NJIT

Office of Faculty Affairs

The Forum

A Message from the VPFA

Dear Colleagues,
Welcome to the June edition of The Forum. I hope you are having a restful and rejuvenating summer. This month's edition highlights several vital campus and national updates:

OMB Regulations: As per the Provost message of Jun 15, 2026, we urge all faculty to review the proposed federal grant rules and submit formal public comments to the Federal Register portal ahead of the **Monday, July 13th deadline**.

National Recognition: Warm congratulations to Dr. Ashish Borgaonkar on receiving the 2026 ASEE National Outstanding Teaching Award.

Perspectives on Progress: This issue features commentary on faculty teaching ranks by Dr. Andrew Gerrard and Dr. Nellone E. Reid. If you would like to contribute a letter or opinion for the upcoming July edition, please submit your comments by July 20.

I look forward to continuing our conversations over the coming months.
Warm regards,
Omowunmi "Wunmi" Sadik, Ph.D.
Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Distinguished Professor of Chemistry & Env. Science

White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

The White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) released a proposed rule governing federal grant funding that, if implemented, could change how science is funded, conducted, communicated, and shared.

Submit a Comment: Individual faculty members, research groups, or academic departments can submit formal public comments directly through the Federal Register portal: https://www.regulations.gov

The deadline to submit a comment is Monday, July 13th at 11:59PM ET.

What to include in your public comment

- Start with your background/expertise: what kind of federal grants have you been part of?Include the specific section number that you are commenting on for each

associated paragraph, e.g. [200.205]. Do not feel compelled to respond to the entire proposed rule.
- Provide specific facts, data, and details on how the proposed rule would impact you, your work, or the broader community, rather than just stating “I support” or “I oppose.” How do federal grants support you, and what would happen if these changes were implemented?
- Make sure to highlight your unique experiences. Well-supported, individual comments are more valuable than template responses.

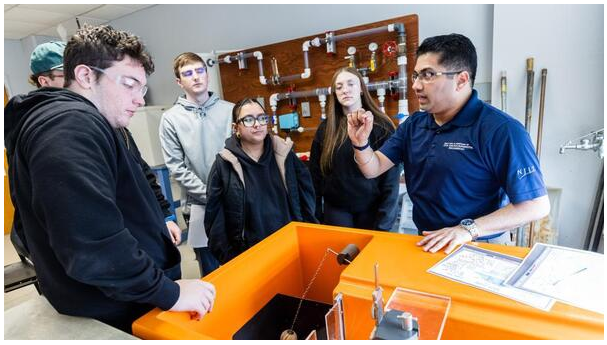
How to Review and Respond:

- Read the Official Proposal: You can access the full Federal Register notice and text here: https://www.regulations.gov/docket/OMB-2026-0034
- A more digestible brief prepared by the AAU, APLU, and COGR, may be found here:
  COGR-AAU-APLU UG Executive Brief 6526_6.pdf
- Key Focus Areas: We highly encourage you to review the sections detailing award terminations, foreign collaboration disclosures, and grant-funded labor rules to assess how they may affect your specific sponsor agencies (NSF, NIH, DoD, DoE, etc.).

  The OMB intends to issue a final rule aiming for an effective date of October 1, 2026, applying the new regulations across all of Fiscal Year 2027.

Faculty Excellence: Ashish Borgaonkar Wins ASEE National Teaching Award for Building the Foundation of Future Engineers

Ashish Borgaonkar, associate professor of engineering education in the School of Applied Engineering Technology at New Jersey Institute of Technology and founding director of Newark College of Engineering’s Grand Challenges Scholars Program, has been selected for the 2026 ASEE National Outstanding Teaching Award.



The award recognizes an engineering educator for excellence in outstanding classroom performance, contributions to the scholarship of teaching, and participation in ASEE section meetings and local activities.

Call for Submissions: Perspectives on Progress*

The Forum belongs to the NJIT faculty community, and we want to ensure it reflects our shared commitment to dialogue and progress. For our summer editions, we are soliciting contributions for our "Letters to the VPFA" discussion board.

Submission Guidelines

Topic: Faculty Teaching ranks

Length: Under 300 words.

Deadline: July 20.

We look forward to hearing your voices and continuing the conversation.

Perspectives on Progress series*

Andrew Gerrard, PhD

Professor & Department Chair, Physics and Director of the Center for Solar-Terrestrial Research

I write this as a member of the NJIT faculty [20 years] wearing multiple hats. These hats reflect the needs of the Physics Department [based on 7 years as Physics Department Chair and 3 years as Faculty Senator], the needs of NJIT's largest research center [Center for Solar-Terrestrial Research; Director for over 12 years], and my own experiences with many other R1 universities.

