Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Program

The CAREER is a prestigious award to help a junior faculty member develop activities that can effectively integrate research and education within the context of their University.

Goals of the CAREER Program:
- Provide stable support for five years to allow the career development of outstanding new teacher-scholars in the context of the mission of their organization.
- Build a foundation for a lifetime of integrated contributions to research and education.
- Provide incentives to Universities to value the integration of research and education.
- Increase participation of those traditionally underrepresented in science & engineering.

Is CAREER the right program for you?
- Are you seriously committed to the goals of CAREER?
- Are you at the right stage in your career (pre-tenure, Assistant Professor)?
- Can you think of a proposal that is appropriate for NSF with research and education activities that are innovative and ambitious?
- Is your Department/Organization supportive?
- Have you discussed your ideas with mentors, fellows, program officers?

Success Rates & Expectations:
- CAREER proposals are submitted to a disciplinary unit or program
- Review & Funding varies according to Program and /or Division - Contact Program Officers & Division Contacts for more information
- CAREER proposals compete with other research proposals in some programs
- Variable levels of expectations for scope of research and education plans
- Assessment of Departmental Letter (2 pages) is part of the review criteria for CAREER
- Funding rates follows trend for regular proposals in the program of interest

PECASE: Presidential Early-Career Awards for Science and Engineers
NSF selects ~20+ nominees from new CAREER awardees
- Selection is based on two important criteria:
  1) Innovative research at the frontiers of science and technology that is relevant to the mission of the sponsoring organization or agency, and
  2) Community service demonstrated through scientific leadership, education or community outreach.

Traits of Successful CAREER proposals
- CAREER proposals should match the expectations in the disciplinary programs in terms of research and education - This is a highly competitive program!
- Write for peer reviewers - Ask your Program Officer who will be assessing your proposal
- Appropriate scope of education and research activities. It is a 5-year plan
- Goes outside the education box of regular research proposals in your field
- Strikes a balance between doable research activities and more risky pursuits
CAREER Education Plan Tips:
• Activities should go beyond what is expected from any Assistant Professor in your field
• But the plan must be manageable and the workload should not be unreasonable
• Quality over Quantity: structure a plan rather than a laundry list of activities.
• Take advantage of local strengths by contributing to existing programming (but clearly indicate your contributions to the program).
• Be informed by what has been successful in the past
• When proposing course-related activity, show awareness of literature on teaching & learning.
• Reviewers look for a plan to determine the impact of the education program.
• Proposals must have an integrated research and education plan at their core.

Integration of Research and Education: How will your research impact your education goals & your education activities feed back into your research?
• Involving others (graduate, undergraduates, K-12, high school teachers, public) in your research using new tools, laboratory methods, field components, web outreach, etc...
• Partnering with those in other communities, especially those traditionally underrepresented in Sciences and Engineering
• Bringing the excitement of your research topics to help in the education of others
• Searching for new methods to deliver your research results to a broader audience than those in the immediate research community
• Using the broader community to gather data for your science (“Citizen Science”)

Some Myths of the CAREER Program
• You cannot apply if you have another award
• It is an entry program, apply to CAREER first
• I can only write a good CAREER proposal after I have seen successful CAREER proposals
• CAREER awardees are more “mobile”
• The education component does not matter
• You have no chance if you are not from a research intensive institution

Merit Review Criteria Update: Jan 2014
When evaluating NSF proposals, reviewers should consider what the proposers want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits would accrue if the project is successful. These issues apply both to the technical aspects of the proposal and the way in which the project may make broader contributions. To that end, reviewers are asked to evaluate all proposals against two criteria:
• Intellectual Merit: The intellectual Merit criterion encompasses the potential to advance knowledge; and
• Broader Impacts: The Broader Impacts criterion encompasses the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

1 See http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit_review/ for more information