A Discussion Document for the CIES President and Board of Directors
Comparative and International Education Society
Awards: An Interim Report

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1. The Task

The President of the Comparative and International Education Society asked me to work with CIES colleagues to review CIES awards, including issues of both content (current and proposed awards) and process (management of current awards; consideration of proposed awards). Prompting that review were apparently inconsistent attention to precedents and to the CIES Awards Handbook, a seeming proliferation of new awards and awards proposals, and concerns among the CIES leadership about how best to manage the awards process. As well, in conjunction with that review, I agreed to update and revise the CIES Awards Handbook.

Unfortunately, that review has taken longer and moved more slowly than anticipated. Since CIES as an organization depends heavily on the individual responsibility and goodwill of members who undertake various CIES tasks, I considered it essential that consultation be broad and patient. I was not able to proceed as rapidly with that as I had hoped. Since that review cannot be completed in time for consideration by the CIES Board in May 2011, with input from colleagues and with the assistance of Aaron Benavot I have prepared this interim report. My concern is to highlight the issues that seem to require prompt attention and to do so in a manner that will facilitate productive discussion by the CIES Board of Directors.

Accordingly, after a brief overview of relevant awards history, I shall note and address briefly questions and issues that have been identified as pressing and that seem to require high priority attention. As my comments will make clear, some of the issues that have been raised do not, it seems to me, fall within CIES’ understanding of awards or the CIES awards process. At President Tatoo’s request, I shall note my own suggestions on how CIES might proceed. To reiterate, my primary concern is to facilitate discussion by the CIES Board.

2. CIES Awards: A Brief Overview

For many years the Comparative and International Education Society had three primary awards. One, the George Bereday Award (1981), generally awarded annually, recognizes an outstanding article published during the preceding year in the Comparative Education Review. A second, the Gail P. Kelly Award (1994), generally awarded annually, recognizes an outstanding doctoral dissertation completed during the preceding year that addresses social justice and equity issues in an international and/or comparative context. The third, awarded periodically, recognizes life-long service and contribution to the field of comparative and international education by designating senior colleagues as CIES Honorary Fellows.

The costs to CIES for those awards are modest. Those costs include very limited administrative costs (telephone; post; preparation of the award certificates), a modest payment to the Bereday Award winner, and the foregone membership dues for Honorary Fellows.
Two awards have been added to that set. The Joyce Cain Award (2001), generally awarded annually, recognizes distinguished research on African descendants. The Jackie Kirk Award (2011), to be awarded annually, honors a published book that addresses gender and education, or education in conflict or post-conflict states, or peace education.

CIES Awards are managed by a standing Awards Committee, initially created in 1980 to review articles for the Bereday Award. As its responsibilities have broadened, the Awards Committee has evolved into a set of sub-committees, each responsible for one of the CIES awards, managed by the Awards Chair. With the exception of the designation of Honorary Fellows, the CIES Awards Committee makes the various awards and reports its decisions to the CIES Board of Directors. For the selection of Honorary Fellows, the CIES Awards Committee assembles supporting documentation and periodically nominates candidates. The award of an Honorary Fellow is at the discretion of the CIES Board of Directors.

The CIES Awards Committee has thus evolved from a small committee convened to review published articles to a cluster of sub-committees, each charged with overseeing one of the CIES awards. Since the designation of Honorary Fellows is the responsibility of the Board of Directors, and since that does not occur annually, the sub-committee charged with Honorary Fellow nominations may be better understood as an advisory group, generally composed of Honorary Fellows, to solicit, consider, and review nominations. Operationally, the Awards Committee, which conducts its work by email, telephone, and fax and does not meet directly, is composed of the Awards Chair and the sub-committee chairs.

The CIES President appoints the Chair and members of the Awards Committee.

