

WISEST INITIATIVES / STEM WOMEN FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

Always be ready to be nominated for an award

One of the measures of institutional, national, and international recognition that you can provide in your tenure and promotion papers is a list of competitive honors and awards for research, or teaching, or service. Your mentors should be alerting you to honors and awards that you may be eligible for at various points in your career. It is prudent to always be ready with your documentation. Always have a long-form CV that is up to date. It is wise to insert seminars, publications, and honors received into your log-form CV as soon as you have the information. When you accept an invitation to give a seminar or conference talk, provide a title and an abstract and enter the title, date, venue into your CV right away. It helps to keep a plan/timeline for each project in progress, and a tentative title and list of authors as the project ideas develop. This way, you always know what you have in the publication pipeline. Identifying the students and other collaborators involved at the outset can be helpful to the students who can develop a stake in a project in which they are assuming primary or supporting responsibility when they know that if they deliver the goods, their name will be included in the resulting paper. This helps Ph.D. students learn career planning early in their career.

A comprehensive list of possible honors and awards in science and engineering can be found in <http://www.raiseproject.org/>. The Raise Project is a campaign to increase the status of professional women through enhanced recognition of the achievements of women in science, technology, engineering, medicine and mathematics. Use the searchable list to identify honors and awards appropriate to your field and the stage of your career trajectory. Be vigilant. You are only “under 35 yrs” or “within 10 years of receiving a Ph.D.” for a short time, so do not miss being nominated while still eligible. Identify also those awards for future and include them in your career planning timeline. A timeline with approximate deadlines would be useful. Periodically discuss current nominations with your mentors and sponsors and discuss a timeline for possible future nominations. Provide them with a current CV at each time you have this discussion, presumably at least a few weeks prior to deadline, because outside supporting letters may also be needed. The raiseproject.org campaign suggests the following steps:

1. Get nominated.
 - Self-nominate or ask a colleague to nominate you. If you aren’t nominated you can’t win. Don’t pass up an award because you think you won’t win.
2. Identify the proper award.
 - Check previous award winners. Is their work similar to yours or that of your nominee?
 - Check award timelines. Make sure to give yourself ample time to put together the best application.
 - Think about the characteristics and attainments that are the most important for this award. Will it highlight your strengths?
 - Find out who has been/will be on the award committee. If you know a current or past committee member contact them to ask about the award process.
3. Learn about the nomination process
 - Volunteer to serve on an awards committee.
 - Look into unacknowledged rules (e.g. although the award language doesn’t say so, some awards may emphasize a major discovery while others may require sustained scholarly contributions over a whole career).
 - How many nominators/ seconders will be needed?

4. Decide on the most effective nominator or secondary nominator
 - Consider award experience. People who have previously received the award or been on the selection committee are both good choices.
 - Consider prestige. Ask arbiters of quality in the field.
 - Consider personal commitment. Select people who are excited to endorse the candidate's success.
 - Identify the specific role that the nominators/seconders will play and discuss it with them when you ask them for letters. Will they write about a certain aspect of the person's work or career? Are they able to talk about the candidate from a personal point of view and/or from the point of view as an arbiter of quality in the field? Don't ask someone who may see the nominee as competition for the award, or if you are concerned that they may not follow-through, or someone who you may have doubts about. Don't be vague in your request.
5. Submit the award.
 - Follow directions! Award applications may be discarded if you fail to abide by the instructions.
 - Confirm the receipt of the materials.
6. Resubmit the award.
 - Be persistent! Award recipients often have to "wait their turn" on a list.
 - Find out whether or not the nomination will be carried forward to the next year. If not, find out what additional information is required. Don't be discouraged.