

National Awards Program for Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences

AWARDS GUIDELINES

Nomination Guidelines

Sponsored by USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture Division of Community and Education

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Section I. General Introduction and Purpose

To address the national priority of providing sufficient quality and quantity of graduates entering the food and agricultural sciences workforce, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), will offer—subject to the availability of funds—a National Awards Program for Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences (hereafter referred to in this document as the "Awards Program").

The Awards Program is offered annually to honor excellence in teaching by recognizing faculty from a college or university (as defined in this section) who both practice and promote effective and innovative teaching. Recipients must exhibit sustained, meritorious, and exceptional teaching at the postsecondary level within the food and agricultural sciences (as defined in this section). The Awards Program focuses national attention on the role of teaching in recruiting and retaining the scientific and professional expertise essential to the future growth and progress of our nation's food and agricultural system.

Authority

The National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (Public Law No.95- 113; 7 U.S.C. 3152), as amended, designates USDA as the lead federal agency for teaching, Extension, and research programs in the food and agricultural sciences. Section 1417(i)(1) of this law further authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a National Food and Agricultural Sciences Teaching Awards Program.

Definitions

For purposes of administering the Awards Program, the following definitions will apply:

- Award Categories—Annually, under the National Awards for Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences Program, awards will be made in the following three categories:
 - *Category 1*
 - **National:** A recipient selected from the pool of potential Regional Award recipients, from any of the four regions, and deemed by the review panel to exhibit sustained, meritorious, and exceptional teaching, and who has more than seven years of experience in higher education teaching as defined in this section. While a sustained pattern of exceptional activity is expected, this award does not recognize teaching longevity so much as it recognizes the quality of recent achievements. National recipients are also expected to demonstrate these attributes broadly within the academic community outside of the nominee’s home institution.
 - **Regional:** A teacher selected from any of the four regions, deemed by the review panel to exhibit sustained and meritorious teaching, and who has more than seven years of experience in higher education teaching, as defined in this section. While a sustained pattern of meritorious activity is expected, this award does not recognize teaching longevity so much as it recognizes the quality of recent achievements.
 - *Category 2*
 - **Early Career Teacher:** A teacher selected from any of the four regions, who has demonstrated a commitment to a career in teaching and is deemed by the review panel to exhibit meritorious teaching, but who, at the deadline for applications, has no more than seven years of experience in higher education teaching, as defined in this section. The “no more than seven years of experience” refers to time in a full-time faculty position and does not include teaching experience as a Teaching Assistant or Adjunct.
 - *Category 3*
 - **Teaching and Student Engagement:** A teacher selected from any of the four regions who has more than seven years of experience in higher education teaching, as defined by this section, and is deemed by the review panel to exhibit sustained and meritorious teaching and significant levels of student engagement in formal, non-formal, and outreach settings. This award is intended for individuals who have a very high teaching appointment (75% or more).

- College or university: An educational institution located within any of the four regions that: (1) admits as regular students only persons having a certificate of graduation from a school providing secondary education, or the recognized equivalent of such a certificate; (2) is legally authorized within such state to provide a program of education beyond secondary education; (3) provides an educational program for which a bachelor's degree or any other higher degree is awarded; (4) is a public or other nonprofit institution; and (5) is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association.
- Food and agricultural sciences: Denote teaching activities concerned with the production, processing, marketing, distribution, conservation, consumption, research, and development of food and agriculturally related products and services, inclusive of academic programs in agriculture, natural resources, forestry, veterinary medicine, human sciences, family and consumer sciences, and other closely allied fields.
- Teaching: Denotes activities to promote undergraduate or graduate student learning of the food and agricultural sciences. Includes various aspects of instruction and student support, such as: formal classroom activities; instruction via innovative delivery systems; student internships and study tours; course and instructional materials development; student advising and counseling; and scholarship related to teaching, including preparation of textbooks, instructional software programs, videos, and other publications of an instructional nature.
- Teacher: A faculty member at a college or university who holds a full-time appointment which reflects sustained and continuing responsibility for undergraduate and/or graduate teaching as determined by the college or university.
- Course: Instruction, inclusive of classroom, online, field, and laboratory settings, offered for academic credit and included in the official course catalog of a college or university, and for which assessments are conducted to evaluate student learning.
- Regions: The four regions of the United States, as defined for the purposes of this program are as follows:
 - *Northeast* (CT, DE, ME, MD, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT, WV, DC);
 - *North Central* (IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, WI);
 - *Southern* (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, PR, USVI);
 - *Western* (AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA, WY, and any Insular Area Institution designated as a college or university (i.e., offering a baccalaureate degree) within: Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.)

