

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

DISTINGUISHED MCKNIGHT UNIVERSITY PROFESSORSHIPS *for* 2010 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND NOMINATING INSTRUCTIONS

Nomination Deadline: February 1, 2010

This is to announce the annual competition for the **Distinguished McKnight University Professorships**, a program of awards for prominent mid-career faculty. The recipients named to this endowed professorship will begin their appointments July 1, 2010.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Purpose — The purpose of the program is to honor and reward our most distinguished and highest-achieving mid-career faculty who have recently attained full professor status — especially those who have made significant advances in their careers at the University, whose work and reputation are identified with the University of Minnesota, and whose accomplishments have brought great renown and prestige to Minnesota. While distinction in individual research or scholarly work is required, the award may also recognize leadership within research teams and collaborative or interdisciplinary efforts.

The Award — Recipients are honored with the title *Distinguished McKnight University Professor*, which they hold for as long as they remain at the University of Minnesota. The grant associated with the Professorship consists of \$100,000 over five years to be used, in accordance with University policy, for research, scholarly, or artistic activities, and expended at the recipient's discretion. Appropriate uses include research equipment and supplies, support for research assistants, professional travel, publication costs, sabbatical leave salary, and two months' summer salary for those on nine-month appointments.

Recipients will be required to remain at the University for the full five years, plus one additional year, or repay in full the expended value of the Professorship for the immediately preceding two fiscal years. Any such repayment should not come from funds administered by the University or its foundations.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility is limited to tenured faculty who have made significant advances in their careers at the University of Minnesota—especially those whose careers have developed and flourished at the University—and who have been promoted to full professor within the past seven years, i.e., in 2002 or later. A faculty member promoted to full professor more than seven years ago may be considered, as an exception, if a strong case can be made that the faculty member was promoted unusually early and quickly through the ranks. If nominating someone promoted earlier than 2002, the nominator must confirm, in a separate paragraph, that the nominee is regarded as “mid-career” in all respects, by carefully and convincingly describing the individual's career trajectory in the context of the discipline's convention for mid-career status. Re-nominations are welcomed, and even encouraged, for faculty members who remain eligible.

THE NOMINATION

A faculty member must be nominated by his/her academic home department; each department may nominate one faculty member. Many departments have a standing faculty awards committee in place whose purpose is to promote the excellence of their faculty colleagues by selecting nominees for internal and external honors and awards. For departments that have such an awards committee, the nomination may come from the committee chair; otherwise, it should come from the department head or chair.

The nominating letter and the supporting letters, which are weighed carefully by the selection committee, must be persuasive in conveying to reviewers the nature and importance of the intellectual underpinnings of the nominee's scholarship that have led to an outstanding reputation.

The nomination dossier will consist of the following six sections, in this order:

1. ***A letter from the nominator.*** Ultimately, the letter must answer the question 'What is the nominee's seminal contribution and how is it important?' and it should establish that the nominee's significant career advances have been made while at the University of Minnesota. It should not quote extensively from letters of recommendation.

The nominator's letter, of no more than five pages, should first briefly describe the process by which the nominee was chosen. Second, it should chronicle the nominee's academic career path with a summary of promotion dates from assistant to associate to full professor (with an explanation if the promotion date to full professor exceeds seven years as described under 'Eligibility'). It should then substantiate the nominee's international standing through a concise account of the following:

- * The nominee's accomplishments in research, scholarly, or creative/artistic activity, including a description of unique theories, discoveries, inventions, or creative products that have brought renown to the University of Minnesota.
- * The nominee's reputation and its impact, described in the context of the size of the field or subfield, with external confirmation of impact (e.g. citation indices).
- * The potential for future accomplishments/breakthroughs.
- * Comment, in context, on the quality of the journals in which the nominee has published, along with a description of the field's convention for publication authorship (e.g. authors listed alphabetically, primary author listed first).
- * The nominee's leadership in any research team efforts or collaborative work —
For a nominee who is part of a larger research team, or whose work is highly collaborative, the letter must describe these efforts, including co-authorship, so that the unique contribution of the individual to the research or scholarship comes through clearly.
- * The nominee's distinguishing contributions to teaching and advising at the graduate and/or undergraduate level (a list of graduated students, with thesis titles, should be included if appropriate, along with their current affiliations; postdocs should also be listed).
- * A description of contributions to the wider community — i.e., within the University, within the profession, and in the larger public setting.

A layman's research title of up to 15 words, followed by a 100-word layman's summary that describes the essence of the nominee's achievements and reputation — see, as an example, the summary description of current recipients' work.

Note: Please also e-mail the title and 100-word summary, at the deadline, to: gsfellow@umn.edu. The subject line should read: "Distinguished McKnight Summary for [name, department]". The message should include only the title and 100-word summary.

