

# Student Paper Award for Probabilistic Methods Papers at ASCE Engineering Mechanics Conferences

*November 2008*

The following constitute rules for formulating a committee, judging papers, and making a student paper award for the best paper incorporating probabilistic methods at the annual engineering mechanics conference sponsored by the Engineering Mechanics Institute of ASCE. For simplicity in the following, “Sub-Committee” will refer to the student awards sub-committee of the ASCE EMI Probabilistic Methods Committee (which will be called “the Committee”).

## **A. The Award**

### *(1) Award description*

The award is entitled “Student Paper Award in Probabilistic Methods,” to be issued by the ASCE Engineering Mechanics Institute Probabilistic Methods Committee. The award will consist of a \$250 award (*only a single monetary award can be made per paper*) and a certificate for each student author, prepared by the Probabilistic Methods Committee Chair with the assistance of ASCE. The purpose of the award is to reward and encourage active student participation in the annual EMI conference. By providing recognition for their work, the committee will also raise the awareness and reach of probabilistic methods in the various areas of mechanics. As such, the award will be focused on rewarding excellence in both the written paper and the oral presentation of the work.

Up to three recognition awards for the best student papers will be announced prior to the end of the annual EMI conference. If no paper is deemed of sufficient quality, awards may not be given (see §B(4)ii). The idea behind the competition and the use of multiple awards is to encourage good work and provide recognition for work that meets high standards without engendering excessive competitiveness among student participants. With the approval of the EMI Board of Governors, funds will come from the operating budget of the committee.

### *(2) Eligibility*

To be eligible, a paper must represent primarily student research and the oral presentation, which may be made in any session or symposium at the conference, must be made by a student author. The paper submission must also be accompanied by a letter from the academic advisor stating that the work represents primarily student research. The paper must meet the formatting and page length requirements of the conference and be submitted to the conference no later than 2 full weeks prior to the start of the conference.

For the purposes of eligibility, a “student” is defined as an author/presenter who is working towards an undergraduate or graduate degree at the time of the conference.

### *(3) Selection criteria*

The best papers will be decided by the Sub-Committee members by an evaluation process set at the discretion of the committee. The final decision should consider both the paper and presentation, but the award should principally rest on the paper quality. Factors that should be considered include: originality, possibility of future importance, quality of writing, effectiveness of figures in illustrating the concepts/results, clarity and organization of the oral presentation, and apparent knowledge of the student. Student applicants should expect that the evaluation process will include questioning of the presenting student during the presentation of the paper during the regular conference sessions. The Sub-Committee need not attend presentation of those papers that it considers, by consensus, to not be of possible award quality.

If the committee believes that no student paper is of sufficient quality, the committee may decide not to give an award.

***(4) Application instructions***

Application for the award is made by submitting an electronic version of the paper, a cover letter outlining eligibility, and a supporting letter from the academic advisor attesting that the paper represents primarily student research to the Sub-Committee Chair no later than 2 full weeks prior to the start of the conference. Student paper awards and the contact information for the sub-committee chair will be clearly announced on the conference Web site. The Sub-Committee Chair will review the papers submitted to determine eligibility based on criteria in §A(2).

***(5) Award timeline***

**Prior to conference:**

- Sub-Committee Chair and Committee Chair recruit and approve membership of the ad hoc Sub-Committee.
- Sub-Committee Chair distributes PDF version of the papers to Sub-Committee members.
- Sub-Committee members review the papers and make a short list of award quality papers.
- Sub-Committee agrees on evaluation and deliberation procedures.

**First day of conference:**

- Sub-Committee Chair provides a schedule of all student presentations to the members of the awards committee.
- Sub-Committee members coordinate and ensure attendance at all award quality paper presentations.
- Sub-Committee members schedule a time to meet after the presentation of the last award quality paper.

**During conference**

- Awards Sub-Committee members attend student presentations.

**After final possible award-quality paper has been presented:**

- Awards Sub-Committee meets to decide on winning papers.

