

IMS Memorials Committee Report, 2021

The IMS Memorials Committee for 2020 - 2021 has consisted of Richard Davis, Edwin Perkins, and Jon Wellner (Chair). Paul Shaman has continued as an ex-officio member of the committee via his work on the Scientific Legacy Project.

This report covers three different projects of the Memorials Committee in 2020-2021:

- A. Scientific Legacy Project: Paul Shaman.
- B. Obituaries for recently deceased IMS Members:
- C. Evaluation of two proposals for new named lectures and prizes in honor of two current IMS members:
 - Grace Wahba:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grace_Wahba .
 - Redacted: for IMS Council only.
- D. Memorials Committee Motion to Council, 2021
- E. Appendix: supporting documents
 - E(1). Proposal to establish an “IMS Grace Wahba Award”.
 - E(2). Memorials Committee Comments on the proposed Wahba Prize and Lecture.
 - E(3). Proposal to establish an “IMS (Redacted: for IMS Council only) Award”.
 - E(4). Memorials Committee Comments on the proposed (Redacted: for IMS Council only) Prize and Lecture

A. Scientific Legacy Project: Paul Shaman.

Paul continues to update the Legacy Database in cooperation with Elyse Gustafson and Tati Howell. This database contains information about the scientific careers of (most if not all) IMS Fellows. Paul suggests that corrections and additions be sent to him at shaman@wharton.upenn.edu .

B. Obituaries for recently deceased IMS Members:

In truth this list of obituaries ... and the work of collecting obituaries for publication in the IMS Bulletin continues to fall mainly on the shoulders of Tati Howell. It is helpful for members of the community to send reports to Tati at bulletin@imstat.org concerning passages of IMS members as well as suggestions regarding potential authors of obituaries. The Memorials Committee owes a big thanks Tati for her dedication to this work.

- Kenneth J. Arrow: 1921-2017 (February 21, 2020)
- Saul Blumenthal: 1935-2018 (March 10, 2018)
- Donald A.S. Fraser: 1925-2020 (December 21, 2020)
- Donald P. Gaver, Jr.: 1926-2018 (February 11, 2018)
- Leo Goodman: 1925?-2020 (December 22, 2020)
- Tom Liggett: 1944-2020 (May 12, 2020)
- H el ene Massam: 1949-2020 (August 22, 2020)
- Elizabeth Meckes: 1980-2020 (December 16, 2020)
- S. James Taylor: 1929-2020 (January 22, 2020)
- Joseph (Yossi) Yahav: 1935-2016 (August 6, 2016)
- Xiangrong Yin: 1966-2020 (August 11, 2020)
- Willem van Zwet: 1934-2020 (July 2, 2020)

C. Evaluation of two proposals for new named lectures and prizes in honor of two current IMS members:

C.1 Comments on / evaluation of a proposal to establish an “IMS Grace Wahba Award”.

Background: A detailed (8 page) proposal was sent by IMS President Regina Liu to the Memorials Committee on 24 January 2021. This proposal was written and supported by an informal committee consisting of Jianqing Fan, Douglas Nychka, Bernard Silverman, Daniella Witten, Wing H. Wong, Bin Yu, Ming Yuan, and Hao Helen Zhang. (The proposal is attached below as Appendix D(1) to this report.)

Memorials Committee Report / Comments: The committee felt that the proposal was very strong and compelling and worthy of the IMS. On the other hand, the committee report pointed out that the proposal created a striking precedent that went beyond the mandate or purview of the Memorials Committee, in that it was aimed at honoring a living member of the community. Here is the description of the role of the Memorials Committee from the IMS Handbook:

“The Committee on Memorials sees that proper steps are taken to memorialize distinguished probabilists and statisticians [who have died](#) ... Ways to honor such researchers are obituaries in the Bulletin, extended memorial articles in IMS scientific journals, memorial issues of IMS journals, and memorial sessions at IMS meetings.” [See <https://imstat.org/ims-handbook/ims-handbook-committees/#Memorials>]

The Memorials Committee comments (sent to Regina Liu on 1 February) also included comments on several other potential problems involving the proposed Prize and Lecture, including potential difficulties in arranging time slots for the lectures and expectations concerning the expected level of funding to endow the lectures. The Comments included further suggestions about the need to either: (a) create either a new IMS committee concerning Named Lectures or, alternatively, (b) restructure and rename the Memorials Committee and give it a new charge or purview which would include appropriately honoring living members of the IMS.

The Memorials Committee Comments on the proposed Wahba Prize and Lecture were sent to Regina Liu on 1 February and is attached to this report as Appendix D(2).

Council Decision: The understanding of the Memorials Committee is that a motion to the IMS council in favor of the proposal was made on April 1, 2021, and that the motion passed on April 20, 2021.

C.2 Comments or / evaluation of a proposal to establish an “IMS (Redacted: for IMS Council only)” .

