Chair of each committee. Attempts are made to ensure that committee members are representative of provinces /regions across Canada, are comprised of both sexes, and have representation from French speaking Canada.

Some thoughts about the awards:

- ✓ These awards are important elements within our Association;
- ✓ These awards were created to enhance and highlight the excellent scholarship of Canadian Masters and Doctoral students;
- ✓ These awards are an important way for CASEA to mentor graduate students into the Association;
- ✓ The scholars for whom these awards are named have been important contributors to CASEA and Educational Administration scholarship. Therefore, any changes to the organization, determination, or presentation of the awards must remain considerate and respectful of those scholars and their work;
- ✓ We privilege the Greenfield Award winner(s) over the Haughey Award winner(s) in terms of what we provide to students as awards or presentation time for those who make the commitment to attend CSSE;
- ✓ The awards themselves are important; I am not convinced that the ways in which we currently manage them have been very effective in achieving their original purposes or in providing opportunities for mentoring or highlighting the growing amount of scholarship written by our CASEA graduate students across our nation.
- ✓ There are growing contentions around what constitutes the scholarship and methodologies of Educational Administration. Though these contentions have always existed, I believe they are playing a role in perceptions around the nature of the organization and determination of awards that may be hindering the real purpose of celebrating the scholarship of CASEA graduate students.

Some of the issues we face that are impacting upon award determinations and our Association's ability to support them:

- The numbers of submissions for the awards vary each year, but for the past few years the numbers tend to be increasing rather than decreasing. Given that the turnaround time for committee members is generally two months, this puts a significant amount of pressure on committee members to read upwards of 6-12 theses or dissertations.
- It has not necessarily been easy to access committee members given our criteria of representation who are willing to help with reviewing. Many scholars have sat on these committees multiple times, and (rightfully so), consider that others need to have the opportunity to engage in this work. On the other hand, new scholars are not always able to commit to the growing workloads required by these committees in the time frame in which we need to have them completed so that the winning graduate students can make travel arrangements for attendance.
- The scholarship submissions continue to broaden in scope, depth, theoretical, conceptual and methodological understandings. This impacts not only the appropriateness of the criteria we use to submit and judge the awards, but also on the determination of winners. This reality also adds to the workload of committee members who then must do very thorough reviews of each submission, and also has led in the case of the Greenfield Award to the determination of multiple winners in the attempt to respect multiplicity of perspectives.
- The determination of multiple winners adds to the financial support CASEA does and should provide to students who wish to attend CSSE. However, given that the Greenfield Award mentions only that we "offset travel costs," and does not have an actual amount put forward as the award, it begs the question of why we provide travel costs to Greenfield winners but not Haughey winners. It is also therefore not surprising that Haughey winners would not attend to the same extent that Greenfield winners would.
- The award amounts are not transparent. Though this adds to CASEA's flexibility in determining and offsetting travel costs given that CSSE moves around every year and winning students have differential travel costs, it also puts CASEA in a precarious position financially as costs continue to increase and we are making more determinations of multiple winners.

Possible Points of Discussion:

Committee Chair Determination:

- Are we satisfied with how we currently access Chairs of both committees?
- Might there be other ways of determining these, and if so, what would these be?

Committee Representation:

- Are our criteria for committee representation still important? Are there other criteria that should be included?
- How do we ensure that committee representation changes equitably over time given the workload issues, such that we ensure we have multiplicity of viewpoints represented and that we don't over-extend the commitments of those who agree to sit on the committees?

Awards:

- Is it time to set actual award amounts for both awards (including the banquet) and move away from travel support?
- If we decide to continue to privilege the Doctoral award over the Masters award, what would be appropriate amounts for each award?
- Is it time to set different criteria for submission and/or evaluation based upon differences in theoretical, conceptual or methodological framing?

Multiple Awards: Given the fact that we are more often presenting multiple awards, it seems to me that we need to consider some avenues for reorganizing the way we present the awards. Some options are included below, but other suggestions would be much appreciated:

- a) Keep the competitive structure as is and attempt to award a single winner. This is unlikely to help out the issues faced internally by committee members given the growing diversity of scholarship and workload issues, but potentially keeps costs to a minimum. It also maintains the current prestige associated with being the single winner of these awards for any given year.
- b) Keep some of the competitive structure, and perhaps have recognition awards for up to a certain number of theses/dissertations (perhaps 2-3?). We could then create panel or poster opportunities for both Masters and Doctoral winners, or perhaps even combine these sessions with the book launch for a larger event as a means of celebrating our new and experienced scholars' work. This would necessitate lesser award amounts overall but ensure we know the number of students whose work would be represented. It could also minimize some of the internal committee issues faced by increasing workloads and broadening scholarship. It may minimize some of the prestige of being a single winner in any given year.

- c) Given that all of our nominated students have received Masters or Doctoral degrees from our respective institutions, we could eliminate the competitive structure and simply have a recognition event for all the thesis and dissertations in Edadm in Canada. This would likely necessitate that we would pay at most for the banquet costs as we would have no way of ensuring how many students would apply to attend, but would eliminate committee work for all but a Chair to organize the event. It would celebrate the "whole" of the body of scholarship and potentially act as a means of encouraging more graduate students to attend. But it would likely also minimize the prestige associated with the current award structures.

I think these issues need to be transparent, and we need to revisit them as an Association because of their importance to our role in fostering excellence in scholarship, in mentoring graduate students into our Association, and in ensuring that we continue to attract new and experienced scholars able to commit to the service requirements of our Association as they see a viable and important role for themselves amidst the diversity of scholarship that is (and can ever more be) represented in Educational Administration.

I would like to begin this discussion at the AGM, and take in ideas via our listserv over time to be collated and considered by the Executive that could then come to the Membership with some ideas.

Respectfully,

Dawn Wallin