Section II. Program Description

Funding

Section 1417(i)(2) states the Secretary of Agriculture may use funds appropriated for the conduct of any agricultural research, extension, or teaching program for the purpose of conducting the Awards Program. USDA, through NIFA, will support management of the Awards Program (solicitation and evaluation of nominations), monetary and physical

awards, travel for two National and two Teaching and Student Engagement winners to participate in an awards ceremony, and preparation of certificates of merit. Institutions employing the Regional and Early Career Teacher award recipients will be expected to provide expense support for their travel to the national awards ceremony.

Eligibility

Teacher nominees must be employed by a college or university that: (1) confers a baccalaureate or higher degree in at least one area of the food and agricultural sciences (as defined in Section I) for which the teacher is nominated, (2) has demonstrated a commitment to the food and agricultural sciences, and (3) attributes a high priority to its education mission.

A teacher nominee must hold a full-time appointment as an active faculty member as of the nominee submission due date and have responsibility for higher education teaching in an area of the food and agricultural sciences.

Individuals who do not receive an award in any given year are eligible for re-nomination. However, a new nomination package must be submitted as nominations are not retained for reconsideration.

National Award recipients are not eligible for re-nomination for the Regional or National Award. Regional Award recipients may be re-nominated to receive the National Award. Such re-nomination may occur no sooner than three years following receipt of the Regional Award. Regional or National Award recipients may be nominated for the Teaching and Student Engagement Award no sooner than seven years following receipt of the Regional or National Award. Early Career Teacher Award recipients may be nominated to receive the Regional or National Award. Such re-nomination may occur no sooner than three years following receipt of the Early Career Teacher Award. Teaching and Student Engagement recipients may apply for a Regional or National Award no sooner than seven years following receipt of the Teaching and Student Engagement Award.

National, Regional, Early Career, Teaching and Student Engagement Awards

This Awards Program will recognize outstanding teachers at the National, Regional, Early Career, and Teaching and Student Engagement levels. A maximum of two \$5,000 National, two \$5,000 Teaching and Student Engagement, six \$2,000 Regional, and two \$2,000 Early Career Teacher awards will be made annually. These monetary awards will be disbursed to the recipient's college or university for the purpose of strengthening instructional programs in the food and agricultural sciences. Teachers honored through this competition will be asked to designate the unit(s) and institution(s) to receive their awards as well as the purpose for which such funds will be used.

One regional recipient will be selected from each of the four regions when a candidate of sufficient quality has been nominated. The balance of Regional Awards will be awarded at-large among the four regions. Early Career Teacher recipients may be from any region. The Teaching and Student Engagement recipients may be from any region.

Awards Program Schedule

The annual schedule for the Awards Program will be as follows:

Step in Process	Timeline
Request for Nominations	45 days prior to deadline
Electronic Nomination Submission Deadline	5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, April 15th this year
Merit Evaluation of Nominations	May-July
Notification	After merit review
National Awards Ceremony	In the fall/winter

Section III. Nomination Review and Evaluation Criteria

The *Awards Program* evaluation process includes both USDA internal staff review and an external, merit evaluation by a panel of experts. In any given year, the peer review panel may include a combination of university faculty and administrators, public school teachers or administrators, representatives from professional associations, and personnel from other federal agencies.

Reviewers follow strict rules governing conflict of interest.

