Guidelines for the Ken Rainey Award for Excellence in Research

Designation

Ken Rainey, a professor at Southern Polytechnic State University and a Society for Technical Communication (STC) Fellow, produced major research studies that provide ongoing benefit to the field of technical communication. Ken passed away in the fall of 2006, but during his years of service to STC, he designed and published many studies that helped connect what is taught in the classroom with what technical communicators do in the workplace.

To celebrate and honor Ken Rainey's passion for research that results in improvements to technical communication, especially to practice, the Ken Rainey Award for Excellence in Research has the following goals:

- Acknowledge the importance and value of exemplary research to the field of technical communication.
- Encourage quality and excellence in technical communication research by honoring those whose research studies have made an outstanding contribution to the field.
- Recognize research that makes an outstanding contribution to practice as a priority, but research that strengthens or extends curricula will also be considered worthy of this award.

All research methods will qualify for this award. Examples are (a) empirical work that a researcher describes as quantitative, qualitative, case study, ethnographic, naturalistic, survey, usability, archival, bibliographic, etc., or (b) modeling or other new approaches not yet applied to technical communication studies.

Eligibility

Nominees must be current members of the Society for Technical Communication and need to have been STC members for at least twelve months prior to the nomination. STC members are eligible regardless of other STC honors or awards received (Fellow or Associate Fellow, President's Award, and so on). Current members of the Ken Rainey Award for Excellence in Research Committee, and STC board of directors are not eligible to be nominated for this award. This award will not be given twice to the same person.

Nominees must fit one or both of these categories:

- An STC member who has conducted a lifetime of quality research that has made significant contributions to the field of technical communication.

    or
- An STC member who has made a significant contribution to the field of technical communication due to a high-quality, single empirical study or a high-quality set of related empirical studies.

Although nominations for both categories will be accepted each year, the award committee will decide each year which category of researcher will be recognized. A person's longevity in the field will not be a factor in the award.

Self-nominations are allowed, as are nominations from anyone else in the field.

Frequency

The award is presented annually with just a single award recipient in any given year. The committee has the discretion not to bestow any awards if it determines that no nominees meet the award criteria.

Award Presentation

The award is presented at the Honors Banquet at the STC Summit. The Ken Rainey Committee provides the citation for the certificate.

The researcher must have accomplished the following:

- Identified one or more problems of clear and compelling relevance to practitioners and/or academics.
- Developed a quality research design, including an appropriate match between methods and the focus and purpose of the inquiry.
- Relied upon sound methods for data collection and data analysis.
- Applied appropriate measures to ensure ethical protection of study participants.
- Reported results in ways that have influenced or have promised to influence practice, theory, or teaching in the field.
- Demonstrated positive impact on the field.

Nomination and Selection

The chair of the award committee will be responsible for selecting committee members and will strive for a committee consisting of both academics and practitioners.

The committee will solicit nominations through these means:

- Arranging for an e-mail announcement to be distributed to the STC membership
- If possible, arranging for a published announcement in Intercom or Notebook
- Posting the announcement on lists or forums used heavily by academics in the field (such as those of the ATTW and CPTSC)

Nominations will be e-mailed to the committee chair and STC Meeting Manager (see below). The chair will notify each nominee and request that the nominee prepare materials describing how he or she meets the published award criteria.

Required packet materials include the following:

- A 1-2 page cover letter outlining how the nominee has *either* conducted a lifetime of quality contributions to the field of technical communication *or* made a significant contribution to the field of technical communication due to a high-quality, single empirical study or a high-quality set of related empirical studies

- A standard, up-to-date curriculum vitae
- PDF copies of up to five articles/book chapters or a single-authored book that is illustrative of the research outlined in the cover letter
- Three letters of recommendation that address the criteria in a manner that will flesh out details not readily available from the resume or from publications on the research. Each person writing the recommendation will e-mail a copy of the letter to the committee chair and STC Meeting Manager (see below). These letters can come from:
  - Colleagues at a work site or in the field
  - Collaborators on a research team
  - A journal editor or special topics editor who understands the strength of publications on the research
  - Company sponsors or funders of research studies
  - Practitioners who have experienced, first hand, benefits from the research
  - Any other individuals who clearly understand the nature of the research and its impact on one or more companies or on the field as a whole
- *(optional)* Testimonials: any e-mail, letter, or other written evidence of the impact of the research on practice, theory, pedagogy, or researcher. For example, the researcher might have received a letter of thanks from an organization that intends to implement changes based on the researcher's findings or an e-mail of thanks from an instructor who is focusing course goals or assignments on a study's results.

When all of the materials for a nominee are received, the committee chair will forward them to each of the committee members.

Committee members will review the packets and then meet via a conference call to discuss the candidates' merits and either choose one for the award or decide not to choose any for the award for that particular year. The committee chair will coordinate this discussion and referee any problems or difficulties in reaching a decision.

A summary of the nominating materials of the individual chosen and a proposed citation will be presented to the Board of Directors. The Board will be asked to confer the award on the committee's selection.

Submissions

Due dates:

- Recommendations: December 13
- Applications by recommended candidates: January 26

Nominations and Recommendations should be sent via e-mail to:

- ken.rainey.award@stc.org
  - Julie Gerdes, Committee Chair
  - Tim Shaw, STC Executive Director