

# SEAS Professor Wins Science Award for Non-Tenured Faculty

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An assistant professor at the Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Sciences won a National Science Foundation award and over \$200,000 for her teaching and research into how fungi can clean up mining sites, SEAS announced Monday.

Colleen M. Hansel, a specialist in environmental microbiology, will receive \$212,000 over the next two years and up to \$537,000 over the next five years through the foundation's Faculty Early Career Development award, she said in an interview yesterday.

The award is given annually by the foundation to faculty in the sciences who haven't yet achieved tenure but show promise in both their teaching and research.

Hansel said the award was particularly welcome given current economic conditions, which have made it extremely difficult to obtain funding.

Her research focuses on harnessing fungi's ability to remove harmful substances produced by mining sites. In particular, Hansel said that many mining sites have toxic concentrations of manganese, and that fungi are able to transform the metal into an inert form.

Hansel said she plans to use the grant to expand her research by adding a new project—along with post-doctoral researcher Cara M. Santelli—to study the process by which fungi can break down other potentially harmful substances.

The grant also requires that winners use part of their award to provide information and education to the greater community.

"The other part of the grant will be to develop a workshop to teach high school teachers and students about acid mine drainage," Hansel said.

Hansel said she would also use part of the grant to support undergraduate researchers in her lab over the next five summers.