The practice has been somewhat less orderly and consistent than this overview suggests, reflecting both changing circumstances and the preferences and working styles of CIES presidents and awards chairs. For example, in some years, the CIES President has designated the Awards Chair, who has then assumed responsibility to identifying and recruiting the members of the awards sub-committees, who are then formally appointed by the CIES President. In other others, the CIES President has been directly involved in constituting and communicating with the sub-committees. For another example, some Awards Chairs have communicated directly with the awardees’ Deans or Chairs, perhaps occasionally contributing to a tenure or promotion review, while other Awards Chairs have not pursued that. For one more example, in some years, the Gail P. Kelly Award has been publicized by the CIES president or secretariat, with the Awards sub-committee role limited to reviewing submitted dissertations, while in other years the Awards Chair has played a much larger role in circulating the announcement, actively soliciting nominations, and working energetically to expand the set of dissertations to be considered. Historically, the selection of the Joyce Cain Award sub-committee chair has included consultation with the chairs of the CIES New Scholars and the Underrepresented Race, Ethnic, and Ability Committees.

The CIES Awards Handbook, revised extensively in the late 1990s, has apparently not been used consistently in recent years, may not have been available to successive Awards Chairs, and has not been updated to reflect new awards and award practices.

It seems clear that the awards process works most smoothly when there is a productive relationship, characterized by excellent communication and strong confidence, between the CIES President and the Awards Chair and when the Awards Chair assumes major
responsibility and works effectively autonomously. Since both presidents and awards chairs differ in preferences and working styles, other arrangements are certainly manageable and periodically desirable.

3. Questions and Issues for Discussion

I list here several questions and issues that have been identified as pressing concerns, with a brief discussion of the issue and as appropriate, my suggestion for follow up action.

A. How should CIES deal with the proliferation of awards and proposed awards?

In recent years, several additional awards have been proposed and discussed. As well, sub-groups within CIES, including standing and ad hoc committees and Special Interest Groups, have proposed or actually created awards. How can CIES make more orderly and consistent the consideration, adoption, and management of new awards?

There are several overlapping issues here. It may be useful to note them separately.

One has to do with the level or scope of a proposed award: CIES or a CIES sub-group? Let us focus first on CIES, that is, society-wide, awards. Formally, the CIES Board of Directors is responsible for considering and deciding on new awards. It seems reasonable to maintain the organizational focus that has guided awards to date: CIES awards are intended to recognize and to stimulate outstanding and innovative scholarship in comparative and international education. If so, then the consideration of new awards should involve systematic deliberation and broad consultation, with attention to the purposes of the award, available funding, selection process, and presentation mode. That consideration requires as well attention to the risk that an increase in the number of awards may dilute the recognition and honor they carry.

While the objectives and locus of authority have not changed, it may be useful to formalize the practice. It seems timely to adopt a standard procedure for proposing and considering new awards. That procedure can be included in the revised Awards Handbook.

B. Should CIES sub-groups be authorized to make awards?

CIES relies on the initiative and energy of its members, regularly expressed at the annual meeting, in other less visible ways, and through various CIES sub-groups. It is in the interest of CIES to encourage that initiative and energy. As CIES membership has expanded, the activities and roles of those sub-groups have become more important. Accordingly, where a CIES sub-group decides to recognize outstanding scholarship in its area of interest, doing so serves CIES’ overall objectives. From this perspective, CIES sub-group awards are an asset to CIES not a problem.

The immediate operational concern is to distinguish clearly between CIES (society-wide) awards and sub-group awards. For that, it may be timely for the CIES Board to adopt a simple general procedure for the creation and implementation of sub-group awards. That procedure should emphasize sub-group autonomy rather than central control and at the same time should assure that the continuity of the award is clearly dependent on the continuity of the sub-group and the award funding. That procedure can specify appropriate terminology to reinforce the distinction between CIES awards and awards by CIES sub-groups. Pending the adoption of that
simplified procedure, the CIES President can specify the guiding principles and the steps to be followed for creating new sub-group awards.

It seems likely that over time sub-group awards will evolve toward a common pattern of specification, review, designation, and presentation, though variations may be welcome and should be tolerated. One SIG, for example, may present its award at an annual SIG meeting, while another may make the award the focus of a SIG newsletter. One group’s award may include payment to the awardee, while another group’s award may take the form of publication in a specified journal.

