

**Office of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Research
CHANCELLOR'S DISTINGUISHED RESEARCH AWARD
2026 Guidelines**

The Award

The Chancellor's Distinguished Research Award annually recognizes outstanding scholarly accomplishments of members of the University of Pittsburgh's faculty. The committee will at its discretion make up to six awards, with three at each of the two career stages.

- **Senior Scholar Awardees** will have compiled a substantial and continuing record of outstanding research and scholarly activity. Nominees must have achieved preeminence in their field and be of international reputation, as evidenced in letters of support from national and international leaders in the field. **Referees cannot be mentors or current colleagues of the nominees.**
- **Junior Scholar Awardees** will have demonstrated great potential as scholars as evidenced by the exceptional quality of their independent contributions and will have achieved national or international recognition. Candidates for this award are required to have received their highest degree **no more than 12 years before** the time of nomination.

Nominations will be considered within three broad categories:

- **Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Related Professions**
- **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics**
- **Medicine and Health Sciences**

Each awardee will receive an award of \$2,000, and a grant of \$3,000 to support their teaching and research. Everyone selected for this award will be honored publicly.

Eligibility

Any tenured or tenure-stream, full-time faculty member who has served at least three years at the University of Pittsburgh is eligible to be nominated for a Chancellor's Distinguished Research Award. Junior Scholar Awardees may be nominated for the Senior Scholar Award, but Senior Scholar Awardees may not be nominated for a second Senior Scholar Award. Individuals may be nominated no more than three times in a five-year period.

Nominations

Any group of three or more faculty members may submit a nomination at upitt.infoready4.com. **Completed nominations are due by Friday October 10th**

You will be required to submit the following information through InfoReady:

- Short narrative on the nature and significance of the nominee's research achievements and contributions. This must be written in plain English for a general audience. Avoid technical jargon, and where appropriate, explain the broader context of the contributions to highlight its significance. (200-word max)
- Description of nominator's relationship to the nominee (300-words max)
- Internal letter of nomination (2-page max). Please note that the internal letter of nomination must have multiple signatories.
- Bio of nominee (1-page max)
- Biosketch **OR** CV (optional) of the nominee
- Media blurb/citation (20-words max). If the nomination is successful, this is the citation that would accompany the awardee's photo on the Pitt website and in media releases.
- **Referees:** Names, brief 50-word professional descriptions, and current electronic addresses of three (minimum) to five (maximum) referees who will be asked for letters of reference. Please note that at least three references must be external. Only those UPMC staff without a Pitt affiliation may be considered external. Relevant professional relationships with the nominee must be disclosed but referees normally should not be graduate or post-doctoral mentors. For more information on references, please see FAQ section below.

For questions about nominations, you may contact to reach the Office of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Research.

Nominations from a previous year may be reactivated through InfoReady. Renomination will require re-entry of elements from the list above, but a case marked as a renomination does not require new references. Individuals submitting a renomination are asked to include a listing of recent accomplishments by the nominee since the last nomination. Instructions on the nomination site will allow references from the prior year to be reposted. A biosketch may be submitted, and a fresh internal letter of support can be uploaded that covers recent accomplishments (2-page max).

Note that while nominations from a prior year are welcome, a reactivation rather than a thorough revision of the packet might not make as strong an impression on the review/awards committee.

Awards Committee

The interdisciplinary Awards Committee is appointed and chaired by the Senior Vice Chancellor for Research (non-voting). It consists of faculty with outstanding research records from across the full spectrum of scholarship at the University.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What should I title my nomination?

- Please enter the nominee's name (last, first) along with "CDRA – Research 2026" as the title of the nomination. For example: "Doe, Jane CDRA – Research 2026"

Do I request the reference letters from the referees?

- **No. The Office of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Research will solicit the reference letters.** We will track responses as they are received and will send reminders to the referees at appropriate points.

Can I get more information on what is required for short answer questions 1 – 3?