2. ***The nominee's curriculum vitae with the most important publications or scholarly works highlighted.***
3. ***A complete list of current and pending grants, internal as well as external,*** including sources of funds, amounts, and inclusive dates of awards. Be certain the list includes a description of the nominee's role on each grant, such as first PI or co-PI.
4. ***Brief background information on each of the recommenders*** to give context to their letters.
5. **Up to six letters of recommendation** from individuals who can provide an objective evaluation of the nominee's prominence in the field. Although internal letters are permissible, generally speaking external letters are more persuasive. ***Also, it is not advisable to seek letters from co-authors, close colleagues, research collaborators, former advisers, or students, who may not be seen as providing the essential objectivity.*** Recommenders should be apprised of the all-University nature of the award. They should be informed that the selection committee is composed of prominent faculty members drawn from across the University, not the nominee's field, so that they grasp the importance of describing the nominee's merit in non-specialized terms. Recommenders should also be asked to speak to the individual's contributions in cases where the research is highly collaborative.

REVIEW AND SELECTION CRITERIA

While distinction in individual scholarly work is required, the award may also recognize leadership associated with research teams, collaborative efforts, or interdisciplinary work. The nominations will be reviewed by a committee composed of distinguished faculty from across the University, which will select recipients based on the following:

- * The merit and impact of the nominee's scholarly or creative achievements;
- * the level of distinction and prestige that the nominee's scholarly work brings to the University;
- * the dimension of the nominee's international reputation;
- * the nominee's potential for future contributions/breakthroughs;
- * the extent to which the nominee's career has flourished at Minnesota and the extent to which the nominee's work and reputation are identified with Minnesota;
- * the quality of the nominee's teaching and advising; and
- * the contributions to the wider community.

DEADLINE AND NOTIFICATION

The nomination, *in fifteen sets*, should be addressed and transmitted as follows, by **February 1, 2010**:

**Distinguished McKnight University Professorship Program
Office of the Vice President for Research, University of Minnesota
314 Johnston Hall—East Bank Campus
101 Pleasant Street S.E.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455**

Nominators will be notified of the outcome by late March 2010.

CHECKLIST FOR THE NOMINATOR

[This checklist is not to be submitted with the nomination materials; rather, it is intended solely to assist the nominator in ensuring that essential points in the nominating instructions have been addressed.

The nominating letter must be persuasive in conveying to reviewers the nature and importance of the intellectual underpinnings of the nominee's scholarship. The letter conveys the following:

- π A thorough description/confirmation of eligibility, if the nominee was promoted to full professor before 2002.
- π The nominee's seminal contribution to the field and its importance.
- π A discussion of the impact of the nominee's international reputation, and how this reflects on the University, including external confirmation of high impact (e.g. citation indices).
- π The nominee's standing in the field or subfield, along with the size of the field (i.e., is the nominee one of the top three in the world in a large group, or is he/she a very large fish in a very small pond?)
- π The nominee's role in collaborative efforts, so that the unique contribution of the individual effort comes through clearly; and any leadership role the nominee has had in a research team or interdisciplinary context.
- π The quality of the journals in which the nominee has published, along with a description of the discipline's convention for listing journal authorship (e.g., authors alphabetical, primary author first, etc.).
- π The nominee's distinguished contributions to teaching and advising, and to the profession and the wider community. The nominee's graduated students are listed, along with their thesis titles, and their current affiliations; the nominee's postdocs are also included (if applicable).
- π The nominee's potential for future accomplishments/breakthroughs.

And, finally:

- π The nominating letter avoids quoting extensively from recommenders' letters (reviewers prefer not to read the same information *verbatim* twice).

The selection of individuals asked to write letters of recommendation is crucial. They must be seen to be authoritative, but objective. The nominator should ensure the following:

- π The six recommenders are able to provide an objective evaluation (i.e., they are not the nominee's co-authors, former advisers, or close colleagues or collaborators) and the nominating information about them persuasively makes the case that they can speak authoritatively and objectively.
- π Recommenders have been informed that the competition for this award is all-University in nature, so that they know to write in non-specialized terms for an academic lay audience.
- π Recommenders have been informed that reviewers of the nominations are prominent faculty drawn from across the University, not the nominee's field.

The research summary and the curriculum vitae:

- π A descriptive title, plus a 100-word layman's summary that captures the essence of the nominee's achievements and reputation, is included; this information has also been e-mailed at the deadline.
 - π The nominee's most important publications or scholarly works have been highlighted on the nominee's c.v.
 - π A complete list of grant awards (with sources, amounts, and inclusive dates) is included.
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