



The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Thomas Jefferson Award

On February 1, 1962, Chancellor William B. Aycock circulated a memorandum to the faculty stating:

“Through the generosity of Mr. Robert E. McConnell of Hobe Sound, Florida, a fund has been established for a Thomas Jefferson Award to be given annually to that member of the faculty who most closely approximates in his teaching and personal life the philosophy and conduct of Thomas Jefferson.”

It appears that at first the recipient was chosen by a special committee appointed for that purpose. Current practice is for the Committee on Honorary Degrees and Special Awards to make the selection.

By precedent, recipients have been chosen from among active members of the tenure-track faculty. There is, however, no authoritative documentation that would exclude fixed-term faculty from consideration. The term “member of the faculty” in Chancellor Aycock’s 1962 memorandum has been interpreted as requiring that the recipient be a current member of the faculty. Thus, retired faculty have not been considered eligible. In 1998 the Committee on Honorary Degrees and Special Awards decided that faculty members participating in phased retirement would retain eligibility as long as they continued in at least half-time status.