

# CASCA Awards Committee Annual Report

Luc Simard, 26 May 2017

## 1. Executive Summary

In the 2016-2017 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. Fereshteh Rajabi), the Qilak Award (awarded to Dr. Pierre Chastenay), the Martin Award (awarded to Dr. Ingrid Stairs), the R. M. Petrie Prize Lecture (awarded to Dr. Charles Beichman) and the inaugural Harvey B. Richer Gold Medal for Early Career Research in Astronomy (awarded to Dr. David Lafrenière). The submission deadline for all award nominations except the Richer Medal was 21 November 2016. The Richer Medal was formally announced on 17 November 2016, and the deadline for nominations was 15 January 2017. The committee made its recipient recommendations to the Board on 8 April 2017. In the next cycle, it is recommended that the Board revises the nomination procedure for the Petrie Prize and establishes a central repository for keeping track of nomination packages over multiple cycles.

## 2. The year in review

The CASCA Awards committee for this cycle was comprised of Luc Simard (NRC; chair), Sarah Gallagher (Western), Renée Hložek (Dunlap / U. Toronto), Catherine Lovekin (Mount Allison U.), Gregory Sivakoff (U. Alberta) and Christian Marois (NRC).

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. 6 Plaskett, 3 Qilak, 3 Martin, 5 Petrie, and 7 Richer nominations were received by the submission deadline. 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 to not bias their evaluations). Nominations from the previous 2 Qilak and 1 Martin cycles were considered in this one such that the final number of award nominations evaluated was 6 Plaskett, 6 Qilak, 4 Martin, 5 Petrie, and 7 Richer. This represented a substantial workload for committee members. There is also no central repository for nominations made over the years. This is a serious obstacle in establishing the eligibility of nominees from previous cycles. It required a lot of “detective work” by the committee chair in collaboration with the previous chair. Each committee member received a nomination package on 4 January 2017 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 two months, and each member submitted a ranked list to the awards committee chair. Clear top choices for each recipient emerged when the chair compiled the submitted rankings except for the Richer Medal; all rankings were circulated among committee members on 2 March 2016 and discussed via WebEx on 10 March 2016. The Richer rankings were very close, and the committee selected three nominees for further discussions. These nominations were reviewed again by committee members, and a second WebEx meeting was held on March 28. Numerical rankings were again too close for a clear decision, and the committee decided to proceed with an advocacy system. The committee finally reached a consensus after much deliberation that took into account all the elements of an exceptional early researcher

including student/postdoc mentorship and service to the community. The Awards Committee made their recommendations to the Board on 8 April 2017.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) document was extremely useful to the committee. Our sincere thanks go to previous committee chair, Kristine Spekkens, for providing it.

### **3. Recommendations for the next cycle**

1. The nomination process for the Petrie Prize is inadequate. In many cases, the nomination consisted of a very short (1-2 sentences) email message simply giving the name of the nominee. The nomination should at a minimum consist of one-page letter describing the scientific, technical and outreach achievements of the nominee. This minimum nomination requirement should be clearly stated on the CASCA site.

2. The committee struggled with the evaluation for the Qilak award in terms of the proper weight to be given between early versus late career efforts. It was also felt that nomination letters should explicitly comment on how much of the outreach efforts are above and beyond the nominee's daily duties. Finally, one of this year's nominee was also a CASCA officer. It did not play a factor in the final selection of a recipient, but there were questions from committee members as to whether or not CASCA officers can be nominated. Clarification should be provided by the Board. If CASCA officers cannot be nominated, then allowance should be made to extend their eligibility for future cycles.

3. There should be a central repository maintained by the CASCA administrator where the nomination packages are stored until they expire.