The Academic Awards Committee was responsible for reviewing all nominations for competitive university-wide academic awards and scholarships, as well as for some departmental and interdepartmental prizes, and choosing the recipients (almost entirely, but not exclusively, undergraduates). Award nominations — solicited from faculty and staff members, deans, department chairs, and program directors in early January — were due in mid-February. Award nomination packets were compiled by the Division of Undergraduate Education and posted to Trunk for review by the committee. Assessment of candidates and selection of award recipients took place in March.

This year’s committee consisted of fifteen faculty members appointed from various departments in the School of Arts and Sciences, and two faculty members from the School of Engineering. There also were three voting ex officio members: the dean of undergraduate studies, the dean of student affairs, and the director of financial aid.

Special thanks to Dean of Undergraduate Studies Carmen Lowe and Administrative Assistant Joanne Ferguson whose meticulous attention to detail ensured that the entire awards process and the April 21 ceremony ran flawlessly. Also to Assistant Professor Timothy Atherton (Physics and Astronomy) for streamlining the electronic voting system.

Important dates for the year were:

- January 6, 2017: First electronic mailing to faculty, chairs, and program directors about academic award nominations.

- February 3, 2017: Second electronic reminder to department chairs and assistants about academic award nominations.

- February 17, 2017: Award nominations due by 5:00pm.

- March 3, 2017: Trunk invitation to committee members to access the 2017 general award nominations and other information.

Because of the large number of nominations and the short amount of time in which to read them, we implemented a new assessment and voting system this year devised by Carmen Lowe and Timothy Atherton. First, all the awards were divided into seven prize clusters:
1. Leadership and Scholarship: 30 nominations for 4 prizes, including Alpha Xi Delta, Alpha Omicron Pi, Cowdery Memorial, Karno Dean’s Award

2. Athletic Achievement: 28 nominations for 4 prizes, including Alex Elias Memorial, Bennet Memorial, Frederick Melvin Ellis, Lewis Manly Memorial

3. Service and Engagement: 33 nominations for 6 prizes, including Association of Tufts Alumnae, Community Service Award, Gemma Cifarelli Memorial, Multicultural Service Award, Pride on the Hill, Alumni Association Award

4. Academic Achievement in STEM: 32 nominations for 5 prizes, including Audrey Butvey Gruss Science Award, Benjamin Brown, Class of 1947, Victor Prather, de Florez Prize in Human Engineering, Lt. Commander Manning Memorial

5. Academic Achievement beyond STEM: 56 nominations for 5 prizes, including Charles Seymour, Class of 1882, Class of 1898, Class of 1942, Ivan Galantic Humanities Prize

6. Making Progress and Overcoming Obstacles: 22 nominations for 5 prizes, including Audrey Hale, Class of 1911, Ellen Myers, Ethel Hayes, Philip Sheridan

7. ROTC: 4 nominations for 3 prizes, Air Force, Army, Navy

Next, each committee member received four prize clusters to evaluate by midnight on March 13. People were free to read the nomination packets in all seven clusters if they so desired, but had to read the four clusters assigned to them. We were asked to rank the nominees in each cluster, entering our votes electronically via a “drag and drop” system on Qualtrics. All this material – the nomination packets in each prize cluster and the ballots – were available on our committee’s Trunk site. The results were tallied by a run-off voting system called Single Transferrable Vote (STV).

On March 15 at 4:00pm, the committee met in Dowling Hall to review the results of the voting and determine the winners of all the general prizes and scholarships. We worked hard to ensure a fair and equitable process and to recognize as many deserving students as possible. As always, departmental prizes and scholarships were determined by their respective departments. Winners of competitive prizes and scholarships such as the Anne E. Borghesani Memorial Prize and the Marshall Hochhauser Prize were chosen by their committees.

On April 21, the 117th Academic Awards Ceremony took place in Cohen Auditorium at 7:30pm, following a short performance by the Jackson Jills. As Committee Chair, I presided over the program. We were delighted to have a platform party consisting of Anthony Monaco, 13th President of Tufts University; James Glaser, Dean of Arts and Sciences; Jianmin Qu, Dean of the School of Engineering; Mary Pat McMahon, Dean of Student Affairs; Carmen Lowe, Dean of Undergraduate Studies; Associate Professor Matthew Panzer, Department of Chemical and
Biological Engineering, winner of the 2016 Lillian and Joseph Leibner Award for Excellence in Teaching and Advising, and the evening’s keynote speaker.

Judicious script editing made it possible for me to keep the program moving briskly so that it finished in under two hours – a record! That left more time for people to enjoy a dessert reception in Alumnae Lounge after the ceremony. As always, it was inspiring to celebrate our students’ stellar achievements in so many areas, as well as their impressive commitment to active citizenship.

In 2017-2018 I will chair the committee in the fall. In the spring when I am on sabbatical, Timothy Atherton will be chair, although I have agreed to serve as host for the ceremony once again.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Wallace Grossman, Professor, Drama and Dance; Chair, Academic Awards Committee

On behalf of committee members:
Thomas Abowd, Lecturer, International Literary and Cultural Studies
Timothy Atherton, Assistant Professor, Physics and Astronomy
Ikumi Kaminishi, Associate Professor, Art and Art History
Frank Lehman, Assistant Professor, Music (on leave AY 16-17)
Carmen Lowe, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, ex officio, voting
Mary Pat McMahon, Dean of Student Affairs, ex officio, voting
Amy Millay, Lecturer, Romance Languages
Paul Muentener, Assistant Professor, Psychology
Vincent Pollina, Associate Professor, Romance Languages (on leave spring 2017)
Dennis Rasmussen, Associate Professor, Political Science
Kamran Rastegar, Associate Professor, International Literary & Cultural Studies
Patricia Reilly, Financial Aid Director, ex officio, voting
Anil Saigal, Professor, Mechanical Engineering
Deborah Schildkraut, Professor, Political Science
Riccardo Strobino, Mellon Assistant Professor, Classics
Loring Tu, Professor, Mathematics
Eric Tytell, Assistant Professor, Biology
Nathan Wolff, Assistant Professor, English
Qiaobing Xu, Assistant Professor, Biomedical Engineering

Administrative Staff:
Joanne Ferguson, Undergraduate Education