In sum, the proliferation of awards and award proposals need not be problematic. One set of procedures can guide proposals to the CIES Board of Directors for new CIES awards, while another set of guidelines can help CIES sub-groups create and implement awards. In the short term, the CIES presidents can develop a working strategy to manage this, while a designated group—either the Awards Chair and sub-chairs or an ad hoc task group led by the Awards Chair—can draft appropriate procedures for consideration and adoption by the CIES Board. Eventually, the CIES By-Laws can note the existence of relevant procedures and guidelines.

C. How should travel awards be managed?

Over the years the Comparative and International Education Society has assisted scholars to attend its annual conferences. Limited funding has generally been targeted to a specific set of prospective conference participants, say scholars resident overseas, or young scholars. CIES has managed that funding in different ways.

Currently, major conference participation support for scholars resident overseas is managed by a sub-committee of the Awards Committee. That arrangement seems quite workable and could be formalized.

Over the longer term, however, it may be preferable to manage that funding in some other way. At least three concerns stand out.

First, while it is simple and convenient to create new sub-committees of the Awards Committee, doing so increases the managerial and administrative burdens of the Awards Committee and Chair, which are in any case likely to increase as new awards are approved.

Second, locating the selection of conference participants to receive funding in the Awards Committee makes it more difficult for the conference program organizers to use available funding to assure broad geographical, subject, and experience diversity. In one year it may be deemed important to increase representation from a particular area of the world, while in another year subject expertise or methodological orientation may have higher priority. It is reasonable and desirable for the CIES conference organizers to be directly involved in, and perhaps primarily responsible for, the use of conference-targeted funding, including travel support for conference participants. As appropriate, conference organizers can create a committee to publicize the availability of the funding, solicit applications, review requests, and decide on allocations.

Third, most important, while travel support is regularly designated an “award,” that support is primarily intended to expand conference participation, and is not primarily intended
to recognize outstanding scholarly achievement. Indeed, periodically there may be tension between those objectives.

While travel support may include outstanding scholarship among the eligibility criteria and may be termed an “award,” allocation of that funding generally does not and probably should not involve the extensive review of published papers or books and other professional achievements required to designate scholarly work as uniquely outstanding and meritorious. To maintain the focus of CIES awards on intellectual and academic accomplishment and innovation requires, it seems to me, managing travel support for its intended purpose: to enable additional scholars to participate in the CIES annual meeting.

Accordingly, it seems preferable for conference organizers, led by the CIES President-Elect, to manage the allocation of support for conference participation. For that, they may create appropriate procedures, constitute a selection committee, and adopt appropriate terminology. That may vary from year to year, as needs, priorities, circumstances, and funding change.

D. Should the annual funded lectures be considered awards and managed by the Awards Committee?

Highlighted in CIES annual conferences have been one or more designated and specially publicized lectures, supported by endowed funds. Currently, there are two such lectures, Eggertsen and Kneller, with somewhat different origins and funding. Since I have not been directly involved in developing or managing those lectures or in selecting the lecturers, I have limited familiarity with their history and practice.

While the colleagues selected to present those lectures are being recognized by CIES for their accomplishments in and contributions to comparative and international education, their selection is not an award in the sense of the CIES awards. There is no broad publication of eligibility criteria and selection procedures. There is no public request for proposals or nominations. There is no systematic, thorough, and comparative review of submitted materials. There is no claim that the scholars selected to present those lectures have made an unusual and distinctive contribution in the year preceding their selection or even over their lifetimes. Indeed, periodically it will seem reasonable to invite younger scholars deemed particularly innovative but with a very modest publication record, or practitioners with more limited academic prominence, or scholars whose primary work lies outside comparative and international education to present those lectures.

Accordingly, there seems to be little rationale for transferring responsibility for selecting the Eggertsen, Kneller, or other distinguished lecturers at annual conferences to the Awards Committee. Since their lectures are primarily intended to spark and energize the annual conference, it is the conference organizers, not the Awards Committee, who should play the primary role in their selection.

