EDI in Research and Teaching Awards
GUIDE

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Guide: EDI in Research and Teaching Awards

Recognition for outstanding research and teaching is an important facet of an academic career yet is well-known for its lack of diversity, which reinforces existing opinions about academia and academic excellence. This brief guide summarizes practices that can be enacted by nominators, nominees, and selection committees to ensure we see and recognize excellence in its diverse forms.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE APPLICANT POOL

Inclusive messaging

Proactive and inclusive messaging can reduce barriers and help ensure a diverse applicant pool.

- ✓ Emphasize the value of EDI in internal calls and details the steps that will be taken to ensure these considerations are included in assessment processes.
- ✓ Time internal calls to avoid competing deadlines and to maximize time for nomination preparation.
- ✓ Use diverse images when promoting award opportunities to enable potential nominees to see themselves included

Gathering the pool of nominees

Scholars from equity-deserving groups (including but not limited to women, visible/racialized minorities, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ2S+) may be less likely to seek or accept award nominations. It is therefore necessary to ensure that EDI is considered early in the nomination process.

- ✓ Embed strong networks of mentors at the department and Faculty level to champion and provide visibility for candidates from equity-deserving groups.
- ✓ Work with individual nominees to build award plans that start at the early career stage and proactively plan to pursue increasingly prestigious awards as their career progresses.

Writing nominations

Preparing award nominations is a time-consuming process that can disadvantage academic staff members from equity-deserving groups, who often face additional service commitments.

- ✓ Reduce administrative burden by streamlining nomination processes and providing equitable supports.
- ✓ Keep nomination and reference letters professional: use formal titles, do not include irrelevant information, do not refer to private life and focus on scholarly accomplishments and contributions.
- ✓ Identify and create opportunities for alternate nomination pathways (such as oral submissions) as appropriate. While this may not be possible for all awards, accepting oral submissions creates more accessible pathways to awards for Indigenous scholars.
- ✓ Avoid "doubt raisers" (statements that question an applicant's aptness for an award) and "grindstone" adjectives (phrases that place emphasis on effort rather than accomplishment) in nomination materials.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN SELECTION METHODS

Selecting the Relevant Awards

Matching nominees with award opportunities can pose challenges to EDI. Prestigious awards and prizes are often named after pioneers in each field, and these individuals tend not to represent diverse populations. Elitist messaging may discourage members of equity-deserving groups from applying for these awards.

- ✓ Avoid using elitist terms to describe awards. Wording such as "demonstrated excellence" may encourage a more diverse applicant pool.
- ✓ When developing lists of awards to support or track, a broad, inclusive lens should be adopted that is focused on meaningful impact within a field and society.
- ✓ Adapt inclusive selection methods to the process of determining whether a given award is appropriate for an individual candidate or pool of candidates.

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Addressing Bias

Biases present systemic barriers to members of equity-deserving groups. Bias can exclude individuals with atypical career paths, those working in interdisciplinary areas, and those who have experienced career interruptions.

- ✓ All faculty members and staff engaged in awards nominations and processes should commit to continuous learning on bias and other EDI and Indigenous engagement considerations.
- ✓ Acknowledge the impact and influence of scholarship from multiple disciplinary perspectives and ways of knowing.
- ✓ Openly and clearly acknowledge the potential for bias in review processes in every committee meeting.
- ✓ Avoid overreliance on student evaluations in teaching awards, as these may contain biases that have the potential to harm members of equity-deserving groups. Student evaluations should be contextualized as measures of students' perceptions of their experience, as opposed to measures of teaching effectiveness.

Review Committees

Participating in an equitable and inclusive selection process is a collective and shared responsibility.

- ✓ Include members of equity-deserving groups on selection committees, recognizing that these groups are often underrepresented and may be disadvantaged by the composition of selection committees.
- ✓ Include a committee member (ideally the committee chair) who will act as the EDI champion to ensure EDI is considered in all aspects of the committee's work.
- ✓ Ensure everyone involved in review processes commits to and engages in ongoing education on issues related to EDI and Indigenous engagement.

Inclusive Selection Criteria and Methods

Broad and inclusive selection criteria can enhance the diversity of a nominee pool and help address systemic bias against equity-deserving groups who have historically been excluded because of overly narrow criteria.

- ✓ Establish clear and transparent selection criteria that recognizes different forms of scholarly activity and reflects the core principles of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment.
- ✓ Review and clarify selection criteria with selection committee members before reviewing nomination packages to ensure individual and collective understanding.
- ✓ Ensure that committee decisions and discussions link the evidence presented in the application or nomination packages to the defined selection criteria. Document selection and decision-making processes.
- ✓ Engage in broad discussions of achievements: Evaluate impact, significance and content of the work.
- ✓ Ensure the committee acknowledges the impact and influence of scholarship from multiple disciplines and ways of knowing.
- ✓ For teaching awards, encourage evaluating and documenting expertise and excellence from multiple sources, viewpoints and perspectives (e.g. critical self-reflection, student and peer assessments) using holistic methods, such as teaching dossiers.

Assessing Candidate Records

An essential element of award nomination and selection is assessing the candidate's record, but there are numerous barriers to the career progress of scholars from equity-deserving groups. Small but systemic effects based on gender and race (e.g., in manuscript and abstract acceptance rates, value of start-up funding and other grants, service loads, speaking invitations, and winning awards) can accumulate, resulting in large differences in CVs. This creates inequities in the ways nomination packages are assessed, both by internal committees and externally by agencies.

- ✓ Recognize that alternative career pathways, leaves, and career delays may affect research output and contributions to teaching and learning communities, cultures, and practices.
- ✓ Acknowledge the full range of research and teaching practices in different disciplines and ensure that individual scholars are assessed within their own disciplinary norms.
- ✓ Assess the content and quality of work and ensure undue focus is not given to individual measures of success such as citation data or student evaluations of teaching. Be aware that traditional metrics do not capture factors such as the impacts of some disciplines or types of research.

These recommended practices summarize the University of Calgary Pilot Plan for EDI in Research and Teaching Awards.
For full details and a list of references please visit ucalgary.ca/equity-diversity-inclusion/strategies-and-policies/awards-edi-plan