

OFFICE OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

**NSF CAREER PROGRAM and
CAREER ACADEMY OVERVIEW**

**Presenter: Jane Jacobi
October 23, 2023**



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AGENDA

1. ORD Team/Services

2. NSF CAREER Program

3. ORD CAREER Academy

4. Questions

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**The Office of Research
Development provides an array of
resources for researchers trying
to navigate the daunting grants
landscape**



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ORD SERVICES

- Proposal development and editing
- Finding collaborators
- Enhancing interdisciplinary collaboration
- Mentoring: Early career academies (NSF, NIH)
- Workshops (and archive)
- Proposal repository

<https://www.clemson.edu/research/division-of-research/offices/departments-ord/index.html>



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ORD SERVICES

- TigerSphere: <https://www.clemson.edu/research/division-of-research/offices/departments-ord/events/tigersphere/index.html>
- Assistance with finding external evaluators and reviewers
- Assistance with forming and managing teams
- Access to *Research Development & Grant Writing News* and *New Faculty Guide to Competing for Research Funding*
- R-Initiatives (Pilot funding, sponsor travel, external reviews, etc.)
- Limited Submissions
- Training in aspects of grant seeking



UPCOMING ORD TRAINING EVENTS

Finding Funding to Support Your Research

Nov. 6, 2023, 10:30 AM to 12 PM

Given the multitude of funding agencies and variety of proposal solicitations available to fund research, finding the right fit for your research can be a challenge. This workshop will provide advice and insight on navigating the research funding landscape so that you might find the best opportunities for funding your research

Register:

<https://www.clemson.edu/research/division-of-research/offices/departments-ord/events/index.html>



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UPCOMING ORD TRAINING EVENTS

Write Winning Grant Proposals

Jan. 5, 2024, 8 AM to 4:30 PM

This widely acclaimed seminar comprehensively addresses both practical and conceptual aspects that are important to the proposal-writing process. It emphasizes idea development, identification of the most appropriate granting agency, writing for reviewers, and tips and strategies that are of proven value in presenting an applicant's case to reviewers.

To participate: contact your ADR



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UPCOMING ORD TRAINING EVENTS

Grant Proposal Budgeting Basics

Feb. 2024

Preparing the budget for a grant proposal can be a challenging task, but it doesn't have to be! This workshop will provide helpful advice for preparing budgets and budget justifications during proposal development.

Register:

<https://www.clemson.edu/research/division-of-research/offices/department-ord/events/index.html>



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NSF CAREER PROGRAM

- CAREER awards are NSF's most prestigious awards in support of early-career faculty with **potential to serve as academic role models in research and education and to lead advances in the mission of their department or organization. Activities build a firm foundation for a lifetime of leadership in integrating education and research.**
- Number of awards: Approximately 3,000 applicants submit proposals in a “normal” year. COVID-era submissions have far exceeded historical numbers. Only 500 are funded/year.
- Due: July 24, 2024.
- www.nsf.gov/pubs/2022/nsf22586/nsf22586.pdf



CAREER ELIGIBILITY

A proposer must meet **all** of the following eligibility requirements **as of the annual deadline**:

- Hold a doctoral degree in a field supported by NSF
- Be engaged in research in an area of science, engineering, or education supported by NSF
- Hold at least a 50% tenure-track (or tenure-track-equivalent) position as an assistant professor (or equivalent title)
- Be untenured
- Cannot have received a CAREER award previously.



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CAREER PROPOSAL INTENT

The CAREER proposal is about **you and your development** as an academic researcher and educator over the next five years . . . and beyond.

Your CAREER proposal details how you will spend \$500,000+ of taxpayer money to **advance your discipline** (intellectual merit) and **increase the societal impact** of your work (broader impacts).

Thus, as a writer, you have a **dual intent**: to promote both personal and public agendas.



INITIAL STEPS

CAREER applicants have to wrestle with tough questions:

- What do I want to leave as my **legacy** as a researcher and an educator?
- What can I claim as my **niche**? What **unique contribution** do I dream of making to my department, my college, my institution, my discipline?
- If I accomplish my objectives, **what will be the benefit**? Will I be better off for the effort? Will the world be better off?



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NAVIGATING THE NSF MAZE

- Directorates, divisions, programs . . . Seems labyrinthine!
- To which NSF program should I submit my proposal?



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CONSULT THE NSF WEBSITE

- Drill down from directorates to divisions and then to programs.
- **Only “programs”** participate in the CAREER solicitation.
- Multiple programs may fund a single proposal.
- Search the NSF funding database for projects awarded by specific programs.
- Read a sample of project abstracts to see if you have found “your people.”

WHERE DOES MY RESEARCH FIT?

