

Tips for Early Career Faculty

Speak with your colleagues at all career stages about awards and society memberships.

Talk to your colleagues. Your senior colleagues may be able to point you to relevant professional societies and awards within your discipline based on their knowledge of the field. Early in your career it can be helpful to work with a mentor to assist you with your career plan. Make sure that awards are part of that conversation, particularly how award opportunities might advance your career.

Discuss award goals with your department chair.

During your annual meeting, make your department chair aware of awards that you are interested in applying to now or in the future. This can prompt a larger conversation but will also be important for those awards that require a nomination from the chair. A number of early career awards are limited submission. In this case, the chair is often responsible for nominating one or more individuals from the department.

Identify awards that you wish to apply for in the future and build them into your career map.

When identifying possible future awards, consider those that will allow you to receive the types of experiences that are important for you and your work (i.e., travel awards, residencies, industry and/or government appointments).

Ask yourself: When do you want to apply? And when might you be most competitive? Are there awards that one should receive prior to the award in question? Consult with the Director of Faculty Recognition to see the medium time from degree for recipients. This can help you gauge when you might be most competitive. We can also review the profile of past awardees to get a better sense of who makes for a competitive applicant.

Early career awards are particularly important for junior faculty to research ahead of time because of eligibility requirements, including time-from-degree requirements.

Research similar scholars.

Faculty often have a sense of individuals at other universities who are working on similar areas of study--either through past collaborations or from professional conferences. It never hurts to research your peers. Review their cv and see what societies they are a member of and identify awards they have received. This can help you consider what awards you might be competitive for in the future.

If you've won an award, check out who else has won the award. What other awards have they won? You may also be competitive for these awards. This can be a good starting place for identifying awards.

Check eligibility requirements ahead of time.

Do this to see how much lead time you need to prepare your application. Do you need to join a particular society? Is there a time-from-degree cut-off? Is this a pre-tenure award? Is the award administered through an internal nomination process? When is the internal deadline?

Build internal deadlines for yourself and put them on your calendar.

When do you need to reach out to letter writers? Provide a significant amount of time. When do you need to follow up with letter writers? When should you prepare draft materials in order to get feedback from colleagues? Create alerts on your calendar to help you with this step

Search for faculty on campus who may already be recipients.

Reach out to past recipients. Ask if they would be willing to share materials with you or would have the time to review your materials. Even having a coffee can provide crucial insight into the process and application materials. The Director of Faculty Recognition can also reach out on your behalf if you feel uncomfortable doing so. Knowing about an award deadline well ahead of time can be particularly important to provide time to reach out to these individuals.

When selecting referees, make sure your list is not composed solely of your dissertation committee or postdoc advisor.

This can make you appear like a student and doesn't shine a light on your new role as faculty member. Think about how you can expand your references in your first years as faculty. For instance, early on it will be good to include referees from your own institution who can speak to how you are establishing yourself as an independent researcher and a valued colleague.