

Agenda: Scientific Review Officer, Laura Thomas, Ph.D., from the NIEHS Division of Extramural Research and Training (DERT) will present on the NIH Grant Review Process and Grantsmanship.

Monday March 29th from 12 — 1 pm ET

Attendees:

Linda Abriola (Brown)	Isabel Meza (UNM)
Prasadi Adhietty (Louisville)	Jennifer Moore (UKY)
Amanda Armijo (MIT)	Emily Pedraza (Baylor)
Candice Brinkmeyer-Langford (TAMU)	Paula Pimienta (Baylor)
Krisa Camargo (TAMU)	Antonio Planchart (NCSU)
Zunwei Chen (Harvard)	David Purdy (University of Iowa)
Pratiti Home Chowdhury (LSU)	Nader Rezaei (UKY)
Daniel Conklin (Louisville)	Brianna Rivera (Oregon State)
Joshua Crittenden (Duke)	Ariel Robinson (UKY)
Mona Dai (Harvard)	Holly Rudel (Yale)
Subham Dasgupta (Oregon State)	Stephanie Sarrouf (Northeastern)
Pan Deng (UKY)	Alexis Sharp (Duke)
Jonathan Doorn (University of Iowa)	Tom Sheahan (Northeastern)
Tammy Dugas (LSU)	Emma Stapleton (University of Iowa)
Ahmed El-Moghazy (UC Davis)	Michelle Steidemann (Michigan State)
Summer Gonsalves (Brown)	Carlos Vergara (Universidad de Puerto Rico)
Chuji Guo (NCSU)	Meichen Wang (TAMU)
Angela Gutierrez (UKY)	Brian Westra (University of Iowa)
Farhana Hasan (LSU)	Jamie Young (Louisville)
Eliane El Hayek (UNM)	
Bernhard Hennig (UKY)	Laura Thomas (NIEHS)
J. Zach Hilt (UKY)	Danielle Carlin (NIEHS)
Jen Irving (LSU)	Sara Amolegbe (NIEHS)
Yuwaraj Kadariya (Fox Chase Cancer Center)	Michelle Heacock (NIEHS)
Sung Kim (University of Texas at Austin)	Heather Henry (NIEHS)
Eva Kim (Duke)	Bill Suk (NIEHS)
Susan Korrick (Harvard)	Brittany Trottier (NIEHS)
Hannah Laue (Dartmouth)	
Yunping Lei (Baylor)	Natalie Rodriguez (MDB)
Francisco Leniz (UKY)	Mali Velasco (MDB)
Gabriele Ludewig (University of Iowa)	
Raina Maier (Arizona)	
Craig Marcus (Oregon State)	
Kaitlin Vollet Martin (UKY)	
Katlyn McGraw (Louisville)	
Erica McKenzie (Temple University)	
Reginald McNulty (UC Irvine)	

Agenda Items:

- **Grant Review Process and Grantsmanship:**

Laura Thomas, Ph.D. (Scientific Review Branch - DERT)

- NIH Review Process: The Path of a successful applications:
 - 1st level of review: Study section. Review for scientific merit. NIH find the level of expertise that is needed to review the application, and then find experts to review applications. (Focus of today's talk)
 - 2nd level: Advisory council or board: recommends action. The external advisory board needs approve what the Institute recommended.
- Applications are assigned to:
 - Institutes or Centers: Based on overall mission and guidelines of the institute
 - CSR or study section at an institute: For fellowships or K99s.
- Review meeting:
 - Each standing study section has 12-22 regular members plus temporary reviewers from the scientific community
 - Number of applications being reviewed depends on number received
 - Reviewers submit recommendations, the ones with the most merit are moved to a full discussion (usually around half).
- A typical study section usually consists of SRO (scientific review officer), chair, reviewer, program officers, and grantsmanship official. Number of reviewers depends on the areas of expertise needed to cover.
- How is an application reviewed?
 - Reviewers give the application a score between 3-5, but are free to give a score up to 9, if outside the 3-5 range they must send an email with reasoning.
 - After the meeting reviewers will write up their critique
 - If there is a conflict, for example if anyone has collaborated with the application, the reviewer will not participate in discussion or scoring.
 - Final score is based on the criterion scores. The assigned reviewers give scores for different criteria. Some reviewers weight things differently, so not a straight formula.
 - More increasingly it's been observed that reviewers weight heavily the research plan.
- What happens next?
 - Who applied will received a summary statement with the summary of the discussion and budget recommendations. This includes the critiques from the reviewers, but also the questions and answers from the full review panel.
- How is your application reviewed?
 - The best place to find out is in the FOA, you will find the section titled Criteria. Look at that because that is what reviewers will be looking for when they take a look at your application.
- Fellowship Training:
 - Assessment of the likelihood that the fellowship will enhance the candidate's potential to be an independent researcher.
- Career development (K awards)

