

THE FORUM

October: A Month of Faculty Excellence and Engagement

Dear Colleagues,

October was a dynamic month packed with major faculty events that celebrated achievements, fostered mentorship, and drove critical discussions about our university's future.



The highlight was the second annual **Nexus of Excellence Awards** on October 8th. The event recognized honorees across categories that reflect NJIT's **Innovation Nexus 2030 Strategic Plan** — spanning excellence in teaching, advising, mentoring, research, diversity and community engagement. A huge congratulations to **Eliza Michalopoulou, Distinguished Professor in Mathematical Sciences**, who received the prestigious **Foundation Excellence in Research & Innovation Medal** for her sustained, reputation-enhancing contributions. The full list of inspiring awardees can be found [here](#).

In a distinct honor, **President Teik C. Lim has been elected to the distinguished class of Fellows of the Institute of Noise Control Engineering of the USA** (INCE-USA)! This is one of the field's highest professional honors, recognizing his pioneering work in noise and vibration control, sustained record of innovation, mentorship, and long-standing service to INCE-USA.



Faculty leadership hosted crucial meetings throughout the month, keeping our community engaged and informed:

- **Faculty Fridays:** Mentoring (October 3) kicked off the month, following a successful survey to gauge interest in mentorship programs—a vital investment in our faculty's future.

- President Lim and Provost Pelesko held a **Town Hall** (October 6) and the Institute Faculty Meeting (October 22).
- During the **Institute Faculty Meeting**, VPFA Sadik provided important updates on the work of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Federal Developments and how the OFA is supporting faculty.

Our ongoing "**Letters to the VPFA**" series aims to engage faculty on the direct impact of federal developments on their careers, featuring a letter this month from an early-career faculty member.

We encourage you to share your responses, opinions, or questions via this [anonymous form](#). Submissions will be published in upcoming communications.

Thank you for being part of our community,
Omowunmi "Wunmi" Sadik, Ph.D. Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs,
Distinguished Professor of Chemistry and Environmental Science

Faculty Events

October Faculty Fridays: Mentorship

The October Faculty Fridays meeting was one of our most well-attended events of the year, answering the question, "*Faculty Mentoring - is it needed?*" with a resounding **"YES!"**

The invigorating discussion yielded a wealth of ideas on how to create an engaging and fulfilling relationship for all participants. As part of next steps, a committee will be created to lead the university's efforts - if you'd like to be included, please reach out to Dr. Sadik.



November 7 Faculty Fridays Engaging with AI

Don't miss our next pivotal discussion in CKB 116 11:30 A.M. - 1 P.M.!

Artificial Intelligence is the disruptive technology of our time, and our November Faculty Fridays will feature a three-track deep dive:

Track A: The Researcher – Featuring Dr. David Bader, NJIT Data Science, on the cutting-edge of AI innovation.

Track B: The Educator – With Dr. Jessica Simon of CEIE, exploring how to integrate AI into teaching & learning.

Track C: The User -- Ms. Manail Anis discusses Digital Ethics, and responsible AI & XR application in teaching.

Faculty and staff are strongly encouraged to attend this critical conversation about how AI is shaping our campus and careers. [RSVP here](#).

November 12 New Faculty Research Showcase

The Office of Faculty Affairs will host the New Faculty Research Showcase on **November 12th, 2025 at 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in Campus Center Ballroom A.**

All faculty, students interested in research, associate deans of research and department chairs are encouraged to attend.

Come and get to know our new faculty as they spotlight their research in just 5 minutes.

All are welcome. [RSVP required here.](#)



NJIT Co-Hosts Critical PFAS "Forever Chemicals" Summit

The New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) partnered with the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to host a crucial two-day summit on Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS), or "Forever Chemicals," on October 9 and 10.

The event gathered leaders in science, policy, industry, and the community for in-depth discussions on the environmental and public health impacts of PFAS, exploring solutions, and advancing state efforts.

NJIT's significant expertise was highlighted on Day Two, which focused on innovation and solutions.

Featured experts from NJIT included:

- Dr. Wunmi Sadik: Discussed innovative treatment and destruction methods on the Emerging Technologies panel.
- Dr. Michel Boufadel: Also lent his environmental expertise to the Emerging Technologies panel.
- Dr. Arjun Venkatesan: Presented NJIT's Center for Translational Research efforts to solve complex, real-world PFAS problems.
- Dr. Atam Dhawan, Senior Vice Provost for Research and Executive Director, NJIT Center for Translational Research, moderated a session on Strategic Translational Research and Innovation Partnership PFAS Initiative.

