Early Career Award Program

Ann Nelson for the University Subpanel

Oct. 27, 2011

Early Career Awards

The EC program is the main entry point to long term funding for untenured university faculty (as well as permanent lab researchers).

EC works in two ways

1. Successful candidates receive DOE support
2. Reviews of unsuccessful candidates give guidance for future proposals and, in some cases, may allow the candidate to be added to an existing grant or funded by other means.

Eligibility and level of support

Must be within ten years of Ph.D.

Untenured tenure track faculty at a university ($\sim$ \$150,000/yr minimum)

or

Permanent, non-post doctoral staff at US National Lab ($\sim$ \$500,000/yr minimum, includes overheaded salary)

Like a normal grant, but requires a preproposal (due Sept. 1, 2011) that are encouraged or discouraged (Oct. 2011). Proposal due Nov. 29, 2011. Panel meets in January, awards announced in spring.

http://science.energy.gov/ /media/early-career/pdf/FAQ_FY12.pdf

History

1978-2010 Outstanding Junior Investigator program, specific to HEP. 5-7 awards per year, occasionally also to lab staff (although may have been faculty with dual appointments).

c. **2009** Requirement for EC or OJI review to be added to existing grant imposed.

2010-Present Early Career award across Office of Science, eight to university faculty, five to lab researchers in 2011.

2011 EC snapshot

- 13 EC awards, 8 to universities, 5 to labs
- 4 to theorists
- 3 to LHC (experimental)
- 3 in cosmology/astronomy
- 2 in accelerator physics

Comments

The EC program appears to work and to have expanded somewhat from the OJI program. It seems to serve its purpose of moving new faculty/permanent staff into long term DOE support.

Some of have been on EC panels and these seem to be reasonable and work well.

Balance between various endeavors seems balanced, at least in 2011.

Questions for us to look into

- There is a large difference between university minimum ($150,000) and the lab minimum ($500,000). Part of this is accounted for by overhead differences, but not all. Given the larger in place resources at a lab, is this difference justified?
- Most new faculty do not succeed with EC and move onto existing grants. Is this aspect working, i.e. is EC acting as a gatekeeper properly?
- What is the right balance between theory and experiment for the EC program? How is this balance managed?
- There is a big difference for faculty applying for an EC award if there is an existing DOE grant, i.e. if there are students and post docs in place. How should this be considered in the EC program?
- How will EC work with respect to the new competitive review process?
- Are the pre-proposals really necessary?

Questions for us to look into (cont.)

- The EC is for untenured faculty and for permanent lab personnel. These are fundamentally different positions. Does this make sense?

Summary

The Early Career is very important to universities and we want to make it work as well as possible. The initial assessment is that is seems to do its job, but we want to make sure it makes sense in the new era of large projects and competitive reviews.