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 twelve 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. I served as committee chair in the fall, Timothy Atherton in the spring when I was on sabbatical.

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 27th ceremony ran flawlessly.

Important dates for the year were:

- January 8, 2018: First electronic mailing to faculty, chairs, and program directors about academic award nominations.

- January 26, 2018: Second electronic reminder to department chairs and assistants about academic award nominations.

- February 1, 2018: The awards committee met briefly to decide how to conduct the voting process this year. Last year, the committee introduced a new process whereby readers were asked to rank their candidates in each category. Identifying preferences beyond the first choice made it possible to use instant run-off voting to order the candidates, with the rationale that incorporating additional choices into the voting would enable the committee to establish a clearer consensus and distribute the prizes more fairly. The committee felt that the new process was overall an improvement and decided to adopt the same process this year.
February 16, 2018: Award nominations due by 5:00pm.

March 5, 2018: Trunk invitation to committee members to access the 2017 general award nominations and other information. The awards were divided into several prize clusters. People were free to read the nomination packets in all the clusters if they so desired but had to read the packets the clusters assigned to them. They were asked to rank the nominees in each cluster, entering 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 the committee’s Trunk site. The results were tallied by a run-off voting system called Single Transferrable Vote (STV).

March 14, 2018, 4:00-8:00pm: Dinner meeting in Room 730A Dowling Hall to select award recipients. The committee reviewed the results of the voting and determined the winners of all the general prizes and scholarships. As always, departmental prizes and scholarships were determined by their respective departments. Winners of competitive prizes and scholarships such as the Anne E. Borgehesani Memorial Prize and the Marshall Hochhauser Prize were chosen by their committees.

April 27, 2018, 6:30pm: 118th Academic Awards Ceremony in Cohen Auditorium. As Committee Chair, I presided over the program. Our platform party consisted of Anthony Monaco, 13th President of Tufts University; James Glaser, Dean of Arts and Sciences; Chris Swan, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, School of Engineering; Carmen Lowe, Dean of Undergraduate Studies. The evening began with a brief address by President Monaco.

Because senior award winners were included in this year’s ceremony there were concerns about the program’s length. For that reason, the start time was moved from 7:30 to 6:30pm. In addition, descriptive content about the student prizewinners was eliminated (although award descriptions were retained) as were faculty presenters for departmental awards. I kept the program moving briskly so that it finished in under two hours by 8:20pm. I would respectfully suggest that next year’s ceremony start at 7:30pm once again, eliminate the award descriptions which are in the program book, reinstitute the descriptive personal sentences about each student winning a general award, and invite faculty representatives to present departmental awards once again.

As always, it was inspiring to celebrate our students’ stellar achievements in so many areas, as well as their impressive commitment to active citizenship.

The chair of next year’s committee has yet to be determined.

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

On behalf of committee members:
Timothy Atherton, Associate Professor, Physics and Astronomy, Academic Awards Committee Chair, Spring
Ikumi Kaminishi, Associate Professor, Art and Art History
Frank Lehman, Assistant Professor, Music
Carmen Lowe, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, ex officio, voting
Mary Pat McMahon, Dean of Student Affairs, ex officio, voting
Paul Muentener, Assistant Professor, Psychology
Vincent Pollina, Associate Professor, Romance Studies
Dennis Rasmussen, Associate Professor, Political Science
Patricia Reilly, Financial Aid Director, ex officio, voting
Anil Saigal, Professor, Mechanical Engineering
Riccardo Strobino, Mellon Assistant Professor, Classics
Loring Tu, Professor, Mathematics
Diren Pamuk Turner, Lecturer, Chemistry
Eric Tytell, Assistant Professor, Biology
Nathan Wolff, Assistant Professor, English
Qiaobing Xu, Assistant Professor, Biomedical Engineering

Administrative Staff:
Joanne Ferguson, Undergraduate Education