- Assessment of the likelihood that the proposed career development or research plan will enhance the candidate's potential for a career in their specific field.
- What makes a strong candidate?
 - Publication record: not just the number, but how relevant they are to the science of your application, not just review articles
 - Excellent training
 - Research and career plans build on training. Make sure it builds on your previous training but make sure you are planning how to strengthen your skills
 - Uniquely positioned for proposed research. Make the case of why you are the perfect person to do this research
 - Strong potential to succeed as an independent research
- What makes a weak candidate?
 - Limited publications as first author
 - Publications unrelated to area of research proposal
 - Limited research presentations
 - Limited demonstrations of leadership
 - Already achieved research independence. No need for further mentoring training.
- Strong career development plan:
 - Logical, systematic, and appropriate for career stage
 - Candidate will gain needed expertise
 - Specific courses and experiences are outlined, be explicit on your research plan
 - Will enhance communication skills and professional development
 - Includes grant writing and lab management skills
- Weak career development plan:
 - Research too close to mentor's, not clear how it will develop an independent career
 - Not clear how differs from postdoc experience
 - Mentor's input not apparent
 - No training in grant writing or laboratory management
- What makes a strong mentor:
 - Outstanding scientist
 - Excellent plan to facilitate transition
 - Record of mentoring other trainees
- Weak mentor:
 - Overcommitted
 - No input into application
 - No definitive mentoring plans
 - No mentors for all phases of research or lack of expertise in all areas
- The research environment:
 - Strong: institutional commitment to candidate. Need to describe all aspects you will need, need a commitment letter from the institution, the more specific the better.
 - Weakness: lack of facilities/resources, lack of institutional commitment
 -
- R-type grant applications (research grants):
- Check the status of your application in eRA Commons

- Separation of Funding and Review:
 - Before submission: Program staff is involved in managing the portfolio
 - Review staff, after the application is submitted direct questions to scientific review officer
 - After review: discussion with PO
- Resources about the grant application and review process:
 - https://grants.nih.gov/grants/about_grants.htm
 - <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide.html>
 - <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-19-083.html>
- Final piece of advice from Laura:
 - Read the summary statements from grants from your mentors or others in your field
 - Ask others not in your field (such as researchers in other labs) to take a look at your application

Questions:

1. Is co-mentorship looked at as strong or weak application (for K awards)?
I don't see that as a strength or weakness, you just need to be able to lay out a case as to why the mentorship of these two individuals is needed and what you will gain to go forward as an independent investigator.
 2. What do you recommend if there is a concern that reviewers may not have expertise needed for a given proposal?
You never know who is assigned to your specific grant application, strictly confidential. You can look at the group of reviewers, and if you are concerned that there is not the area of science that is needed for your applications. Nothing you can do then. But you can be proactive about it, when you are submitting your application you can suggest the areas of expertise that reviewers should have. Highlight areas of science, but do not recommend specific people.
 3. What is the best way to highlight research presentations?
You can do that in your bio sketch, put that in the career development section.
 4. How do you become a reviewer?
Best way is to apply for a grant so NIH knows you are interested. Also email Laura, send her your CV and biosketch and express interest to sit on a review panel. No postdocs. It is a great opportunity, and also one of the best ways to learn how to write a successful grant application.
 5. What is and is not allowed in an appendix?
When your app is assigned to a review officer, they will send an email if the application allows additional materials submitted. You can't amend or submit a revised research plan. Only put in the appendix what is allowed. By the time it gets to the review officer, it has gone through the Scientific Review Committee already.
- **Podcast discussion**
 - What does everyone think about podcasts and how likely would folks be to listen to them if we tried producing them? Gather feedback from anyone who has put podcasts together.

