The competition is designed to recognize outstanding essays written by students in the English Department, at both the undergraduate and graduate level, and to reward the most meritorious submissions. A special prize is also awarded to an outstanding male student of the English Department, a graduate of an Israeli high school who completed a full military service in the Israeli Defense Forces. Over the years, the competition has established high standards, and has been instrumental in promoting further academic progress for excellent students.

Born in 1950, Nadav Vardi's life, like that of many young Israeli men, was cut abruptly short during the Yom Kippur War. Yet even in his brief life Nadav showed himself to be a boy of great sensitivity and promise. A Sabra, Nadav felt a great love for his country: even after having spent part of his high school years in New York City where his father did post-graduate studies, he insisted on entering the army here, despite his parents' suggestion that he complete his college education in the United States. Upon conclusion of his army service, Nadav's plan was to harness his obvious talent for writing to the field of journalism. He decided, however, to first get his B.A. in English literature at Tel Aviv University. Just before the start of what would have been his third year, Nadav was called up to his tank unit for reserve duty at the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War. He was killed in action on 16 October 1973. (Based on a text written by Reeva Goldberg).

Recent Recipients of the Vardi Prize for Excellence in Studies:

2017: Leehu Sigler

2016: Liron Nahum

2015: Gili Karev
2014: Liron Nahum

2013: Nathanel Oshri

2012: Yoav Lapid

2010: Keren Shafir

2009: David Pilavin
2008: Andrey Perlin
2007: Ishai Ravid
2006: Tal Rayman
2005: Nir Rubinstein
2004: Oren Guy

Recent Recipients of the Vardi Award for Best Paper on BA Level:

2017: Tali Berlovich Paz

2016: Orin Pozner

2015: Elizabeth Krasnobrodsky
2014: Orin Pozner

2013: Gilad Gutman

2012: Alma Smilansky

2011: Keren Shafir

2009: Hadas Elber

2008: Einat Tzubary
2007: Ron Ben Tovim
2006: Avshalom Mane
2005: Julie Cohen, Rachel Bennett-Sela
2004: Zamir Libbi

Recent Recipients of the Vardi Award for Best Paper on MA Level:

2017: Gilad Bronshtein, Omri Cohen

2016: Yafit Shachar
2015: Zeidy Canales, Nitzan Lapidot

2014: Yafit Shachar

2013: Tamar Gerstenhaber

2012: Eran Edry
2009: Tal Rayman
2008: Einav Ketraro
2007: Shira Avni (Honorable mention - Tamar Gerstenhaber)
2006: Mira Pevtsov Livchits
2005: Roi Tartakovsky, Maya Merlob
2004: Alperovitch Dalit

Guidelines