

PROPOSED SET OF GUIDELINES FOR NAMING/RENAMING COPSS AWARDS

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Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Task Force Members

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Charge to the Task Force

Convene a diverse committee of experts and members of our societies to create guidelines for naming/renaming COPSS awards and to suggest action-oriented strategies to increase and commit to diversity, equity and inclusion in our profession.

CURRENT STATUS

Current awards bestowed by COPSS

See <https://community.amstat.org/copss/awards/awards>.

- a. *President's Award*
- b. *Distinguished Achievement Award and Lectureship*: Formerly the RA Fisher Award and Lectureship.
- c. *Florence N. David Award and Lectureship*: Named after Florence Nightingale David, an English mathematician who taught at Oxford. After the war, F.N. David moved to California where she became Prof. and Chair of the Department of Statistics at UC Riverside. Post retirement, she continued working at UC Berkeley. She studied with Karl Pearson and his son Egon, and also with Sir Ronald Fisher.
- d. *George W. Snedecor Award*: Named after George Waddel Snedecor, an American mathematician and statistician who funded the first statistical laboratory at Iowa State University and later became the first chair of the Department of Statistics. His main contribution was the publication of *Statistical Methods*, a book for researchers who wished to analyze experimental data. That book was the most cited statistical book in the 1960's. He was also an early user and strong proponent of digital computing to carry out calculations.
- e. *Elizabeth L. Scott Award*: Named after Elizabeth L. Scott, an American mathematician with a focus in statistics. She was the first female faculty in the Department of Statistics at UC Berkeley. Her interests were in astronomy and climate, but she also used statistics to help advance the academic careers of female faculty.
- f. *COPSS Leadership Academy*: This collection of awards was recently established by COPSS and differs from the rest of the portfolio of awards in its focus. The COPSS Leadership Academy recognizes early and mid-career statisticians who have shown the potential for leadership in the profession by showing extraordinary performance in scholarship, service, collaboration and other areas.

There are now only three awards that are named after statisticians from the past. The Task Force is unaware of any issues associated with the professional or personal lives of Florence N. David, Elizabeth L. Scott and George W. Snedecor that might be viewed as controversial or as hurtful to

anyone. On the contrary, these three prominent statisticians have a reputation for having been good mentors of younger scientists, including women, and for having espoused a culture of inclusion in their professional environments.

This said, the names of existing awards do not reflect the diversity in the profession. Two of the awards are named after women, one is named after a male. None honors a person that is not White.

Two of the partner societies administer almost 30 awards that are named after individuals. Of those, four are named after females, two honor Black statisticians, and one honors an Asian graduate student. It is important to note that some of these awards have been recently established, yet they overwhelmingly continue to highlight the contributions of White males.

Mechanisms used by professional associations to create and name awards

Professional awards are typically established via one of the three following mechanisms:

1. The award is proposed internally, by the leadership of the association.
2. The award is proposed by members or other stakeholders.
3. The award is proposed by an individual person (or an organized group such as an academic department, university or foundation) who often also provides the funding to endow the award.

Award naming guidelines such as the ones suggested later in this document can be applied systematically and equitably to awards proposed by the society's leadership or by its members. Indeed, in this case, establishing awards can be a vehicle for increasing diversity and equity, if the society chooses to honor the contributions by specific groups of members.

Award naming guidelines can also be applied to determine whether or not funds from a private person or from an organization for the purpose of establishing an award in honor of someone specifically should be accepted. In such an instance, the choice of the honoree is not the society's, but the choice to accept the funds is. Accepting funds without consideration of award naming guidelines may create inequities or worse – promote an individual who for whatever reason is not deserving of such high honor.

Guidelines recently proposed by member societies

The ASA is the only member society that has recently published guidelines for naming or for renaming awards and scholarships. The policies can be found in <https://www.amstat.org/ASA/Your-Career/Awards-and-Scholarships.aspx>, and are attached to this document. The ASA policy is largely based on Stanford University's guidelines for renaming buildings and other features on campus.

The guiding principle for both organizations is that of inclusion: everyone in the organization should feel respected and represented. In that light, retaining the names of buildings or, in the case we are considering, retaining the names of awards, that honor persons whose work or personal actions

could be seen as harmful to a specific group, violates the ideas of diversity, equity and inclusion for which the organization strives.

Because of its serious nature, renaming an award that was named to honor a specific person should be undertaken only upon documented evidence of the person's professional or moral shortcomings, and after careful consideration of the impacts associated with either changing or retaining the name.

More specifically, the ASA guidelines propose a process of whether to change or retain the name of an award. In the remainder, we focus on the ASA policy for renaming an award, which includes the following steps:

- a.** Initiation: Any ASA member can submit a request to the ASA Board for the renaming of a specific award.
- b.** The requester must include written documentation of the offensive behavior by the person after whom the award is named, the source of the evidence and a discussion describing how the behavior is inconsistent with ASA's mission and values.
- c.** The decision to change or retain the name of the award is made by the ASA Board. If necessary, the ASA Board may choose to retain the services of an independent research firm to corroborate the allegations made.
- d.** Renaming an award is not to be done lightly. Factors to be considered include:
 - i. The centrality of the offensive behavior in the person's overall life and career.
 - ii. The degree to which the behavior has harmful impacts on the wellbeing of members of the association.
 - iii. The strength of the evidence.
 - iv. Whether the issue had already been discussed by the ASA Board before the award was named after the person.
 - v. Whether it is possible to mitigate the harmful impacts of the name in some alternative way.
- e.** For new awards, the person soliciting the establishment of award must provide two possible names: the name of the honoree, and an alternative (not a person's name) that will be used should the honoree's behavior conflict with ASA's mission and values, with the latter being preferred, as discussed below.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CREATING AND NAMING NEW AWARDS

