

Lacey W. Heinsberg, PhD, RN | 2025 Rising Star Award Winner

What position did you hold when you won? I was a new tenure-stream Assistant Professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing, having just transitioned from my postdoctoral training.

Brief description of your career progression: I started as a civil engineer before pursuing nursing, completed my PhD in nursing with NIH F31 support, then postdoctoral training in human genetics with NIH K99/R00 support. I am now an Assistant Professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing leading community-based research in American Samoa, focusing on maternal-child health, genetics/genomics, and environmental health.

What did winning the award mean to you? Winning this award was deeply validating and humbling. I am continually inspired by the incredible nurse scientists in ENRS - their work pushes me to grow and think bigger. This award affirmed that nursing science can uniquely bridge genetics, environmental health, and health equity - and that this work matters.

What would you say to those on the fence about applying or nominating another? Apply! Your work matters, and recognition opens doors! We all have imposter syndrome, but Amy Poehler says to just go for it - do the thing before you are ready. The application process itself helps you recognize your own growth. And if you see a rising star colleague, nominate them! That support means everything. We need to lift each other up - our nursing community is incredible and we need to highlight that work!

What value has winning the award brought to your current career path? The award enhanced my credibility as an early career investigator, strengthened my confidence in pursuing my research goals, and expanded my network within nursing research. It also reminded me of the power of our community. I am still so proud and humbled to have been selected - thank you to ENRS and the award committee for this opportunity.