

Honorifics Best Practices: A Quick Guide for Early to Mid-Career Faculty

Honorific awards are bestowed to acknowledge significant contributions to one's field, institution or professional society. In academia, honorifics may serve as gateways to new opportunities and career advancement. Just as good science leads to new research questions, honorifics build on themselves and the highest levels of scientific achievement reflect sustained excellence. This honorifics guide is targeted to early-to mid-career land-grant college faculty, but adoption of these strategies is appropriate for any university faculty, and at all career stages.

Start with your Institutional and Professional Databases

Honorifics typically start with campus or institutional awards that provide the building blocks to awards sponsored by professional societies and national organizations, and start with building faculty visibility.

- 1. Maintain an up-to-date webpage** or directory/expert listing including a professional portrait, an academic title, faculty rank, unit name, email contact, terminal degree, ORCID ID, social media handles and field of expertise.
- 2. Update your Google Scholar page**, verify email, and update profile and make the profile public. While no database captures every scholarly achievement, key elements including journal articles, citations, books, book chapters, federal grants, conference proceedings and awards.
- 3. Develop a LinkedIn profile** that contains the highlights of your Google Scholar page. It is a good place to share news and connect with other researchers.

Focus on your Instruction Mission

University faculty are expected to participate at some level in all three land-grant college mission areas including instruction, research, and Extension.

- 1. Serve** as the instructor of record, serving as a guest lecturer, or a graduate student mentor.
- 2. Investigate** other types of creative instructional opportunities afforded by virtual instruction and asynchronous delivery. Individuals without instruction appointments may fulfill this with guest lectures.
- 3. Participating** in undergraduate advising and graduate student committee service mentors provide other types of support to students who are navigating a college degree, such as international, first-generation, or other types of underserved students. Service on graduate student committees is a great way to explore new research areas.



Build your Research Mission

Basic and applied researchers should focus on journal publications as the primary currency of the trade; however, solid grantsmanship and presenting at professional meetings help build a legacy program.

- 1. Publish strategically:** Not every peer reviewed publication is equivalent. Early career faculty should pursue journal articles as opposed to book chapters or book editing. Metrics for measuring the cumulative impact, such as the h-index or Scholarly Research Index, aggregate productivity and impact across fields of expertise. Targeting journals with open access reprints is a good strategy to maximize citations. Publishing annual reviews and articles on trending or emerging topics tend to generate more citations over time.
- 2. Building diverse funding streams** is central to stable research enterprise. Institutional, industry, and commodity sponsors often provide seed money for generating preliminary data that can be leveraged into securing competitively awarded federal funds. Federal grants are the gold standard for academic research productivity, though funding from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can be equally effective.
- 3. Attend grant writing workshops** and collaborate with successful grant writers to develop organizational and effective writing skills, which are very different from writing scientific manuscripts. Serve on a proposal review panel to gain insights into quality proposals.
- 4. Present original data** at annual professional meetings to gain reputation. This exposure may lead to invitations for departmental seminars, which indicate a developing national reputation. Invited talks at industry summits and other types of more focused professional events bolster credibility.

Leverage your Extension Mission

State Cooperative Extension is about building relationships and trust with stakeholders including growers, agents, industry partners and regulators. Responsibilities vary, but always include some direct support to stakeholders through county meetings, agent training, workshops, or virtual presentations.

- 1. Being visible** to the stakeholder base is important in developing interpersonal relationships, so be in the field regularly.
- 2. Communicate!** Staying creative in outreach and programming is one of the hallmarks of a savvy program. Consider using blogs and social media profiles.
- 3.** In addition to annually updated publications like a pest management handbook, production guide or crop budget, regular newsletters and email communication keep stakeholders in tune with changing conditions. Outreach opportunities include smartphone apps, E-learning modules, videos, and field guides. Consider language translation to provide more stakeholders with quality decision support.
- 4. Produce scholarly works** include journal articles, numbered Extension publications, technical bulletins and book chapters. Including older Extension publications is a good way to maintain scholarly activity for new specialists.
- 5. Extension Specialists** frequently publish as a co-author with research colleagues. Rather than presenting hypothesis driven original research, peered reviewed Extension journals publish articles on pest and natural enemy profiles, emerging issues, case studies, surveys and needs assessments, successful educational applications, and scholarly opinions.

Institutional and Professional Service

Institutional (departmental, college and University) and professional service are required of all academic faculty, but those duties are secondary to primary instruction, research and Extension responsibilities. Service may include voluntary commitments of only a few hours to elected leadership that lasts more than one year.

- 1. Peer review** is a common form of professional service; scientists should expect that they will contribute two to three peer reviews for each manuscript they publish. In fact, academic journals survive on volunteer reviewers, subject editors, and editors, each with increasing responsibilities and potential to elevate professional standing.
- 2. Service on search committees** may lead to future roles including elected service on college or University committees. Contributing to shared governance is critical for maintaining independence in promotion and tenure, instructional freedoms, and institutional policy development.
- 3. Volunteering to moderate symposia**, adjudicating student paper competitions or organizing symposia are also great ways to meet new people and meet professional service expectations. Faculty tend to gravitate into roles where they are passionate about championing specific issues or catalyzing change.

Ensuring Access for All

Building and supporting an inclusive human ecosystem that facilitates access for all stakeholder populations is central to higher education. The concept of access for all goes well beyond race, ethnicity and gender and includes considerations such as geography, socioeconomic status, first generation students, disability status, religion, age, sexual orientation, viewpoint, and special talents. Robust candidate recruitment starts well before the position search with long term efforts to build candidate pools.

- 1. Embracing access** requires that all individuals recognize the unique needs and contributions of their team members.
- 2. Creating space** for all viewpoints is essential for all voices to be heard.
- 3. Mentoring and fostering** a sense of belonging with underrepresented populations will lead to stronger community engagement and representation.

Leadership

Leadership is loosely defined as the ability to guide a group of people to translate ideas into reality. Leaders can articulate a clear path, manage conflict, foster collaboration, establish attainable goals, maintain organization, and develop a positive rapport with peers and subordinates.

- 1. Work to build teams** with complementary expertise to solve difficult problems.
- 2. Take advanced leadership training** through continuing education courses, cooperative Extension, professional institutes, Food System Leadership Institute and LEAD21.
- 3. Mentoring** with a current administrator is highly advised for those seeking similar positions.

Preparing for Honorific Nominations

Honorific nominations and awards require planning, documentation, adherence to guidelines, and supporting nominators. Faculty should maintain an up-to-date curriculum vita throughout their career that includes all scholarly outputs to make the honorifics process easier for nominators and awardees alike.

- 1. Annual evaluations** are an excellent time to discuss goal setting, including potential awards, with supervisors and administrators who might serve as nominators.
- 2.** Begin with **institutional awards** that are available to early career faculty, and consider professional organizations that make annual awards for outstanding individuals of at all career stages.
- 3. Highly Prestigious and Prestigious Awards** (i.e., AAAS Fellows, National Academies of Science, World Agriculture Prize, World Food Prize, and Wolf Prize among others) recognize lifetime achievement. These awards also have very specific nomination criteria that require advanced planning to meet these rigid criteria.

*Honorifics Best Practices: A Quick Guide for Early to Mid-Career Faculty is a project of the Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors and the Southern Research Communicators Consortium.
Additional resources can be found at <https://saaesd.org/honorifics>.*

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