

## **Forest and Natural Resource Sciences Graduate Student Award for Excellence (PROPOSAL 28 April 2008; revised 1 November 2016 and 18 February 2017)**

Drafted originally by the Sub-committee: Heather Alexander, Joe Guthrie, Chris Reeves, and Wade Ulrey

(Revised by the Forest and Natural Resource Sciences Graduate Student Association on 1 November 2016 by Rachel Landham, JennMcKenzie, Zach Poynter, Devin Black, and Ben Rasp, and by D. Wagner 18 February 2017; revisions approved by Department of Forestry on 24 February 2017)

### I. Idea Conception

During several monthly meetings, members of the Forestry Graduate Student Association (GSA) discussed the idea of a student award that would annually recognize outstanding graduate students within the department and their achievements. Students felt that they actively pursue many activities, and that their academic, research, and outreach accomplishments were deserving of recognition. Recognition would benefit the student's professional resume, and foster a sense of ambition and excellence within the department.

### II. Progress Thus Far

After cursory discussions of the topic at GSA meetings, the idea was mentioned to Dr. Bullard during a meeting with Graduate Students on 30 January 2007. Dr. Bullard suggested that the students discuss the idea at the next Graduate Committee meeting. On 5 March 2007, student members of the Graduate Committee presented the idea to faculty committee members who then requested a more detailed proposal from the GSA. GSA members further reviewed the issue during the monthly GSA meeting on the same day, and formed a sub-committee consisting of Heather Alexander, Joe Guthrie, Chris Reeves, and Wade Ulrey. This sub-committee outlined a draft summary of proposed components of a student award and presented the contents at the GSA meeting on 2 April 2007. After gathering suggestions from other GSA members, the sub-committee revised the summary and presented the idea to Dr. Wagner, who then relayed the GSA's ideas to Dr. Bullard. Dr. Bullard met with the sub-committee on 16 April 2007, and the sub-committee reorganized and drafted a proposal. The initial version of this proposal was given to Dr. Bullard on 27 August 2007, and the GSA sub-committee received comments on 18 September 2007. Dr. Bullard made minor suggestions and comments. The proposal was then presented to the Graduate Curriculum Committee on 15 October 2007 and met with a consensus of approval and recommendation of presentation to the entire faculty pending minor changes that are addressed in this draft. The proposal was accepted by the full faculty at the faculty meeting on 3 December 2007. The first awards were on 24 April 2008. This document was later revised on 1 November 2016 and on 18 February 2017.

### III. Eligibility

Students feel that the award process should be open to all M.S. (Plan A and Plan B) and Ph.D. students within the Forestry Department (*i.e.* any student whose **major** advisor/co-advisor is a Forestry faculty member). M.S. students should be in their last academic year, and Ph.D.

students should be in their last two years. Any student who receives the award may not be re-nominated in later years, unless the student is pursuing a different graduate degree within the Department. Any student meeting the outlined guidelines for excellence as reviewed by the award committee should be eligible for recognition. *This means that during any given year, multiple students could receive the award.*

#### IV. Committee

Recipients will be selected by a committee consisting of three Forestry faculty members as appointed by the Department Chair. No committee member shall be the major or co-major advisor for a nominee.

#### V. Award

The annual award would consist of a plaque placed in a prominent location within the T. P. Cooper Building with new name plates added for each award recipient. In addition, recipients would receive a cash award as determined by the Department Chair and budgetary availability. We suggest an amount of ~\$250.

#### VI. Application

The process will begin entirely with a student's application. This will provide students an active role in the application process that mimics the promotion and tenure process in academia. Application submission would occur in early spring each year (1 January – 31 March).

Applications would be available to students in January each year, with a March 31 submission deadline. The entire application is expected to be completed entirely by the student without faculty input. The committee will meet to discuss the applications during April and announce the recipients of the award via personal letters to each nominated student. The winners could then be announced at the last departmental seminar in the spring, usually held the first week of May.

The application will consist of various components, with each component bearing different weights (indicated below within parentheses). We suggest the committee use the weighted average of these components to determine if a student meets the requirements for the excellence award, such that any applicant with an overall percentage  $\geq 90\%$  receives the award. We propose the following categories be used to evaluate a student's eligibility:

##### A. Curriculum Vitae (10%)

The student's CV will provide the committee with background information pertaining to the student's academic, research, service and other activities over the course of the student's entire career. We feel the student's overall background is an essential part of who s/he is, but we suggest the weight of this component be only 10%, as we believe the award should focus on the student's achievements while pursuing a graduate degree at the University of Kentucky.

### B. Research or other Project Experience (40%)

Students within the Forestry Department pursue a variety of project topics with varying degrees of breadth and depth. In this section, we propose the student list activities that have taken place only during their time in the Department of Forestry at the University of Kentucky including the following (and other relevant) categories:

- 1) Conferences, workshops, symposia
  - Students should note whether or not they presented
- 2) Presentations
  - May be poster or oral presentations, and may include any venue (departmental seminars, conferences, non-profit organizations, governmental chapters, K-12 schools, *etc.*)
- 3) Manuscripts
  - Includes scientific and technical papers, chapters, books, *etc.*, which are published, in press, and/or submitted for publication
- 4) Awards and Grants
  - Grants include those awarded, grant applications for which the applicant received honorable mention, and grants “submitted” (but “submitted” applications count only if no decision has been received as of the date of application for a Forest and Natural Resource Sciences Graduate Student Award for Excellence)

### C. Service (20%)

Many students expand their professional and personal development through involvement in various outreach and service activities that are not required for their degrees. We feel that these activities are particularly important considering the inherently rigorous and time-intensive nature of graduate work. This service might include volunteering, being a member or officer in a club or organization, serving on committees or review panels, *etc.* We include teaching experience in this category only if it is not required for an applicant’s degree or employment. Thus, teaching counts toward service only if applicants are not employed as TAs and only if they teach above and beyond the teaching requirement for their degree (*e.g.*, consider that the M.S. (Forest and Natural Resource Sciences) degree requires at least one semester of teaching experience, but most other graduate degrees do not require teaching experience).

### D. Essay (20%)

The essay portion of the application will allow the student to demonstrate the ability to share information as well as to explain various components of her/his graduate school experience. We feel that this should not be based on grammar, because content is more important and because the intention of this component of the application is not to disadvantage an applicant for whom English is not her/his native language. Essays could address the following (and other) topics:

- 1) Why the student feels s/he is deserving of the award, including achievements not recognized elsewhere in the application.
- 2) A description of short and long-term goals and aspirations in relation to the student’s future career
- 3) An explanation of progress made during graduate studies at UK

#### E. Academics (10%)

Academics are undoubtedly a major component of every graduate student's tenure at UK, and, as such, are included in the application. However, we feel that this component of the evaluation should be weighted at only 10% because contributions to academic and public communities are more important. We suggest the following two areas be considered:

- 1) The academic section should include the student's overall GPA while a graduate student at UK and a listing of courses taken and grade received.
- 2) If desired, the student may include a short paragraph detailing the reasons for any anomalies in their grades.

#### VII. Annual Review and Updates

On an annual basis (each fall), members of the Forest and Natural Resource Sciences Graduate Student Association and the Forest and Natural Resource Sciences Graduate Committee will review the award selection process and assess any potential problems or issues needing to be addressed. Recommendations for changes or updates to the selection process will be made by each organization and presented to the Department Chair, who will mediate discussions and serve as an advisor.