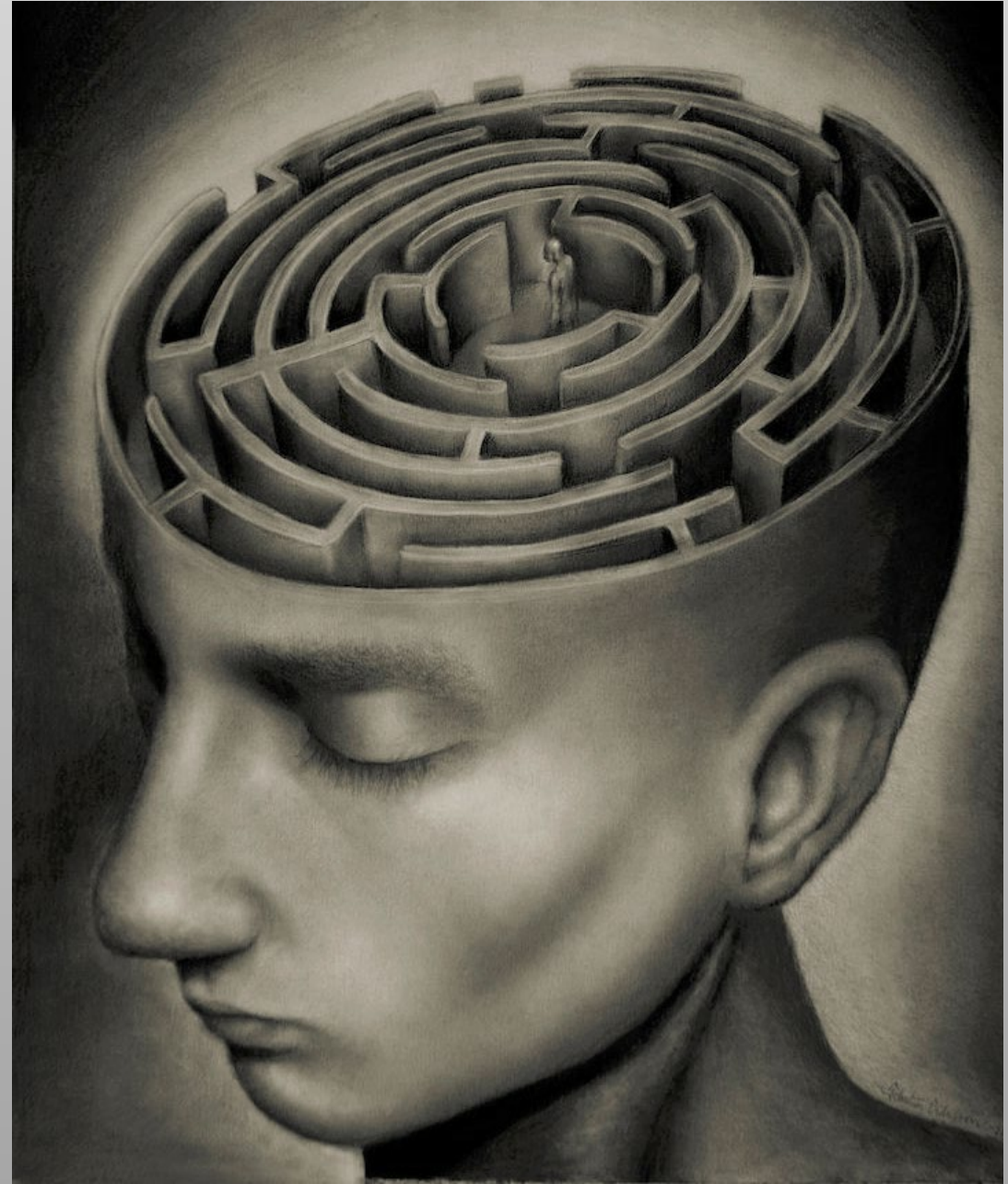
My research cuts across multiple programs . . .

It fits in between multiple programs . . .

It could fit in either program A or program B.

**Contact Program
Directors or division
contacts:**

**[http://www.nsf.gov/crssp
rgm/career/contacts.jsp](http://www.nsf.gov/crssp
rgm/career/contacts.jsp)**



APPROACHING PROGRAM DIRECTORS

Program directors' success is determined by the success of their programs and the corresponding communities. **You are a piece in the NSF reward system.**

They are highly motivated to support and expand the community by **encouraging and mentoring the next generation of thought leaders.**

Program directors are (usually) nice people who have your best interests in mind. **Don't hesitate to reach out to them.**

Request feedback on a 1- to 2-page document.



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READINESS TO SUBMIT

What **factors should I weigh** in deciding to submit an NSF CAREER proposal instead of another type of proposal?

Issues: Enough time

Number of NSF months already committed

Networks/contacts sufficient to facilitate education and outreach activities

Availability of students and collaborators

Amount of the award vs NSF expectations of effort



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READINESS TO SUBMIT

Is it the right time in my career arc to submit?

Options:

- Get the CAREER award as early as possible to help bootstrap your research and education program
- Hold onto your first of three shots until you know what you're doing
- Write multiple 1-pagers and get feedback and guidance from ADRs, mentors, Program Directors, ORD.

