STERLING PRIZE
GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

Simon Fraser University’s Nora and Ted Sterling Prize in Support of Controversy ranks as our most unusual, and - in light of the University’s historical and modern role in society – one of our most highly valued prizes. The prize was established by Ted and Nora Sterling to honour and encourage work that provokes and/or contributes to the understanding of controversy. The purpose of this document is to give those interested in making a nomination some guidance.

In its deliberations the committee is guided by the Terms of Reference, which state:

The Sterling Prize may be given for work in any field, including – but not limited to – the fine arts, the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and education. To be eligible, the work must be the object of or present a meaningful analysis of the conduct or consequences of controversy. However, the work must not simply be controversial. The work should be of the kind which presents new ways of looking at the world, work which is daring and creative, work which is decidedly unconventional and distinctly untraditional: in short, work which challenges complacency. The work must be of a recognizably high standard, and must be morally and ethically sound.

Normally it is expected that the Prize will be awarded to a member of Simon Fraser University – its students, faculty, staff or alumni. However, the Prize may be awarded to a person unconnected to Simon Fraser University if the candidate’s contribution has been of exceptional merit and the award to her or him reflects favorably on SFU.

There are no rules governing the content of a nomination for the Sterling Prize, and the committee has considered an enormous variety of submissions on persons from all walks of life, containing all manner of material. Unfortunately, the quality of these submissions has also varied greatly, which has sometimes complicated the already difficult task of selecting a winner from among several worthy nominees. Without wishing to impose any sort of uniformity on nominations (which would be counter to the spirit of the Prize), the committee offers the following suggestions:

1) A covering letter should address why the nominee is worthy. The committee looks for detail as well as generalities. Evidence that the controversial role has been sustained at some personal cost is particularly valuable. Several nominators may each write, or they may write together, but it is valuable to direct the committee to the salient points.

2) The committee considers favorably evidence of a substantial body of work on a controversial topic or position. Good documentation is immensely helpful if it is aimed at helping the committee evaluate nominations with respect to the Terms of Reference. The documentation may include press clippings about the nominee, copies of her/his work, videos etc., but we really will consider anything.

3) A member of the committee would be pleased to meet with you in confidence to discuss your idea for a nomination. Contact the Office of the Vice-President, Academic at vpacad@sfu.ca or 778-782-3925 to make arrangements.