Review Process

Nominees from each of the four regions will be evaluated first in competition with others from within the same region. Teachers deemed most meritorious in each of the four regions will then be placed in competition for the National Awards. Early Career Teacher Award category nominees will be evaluated separately from the Regional Award category nominees, using criteria specified for this award. Teaching and Student Engagement nominees will be evaluated separately from the Regional, National, and Early Career Teacher awards, using criteria specified for this award. The review panel reserves the right to make less than the maximum number of awards in each of the three Award Categories due to insufficient meritorious nominations.

Evaluation Criteria

Each nominee is required to complete and submit a nomination package as described in Section IV, below. The primary component of that package is a written response to each of the following six Evaluation Criteria. Responses should be organized by Evaluation Criterion number and include the bold-type criterion wording. Responses for Evaluation Criterion # 6, 'Endorsement by an Administrator, and Two Others, Who May Be Alumni, Current Students or Colleagues,' may be submitted via signed letters, on letterhead. **Note: Nominees are required to provide a first-person response to all Evaluation Criterion, except Criterion 6.** Recipients will be selected based on the following criteria and specific examples given to demonstrate impact within each criteria.

Evaluation Criteria	Weight for National, Regional, and Early Career Teacher Awards	Weight for Teaching and Student Engagement
<p>Criterion 1. Teaching Quality Assessment: The degree to which the nominee’s teaching quality is demonstrated through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. documenting their most recent (a minimum of 3 or a maximum of 5 years) teaching assignments, such as whether these courses are required courses, elective courses, general education courses, Ph.D. courses, etc. and how any related sciences courses are important to the food and agricultural sciences; 2. listing any teaching awards they may have received in the last 5 years; 3. providing two types of evidence of appraisal they obtain to help them improve their teaching. This can include any combination of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. peer or administrator evaluations of course materials, learning objectives, and examinations; b. in-class visitation by peers and/or administrators; c. exit interviews/surveys with current graduates/alumni; d. student evaluations of instruction (An example is provided in Section V for how to include them. Please include comparable department, college or university scores); e. evidence-based measurements of student learning that meet defined student learning outcomes. 4. including a self-reflection on how teaching appraisals are utilized to improve their teaching. 	25%	25%

<p>Criterion 2. Philosophy of Teaching and Evidence of How It Translates into Teaching Methodology:</p> <p>The degree to which the nominee articulates their approach to teaching by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) providing a Teaching Philosophy that includes efforts and commitment to inclusive teaching practices; b) discussing how this philosophy is incorporated into their teaching and providing specific examples of their teaching methodology; c) describing how their philosophy and practices have changed over time d) explaining how they incorporate new research or current knowledge in their disciplinary field and in pedagogy and/or public service engagement. <p>The degree to which the nominee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) articulates a cohesive, creative, organized and intentional philosophy which is foundational to her/his teaching; b) incorporates high impact practices that supports or partners with the institution’s diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and/or teaches/serves diverse student bodies; c) demonstrates how his/her research influences their teaching; and d) demonstrated efforts to improve teaching effectiveness through evidence-based teaching. In other words, what is the nominee’s philosophy of teaching, how did it develop, and how do they put it into practice? <p>For regional/national nominees and TSE nominees, how has their philosophy evolved over time? The nominee should describe the high-impact practices they utilize, such as hybrid or blended classrooms, flipped classrooms, case studies, problem-based learning, experiential learning, Socratic method, active learning, etc. The nominee should also describe efforts to make their classroom respectful, open, and inclusive, and how they support learning in all students.</p>	20%	20%
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<p>Criterion 3. Service to the Teaching Profession: The degree to which the nominee has contributed to the support of excellence in teaching through activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • either organizing or leading teaching improvement initiatives; • serving as a teaching mentor to other faculty, or to undergraduate or graduate student teaching assistants; • serving on committees related to teaching, curriculum or student success; • or otherwise contributing to the support of excellence in teaching at the K-12, college, departmental, university, regional, and national levels, including professional societies. <p>Include service activities related to teaching, curriculum, and student success, such as college or university committee activity or serving on national committees focused on teaching.</p>	15%	10%
<p>Criterion 4. Professional Development and Scholarly Activity: The degree to which the nominee’s professional competence in teaching is evidenced by continuing intellectual accomplishments and pursuits.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the nominee doing to improve their teaching? This may include such items as participating in teaching improvement workshops, serving as author or editor for textbooks or other activities that enhance the nominee’s understanding of the instructional content; or other teaching professional development activities. 2. What is the evidence of their teaching scholarship such as giving invited presentations; publishing peer-reviewed <i>teaching</i> research publications; conducting scholarship of teaching and learning; or participating in other teaching professional development activities? <p>An example has been provided in Section V. for demonstrating relevant <i>teaching</i> publications, teaching grants, and invited teaching presentations.</p>	15%	15%
<p>Criterion 5. Service to Students and Community: The degree to which the nominee has an exemplary record of contributing to student success through such activities as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • academic and career advising; • undergraduate research, mentoring, supervising; • internship supervision; • competitive team activities; • career exploration or placement; • advising of student associations (on campus, regionally or nationally); • recruitment; K-12, 4-H, or youth service, etc. 	15%	20%

