

Department of Psychology Distinguished Teaching Award

The goal of this award is to recognize ladder faculty and lecturers who have made outstanding contributions to the undergraduate and/or graduate teaching missions of the UC-Davis Department of Psychology. This award considers the term “teaching” broadly, including but not limited to teaching of formal courses, research training, mentoring and professional development, and curriculum development.

The nomination process is designed to approximate those used for the campuswide [Distinguished Teaching Award](#) and [Academic Federation Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching](#), as well as the L&S Teaching Awards, providing a natural pathway to these awards for our outstanding educators. However, the departmental award is broader than these awards, and individuals who would not qualify for the campuswide and L&S awards may be competitive for the departmental award. Also, whereas there are separate campuswide awards for ladder faculty and lecturers, we have a single award that includes both categories.

Nomination Process

Nominations may be submitted by faculty, staff, or students. Self-nominations are encouraged. Nominees must be Senate faculty (including LPSOEs/LSOEs) or Academic Federation lecturers. Graduate students are not eligible, even when they serve as instructors, because a separate award is provided for them. Individuals who have won this award within the past 5 years are ineligible. Academic Senate nominees must have taught at UC Davis for at least four years to be eligible for the campuswide award, but this is not required for the departmental award.

The Instructional Support and Innovation Committee serves as the review committee for these awards. Any members of committee who have been nominated or have any other conflict of interest will be recused. The initial nomination must be received by the chair of the committee (vlcross@ucdavis.edu) no later than the first day of instruction in the Spring Quarter.

The nomination packet consists of the following:

- One nomination letter of no more than 1200 words (note that a substantially shorter letter may be fully adequate).
 - This letter should be written by one or more faculty or staff members and/or one or more students or alumni. If desired, separate letters can be provided by faculty/staff and students/alumni.
 - Self-nominations are encouraged. They are not allowed for the campuswide or L&S awards, but the departmental committee can write a letter of nomination to replace the self-nomination if the individual is nominated for a campuswide award. Self-nominations can include a supporting letter from former students, if desired. A self-nominator could instead request that the review committee contact current students (see below).
 - When appropriate, the review committee should be given access to relevant materials (e.g., syllabi, Canvas sites).

- For nominations that focus on teaching of formal courses: A summary of recent teaching evaluations (the average numeric ratings for each course, optionally accompanied by selected comments). For Academic Senate members, we recommend at least 3 evaluations from the past 5 years (with no more than 8 total, and no more than 2 per academic year). For Academic Federation members, we recommend evaluations from the 3 most recent undergraduate courses. If the nominator does not have access to the teaching evaluations, they will be obtained directly by the review committee.
- For nominations that focus on graduate training: A list of graduate students for whom the nominee has served as major professor.
- The CV of the nominee, including a list of all classes taught at UC Davis over the past 5 years.
- For nominations that do not include a letter signed or co-signed by current or former students, the nomination letter may (optionally) request that the review committee contact students to provide informal testimonials or a supporting letter. This request should include a list of students to be contacted. However, it will be up to the committee to decide whether to contact the students.

We recommend that nomination letters focus on some or all of the characteristics of excellent teaching highlighted by the campuswide awards. For example, the [Distinguished Teaching Award](#) highlights the following characteristics of excellent teaching:

- Class organization, clarity of lectures/presentations, and integration of lectures with coursework; objectives, philosophy, and principles associated with course content
- Command of subject matter and the ability to relate it to current events, historical precedents, and future research
- Ability to stimulate thought and involvement in the educational process; ability to teach students how to learn such that they develop sustained learning habits
- Significant contributions to improved and innovative teaching; use of innovative evaluation methods
- Advising and mentoring in terms of students' academic activities and career objectives; concern and responsiveness for students' welfare
- Accomplishments as measured by the success of students in subsequent academic and career activities

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, and other elements of teaching may also be described (e.g., involvement of students in laboratory research or internships). It will also be helpful describe the unique or unusual characteristics that make the nominee particularly worthy of special recognition for teaching.

Because there are separate campuswide awards for undergraduate and graduate/professional teaching, nominations for the departmental award may wish to focus primarily on either undergraduate or graduate teaching. This is not required (i.e., nominations for the departmental award may discuss both undergraduate and graduate/professional teaching when this is deemed appropriate by the nominator(s)), but a focused nomination is typically more likely to be successful.

Nominations for Campuswide and College Awards

Individuals who have been nominated for the departmental award can request that the review committee coordinate a subsequent nomination for the appropriate campuswide or L&S award. When appropriate, the review committee will write one of the nomination letters on behalf of the department. In addition, the review committee will offer to perform a classroom observation or other formal review as part of the nomination.