The summit provided a comprehensive look at the issue, with Day One focusing on PFAS fundamentals and collaboration pathways, and Day Two dedicated to solutions and emerging technologies. State leadership, including NJDEP Commissioner Shawn LaTourette, detailed New Jersey's action plan. The summit reinforced NJIT's central role in driving the research and technological innovation needed to tackle this pressing environmental challenge. <https://dep.nj.gov/pfas-summit/agenda>

Letters to the VPFA*

Dr. Allison Edgar, Assistant Professor of Biological Sciences

I was invited to write a few words from the perspective of a new faculty member. What resources might help us in the current environment? There are three major areas that I believe would be low-cost and high impact: financial flexibility to support essential elements of our research, assessment policies that acknowledge the present funding environment, and expanded opportunities to build community across career stages.

New faculty need financial buffers against the uncertainty of the current funding climate. It is hard to find solutions for a lack of money besides money. As a wet lab biologist, my lab

cannot operate without a budget for maintaining research animals and supplies, some of which are perishable. Extending timelines for spending down allocated startup funds beyond the original expiration date is an obvious, practical, and cost-neutral adaptation to meet this need for early faculty still on start-up funding. Furthermore, even modest funding – such as internal seed grants and funding for student conference travel – will be invaluable for tenure-track faculty who need to change their research direction to remain competitive, or who have no external funding at all. Any potential savings from cutting such supports should be weighed carefully against the opportunity costs of losing future research capacity.

It would be short-sighted to assume that recent changes in funding priorities will persist indefinitely or that any area of research will be unaffected. Therefore, we should not allow such changes to drive hiring and retention. If a department previously identified a research need and made a hire in that area, the university should be cautious about letting changes in funding priorities that may be temporary cause the loss of faculty working in that area. Universities with the vision to maintain their programs in areas such as climate change, public health, DEI-related work, renewable energy, immunology, social media manipulation, and whatever else may be targeted tomorrow will be in a better position to continue doing valuable research in these areas the day after tomorrow. As the actual and projected changes to federal research budgets are broad and not all obviously ideological, this same approach should be extended across all faculty evaluations.

Finally, we need community. Starting a lab is disorienting and isolating under the best circumstances (I am told). We need both structured and casual opportunities to interact with other assistant professors going through this career stage, those who have passed through it before, and long-time faculty with experience evaluating promotion and tenure cases to advise us.

Upcoming Events and Deadlines

- **Office of Faculty Affairs events** - [see more](#)
- **Faculty Fridays** - Save the dates: Nov 7, Dec 5, Feb 6, Mar 6, Apr 3, May 1 in CKB 116 11:30 A.M. - 1 P.M.
- **New Faculty Research Showcase** - Nov 12 in Campus Center Ballroom A at 11:00 A.M. – 1 P.M.
- **Faculty Development Workshop Part 2** - Dec 12 in CKB 116 at 8:30 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.
- **2025/2026 Promotion and Tenure Promotion dates:**
<https://www.njit.edu/provost/promotion-and-tenure>

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Office of Faculty Affairs is currently working on the following awards and seeks nominees.

National Academy of Inventors Senior Member: At a minimum, candidates must demonstrate a high degree of innovation by holding 1 issued U.S. patent. Candidates must be in professional practice or research in his/her current field for at least 5 years.

Blavatnik US National Awards: The Blavatnik National Awards honor America's most innovative young faculty-rank scientists and engineers. These awards celebrate the past accomplishments and future potential of young faculty members working in the three disciplinary categories of Life Sciences, Physical Sciences & Engineering, and Chemical Sciences. Every year, one Blavatnik National Awards Laureate in each disciplinary category will receive \$250,000 in unrestricted funds, and five nominees in each

disciplinary category will be recognized as Finalists and will receive \$15,000 in unrestricted funds. Nomination is made by the university.

Blavatnik Regional Awards: The Blavatnik Regional Awards acknowledge and celebrate the excellence of outstanding postdoctoral scientists from institutions in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut working in the three disciplinary categories of Life Sciences, Physical Sciences & Engineering, and Chemical Sciences. Laureates are awarded \$30,000 each and two Finalists in each disciplinary category are awarded \$10,000 each in unrestricted funds.

If you are planning to apply for a prestigious award, please contact Dr. Shivon Boodhoo for assistance and advice 8 weeks to two years ahead of the deadline. See the [faculty awards website](#) for information.

We Want to Hear from You!

Your contributions are valued! We invite you to share your suggestions, news materials, opinions, student success stories, and classroom engagement examples for inclusion in *The Forum*. Please email them to vpfa@njit.edu or use this [anonymous form](#) by the 15th of each month.

Editorial Board

Shivon Boodhoo, PhD

Wunmi Sadik, PhD

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*A note on "Letters to the VPFA": The Forum operates in strict adherence to all ethical standards. No content will be redacted or removed from letters received and all letters are requested to be under 300 words for publication. Please note that all opinions expressed herein are those of the individual authors and do not represent the official views or endorsement of the institution.

The Forum is dedicated to supporting the professional development and community of NJIT faculty.

New Jersey Institute of Technology

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