<p>Criterion 6. Endorsement by Administrator, and two others, who may be Alumni, Current Students, or Colleagues: The degree to which statements substantiate the nominee's excellence in and dedication to the teaching role.</p> <p>Letters should convey special contributions that distinguish the nominee from other teachers, and to the extent possible, provide details not found elsewhere in the nomination packet. Include statements (preferably on signed letterhead) from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) an administrator of the college or department. This individual is also the nominator for this faculty member and should discuss how the nominee has made an impact on teaching and learning at the home institution. Responses should demonstrate how the nominee excels when compared to others within the department, college, and university. Further, for nominees whose fields are not within those designated as food and agricultural sciences as defined in these guidelines, please include how their teaching contributes to the education of students in the food and agricultural sciences. (b) a colleague (c) a former or current student. Student letters must identify the student's current relationship to the nominee and institution. For example, is the student currently a graduate student in the nominee's department? 	10%	10%
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Section IV. Nomination Preparation and Submission

All nominations must be submitted electronically, and arrive no later than 5:00 p.m., Eastern Daylight Time, on April 15th of this year.

Preparation

Determine institutional and teacher/nominee eligibility from Section I Definitions, and/or Section II Eligibility criteria, above. **Non-compliant nominations will not be accepted for review.**

Submit only the materials requested. All submitted documents should use Times New Roman 12-point (or equivalent) font, have 1-inch margins, and be single spaced. **Documents not adhering to this format will not be accepted for review.**

Nomination Submission

Submit each nomination to: TeachAward@usda.gov.

Paper copies of nominations, nominations submitted via fax, or submissions received after the posted deadline date, and time **will not be accepted for review**.

A submitted nomination must contain the following items in a single pdf:

1. NIFA-supplied Information Cover Page (page 1 of the Nomination Packet);
2. Personal Data Page (page 2 of the Nomination Packet);
3. Answers and supporting evidence for Criteria 2-5 (pages 3-9 of the Nomination Packet);
4. Endorsement and nomination letter from an Administrator (pages 10-11 of the Nomination Packet)
5. Two endorsement letters (single page each) from another source (alumnus or current student, and a colleague) (pages 12-13 of the Nomination Packet)

The PDF document should be named using the first initial and full last name of the nominee. For example, the PDF name for Dr. Jane Smith would be JSmith.

Nomination Acknowledgment

NIFA will attempt to acknowledge all email nominations received within two business days of receipt (excluding weekends and any Federal holiday). Therefore, it is the responsibility of the nominator to submit a nomination well ahead of the deadline to ensure it has been received in time for review. This NIFA acknowledgment of receipt of a nomination does not constitute a review of all attachments to ensure accuracy and completeness for panel evaluation. NIFA will submit for panel review only the first nomination received for an individual.