E. How should CIES awards be managed?

As I have indicated, there is both a systematic and well documented process for managing CIES awards and periodic variation in practice. That variation, it seems, is due in part to unfamiliarity with the awards process and in part to changing needs and circumstances.
Unfamiliarity with the awards process reflects the changes in CIES personnel—some officers are more assiduous in discovering and implementing existing procedures than others; some officers emphasize precedent while others emphasize innovation—and very limited support and continuity in the CIES secretariat. On this, the remedy seems straightforward. Make the procedures clear and easily available.

The most recent major revision of the CIES Awards Handbook in 2000 was presented to, discussed by, and endorsed by the CIES Board of Directors. That Handbook was clearly understood to reflect CIES awards procedures, with broad attention to intents and purposes and specific details on tasks to be accomplished and dates for completion. In the technology of the era, they were organized into a binder, with the expectation that successive awards chairs would insert their own innovations (say, revision of the announcement strategy for the Gail P. Kelly Award) and relevant correspondence (for example, letters to awardees’ deans or chairs) and then pass on the binder itself. Since the CIES Awards Handbook has apparently not been revised in more than a decade, updating is timely. That updating can be the occasion for the transition to a primarily electronic existence, which should facilitate transmission from one generation of CIES officers to the next.

Modifications of understandings and practices for current awards, specification of new or revised procedures, explanations of new awards, and other decisions relevant to awards can be included in the revised Awards Handbook. To give the Awards Handbook somewhat more formal status, it can be noted explicitly in the relevant section of the CIES By-Laws. It seems to me now, as it did a decade ago, that there is no need to incorporate any of the text of the Awards Handbook into the CIES By-Laws.

The second cause for variation in practice, changing needs and circumstances, suggests that it ought to be possible for awards procedures to be adapted as CIES experiences and priorities change. Guidelines can reasonably be guidelines, not inflexible rules. CIES will be well served by procedures that create room for CIES presidents and awards chairs to innovate and revise.

From this perspective, variations in practice can be a benefit to CIES and should not be assumed to be a problem. By design, CIES Presidents have substantial discretion. With greater clarity on existing guidelines, CIES Presidents can, as the situation warrants, modify the practice and as appropriate, initiate the review and modification of existing guidelines.

4. Awards anomalies and unresolved issues

My review to date has confirmed that there persist anomalies and unresolved issues associated with the awards process. CIES may prefer the innovation space that ambiguities create. Alternatively, the CIES President and Board may prefer a systematic review of these and related issues, with recommendations for future action. I list them here in no particular order.

A. “Outstanding” vs. “Best” article published in the Comparative Education Review

While the formal terminology for the George Bereday Award indicates that it is intended to recognize the “outstanding” article published during the preceding year in the Comparative Education Review, some CIES members and officers have interpreted that to mean
the “best” article published during that year. Most years that difference is not problematic. Occasionally, however, the Bereday award sub-committee may decide that no published article meets the standard of “outstanding” and thus decline to make an award. While that is of course discomforting to the journal editors and to CIES more generally, that can also stimulate reflection on scholarship and publication and perhaps improve both.

To avoid confusion and hard feelings, either the term “best” should be scrupulously avoided in this regard, or “outstanding” should be changed to “best.”

B. What, exactly, is an article? or a book? And what constitutes publication?

For the initial article-based award, the George Bereday Award, there was little confusion about what was to be considered. After discussion of reviews and bibliographies, the award committee was clear on the articles to be reviewed.

With the introduction of the Joyce Cain Award, however, the specification of “scholarly article” and “publication” became more problematic. Among the problems—

“Scholarly article” suggests that nominated articles must have been published. Are conference papers, book chapters, and similar works eligible for this award? Is “scholarly article” a more restrictive category than “article”? If so, what does that mean in practice?

If articles to be considered for the Joyce Cain Award must have been published, what are the expectations or restrictions on what constitutes “publication”? Are articles in any [refereed] journal anywhere in the world eligible? Are articles that appear in newsletters or local journals that circulate at a university or other limited setting eligible? Are articles in electronic journals, electronic bulletin boards, forums, or listservs eligible? Are web sites considered publications for the purposes of this award?

