



Background

The idea for the Rebecca Clark Staff Award for Moral Courage came about at a recent meeting of the Employee Forum's Executive Committee. The committee discussed how it could recognize staff members on campus who have advocated on behalf of other staff at the University and who have improved working conditions for others on campus. We discussed the idea of proposing that an award be created and conferred at University Day alongside the Edward Kidder Graham and Distinguished Alumnus Awards.

Naming of the Award

Rebecca Clark (1915-2009), a former UNC Chapel Hill staff member, African-American political activist, and civil rights organizer, fought against unequal pay and workplace discrimination. Clark worked briefly as a housekeeper at the Carolina Inn in the late 1930s and again in the 1950s as a nurse until her retirement in 1979. She became the first licensed practical nurse to work in the campus infirmary. She worked with administrators to obtain affordable housing for Carolina's lowest-paid employees. Clark also tirelessly registered African-American voters and gained the respect of many local and state public servants. Clark died in 2009.

As a result of her efforts, the University named the Cheek-Clark Building, formerly the University Laundry, after her and Kennon Cheek, organizer of the Janitorial Association.

Clark is an important figure in the University's history: she always stood up for her fellow workers and advocated for better working conditions. She was so persistent that her coworkers nicknamed her "Squeaky Clark."

Clark exemplified a courageous spirit and willingness to speak out about inequities from a vulnerable position despite potential retaliation. Her strong sense of fairness, personal integrity, and insistence on equality are values that the Employee Forum promotes among all staff and the greater UNC Chapel Hill community. Thus, it is fitting that this award be named the Rebecca Clark Staff Award for Moral Courage.

Funding of the award

Should this award be approved by Chancellor Folt and the Employee Forum, the Employee Forum requests \$2,500 (before tax) and a plaque to be provided to the winner annually at University Day.



Draft award description/criteria:

Rebecca Clark Staff Award for Moral Courage

This award celebrates a current staff member at UNC-Chapel Hill who has selflessly advocated for better working conditions for staff. The Rebecca Clark Staff Award winner exhibits values that Clark exemplified during her time at Carolina: a courageous spirit, a willingness to speak out about inequality and discrimination, and a strong sense of fairness and personal integrity. The recipient also demonstrates a strong commitment to social justice.

The award is conferred annually and presented at University Day. Any member of the UNC Chapel Hill staff is eligible for nomination, except current members of the Employee Forum's Executive Committee. Any member of the University community may submit a nomination.

About Rebecca Clark (from the Carolina Story: <http://museum.unc.edu/exhibits/names/kennon-cheek-rebecca-clark-building/>)

Clark joined the university as a maid at the Carolina Inn in 1937 and later worked in the laundry building. She advocated for better working conditions for her fellow housekeepers. Clark returned to the university in 1953 as a nurse's aide and became the first licensed practical nurse to work in the campus infirmary. After retiring in 1979, Clark continued to contribute to her community. She encouraged university officials to provide opportunities for the lowest-paid employees to buy their own homes.

Tentative timeline and process for 2016

Process: The Employee Forum Executive Committee will select the nominee and forward their nomination to the full Employee Forum delegation for approval. The recommendation will be submitted to the chancellor for final consideration.

- March 2, 2016: Employee Forum votes on whether to create the award (See attached resolution)
- June: Call for nominations go out via Gazette, Informational email, DMA Newsletter, Employee Forum newsletter, Faculty Governance News
- June 30: Deadline for award submissions
- July: Employee Forum Executive Committee meets to select award nominee and submits nominee to the full Employee Forum for consideration. After discussion and approval, the nominee's name is submitted to the chancellor for final consideration.
- October 12, 2016: Inaugural Rebecca Clark Award for Moral Courage conferred at University Day

Resolution 16-01

Proposed Resolution On the Establishment of the University-Wide Rebecca Clark Staff Award for Moral Courage

Submitted by Katie Turner, Division 6, for consideration at the Employee Forum meeting on March 2, 2016

BE IT RESOLVED, the Employee Forum establishes an award in memory of Rebecca Clark to promote the recognition of staff who have advocated for better working conditions, with courage and tenacity, for their fellow employees:

The Rebecca Clark Staff Award for Moral Courage

This award celebrates a current staff member at UNC-Chapel Hill who has selflessly advocated for better working conditions for staff. The Rebecca Clark Staff Award winner exhibits values that Clark exemplified during her time at Carolina: a courageous spirit, a willingness to speak out about inequality and discrimination, and a strong sense of fairness and personal integrity. The recipient demonstrates a strong commitment to social justice, especially with regard to the treatment of fellow workers.

The award is conferred annually and presented at University Day. Any member of the UNC Chapel Hill staff is eligible for nomination, except current members of the Employee Forum's Executive Committee. Any member of the University community may submit a nomination.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this document establishes guidance and criteria for future award processes.

COMMENT:

More information about Rebecca Clark can be found at the following links:

Kennon Cheek, Rebecca Clark and the Kennon Cheek/Rebecca Clark Building (<http://museum.unc.edu/exhibits/names/kennon-cheek-rebecca-clark-building/>)

Documenting the American South Interview with Rebecca Clark (<http://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/K-0536/menu.html>)

Rebecca Clark dies (<http://www.ibiblio.org/carrborocitizen/main/2009/01/08/rebecca-clark-dies/>)

Names in Brick and Stone: Cheek-Clark Building (<http://dhpress.unc.edu/unchistory/building-narratives/cheek-clark-building/>)

Rebecca Clark Staff Award for Moral Courage FAQ

Comment: The charge of this award is too broad, it seems like anyone could be eligible.

Response: Since the first reading of the award proposal, language was added to the award description to clarify the values we are seeking in a recipient: “The Rebecca Clark Staff Award winner will exhibit values that Clark exemplified during her time at Carolina: a courageous spirit, a willingness to speak out about inequality and discrimination, and a strong sense of fairness and personal integrity. The recipient will demonstrate a strong commitment to social justice, especially with regard to the treatment of fellow workers.” The resolution language has also been updated to preserve this document as a guide to the award’s implementation.

Question: Don’t other campus awards have selection committees made up of people appointed from across the campus?

Answer: Yes. Departments that sponsor awards are not elected bodies. Therefore they do not have representation from across the campus. Many department-sponsored awards rely on a selection committee appointed by the department to get representation from across campus.

Question: Why is this selection process different from department-sponsored awards?

Answer: As an elected body, we are an inherently representative organization with delegates representing all employment categories across campus. The Executive Committee is made up of elected delegates who chair the standing committees of the Forum, the Forum chair, and one representative of each division that the Forum represents. This award process more closely mirrors that of the faculty governance process for determining recipients of the other awards that are presented at University Day.

Question: How are other awards that are presented at University Day handled?

Answer: Two faculty governance-conferred awards are currently presented at University Day: the [Edward Kidder Graham Award](#) and the [Distinguished Alumnus Awards](#). For both awards, the Honorary Degrees and Special Awards Committee, an elected faculty committee, considers nominees and presents them to the Faculty Council for a vote. The Edward Kidder Graham nominee is then forwarded to the chancellor’s office. The Distinguished Alumnus nominees are forwarded to the Board of Trustees for final approval.

Question: What is meant by “moral courage”?

Answer: “Moral courage” simply refers to a willingness to do what one thinks is right and ethical in spite of whatever consequences may occur as a result.

Question: What happens if an Employee Forum delegate is nominated for the award?

Answer: If an Employee Forum delegate is nominated and selected by the Faculty Executive Committee for consideration by the full body, that person is expected to recuse him or herself from the discussion and vote.