COMMITTEE ON FACULTY RESEARCH LECTURER
REPORT TO THE RIVERSIDE DIVISION
MAY 20, 2008

NOMINATION OF DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR IVAN STRENSKI
FOR 2008-2009 FACULTY RESEARCH LECTURER

From its inception well over half a century ago, the Faculty Research Lecturer Award has been the highest honor that the Academic Senate bestows. The Committee on the Faculty Research Lecturer is honored to place in nomination Ivan Strenski, Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies and Hollstein Family Community Endowed Chairholder. We believe that the international acclaim for Professor Strenski’s research on religion and its relationship to other academic disciplines and to social and political institutions will add great luster to the award.

The nomination letter from Professor Strenski’s department frames his research as “focusing on: a) the history of the rise of the academic study of religion in France; b) the history of theology and religious thought; c) French social and cultural history; and d) contemporary questions about religions and social political institutions that beg for insight and interpretation.” A celebrated expert on Durkheim and on Judaism, Professor Strenski has published 10 books (and has another in press) with the very best publishing houses (for example, Princeton University Press, University of Chicago Press, and University of Virginia Press), and his books have been favorably reviewed not only in religious studies journals but also in history, anthropology, philosophy, and sociology journals. He has similarly published many scholarly papers in highly regarded journals that cross the same set of academic disciplines.

Professor Strenski’s professional stature is documented by his many invited presentations around the world, frequently as a keynote speaker, and at the very top universities in the country (including Harvard, UC Berkeley, and Chicago). He has been the recipient of several NEH Fellowships, has been granted the coveted John Templeton Prize, and has been awarded an honorary doctorate at the University of Lausanne for his work on the history of religions.

Letters from scholars around the world also attest to Professor Strenski’s prominence. He is lauded as “one of the most productive and innovative scholars of religion of the present generation,” as “amongst the very elite of US and international scholarship,” and as having “shaped the field of religious studies.” Also pertinent to the spirit of the Faculty Research Lecturer award is the observation that “the years since his appointment at UC Riverside have been the most productive of his career.”

These are only a few of the reasons why we, the undersigned members of the Senate Committee on Faculty Research Lecturer, unanimously and enthusiastically nominate, as Faculty Research Lecturer for 2008-2009, Distinguished Professor Ivan Strenski.

R. Robert Russell, Chair (Department of Economics)
Roger Atkinson (Department of Environmental Sciences)
Dallas L. Rabenstein (Department of Chemistry)
Natasha Raikhel (Department of Botany and Plant Sciences)
Jonathon H. Turner (Department of Sociology)