The annual notice for the Joyce Cain specifies articles published during the preceding year. What are the guidelines on when publication actually takes place? In practice, academic and other journals fall behind and do not actually print and distribute, say, a 2010 issue until well into 2011, even though the cover bears the 2010 publication date. If electronic journal articles are to be included, when does their publication take place? For electronic articles, which are not infrequently revised after their initial posting, what is considered the official—“published”—version?

The creation of the Jackie Kirk Award raises similar questions about what, exactly, is a book, and what constitutes publication. To be considered a book, for example, must a manuscript be printed on paper? And more.

Academic practice is of course changing. Confusions and disagreements about what is a scholarly article or book and what constitutes publication are not limited to CIES awards. CIES should decide whether it prefers to leave these and perhaps other unresolved issues to be addressed by each year’s awards sub-committees, or alternatively, to be addressed in more detailed guidelines.

C. Should proposals for new CIES awards require endowed funding?

The cost of an award can be modest (largely, administration) or substantial (significant remuneration to the awardee). Should those who propose an award be required to provide the funds to be used for it? Must those funds be sufficient to endow the award? Or should the CIES
Board of Directors consider awards proposals on the basis of their contribution to scholarship in international and comparative education and to the purposes of CIES and then, where the initial decision is positive, explore how to fund the award? Embedding the funding in the proposal assures that a proposed award can actually be awarded but at the same time may limit the autonomy of the CIES Board of Directors in determining what is best for CIES and how a particular award should be shaped and managed.

D. How should CIES awardees be recognized?

CIES awards can contribute to improving and extending scholarship in international and comparative education. To play that role well, awards should be widely publicized and awardees publicly celebrated. As the number of awards increases, recognizing the awardees becomes more challenging. Attaching the presentation of awards to the annual business meeting, the annual presidential address, or the annual banquet becomes unwieldy when their number is large. As well, when there are many awards, each becomes somewhat less visible. A separate awards ceremony may be poorly attended, defeating its purpose.

As the number of awards increases, creative strategies for recognizing the celebrating scholars and scholarship will be required.

E. CIES By-Laws and other issues

This list does not exhaust the concerns about the awards process. Should the CIES By-Laws be revised to say more about awards? If the By-Laws are to be something more than minutes of Board meetings (if not, why have them?), they should be revised infrequently. I see no reason for frequent revision of the CIES By-Laws to address awards. The By-Laws should note CIES awards and responsibility for them. It might note the Awards Handbook. That should not change often. Should CIES awards be more narrowly or more broadly defined? The general purposes of CIES would likely be best served by very general specifications—outstanding article, outstanding dissertation, outstanding book, outstanding publication on education and social justice—rather than the more narrow specification that has become the practice. At the same time, it is reasonable for CIES to designate for special attention and encouragement more narrowly defined areas of scholarship. Decisions on those issues are, it seems to me, reasonably the responsibility of the Board of Directors. Should service to CIES feature prominently when awards are created and named? Yes, with occasional exceptions. And more.

The annual report of the Awards Chair is an appropriate vehicle for noting these and other issues and suggesting appropriate courses of action. The Board’s discussion of that report provides an opportunity to determine which issues require further attention and perhaps action.

5. Ambiguities are not necessarily problematic

In this brief interim report, I have sought to highlight awards issues that require attention. Some can be addressed by a careful revision of the Awards Handbook and better
management of maintaining and communicating it. Others may require explicit attention and action by the CIES Board of Directors.

That is as it should be.

While some may prefer tight guidelines and procedures that eliminate ambiguities and limit discretion, I am not convinced that proceeding down that path serves CIES well. As times, circumstances, and leaders change, it is reasonable, indeed desirable, for CIES presidents and directors to wrestle with thorny issues and to consult with the CIES membership as they do so. It is also desirable, I believe, to maintain the dynamism and relevance of CIES (and of scholarship on international and comparative education) by encouraging CIES presidents and directors to launch new initiatives and to do things differently. Advancing scholarship requires that our primary concern not be establishing borders but rather figuring out how to cross them.