- Thoughts on doing a KCD podcast versus a webinar?
- Please send your feedback to Danielle via email!
- **Science art competition ideas**
 - We thought it would be fun to do an art concert for the summer. It would be open to all SRP trainees. The winner will get their piece of art advertised in the ePosted Notes.
 - Has anyone done this? Thoughts?
- **Highlighting trainee videos in the [e-Posted](#) and via SPAN**
 - We are doing our best to make sure trainees videos get shared on our trainee video webpage. Please send those so we can post them!
- **Trainees being highlighted next RT/CEC call**
 - Next RT/CEC webinar will highlight several of our trainees. If you are trainee and you are conducting RT or CE work, let us know!
 - Heidi Pickard (Harvard at URI) and Alicia Crisalli (URI) – organized the virtual conference PFAS in Our World: What We Know and What Can We Do, an opportunity for young scientists to learn how their research can have an impact to protect communities most at risk.
 - Denise Moreno Ramirez (Arizona) – initiated Voices Unheard: Arizona’s Environmental History Project, which captures community voices to inform research and involves community members in the process.
 - Moala Bannavti (Iowa) – measures PCBs in schoolrooms in predominantly minority communities, won the Dare to Discover Scholar Award, and won the 3 Minute Thesis competition for a video describing her PCBs work
 - Latasha James (UNM) – involved with DURAC, a Navajo Nation-created advisory board of citizens and officials. Her thesis is on community-based research methods to share the stories and experiences of residents affected by the abandoned uranium mining in Tachee/Blue Gap, Arizona.
 - Priyanka DeSouza, MIT - gathering data, interviews, videos, and photos to document the challenges of communities near the Olin Chemical Superfund Site.
- **Next SPAN Zoom Webinar**
 - **Training Core Activities and Round-robin/sharing of highlights from all of you** (i.e., the Superfund Centers and R01 grantees)
 - **Reminder:** If you’d like your activities included, please send them to Danielle Carlin (danielle.carlin@nih.gov) and Natalie Rodriguez (natalie.rodriguez@nih.gov) at least 2 weeks before the next scheduled SPAN WebEx.
 - **Tentative June 2021**
- **Annual Meeting Save the Date!**
 - December 15 – 17 in Raleigh, NC!

Additional Information:

- **Reminder to use the SRP Data Collection Tool (DCT) to submit Trainee Highlights!**

- Awards, publications, honors; Photos of activities; SRP uses these entries to learn about what trainees are doing and to select trainees to highlight in the E-Posted! We also consider submitted photos for the E-Posted Photo of the Month! Helps you with the Annual Update Process!
- **Reminder to update CareerTrac**
- **KC Donnelly Externship**
 - The application submission for the KC Donnelly Externship has changed.
 - The Notice of Special Interest (NOSI) has been published in the NIH Guide. Please refer to the NOSI ([NOT-ES-21-005](#)) to see the changes to the application submission. The deadline for the letter of intent was extended to March 1, and supplement applications are due April 1.
 - Brittany Trottier is the contact for the KC Donnelly Externship (brittany.trottier@nih.gov)
 - <https://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/supported/centers/srp/training/donnelly/index.cfm>
 - Question: When will we hear about KCDs? *We typically send out notifications mid-May. Funding will start early to mid-June.*
- **Wetterhahn Award**
 - The winner of the 2021 Wetterhahn Award will be announced at the SRP Annual Meeting in December.
 - Congratulations to Jennifer Kay! Kay completed her Ph.D. under the direction of Bevin Engelward, Ph.D., at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology SRP Center and is now a researcher at Silent Spring Institute.
 - Nominations for the 2021 Karen Wetterhahn Memorial Award will be accepted from July 1st until August 1st.
 - <https://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/supported/centers/srp/training/wetterhahn/index.cfm>
- **Reminder to send updates to SPAN Leadership Committee**
 - These will be taken September/January of each year (please limit to 1 – 2 graduate students/Post-Docs per Center to keep up with the listserv)
 - Please email your nominations to danielle.carlin@nih.gov and indicate the current status of the new member (e.g., graduate student or Post-Doc)
 - Membership on the SPAN Leadership Committee is a two-year term.
- **SRP Website – for SPAN/Training**
 - <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/supported/srp/training/index.cfm>
 - Notes from all previous SPAN Teleconferences/WebEx Discussions are posted here.
- **SRP e-posted: Trainee Highlights**
 - Training Core Leaders, please send Natalie Rodriguez (natalie.rodriguez@nih.gov) any news items of interest to trainees (e.g., trainee success stories, pictures, job announcements).

- **SRP/NIEHS on Linked In:** <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8565066>
 - Note: this is for SRP Trainees only

See you in June! Keep an eye for the doodle poll.