

CASCA Awards Committee Annual Report

Kristine Spekkens, 27 May 2016

1. Executive summary

In the 2015-2016 cycle, the CASCA awards committee evaluated nominations and made recommendations to the Board for the recipients of the J. S. Plaskett Medal (awarded to Dr. Jonathan Gagné), the Qilak Award (awarded to Dr. Jaymie Matthews), the Carlyle S. Beals Award (awarded to Dr. Chris Pritchett), and the Dunlap Award (awarded to Dr. Peter Stetson). Note that the Executive Award was also discerned this year, but is handled by the CASCA Board and therefore discussed very little here. The submission deadline for all award nominations was November 20th 2015, and the committee made (the bulk of) its recipient recommendations to the Board on February 26th 2016. In the next cycle, it is recommended that the Board revise the Executive Award submission instructions so that nominations are sent to two independent email addresses for redundancy, and that the Board develop a set of terms of reference for the awards committee to ensure consistency in the evaluation process from year to year.

2. The year in review

The CASCA awards committee for this cycle was comprised of Kristine Spekkens (RMCC; chair), Sarah Gallagher (Western; CASCA Board rep), Ray Jayawardhana (York), Levon Pogosian (SFU), Allison Sills (McMaster), and Luc Simard (NRC-HIA).

The November 20th deadline was ~2 months earlier in the cycle than in previous years upon recommendation of the Board, in order to move the deadline closer to the CASCA membership renewal period. This also provided some extra time for the eligibility of nominations to be determined by the Board before the Awards Committee began its deliberations. In the end, the Committee made its recommendations to the Board about a week earlier than in past years: this is because it took a bit longer to establish the eligibility of all nominees than usual, and because time was lost due to the Winter break.

An announcement of the competition was circulated on the CASCA email exploder in mid-October, and a reminder was circulated the week before the deadline. 5 Plaskett, 2 Qilak, and 1 Beals nomination were received by the submission deadline. Shortly afterwards, the Awards Committee chair and CASCA admin assistant verified the CASCA membership eligibility of all nominations (eligibility information was not shared with other awards committee members so as not to bias their evaluations). Two Plaskett nominees were deemed ineligible, and the CASCA secretary informed the nominators and nominees of this decision. Nominations from the previous 2 Qilak, 1 Beals and 1 Dunlap cycles were considered in this one, such that the final

number of awards evaluated was 3 Plaskett, 6 Qilak, and 3 Beals and 3 Dunlap. Each committee member received the nominations via a Dropbox link tailored to exclude any nominations on which they had a conflict of interest (all conflicts were institutional).

The committee members evaluated the nominations over a period of 6 weeks (including the Winter break), submitting a ranked list to the awards committee chair. Clear top choices for each recipient emerged when the chair compiled the submitted rankings; these rankings were circulated among committee members on 23 February for the Qilak Award and on 26 February for the others, who agreed with the outcome. The Awards Committee made their recommendations to the Board on 24 February for the Qilak Award and on 26 February for the others. The Board accepted these recommendations.

3. Recommendations for the next cycle

1. The Executive Award is the only one evaluated by the CASCA Board itself, rather than the Awards Committee. As a result, Executive Award nominators are instructed to submit their nominations directly to the CASCA secretary alone, rather than to both the Awards Committee chair and the CASCA secretary, as is the norm for other awards. Redundancy in the nomination process is desirable to ensure that all nominations are received; this year, one Executive Award nomination was not initially received because of difficulties with the @casca.ca email server (the omission was caught early when the nominator inquired with the Board, so the evaluation process was not compromised). It is therefore recommended that the Board revise the Executive Award submission instructions to include at least two independent (ie. going through different servers) email addresses to prevent this from happening again.

2. Currently, details about how the Awards Committee operates are passed on informally between cycles, and the CASCA webpages serve as the only official document (indirectly) describing the Awards Committee's terms of reference. As far as the Awards Committee chair is aware, this approach has been effective at ensuring that the process is largely consistent from year to year, but there is currently no mechanism for documenting the Committee's handling of unusual events (e.g. the protocol to follow when a nomination is rejected), or precedents established that aren't necessarily included on the CASCA webpages (e.g. the protocol for considering nominations for more than one cycle). It is recommended that the Board draft a terms of reference document for the Awards Committee that explains its responsibilities, standard protocols and deadlines.