Guiding principles

The Task Force strongly endorses the following principles to guide the choice of award names:

- Awards should be established to recognize the contribution of past and current members, but also as a vehicle to promote diversity, inclusion, and equity.
- Awards named after individuals reach into the past, and sometimes honor persons whose attitudes or values were an overlooked anathema in their time or have become an anathema in today's environment. For example, as a profession we might choose to no longer honor a colleague who actively worked to exclude women from academia, regardless of the customs at the time.
- To become diverse and inclusive, a society must face forward, into the future and align its awards with the values the society wishes to promote. If the society aims to provide a welcoming environment to all its members, then members who make extraordinary contributions in this direction should be recognized and honored.
- Eligibility criteria that limit the age of the nominee may exclude otherwise worthy individuals who may have completed their advanced degree later than what is considered standard. Reasons may include the need to work between degrees, or the desire to start a family or even the lack of opportunity to complete a degree in the usual time frame. Those most affected are persons of limited means, women, immigrants or those who are the first in the family to obtain a college education. Instead of an age threshold, a more inclusive approach is to use an academic threshold that places an upper bound on the number of years elapsed since the person completed the advanced degree.
- When possible, a society should consider establishing and naming awards that serve to reflect *purpose*. Some obvious purposes of a professional society include:
 - Promoting the development of theory and methods to advance statistical science.
 - Promoting the principled use of statistics in science and public policy.
 - Contributing to advance other disciplines through joint collaborative efforts.
 - Ensuring the vitality of the profession by educating the next generation of statisticians at all levels.
 - Becoming a reflection of society by actively promoting diversity at all levels.
 - Attracting the best talent by providing a welcoming professional environment and ensuring equity and fairness in the profession.

At present, most of the awards administered by COPSS and its partner associations reflect the first two or three purposes but have not kept pace with the evolving societal shifts. The new COPSS Leadership Academy represents a welcome broadening of the reasons for recognizing extraordinary contributions by statisticians.

Recommendations for selection of names of new awards

In light of the discussion above, the Task Force makes the following recommendations regarding the naming of **new awards**:

Recommendation 1: Where possible, avoid establishing new awards named after specific individuals. Regardless of how carefully this is done, it can be difficult if not impossible to ensure that specific individuals' behavior is aligned with society values.

Recommendation 2: If new awards will be named after a person, then the society should solicit input from its membership and other stakeholders to make the selection.

Recommendation 3: Establish new awards that are consistent with and reflective of the professional society's values. Examples of such awards would recognize:

1. Outstanding contributions by statisticians working in public policy, human rights, and other pressing societal problems.
2. Outstanding mentoring of traditionally underrepresented or excluded scientists: indigenous researchers, students and faculty in low resourced environments, etc.
3. Outstanding efforts to increase participation and amplify the voice of minority groups in the profession.

These are presented as examples only, and many other possibilities exist.

Recommendation 4: Revisit eligibility criteria for all existing awards. Some criteria may inadvertently limit access to specific groups of persons. An example is the upper bound on the age of eligible nominees for the President's Award. Instead of the age of the nominee, consider using the number of years since the highest degree.

Revisiting award names is important

We live in a society with changing values. These changes will eventually permeate the professional associations in statistics and the profession itself and bring along a new set of values and customs. Furthermore, the composition of many professions, including statistics, is changing. Individuals who have been underrepresented are joining professions that have historically excluded them, may not represent their values, and, at worst, have values that are at odds with their inclusion. As the values of our society and the composition of our profession evolves, so must policies and activities, including the recognition of extraordinary contributions by members.

The Task Force strongly urges COPSS to establish a mechanism for periodically revisiting all named awards. The newest existing COPSS award was established over 20 years ago, and since then, there has been an increasing awareness of the importance of diversity in the profession. Do the lives and careers of Scott, David and Snedecor reflect the *current* values of COPSS? This question must be asked periodically by future COPSS leaders to ensure that both the society and the recipients of those awards continue to take pride in them.

Recommendations for the periodic review of awards

Regarding the review of award names, the Task Force makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 5: COPSS should publish a policy for re-naming awards. The policy can be similar to the one adopted by the American Statistical Association but should go a step further by including a requirement that all COPSS awards be reviewed periodically, even if no concerns about them are raised by the membership. (See Recommendation 5).

Recommendation 6: Establish a regular cycle of award reviews. A reasonable cycle of reviews may be decadal, and would include all awards administered by COPSS. Every 10 years, COPSS leadership should name an ad-hoc committee with diverse membership, and the committee would then recommend whether to retain the award names or whether to consider re-naming those awards. If the recommendation is to re-name the awards, then the process set forth by COPSS shall be followed.

Recommendation 7: In addition to the decadal review of awards, COPSS should establish a mechanism for setting up reviews outside of the regular cycle. These reviews would result from requests by members or other stake holders. Anyone should be able to raise concerns about the name of an award and to do so via a mechanism that protects their identity. Every concern shall be brought up to the COPSS Board, and the discussion and resolution shall be included in written minutes.