- Short Answer Question 1
 - Present a succinct narrative summary of the research achievements of the nominee that warrant recognition through the Chancellor's Distinguished Research Award. The summary must be persuasive to colleagues outside the candidate's field (200-word max).
- Short Answer Question 2
 - Briefly detail your professional relationship to the nominee (300-word max).
- Short Answer Question 3 (For Renominations Only)
 - Please list accomplishments since the last nomination, and show they strengthen the case for recognition through the Chancellor's Distinguished Research Award. Reference letters from last year will remain valid, but if you would like us to invite referees to refresh their letters please make that request at the end of the answer you provide (1000-word max).

What does an impactful nomination package look like?

- Our tips very closely align with NSF's recommendations for the [Waterman Award](#). These tips apply to both the CDRA senior and junior nominees.
- Describe what makes the nominee exceptional in terms of impact. The Awards Committee has consistently found mere metrics, such as publications, citations, or total

sponsored project funding, intended as proxies or shorthand for impact less than compelling. Concrete examples of a nominee's scholarly contributions accompanied by descriptions of how that contribution had impact – whether in their field or outside of academia – makes for a compelling case. Traditional metrics of scholarly production can be important elements of a nomination letter, but metrics without context are not sufficient.

- In plain language, explain the nominee's research to a generalist academic audience. Explanations should be clear, easy to follow, free of technical jargon, and comprehensible by scholars in very different fields than that of the nominee.
- **NOTE:** the CDRA Awards Committee is composed of faculty from across the full spectrum Pitt scholars, and may include artists, humanists, scientists, clinicians, and members of the professions. All members of the committee vote on all six awards categories, so a successful nomination needs to convince the full range of disciplinary experts that your nominee is worthy of this award.
- **NOTE:** Strong references will be from diverse institutions and roles, to provide a more complete picture of the nominee.
- References should complement the nomination and provide specific examples. They should not duplicate information already provided in the nomination.
- Who is considered an external referee? Can this include referees that are within Pitt, but are external to the nominee's School or Department?
- No, external referees must not have a current University of Pittsburgh affiliation.
- **NOTE:** For dually appointed Pitt/UPMC faculty, a UPMC appointment is still considered internal. Only those UPMC staff without a Pitt affiliation may be considered external.

Can I renominate a faculty member using the same nomination package from a previous year?

- Yes. Nominations from a previous year may be reactivated through InfoReady. Please see above for additional details.
- **NOTE:** While nominations from a prior year are welcome, a reactivation with no changes, as opposed to a thorough revision of the packet, might not make as strong an impression on the awards committee.

I am renominating a faculty member. Do I have to fill out the text entry short answer questions under "Details", or can I skip to question 3?

- Whether you are nominating or renominating a faculty member, questions 1 and 2 are required fields on the nomination. Your nomination cannot be submitted unless they have been answered.

I am renominating a faculty member. What information do I place in the short answer sections?

- You can reenter answers to question 1 and question 2 from the nominee's original nomination into the text boxes for the corresponding questions in this nomination. The only new information you need to provide is in response to question 3. This is where you will state how your nominee has added to his/her research achievements or recognition since the last nomination. If you would like a copy of the nomination packet you submitted for a previous nomination cycle, please contact research@pitt.edu.

How may the monetary awards be used?

- Each Chancellor's Distinguished Award will consist of a cash prize to the faculty member of \$2,000 and a grant of \$3,000 to support the faculty member's research activities.
- The appropriate use of the \$3,000 grant, which is considered a Research Allocation, is outlined in the [Research Allocations Policy RI 06](#):
 - "Research allocation funds are to be used for cost sharing for proposals, start-up costs for both current and new faculty, repair and minor renovation of research facilities, purchase of major research equipment, and closely related research expenditures. They are also intended as seed money and to improve our competitive position in attracting sponsored research projects. Some instructional support like research experience for undergraduates shall be permitted. These funds may be used for the support of graduate students, shops, technicians, etc., to the extent that such use demonstrably improves the present research environment and furthers the research mission of the School. They may not be used for salaries of tenured and tenure-stream faculty, administrative support, or to substitute for support traditionally granted from the base budget."