

Maxwell, Martha. (Fall 1998). Fellows in Learning Assistance and Developmental Education: A Proposal. *Journal of College Reading and Learning* 29 (1), pp. 41-47.

Martha Maxwell
***Fellows in
Learning
Assistance and
Developmental
Education:
A Proposal***

Professional associations in academic fields such as science, medicine, and psychology honor their outstanding members by electing them "Fellows." This paper proposes guidelines for associations to elect honorary Fellows in Learning Assistance and Developmental Education. It includes criteria for education, experience, and specific contributions through publishing, research and practice in evidence of the recognition of the nominee as an authority in the field. Readers are invited to comment.

In recent years, there has been a groundswell of interest and commitment to the concept of program evaluation guided by the development of professional standards in the field of Learning Assistance and Developmental Education (Council for the Advancement of Standards, 1997; National Association of Developmental Education, 1994). Following the publication of the latest revision of the Council for the Advancement of Standards' guidelines for Learning Assistance programs, the leaders of professional associations like the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) and the National Association of Developmental Education have established committees to determine how individual members can be credentialed and how programs can attain certification.

In addition to individual member credentialing and program certification, another hallmark of a profession is that it formally recognizes, endorses, and rewards those leaders who have made outstanding contributions to the field. The most meritorious members of a profession are awarded the title of "Fellow" in fields such as medicine, science, psychology and education. The American Psychological Association and the National Academy of Educational Research, for example, designate "Fellows." Professions assure the public that members are qualified to provide promised service, and the public should know what outstanding practice--not just credentialed, competent practice--looks like. Similarly, new members of the professions are readily able to identify suitable models and mentors. In addition, other professions may take notice of the high standards maintained by the profession.

Given the benefits of formally recognizing excellence in a profession, I propose that the fields of Learning Assistance and Developmental Education establish criteria and procedures for selecting Fellows. Below I detail the requirements and procedures for selecting Fellows by offering an operational definition of Fellow, general and specific requirements for becoming a Fellow, and the nomination and review procedures for selecting Fellows. The ideas presented in these sections were developed using as guidelines the standards of the American Psychological Association. Finally, a plan for moving the proposal forward is offered.

Definition of a Fellow

A Fellow represents the upper echelon of the practitioners, researchers, teachers, and administrators in the Learning Assistance and Developmental Education fields. He or she has made outstanding contributions, introducing innovative ideas and practices. A Fellow's contributions have been highly visible and shared with colleagues (e.g., through lecturing at national or regional conferences), and the person represents the highest level of performance as compared with recognized leaders in the field. A Fellow is a person to whom colleagues turn for ideas and advice in respect to teaching, program development, evaluation, research, or theory. Although the term "Fellow" has a masculine connotation, it is regarded in most professions as applying to both men and women. I will continue to use it in that sense until a more gender-neutral word is suggested.

General Requirements

To be considered for the title of Fellow, candidates must meet the following five general requirements:

Five Year Minimum

Candidates must have a minimum of five years' experience in the Learning Assistance and Developmental Education field. (Nominees should describe the positions they have held in the field.)

Doctorate or Equivalent

Candidates must have an earned doctorate with a dissertation on a topic related to Learning Assistance or Developmental Education, or at least 10 years of professional experience plus certificates, relevant graduate courses, research and publications, and so forth. (The nominee with a doctorate should submit an abstract or synopsis of his or her dissertation; other nominees should submit certificates and other relevant documentation.)

Qualification Statement

Each candidate must provide a statement explaining how he or she is qualified for fellowship status.

Professional Sponsorship

Candidates must be sponsored by two professionals who are Fellows or recognized leaders in the Learning Assistance or Developmental Education field. (Once an initial

corps of Fellows has been elected, Fellows may be expected to assume the major role in selecting other Fellows.)

Professional Endorsement

Three letters of endorsement from professionals in the Learning Assistance or Developmental Education fields are required.

Specific Requirements

In addition to the five general qualifications listed above, a candidate for Fellow must provide suitable documentation in at least three of the six areas described below:

1. The candidate has shown outstanding leadership, scholarship, or service to the field. Such achievement could include the following:
 - (a) outstanding teacher (documented by letters from students or student and peer ratings),
 - (b) author of a textbook or textbooks (including letters from a minimum of two professionals in other institutions who have adopted the textbook),
 - (c) author of book or books for professionals (including two book reviews attesting to the value of the work for the profession),
 - (d) president or dean of a college or university,
 - (e) editor or founder of a quality journal,
 - (f) chairperson of a credentialing body,
 - (g) administrative officer or influential person in national or regional organization in the field, or
 - (h) recipient of an award or awards from national or regional associations (including a clear statement of the criteria for the award).

The following position descriptions are insufficient even if considered together: Learning Center Director; Department Chairperson; Director of Tutor Training or other training programs; Consultant; Associate Journal Editor; President of a Division or Special Interest Group; Member of a Board or Committee; President of State, Regional or Local Association; and Editor of a national, state or local association newsletter.