Background: A 3 page proposal was sent by IMS President Regina Liu to the Memorials Committee on 13 June 2021. A copy of this proposal was received directly from (redacted: for IMS Council only) on 21 June 2021. This proposal was written and supported by an informal committee consisting of (redacted: for IMS Council only) (The proposal is attached below as Appendix D(3) to this report.)

Memorials Committee Report / Comments: The committee felt that the proposal was well written and worthy of the IMS. The committee agreed that Professor (redacted: for IMS Council only) is a strong possibility for such an award. On the other hand, the committee report pointed out that the proposal landed squarely in the territory of the precedent created by the Wahba Award and Lecture: it goes beyond the mandate or purview of the Memorials Committee, in that it was aimed at honoring a living member of the IMS community. This was already noted in C.1.

The Memorials Committee comments (sent to Regina Liu on 19 July) also repeated comments from the Committee Comments on the Wahba prize and award. This included potential difficulties in arranging time slots for the lectures and expectations concerning the expected level of funding to endow the lectures. The Comments included further suggestions about the need to either: (a) create either a new IMS committee concerning Named Lectures or, alternatively, (b) restructure and rename the Memorials Committee and give it a new charge or purview which would include appropriately honoring living members of the IMS.

The Memorials Committee Comments on the proposed (redacted: for IMS Council only) Prize and Lecture were sent to Regina Liu on 19 July. They are attached to this report as Appendix D(4).

Council Decision: This proposal has not yet been presented to the IMS Council pending discussions and decisions concerning the restructuring and potential renaming of the Memorials Committee

(or possible creation of a new Committee) charged with awards intended to honor living members of the IMS.

D. IMS Memorials Committee Motion to Council, 2021

MOTION: To rename the ‘Committee on Memorials’ to ‘Committee on Endowed Lectures and Memorials’ and broaden the charge to consider proposals beyond honoring the dead.

Furthermore, the following sentence will be added to the committee’s in the IMS Handbook: “In exceptional cases the Committee will also consider proposals of endowed lectures honoring deserving researchers or endowed lectures that enhance IMS missions.” These changes are suggested in order to bring the role of the Committee on Endowed Lectures and Memorials in line with existing material on the IMS web site as listed in the ‘Background’ material below.

BACKGROUND: The current charge to the committee reads: ‘The Committee on Memorials sees that proper steps are taken to memorialize distinguished probabilists and statisticians *who have died*. Ways to honor such researchers are obituaries in the Bulletin, extended memorial articles in IMS scientific journals, memorial issues of IMS journals and memorial sessions at IMS meetings.’

Note that this charge *does not include* ‘Creation of New IMS Prizes or Awards’ or ‘Creation of New IMS named Lectures’ as described below.

Under <https://imstat.org/memorials/creation-of-new-ims-prizes-or-awards>:

Creation of New IMS Prizes or Awards
Current IMS Awards
Current IMS Funds

Examples:

- IMS Lawrence D. Brown Ph.D. Student Award Fund: created 2019.
- IMS Peter Gavin Hall IMS Early Career Prize Fund: created 2018.

Such prizes have been created in only a few cases and have involved substantial fundraising efforts. The most recently created awards have involved total contributions of approximately \$100,000-150,000. The creation of any such prize must be approved by the IMS Memorials Committee and the IMS Council. It is advisable to consult

with the Chair of the Memorials Committee in [advance](#) of submitting a proposal.

Under

<https://imstat.org/memorials/creation-of-new-ims-named-lectures/>:

“Creation of New IMS Named Lectures IMS Special Lectures IMS/BS Special Lectures

This is very difficult to carry out due to the current number of existing named lectures and the problems involved in scheduling such lectures.

Existing named Lectures, with date created:

- Reitz (1947)
- Wald (1957)
- Neyman (1982)
- Le Cam (2003)
- Doob (2012) joint with Bernoulli Society
- Schramm (2013) joint with Bernoulli Society
- Blackwell (2014)
- Wahba (2021)

If you wish to consider this option, please reach out to the IMS Memorials Committee to discuss in [advance](#) of submitting a proposal.”

Additional background and concerns:

(a) The Committee is concerned about continuation of the current decision patterns with little or no established guidelines or criteria. It seems likely to the Committee that in the long term this could easily result in a proliferation of awards and a consequent degradation of the significance of our existing awards.

(b) We hope that the incoming Committee on Memorials will work to establish criteria, guidelines, and processes to handle the recently received named lecture proposal (to honor (redacted: for IMS Council only) .as well as the many other proposals of a similar kind which the Committee on Memorials anticipates receiving in the coming years.

E. Appendix: supporting documents (sent separately)

- E(1). Proposal to establish an “IMS Grace Wahba Award”.
- E(2). Memorials Committee Comments on the proposed Wahba Prize and Lecture.
- E(3). Proposal to establish an “IMS (redacted: for IMS Council only) Award”.
- E(4). Memorials Committee Comments on the proposed (redacted: for IMS Council only) Prize and Lecture