Section V. Examples of How to Present Supporting Documentation for Teaching, Awards and Recognitions, Publications, Grants, and Presentations

Example: Teaching Evaluation

Table 1: Student Teaching Evaluation Summary. Scale is 1-5 (poor - excellent) for "Overall assessment of instructor." Bold indicates candidate score is above departmental and college averages. Use N/A if score is not available.

Course	Sem/Yr	# Stud.	Req'd Yes/No	Candidate Average	Department Average, If Available	College Average, If Available
Principles of XYZ	FA24	55	Yes	5.11	4.58	4.46
Principles of XYZ	SP24	116	Yes	4.83	4.66	4.5
Principles of XYZ	SU24	31	Yes	5.11	4.81	4.51

Foundations of ABC	FA23	55	Yes	4.84	4.81	4.47
Foundations of ABC	SP23	81	Yes	4.88	4.88	4.81
Foundations of ABC	FA22	74	Yes	4.94	4.68	4.44
Developing LMNOP	FA24	45	No	4.83	4.67	4.31
Developing LMNOP	SP24	77	No	4.85	4.45	4.36
Study Abroad Q	SU23	68	No	4.75	4.66	4.57
Study Abroad Q	SU22	13	No	4.75	4.81	4.51
Practicum in Something	SP23	111	Yes	4.88	4.66	4.57
Practicum in Something	FA22	59	Yes	4.54	4.81	4.51

Example: Teaching Awards and Recognition

- Year, Advising Excellence Award, Any State University, The Best College Ever (College)
This honor is awarded to a faculty member in the College who demonstrates excellence in advising. It is determined by a committee of faculty and students.
- Year, Distinguished Teaching Award, Professional Association, (National) This award recognizes individuals whose efforts represent the very best in this discipline's higher education, is a criterion award, and applicants are reviewed by a committee of the association's members
- Year, Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Award, Any State University, (University)
This is State University's highest honor, which recognizes up to five recipients each year.
- Year, International Achievement Award, International Organization (International)
This award honors instructors who inspire excitement, inquiry, and promote global understanding.
- Year, Awesome Foundation Teaching Award, (University) This award recognizes faculty and staff at State University that develop innovative ideas, programs, and efforts and work to improve the University.
- Year, Distinguished Alumni Award, University of State, Incredible Department, (Department) Department faculty nominate alumni who have gone on to distinguish themselves in the discipline.

Example: Teaching Publications

- **Nominee Name.** Year. Teaching techniques to the new generation in this discipline. Year. *The Professional Society Journal*. Volume: pages.
- Other authors, **Nominee Name**, other author. Year. Doing something unique in the classroom. *The Professional Society Journal*. Volume: pages.
- **Nominee Name**, other authors. Year. Finding teachable moments. *The Professional Society Journal*. Volume: pages.

Example: Grant Funding to Support Instruction Innovation and Teaching Excellence

- Educational Program to Improve Innovation and Entrepreneurial Thinking in Discipline X. (Principal Investigator with Other Person, University of Y College of Z, Funded in Year by Federal Agency Grant Number - \$\$,\$\$\$)
- University of Y Underrepresented Students Program in Discipline Q. (Co-Principal Investigator with Other Person, University of Y, Funded in Year by the Federal Agency Program – \$\$\$,\$\$\$)
- Multi-Institutional Leadership Graduate Course. (Principal Investigator, with Other Person, Other University; Cool Award funded in Year by Private Foundation, \$\$,\$\$\$)

Example: Teaching Presentations

- Training Aids for Judging Panels. Year. University of State, Location.
- Innovative Techniques to Engage Students. Year. International Judging Coaches.
- Introduction to Judging and Benefits. Year. Other State University, Location.
- Syllabus Swap Session. Year. State University, Location.
- Interpretation of Teaching Evaluations. Year. University of Territory, Location.

View the Historical List of Award Program Recipients

Past recipients can be found in the “Related Documents” section of the National Awards for Excellence webpage: [National Awards for Excellence | NIFA \(usda.gov\)](https://www.nifa.usda.gov/nifa-awards-for-excellence)

Questions about the National Awards Program for Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences should be directed to:

TeachAward@usda.gov