Frankly, I was not overly enthused with the Teaching Professor position as formulated this past Spring 2026. Though I liked the creation of the Teaching Professor and Principal University Lecturer (PUL) ranks, as well as the feature that Teaching Professors would have a vote in Department and Institute Faculty Meetings, I had concerns about the implementation of the Teaching Professor position [explained below]. However, I swallowed my concerns and both voted for, and campaigned in favor of, the proposed Teaching Professor position with the hope and expectation that the position could be "fixed/modified" in coming years.

My major concerns of the Teaching Professor rank were based on an erroneously constructed academic hierarchy imbedded within the implementation. That is, NJIT's current ULs/SULs have been employed for a set purpose: to provide high-quality instruction. Thus, the UL/SUL/[PUL] positions serve extremely valuable academic roles and are needed at NJIT. Given this level of importance, I did not like that the "Teaching Professor" position was being implemented as a "promotion." The very word "promotion" implies a position of higher importance/usefulness, which I thought was insulting to current and continuing ULs/SULs. The Teaching Professor role is not a "higher" position than the UL/SUL/[PUL] role, but rather should be viewed as an different job with a different role. [Similarly, a tenure track/tenured faculty member is not "higher" that a UL/SUL; tenure track/tenured faculty just have different job duties and responsibilities.]

Thus, the Teaching Professors should be implemented as new positions and should not be considered "promotions." The Teaching Professor positions should have open, nation-wide searches. Present ULs/SULs/[PULs] that may be carrying out responsibilities beyond those designated should be strongly encouraged to apply and to compete for a Teaching Professor position.

I strongly believe that implementation of a "this is a new academic position mentality" would go a long way to resolving many of the current issues and concerns facing the proposed "Teaching Professor" position that the TT/T faculty have. Specifically, Departments/Deans would have the only real decision on who they hired for this new role. As I understand it, a major reason that current ULs/SULs do not like the idea of a new academic position is because they would not automatically be guaranteed a Teaching Professor rank; they would instead have to apply/interview for the new position/role. Furthermore, I understand that PSA may not like this approach because it bypasses the promotion/appeal process. However, my understanding of both concerns is anecdotal.

Perspectives on Progress series*

Nellone E Reid, PhD Senior University Lecturer
Chemical & Materials Engineering

Serving on the committee that proposed teaching rank faculty positions was a genuine pleasure. I had the privilege of working alongside representatives from the Vice Provost's office, the Faculty Senate, the Lecturers and Educators Congress, and of course the Professional Staff Association. Bringing those voices to one table was, in itself, a meaningful part of the experience.

Through this work, I gained a deeper understanding of how universities across the nation are adopting teaching rank positions, structures that empower dedicated members of the university community and open additional professional pathways for them. I found it especially valuable to hear the full range of perspectives, both those that supported the proposal and those that raised concerns. That debate was challenging, but it made our work stronger. In the end, we put forward a proposal that we believed mitigated most of the concerns raised without negatively impacting current or future tenure-track positions.

I remain convinced that the proposal would have strengthened NJIT as an R1 institution. It would have done so by elevating our teaching faculty and by creating a clear pathway for educators who want to, and in many cases already do, pursue research-based grants and provide service to the university well beyond the classroom.

The proposal did not pass, and I won't pretend I wasn't disappointed. But disappointment isn't the end of the story. I look forward to getting back to work: refining the proposal, sharpening how we communicate the value of teaching rank positions, and continuing to build the understanding that this effort deserves. The conversation we started matters, and I believe it will ultimately move our institution forward.

*** Editorial note: In keeping with principles of open faculty discourse, letters to the VPFA are published as submitted. The opinions expressed are those of the author and are not endorsed by the VPFA or the university.**

Faculty Award Submissions

NAI - National Academy of Inventors Fellow due July15

APS - American Physical Society Fellow - varies by section

IEEE Senior Member - rolling deadlines

Blavatnik Award - anticipated December

Please contact Dr. Shivon Boodhoo, Director of Faculty Awards for help and advice with nominations for prestigious awards and prizes (boodhoo@njit.edu).

Quick Links

- Office of Faculty Affairs
- Faculty Awards Initiative
- OMB: https://www.regulations.gov/docket/OMB-2026-0034

Editorial Board: Dr. Wunmi Sadik, Dr. Shivon Boodhoo, Deric Raymond, Faculty representatives TBD