Annual prizes are awarded to the best poems written by a student in the English Department.

Bernice Schaffer Bessin was born in New York City on June 3, 1914. She married George Bessin in 1940 and raised two daughters, Barbara Bessin Zucker and Margaret Bessin Peppercorn. She worked as an elementary school guidance counselor in the poor sections of New York City's lower east side.

After retirement she began writing poetry. In her late 70's and 80's she taught poetry at a senior citizen center in New York, had poems published, and taught poetry to inmates at a women's correctional institute. Her own poems dealt largely with issues of family, aging, and the life cycle. They expressed her great warmth, sensitivity to issues of change and aging, her energy, and her enthusiastic love of people and of life.

Recent Recipients of the Bessin Award:

2016: Leehu Sigler, Batel Levy, Gilad Gutman

2015: Maayan Priel, Zeidy Canales, Aviva Betzer

2014: Maayan Priel, Aviva Betzer, Asaph Wagner

2013: Ye'ela Karni, Dana Ben Arye, Shuran Avni - Barmatz, Iman Jaml

2012: Asii Jamal, Ulrike Goldenblatt, Carmel Livni

2011: Nadja Rumjanceva, Roman Filikovsky
2010: Danielle Zilberberg, Slava Bart, Melissa Dank
2009: Ron Ben Tovim, Viacheslav Bart
2008: Avital Tsolve (First Prize), Moran Kornberg (Second Prize)
2007: Ron Ben Tovim
2006: Avshalom Guissin
2005: Julie Cohen
2004: Elad Zamir

Guidelines