

BROADENING PARTICIPATION IN TOS THROUGH HONORS NOMINATIONS AND AWARDS

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The Oceanography Society (TOS) Honors Program provides opportunities for its members to amplify the Society's values (<https://tos.org/about>) and to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of colleagues. However, individual and systemic biases can affect the nomination and selection process. In fall 2021, the TOS Council postponed a cycle of the Honors Program due to lack of diversity in nominees (<https://tos.org/tos-news-june-2022>). The TOS JEDI Committee (<https://tos.org/diversity>) is considering ways to generate a large and diverse pool of nominees by embedding TOS's justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion goals into the honors and awards process. This article highlights some of those suggestions and invites TOS members to weigh in.

As of 2022, TOS has three honors categories: Fellows, Medals, and Awards. The oldest honors offered by the Society are the Munk Award (established in 1993), the Jerlov Award (established in 2000), and The Oceanography Society Fellows (established in 2004). The other medals (Wallace S. Broecker, Mary Sears) and awards (Mentoring, Early Career, and Ocean Observing) are relatively new. The nomination criteria for all awards (<https://tos.org/honors>) at present focus on a nominee's impactful, innovative, and/or transformative contributions to original research; impact in educating and mentoring students and early career scientists; and their significant interdisciplinary and/or collaborative research. It is sobering that to date, the lists of awardees

remain predominantly from a particular demographic—White men from North America or Europe. For example, of the 13 Munk Awardees, 12 are White men. Of the 11 Jerlov Awardees, 10 are White men. Of the 45 TOS Fellows, 31 are White men. While other societies in oceanography also predominantly honor men, the gender statistics for TOS honors are the least diverse (Legg et al., 2022).

Part of the reason for the lack of diversity in nominations may be how TOS members and nomination supporters interpret merit. For example, when one of us (FM-K) attempted to nominate a female scientist from a developing nation for a specific TOS medal, he was not able to obtain letters of support. Scientists from renowned institutions in developed nations agreed that her contributions were multiple and commendable, but also felt that this nominee would likely not be considered by TOS because she could not be equated to one of the people represented by a named medal. This experience suggests that there may be unwritten rules preventing many of our peers from being nominated, let alone selected, for these awards. We suggest that TOS can more clearly articulate its values in a redesigned process that is sensitive at a number of different levels, such as individual identity, socioeconomic status, culture, and geography.

We offer six initial suggestions that may help open the TOS nomination and awards process to broader sets of contributions and contributors. These

suggestions are consistent with efforts to reconsider awards processes in other geoscience societies (e.g., Holmes et al., 2020; Ali et al., 2021).

1. Focus the award guidelines on the holistic essence of a career. Criteria could introduce a more comprehensive definition of achievement beyond the publication record alongside the overarching value of a person's efforts to improve community well-being at local, regional, national, and/or international levels.
2. Change the nomination guidelines to better support individuals at each stage in the honors and awards process. Simplify the package that nominators provide and allow supporters to sign on and/or add a short concurring letter. Guarantee need-based support for awardees, such as travel and lodging to attend the award ceremony, meeting registration fees, and interpretation services.
3. Allow nominations of non-TOS members for all TOS honors. Clearly, there are many TOS members who deserve honors and awards, but TOS members should not be restricted to looking only inside the Society to celebrate excellent role models. This is an important mechanism to highlight the fact that our Society has broader values and real-world commitments. It may also serve as a new avenue for membership recruitment for nominees and their networks.

4. Implement a waiting period (three years or more) before awarding TOS honors to people who have received similar awards from TOS or other societies. This action would increase the chances of diversifying the pool of people who are selected for honors.
5. Expand the number of named medals to reflect the diversity of those who have made life-long contributions to ocean science, conservation, education, and access. These medals may be named after individuals from communities that have been historically or currently targeted by or excluded from academic circles in developed countries. If so, TOS must first build relationships with these communities and bestow awards jointly. It is of utmost importance that new awards have similar prestige as existing ones.
6. To mitigate implicit bias, commit to an ongoing review of the Honors process every three to five years. TOS should regularly reevaluate procedures, such as award publicity, nomination package guidelines, award criteria, and nomination and selection committee procedures, against evolving best practices. TOS should also promote implicit bias training for members of the Nomination and Selection Committees and make these types of training programs a benefit of TOS membership. TOS may consider offering this training openly and for broad community participation, for even greater impact on advancing diversity and inclusion in ocean science.

Implementing solutions that will enable TOS to recognize the many people who help advance science, education, and society is not easy. For example, those from less-resourced countries encounter many barriers in developing a career in marine science (Osborne et al., 2022). The broader TOS community can help identify and participate in a process to achieve changes in the honors nominating and selection process that will result

in positive outcomes for the Society, its membership, and our individual networks. We encourage everyone to nominate role models in our networks and to volunteer for TOS committees. We invite you to work with The Oceanography Society's JEDI Committee to improve the awards process to recognize individuals, groups, and activities anywhere and at all scales. Please send any ideas or feedback to JEDICoChair@tos.org. In doing so, you will help move us closer to the ideals we hold as a Society. 🌐

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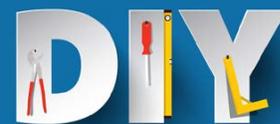
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