WINNING

- Present an idea matching an NSF program interest AND prove it is **innovative**.
- Tackle a **timely** problem with potential for significant broader impact (departmental, institutional, cross-disciplinary, societal).
- Lay out a **logical, realistic plan** for accomplishing the work in the five-year time span. Partner with others as necessary to achieve desired outcomes and minimize risk.
- Find a way to **integrate** education plan with research plan.
- Include an **evaluation** mechanism.
- Prioritize audience needs and **engage** readers.



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WINNING

- Convince the readers that you have the **potential to serve as an academic role model** in research and education.
- Demonstrate to the reviewers that you are **well-positioned to lead advances** in the mission of your department, organization, and discipline.
- Prove to the panel that faith in you will **rewarding**
- Prove to the panel that the funding you seek will build a **foundation for a lifetime** of leadership in integrating education and research.



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LOSING

What things will kill a proposal?

- Lack of **unique approach** to research and education
- Focus on **applied** rather than fundamental science
- Unclear **methods/insufficient citations** in research or education plan
- A missing or lukewarm **department chair letter** (“damning with faint praise”)
- A **badly written budget or budget justification** (regulations are not followed, costs are not warranted, no funding for education or outreach activities listed in proposal)
- Grounds for being **returned without review** (plagiarism, formatting, use of “et al.” in the references list, omission of Broader Impacts section in project description, calling that section “Broader Impact,” etc.)

FAQs FROM ORD ACADEMY PARTICIPANTS

What is the funding record for CAREER awards across different directorates/programs? Trends for CAREER follow general funding patterns in directorates and programs; see <https://dellweb.bfa.nsf.gov/awdfr3/default.asp>

Does having or not having other NSF funding affect my chances of winning a CAREER award? No.

What is the average amount of funding? \$350,000 to \$750,000 for 5 years. Can go over \$1 million!

Will reviewers expect to see (published) preliminary data? Depends on the program. Ask the Program Director.



FAQs FROM ORD ACADEMY PARTICIPANTS

How important is it to have previous publications on the proposed topic?

Peer-reviewed publications are a plus, but I have never seen CAREER reviews explicitly calling out an early-career writer for not having them.

How critical is socializing your proposal (or general ideas) ahead of time with PDs and the community? I think this is a must. To some extent you have to “work the crowd.”

Does the CAREER program welcome high-risk research topics? Yes, as long as you have a risk management plan. They want to feel that their investment will be protected.

Will the grant pay for equipment? Yes. Not major equipment, though.



FAQs FROM ORD ACADEMY PARTICIPANTS

What constitute “tie breakers” between multiple good proposals?

Excellent evaluation plan, a theory guiding the education plan, sufficient citations in the education section, sound integration of research and education, serious attention to stakeholders and broader impacts. Innovative and evidence-based outreach.

Do the prior work and credentials of the proposal writer play into whether the proposal finds success? Yes for prior work, no for credentials if by that is meant academic pedigree.

Can I have collaborators? Yes. You just cannot have co-PIs. Collaborators can be allocated funds in the budget.



FAQs FROM ORD ACADEMY PARTICIPANTS

May I submit a CAREER proposal and another proposal on a different topic to NSF in the same year? Yes, but only if the research is substantially different. If you are planning to submit a CAREER proposal and another proposal to the same NSF program, please contact the Program Director to discuss your individual case.

Will the grant pay for students or postdocs? Yes. Woohoo!



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CAREER ACADEMY 2024

- Our CAREER Academy is **designed to help you win.** Academy participants have a higher rate of success than do non-participants.
- Academy participants learn strategies relevant not only for the CAREER proposal but for **all proposals.**
- Two tracks: **Track 1**, for faculty who have not previously submitted to the CAREER program; **Track 2**, for faculty who have previously submitted a CAREER proposal or are Academy returnees. There is no limit on the number of times you can participate in the Academy.



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CAREER ACADEMY 2023

- **Application window will open November 1 and close December 1.** Look for an email and a link on our webpage!
- Notification of acceptance: **December 8.**
- Runs from **January through July.** Comprises presentations, group activities, peer reviews, individual consultations, heavy-duty editing. We have contact of some sort every week.
- In January, individual Zoom conferences with accepted participants will be held to gauge readiness and tailor materials.
- All workshop sessions will be held over Zoom and will be recorded.



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CAREER ACADEMY 2023

Special benefits for Academy participants:

- Privileged access to ORD editors after the Academy for other types of proposals, regardless of dollar value. **We invest in your potential over the long term.**
- Potential to receive feedback on CAREER proposal from **outside reviewers** with subject-matter expertise (limited number of slots available, depending on VPR budget).
- Debriefing to go over panel reviews and **plan follow-up strategy.**
- Structured **networking** with other early-career faculty. Benefit from others' expertise. Make friends!



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Questions?

Thank you for coming!

Contact me: jacobij@clermson.edu



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