Provost's Research Awards

Dear Dean,

I would like to suggest that some or all of the 200K fund that was previously mentioned at a DoR meeting could be used to institute a **Provost's Research Awards** scheme.

I think it would be highly appropriate for the College to recognize, on an annual basis, **5-10 individuals** that are setting a **very high standard of excellence** and productivity in their research.

Such awards would be immensely valuable for formally recognizing and motivating individuals with exceptional research achievements. Given the tremendously important role that research excellence plays in building and maintaining the reputation of a University, it would seem highly appropriate to recognize excellence in research in this way.

The research awards could also be used as an occasion to showcase Trinity's research strengths, with appropriate media coverage, possibly forming the basis for a **Trinity Research day** when all award recipients would present an open (layperson/media friendly) lecture on their research.

As a basis for further discussion, I would suggest that each award recipient could receive a **5-10K unrestricted research award** (to fund travel, small items of equipment, etc) along with the usual dust collector (vase/bowl/plaque/medal); and of course, the warm glow of appreciation that actually matters a great deal.

This scheme would be effectively cost neutral, because the individuals receiving these awards are also likely to be those generating considerable research revenue and associated overheads for College at a time when these are shrinking at an alarming rate.

I would estimate that 80% of our citations (or any other measures of research esteem) are generated by <20% of our academic population. At present, I feel that high performing individuals are quite neglected in our Institution—possibly to avoid upsetting those who are not—and are largely left to their own devices to maintain (or generate) their own enthusiasm and commitment to research.

We may be close to overdrawing on the reserves of self-motivation of the high achievers at present and it may be prudent to recognize their efforts in this way. Even the most highly motivated individuals need to be given a pat on the back on occasion (to paraphrase Kissinger, we care so much because the rewards are so small). But this is especially true when the research climate has become increasingly arduous and we all begin to wonder whether our efforts are truly appreciated (here) and might not be more appreciated (elsewhere).

Best wishes,

Seamus Martin