



2023 Breakthrough Stars Guidelines and Criteria

Rationale

Each spring, the Office of the Vice President for Research names selected faculty as Breakthrough Stars. These awards recognize a small group of peer nominated and reviewed faculty members from the Columbia, Comprehensive, and Palmetto College campuses. These faculty members exceed expectations in their fields, demonstrate exceptional potential, and have made outstanding contributions to research and scholarship during a short time at USC. The Breakthrough Star Award recognizes faculty for these achievements and celebrates their contributions to the University of South Carolina.

Award Description

The recipients of this non-cash award are featured in a supplement to Breakthrough magazine, and are featured throughout the year in other mediums. Additionally, they are invited to attend the annual Breakthrough Awards Dinner, held each spring. The award raises awareness of the importance of commitment to research and scholarship amongst junior faculty. Breakthrough magazine and its supplement are widely distributed to all faculty and administration, peer institutions, program managers, legislative representatives, and selected alumni and donors.

Award Review Criteria

The Breakthrough Awards Committee will evaluate the nomination materials based on the strength of evidence for the following criteria.

- The nominee should significantly exceed expectations in their field. An effort should be made to define baseline expectations.
- The nominee should have already demonstrated output of very high quality, and a national/international reputation is clearly possible, if not likely.
- Nominees may have a track record from previous work experience, but there should be significant evidence of continued excellence since coming to USC.
- Breakthrough Star nominees' accomplishments cited in the nomination materials should be drawn from their time at USC. Past awards from previous institutions will not be considered.

Nomination materials should provide evidence through reference to professional standards that are applicable to the nominee's field. Evidence should be drawn from the nominee's time at USC. Suggested examples include, but are not limited to: H-Index, publications in high impact journals, book chapters or other significant publications, competitive society memberships, strong record of extramural funding, juried exhibitions, etc. Wherever possible, an effort should be made to contextualize the significance of the presented evidence.

Eligibility

- Tenure track assistant professors employed within the USC system for a minimum of three years at the time of nomination (including current semester).
- **Within three years of promotion, tenured associate professors who have been promoted from assistant professor within the USC system.**
- Recruited tenure and tenure track associate professors employed within the USC system for a **minimum of three years, but not more than five years at the time of nomination (including current semester).**

- Past nominees who were not selected in previous years are eligible for re-nomination.
- Past recipients of the award are not eligible.
- Members of the Breakthrough Awards Committee are not eligible to be nominated.
- A nomination may be submitted by any faculty member, chair, dean, associate dean for research, or chancellor – but a faculty member may not nominate themselves.

With prior approval from the Vice President for Research, certain eligibility criteria may be waived in unusual circumstances.

Nomination Procedures

Nominations for the Breakthrough Stars award are submitted online through a nomination system based on USC's sponsored awards proposal routing system USCeRA, a familiar interface for most USC faculty members. The nomination submission system is available at vprinitatives.research.sc.edu. Download the step-by-step [Nomination Submission Guide \(pdf\)](#) for detailed information on the submission process.

Both the nominee and the nominator have a role to play in completing nomination package components both inside and outside of the nomination system. Completed nomination packages are finalized and submitted to the Office of Research by the nominator.

Complete nomination packets are due no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, October 14, 2022.

For questions or difficulty submitting nomination materials, please call **Debbie Gipson** at (803) 777-5458.

Nomination Package Components

Nominees Must Provide:

- An up-to-date CV (to be uploaded in PDF format) that demonstrates excellence in research, scholarly activity, and leadership. The CV should accurately reflect and support the responses to the Nominee Questionnaire and the letters of recommendation (these items are detailed below).
- Responses of 4,000 characters or fewer (counting spaces and line breaks), for each of the Nominee Questionnaire prompts listed below. (Nominees will have 4,000 characters per response.) We recommend that nominees draft their responses outside of the system, then copy and paste the responses into the Nominee Questionnaire form inside of the nomination system.
 - In your own words, describe how you have exceeded expectations for your field **since arriving at USC**. Make an effort to define baseline expectations.
 - Give examples of your research and scholarship activities **while at USC**. These examples should be of very high quality and demonstrate your potential to develop a national or international reputation in your field.
 - Note on the next three questions: Each year, Breakthrough award recipients are featured in a booklet, with a photo spread and a short write-up. Your response to the three questions below will be quoted and/or used as source material for the awards booklet write-up (responses may be edited for clarity, etc.). Please feel free to take creative license in answering these three questions; we're looking for your interpretations and reflections, rather than a technical response.
 - Considering your research focus, what drew you to it initially, and what has kept you in

those research questions over the years?

- How would you summarize the significance and impact of your research career — how has it advanced your own understanding of the research topic? How has it advanced your students and your particular academic discipline?
- What's next for your research career?

Nominators Must Provide:

- A letter of recommendation, under the nominator's signature, no longer than two pages in length (to be uploaded in PDF format).
- A letter of recommendation from a USC colleague who is familiar with the nominee's work and qualifications for the Breakthrough Star Award, no longer than two pages in length (to be uploaded in PDF format).

Notes and Exceptions

- Nominators may submit only one 2023 Breakthrough Stars Award nomination.
- The committee will accept and review only one nomination per nominee. Nominators may want to confirm with potential nominees.

Selection Process and Timeline

Nominations that are complete and responsive to the requirements of this announcement will be evaluated by the Breakthrough Awards Committee. The committee will evaluate nominations using the award review criteria. The committee will provide a prioritized list of recommended recipients to the Vice President for Research (VPR). The VPR will have final determination of recipients based on the committee's recommendations. Nominees and their nominators will receive notification of their selection or declination on or before **Thursday, December 8, 2022**.

For questions regarding this award, contact **Debbie Gipson** in the Office of the Vice President for Research.

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