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 by acclamation, Norman C. Ellstrand, Professor of Genetics, Department of Botany and Plant Sciences. As one of the external letters states he “…is the foremost expert on gene flow… ” and possibly the most trusted scientist in the highly polarized debate over GM crops.

Norm’s research history presents a coherent progression from an interest in plant breeding systems and cost/benefit analysis of sexual reproduction to the development of techniques for identifying paternity (which is part of the mix of factors that determines whether or not it is advantageous to have outcrossing versus self-fertilization) to a more general interest in gene flow, and finally to an interest in the escape of engineered genes from cultivated plants into wild plants. This progression, as outlined in the nomination letter, displays the strength of integrating the development of new methodologies with the definition of research questions. It also displays his persistence and originality. Many people do good work, but few display such coherent research themes.

The second reason for choosing Norm is that his areas of excellence span basic research, applied research and the transfer of research results to the implementation of policy. This mix means that he will ultimately have a much broader impact than would be the case if he were confined to basic research and basic science journals. At the same time, it is clear that his versatility has not been attained at any sacrifice in his basic research contributions. His extraordinary publication and citation records are a testament to this aspect of his career.

The third compelling feature of Norm’s work is his production of a book that consolidated a large body of “gray” literature with basic science. He then presented this synthesis in a way that was accessible to a general audience. This is part of the outreach component of his career. As one external reviewer put it “Norm is an absolute gem of a communicator with a humane decency that makes science accessible, trusted and even embraced by diverse people and institutions.”

The Committee also notes with pride that all Norm’s work was all done at UCR.

For these reasons and many more, we, the undersigned members of the Senate Committee on Faculty Research Lecturer, unanimously and enthusiastically nominate, as Faculty Research Lecturer for 2011-12, Professor Norman C. Ellstrand.

Christopher A. Reed (Department of Chemistry) - Chair
Roger Atkinson (Department of Environmental Sciences)
Stanley Stewart (Department of English)
David Reznick (Department of Biology)