2. The candidate has received public recognition as an authority by presenting evidence in one or more of the following areas:
 - (a) election to a scholarly society,
 - (b) selection as a reviewer for a scholarly journal,
 - (c) selection as a reviewer for grant applications,
 - (d) assumption of a leadership role (e.g., chair of a scientific or educational group),
 - (e) selection as a reviewer for manuscripts from publisher(s) of books in Learning Assistance or Developmental Education,
 - (f) the development of innovative material for instruction or research as evidenced by written reports in journals or presentations at conferences,
 - (g) statements by colleagues of frequent and high quality service (as in letters of reference regarding teaching or other contributions),
 - (h) invitation(s) to be a visiting professor, or

- (i) invitation(s) to be a presenter or mentor at Learning Assistance or Developmental Education institutes.
3. The candidate has had a significant impact on state, national or international programs and policy. Creative and innovative application of principles to programs or problems reflects the candidate's depth of knowledge and leadership. Such leadership might result in statements of support such as "The nominee chaired a committee that developed and published national professional standards, guidelines, and ethical standards for the profession."
4. The candidate has promoted the field on the social and political scenes and has made special efforts to improve the image of the field.
5. The candidate has developed a program that provides effective education and training as evidenced by:
 - (a) recognition of the merits of the program by peers, outside agencies, or other colleges (statements concerning recognition should be stated explicitly and in detail rather than in sweeping generalities),
 - (b) evaluation involving follow-up of students (e.g., grade point average, retention, graduation rates, attendance in graduate school, and so forth),
 - (c) evidence of the individual's impact on a community, organization, or institution, through research or application of principles relevant to Learning Assistance and Developmental Education.
6. The candidate has an outstanding research and publication record for the field. This will be determined by examining aspects of research and publishing such as the following:
 - (a) publication in academic journals (publications to be rated on content, single versus multiple authorship, and quality of the journal),
 - (b) frequent selection as chair of paper reading sessions,
 - (c) organization of, and participation in, symposia at professional meetings,
 - (d) presentation of significant papers at professional meetings,
 - (e) citations of nominee's publications in professional publications by others,
 - (f) presentation of invited addresses,
 - (g) author or editor of a major textbook or textbooks in the field (including two published reviews of each book),
 - (h) author of a whole chapter or major section of a book in the field (including copies of two published reviews of book),
 - (i) author or editor of a major work or works for professionals in the field (including copies of two published book reviews),
 - (j) principal investigator on a grant funded by federal, state/provincial, or private foundation,
 - (k) reviewer on a journal for a minimum of three years,
 - (l) editor of a journal, or
 - (m) creator of a film or video series involving the theories, principles, instructional strategies in Learning Assistance and Developmental Education.

The following kinds of publications are not considered in evaluating the nominee's publications: abstracts; articles in association newsletters; books or papers in preparation; a chapter or article in one's own book; repeated articles based on the same data or program; and book reviews.

Nomination and Review Procedures

Reviewers will judge endorsers by their standing in the field, and their willingness to give additional information if requested. Reviewers will watch for missing letters and notify the nominee if letters are not received. It is important to emphasize to the nominee that at least one letter of support must be from someone who is not personally associated with the nominee, that is, someone who is not or has not been the nominee's major professor, supervisor, or close colleague. This requirement is aimed at preventing the conflict of interest or parochialism that might occur if the endorsers were colleagues or administrators from the nominee's institution, department, or research project. Thus one letter attesting to the nominee's contributions to the field must come from outside the nominee's institution or agency. The letters of endorsement must document outstanding performance and contributions to the field. In other words, saying that the nominee is respected in the field is not enough: such statements must be substantiated. Letters of endorsement differ from job recommendations. Job recommendations stress the applicant's ability and potential. Letters of endorsement must describe and document professional accomplishments.

Implementation

As mentioned above, this is a preliminary draft of criteria for establishing the award of the title Fellow to outstanding members of the Learning Assistance and Developmental Education professions. Following the publication of this paper, additional steps are planned to gain the support of professional associations and encourage them to implement this proposal.

First, this draft has been circulated to the present and pending officers of CRLA, National Association for Developmental Education, and Mid-west College Learning Centers Association, and other persons interested in the credentialing process. Second, I will present these criteria at a session at the next CRLA Conference and at other association conferences to get further suggestions from members. After reviewing further revisions, the association officers will be asked to establish committees to work together to review and draft the final proposal for action.

When implemented, it will be necessary for officers or governing boards of the relevant professional associations to nominate the first group of Fellows. Once an initial pool of Fellows has been selected, it will review and certify subsequent nominees.

Readers are invited to e-mail their suggestions to me at 76265.2466@compuserve.com.

References

Council for the Advancement of Standards. (1997). *CAS: The book of professional standards for higher education*. Washington, DC: Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education.

National Association of Developmental Education. (1994). *NADE Self-Assessment Guides for Tutoring Programs, Adjunct Skills Programs, Teaching and Learning Programs, and Developmental Courses*. Clearwater, FL: H&H.

Since retiring in 1979 from the University of California-Berkeley where she founded the Student Learning Center, Martha Maxwell has published numerous books and papers, and consulted with and mentored younger Learning Assistance practitioners through MM Associates, Box 2857, Kensington, MD, 20891. In 1972, Martha was elected a Fellow of the APA, Counseling Division. I wish to thank James H. Bell, Maureen G. Hewlett and two anonymous reviewers for their assistance in clarifying this proposal.