

Committee Reports, Spring, 2025 (September 2024 – April 2025)

Committee: Scholarships and Academic Awards

Committee Chair: Amy Gates

Committee Members: Lexey Bartlett (Vice Chair) | Sonia Mae Brown | Carie King (Affiliate) | Jessica McCole (CO) | Felicia Steele

Summary of Committee Activities: Following the fall Board Meeting, the committee met via Microsoft Teams on 23 October 2024. Gates reported that, following a round of suggestions and revisions by committee members via email, the FY2025 essay prompts had been submitted to McCole. We returned to two (rather than the centenary three) prompts to streamline student choices, and we ensured both prompts are more directly connected to the Convention theme to assist applicants and evaluators in crafting and judging those essays appropriately. McCole has included some committee members in the pre-cycle testing along with Central Office staff. This seems to be working well.

Bartlett, Gates, McCole, and Steele worked to adjust dates for the 2024-2025 Award Cycle to allow for adequate turnaround time between cycles and one week following application close for letters of recommendation. The revised schedule is as follows:

Sigma Tau Delta	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer
Applications Open	Oct. 21-Nov. 11	Jan. 13-Feb.3	Mar. 10-Apr. 7	Jun. 23-Jul. 14
Letters of Rec/Membership Checks	Nov. 18	Feb. 10	Apr. 14	Jul. 21
Evaluations	Nov. 20-Dec. 16	Feb. 12-24	Apr. 16-May 19	Jul. 23-Aug. 11
Announcement	Dec. 23	Mar. 3	Jun. 2	Aug. 18
Recipients Confirm	Jan. 6	Mar. 17	Jun. 16	Sept. 1

To assist in building a larger pool of evaluators, an evaluator survey was created, edited, approved, and sent by McCole in late October 2024. The results were good, but we will likely continue to need to recruit evaluators, particularly for the large spring cycle.

The committee has collaborated to plan a Convention roundtable on requesting and writing letters of recommendation, and the panel will represent a variety of perspectives.

Gates worked with McCole and other testers to revise some of the language on questions, and Gates and McCole made adjustments to the rubrics in AwardSpring to align more closely with the submission requirements, most notably giving “Awards” and “Activities” separate lines on the rubrics. Bartlett revised the description of the Summer Program Scholarship. This scholarship has been woefully underutilized, and we hoped that a clearer description of purpose, audience, and possible applications might increase interest. McCole publicized the Summer Program Scholarship via *Footnotes* on 28 January 2025 and featured it on social media. The Summer Program Scholarship is the only scholarship in the winter cycle; this winter 2025 cycle, we received only one application. Promoting, or perhaps adjusting, this opportunity will continue to be a topic of conversation.

Chairs of Scholarships and Academic Awards (Gates) and Partnerships (Steele) committees, supported by Namon Kent and McCole, held a webinar on 6 March 2025 to promote and answer questions about the spring awards cycle. Kent piloted use of StreamYard to live stream and record the event, which seemed to go well.

The fall 2024 and winter 2025 cycles have both gone well. The spring cycle is currently open as of 10 March 2025. We hope and expect that our most complex cycle of the year will go much more smoothly this year.

Recommendations or Resolutions: Not at this time.

Special Concerns: While we commend the creation of new opportunities for students and advisors, scholarships and awards that emerge from outside this committee and are managed and evaluated outside AwardSpring cause confusion for the committee and for Sigma Tau Delta members and Advisors. We on the committee cannot answer questions about these opportunities because our knowledge is limited to what is in the same emails members receive, and it is not always clear where to direct questions. This situation has come up a couple of times this year, most recently during the “Sigma Tau Delta Pays You Back” webinar with Felicia Steele and Amy Gates where we had several questions about the Girton College scholarships that we could not answer.