**After the conference**

- Awards Sub-Committee Chair and Committee Chair arrange for award checks and certificate of recognition for all winning students.
- Awards Sub-Committee Chair coordinates with EMI to ensure that the student paper winners are featured in the next EMI newsletter.

## **B. The Awards Sub-Committee**

***(1) Relationship to other committees within EMI***

The Probabilistic Mechanics Awards Sub-Committee will be a sub-committee of the Probabilistic Methods Committee of the Engineering Mechanics Institute.

***(2) Membership***

The Sub-Committee will be composed of four members in good standing of the Committee. With the approval of the Committee Chair, the size of the Sub-Committee may be changed to meet exigencies, and may include non-Committee members if insufficient Committee members are available.

A Sub-Committee Chair will be selected as discussed in §B(5)i for a 3 year term. Upon completion of their 3-year term, they must step down from the Sub-Committee for at least 1 year before serving on the Sub-Committee again. The Sub-Committee Chair is charged with forming the ad hoc Sub-Committee prior to each EMI conference with the approval of the Committee Chair. No person may serve on the Sub-Committee for more than 3 consecutive years. If the Sub-Committee Chair is unable to attend the conference, a fourth at-large member will be selected.

### **(3) Responsibilities**

Sub-Committee members should make every effort to attend every student presentation that is considered possible award quality. Each member must read and evaluate every student paper submitted for consideration. When a member is not able to attend a student presentation, he or she should inform the other members during the discussions and take due consideration of the other judges' opinions.

For scheduling purposes, the Sub-Committee members must be available after the last student presentation to hold a meeting to decide on the awards.

The Sub-Committee Chair must coordinate with the Committee Chair to publicize the award competition during the conference organization. Early coordination is important to getting the student paper competition on the web for the upcoming conference. By the start of the conference, the Sub-Committee Chair will organize a list of the time/location of each student presentation, and the logistics of evaluation and deliberation. Following the conference the Sub-Committee Chair is responsible for award and certificate preparation and distribution.

The Committee Chair may attend ex officio the Sub-Committee meetings, and participate in the discussions but may not vote.

### **(4) Judging procedures**

#### **i. Initial nominations**

Each Sub-Committee member may nominate up to three papers that they believe are award quality. Initially, the committee members should not rank the papers in any particular order. If they do not believe there are three papers that are award quality, they may nominate fewer than three. A Sub-Committee member that is co-author on a paper **may not** nominate their own paper (but others may do so).

#### **ii. Discussions**

In principle, all nominated papers should be discussed by the committee until a consensus on the awards is reached. If no paper receives more than a single nomination, the committee should discuss not giving an award. During the subsequent discussion and voting on which of the nominated papers should receive an award, a sub-committee member may discuss and vote for a nominated paper for which he/she is a co-author. Alternatively, the sub-committee member may also abstain from voting if he/she is not comfortable with voting for his/her own paper. The objective of the discussions is to reach a collegial unanimous decision on the awards. Each recognized paper should exhibit sufficient quality in both written and oral presentation to be deserving of an award. If no unanimity can be reached, an award may be given to a paper that receives 3 positive votes. No award can be given to a paper that receives only 2 positive votes.

### **(5) Logistics**

#### **i. Terms of service on committee**

Members-at-large on the committee will only serve for one conference, but may serve for up to 3 consecutive years at the discretion of the Awards Sub-Committee Chair and the Probabilistic Methods Committee Chair. The Awards Sub-Committee Chair will serve a single 3-year term. Upon completion of their 3-year term,

Chairs must step down from the Sub-Committee for at least 1 year before serving on the committee again as either Chair or at-large members.

ii. Appointment of Awards Sub-Committee Chair

When the term of service of a Sub-Committee Chair is finished in normal rotation, the position will be filled by nomination and election at the annual Committee meeting. To ensure program continuity, when a vacancy occurs outside of the normal rotation, the Committee Chair may immediately appoint a new Sub-Committee Chair, with subsequent approval by the Committee at the next EMI meeting. The Committee Chair may designate a different Sub-Committee Chair at any time if he/she deems it to be in the best interest of the organization. Such changes require discussion and approval of the Probabilistic Methods Committee at the next EMI meeting.