

Advice for Award Winners

Celebrate, enjoy the fuss and the sensation of success for a few days. Thank your colleagues and students for supporting your nomination, and then brace yourself for pressure. Everyone now expects you to be a stellar performer. However, great teaching is not reducible to stand-up comedy and the gift of the gab. Great teachers inspire learning, link research and teaching, and respect and support students and it is worth thinking about what you might do to further those aims.

Be prepared for disappointment. Other academics may not know about your award, may not care or may be envious. Remarkably, some may think less of you as a result of the award, perhaps suggesting that recognising, rewarding and celebrating teaching is a misguided pursuit. Whatever the reasons, their silence or, even worse, their barbed comments can be hurtful. Steel yourself for these possibilities, rise above any pettiness, and don't let the negativity of others undermine your achievements. And be aware that there are people out there who really do value your work, appreciate your effort, and want you to share your talents with them.

You may need to allow yourself some time to get used to having a higher profile. A teaching award may shoot you out of your comfort zone and offer new possibilities. It's fine to feel off balance, and even a little anxious, for a while: but we would encourage you to **grab your opportunities** with both hands.

Manage upwards. Your supervisor, executive dean and vice-chancellor might be excited by your success but may not have thought strategically about what you might do next. Help them identify what would and what would not be good for you, your faculty and your institution. For example, what presentations do they want you to do, to whom, and why? Are there any leadership roles in the faculty, university or more broadly

that you might be able to take on? Which requests are your supervisors happy for you to refuse?

Beware becoming your institution's 'show teacher', trotted out on special occasions to demonstrate the 'institution's commitment to teaching excellence'. Repeated focus on the work and achievements of an individual or small group of people may be counter-productive. Just imagine the annoyance and frustration of long-serving and highly effective colleagues. They may not have received awards and perhaps quite justifiably feel that their sterling work is being overlooked and undervalued. And in such cases you may well find that it is you who is the focus of those frustrations, not the institution.

Rattle some door knobs. No-one really knows what a teaching award allows you to do. Identify some of the things that interest you and try using the award as the opening. Look beyond your traditional hunting grounds – outside your discipline, institution and geographical location. Think of some of the ways skills you have demonstrated so clearly in teaching might be transferred to other fields. Sometimes, when you look for an opening, you'll get a polite no. Sometimes, you'll be ignored. Sometimes, you'll be met with tail-wagging, face-licking enthusiasm. Try to look for activities that might support any longer-term ambitions you have for service, management and research as well as teaching.

Plan your next promotion application with the teaching award as one of the jewels in your crown. Your organisation will have stated, all over its strategic plans, that teaching excellence (or similar) is one of its core objectives. Encourage promotion committees to prove it.

Prepare to defend your research track record. One of us was warned that a teaching award represented the end of his



career as he would either be seen as a non-researcher or would inevitably head in that direction. In the simple everyday categorisations many people make of one another's academic roles and activities, it is possible that you'll be seen as a teacher first and foremost. So, take care to manage your academic identity to create the impression you want or need. If it is important to you, protect your research interests and find ways to keep going. Consider whether new areas of research may open up for you around the teaching-research nexus. Make the teaching award work for you, not against you, in all areas of your professional life.

Encourage and support your colleagues.

What are the chances that you really are the best teacher in your institution? Offer to review applications for your institution – you will probably be asked to do so anyway. Nothing takes pressure off you faster than having colleagues in your discipline or institution emulating your success. Build networks with other award winning teachers, both within and beyond your own organisation, and consider what you can do to extend best practice, support the wider teaching community, and develop teaching-research groups.

Learn to say no, with grace. You might find yourself approached incessantly – and with little regard for your other commitments – to review applications, participate in learning and teaching focus groups, lead professional development sessions... Manage your workload, or ask your supervisor to help you with this. Not every offer is a good offer. There are some things you will be asked to do that no-one else would agree to. There may be good reasons for their lack of interest. If you might agree to invitations under particular conditions, state them. Ask yourself what's in it for you, and for your institution. Consider whether there's any particular reason why you are the right person for this, and if there isn't, perhaps say no or deflect the request to colleagues who might be looking for such an opportunity. You're a busy person.

Enjoy. Hold the award lightly, don't take yourself too seriously, let your professional life open up, grab opportunities, speak to new issues, challenge institutional poor practice, take risks, see where serendipity leads you – celebrate others' successes, toast the award winners who come after you, be a mentor, and above all have some fun. You've earned it.

