

NIGMS Feedback Loop

A catalyst for interaction with the scientific community



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The National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) is one of the National Institutes of Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. By supporting basic biomedical research and training nationwide, NIGMS lays the foundation for advances in disease diagnosis, treatment, and prevention.

The *NIGMS Feedback Loop* is an e-mail newsletter alerting researchers to NIGMS [funding opportunities](#), trends, and plans. We encourage your [input and feedback](#) on Institute activities.

All NIGMS grantees are automatically subscribed to the *NIGMS Feedback Loop*; other interested individuals are encouraged to subscribe themselves. To subscribe, change your subscription options, or unsubscribe, visit the *NIGMS Feedback Loop* [subscription page](#) on the NIH LISTSERV Web site.

A Message from the NIGMS Director

In these times of budgetary constraint, investigators are understandably quite conscious of NIH funding policies. In this message, I will reiterate NIGMS' policies and provide historical data on their impact. NIGMS does not use a "payline" in making funding decisions, meaning that the percentile score is not the only factor considered when Institute staff and Advisory Council members recommend specific grant applications for funding (see the [NAGMS Council Guidelines for Funding Decisions](#)). Among the other factors taken into account are whether the applicant is a new investigator, the level of other support available to the investigator and potential scientific overlap, and NIGMS scientific program needs and balance.

Figure 1 below shows the total number of applications assigned to NIGMS (in white) and the number of applications funded (in black) versus the percentile score for both new (Type 1) and competing renewal (Type 2) R01 applications in Fiscal Year 2005. Note the gradual decline (rather than a sharp cutoff) in the number of grants funded as the percentile increases.

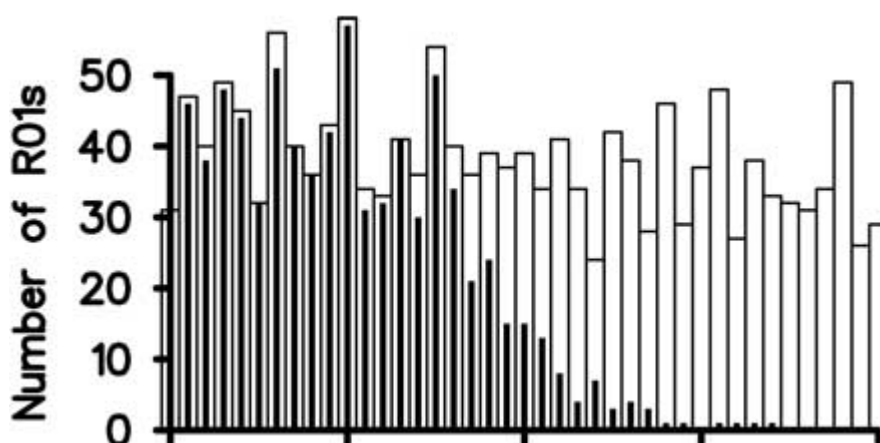


Figure 1: NIGMS Type 1&2 R01s Reviewed and Funded, FY 2005

To put this graph into context over time, Figure 2 plots the percentage of R01 applications funded versus the percentile score for Fiscal Years 2000-2005. Also shown are the corresponding published success rates for these years.

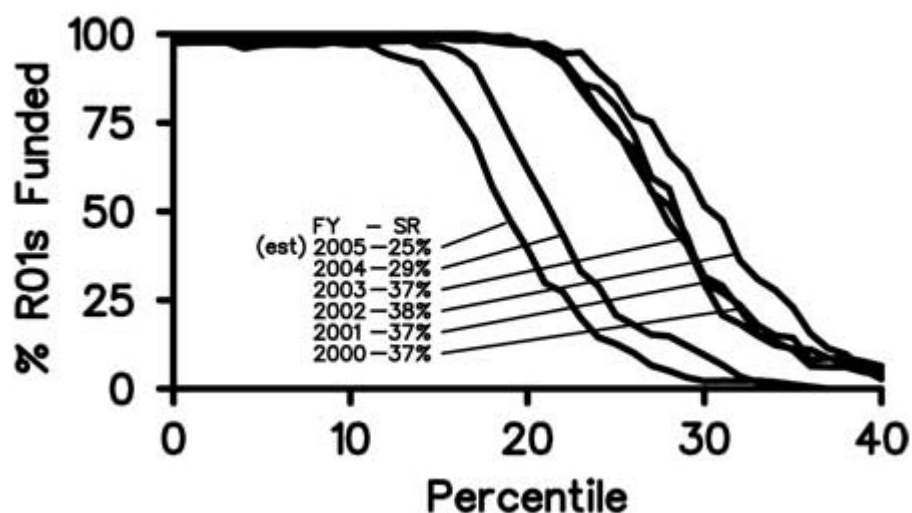


Figure 2: Funding Curves for NIGMS Type 1&2 R01s, FY 2000-2005

The shift of these curves to lower percentiles over time is due to two factors. First, the number of funded grants has leveled off and decreased slightly over the past 2 years after growing by approximately 30% during the period in which the NIH budget doubled.

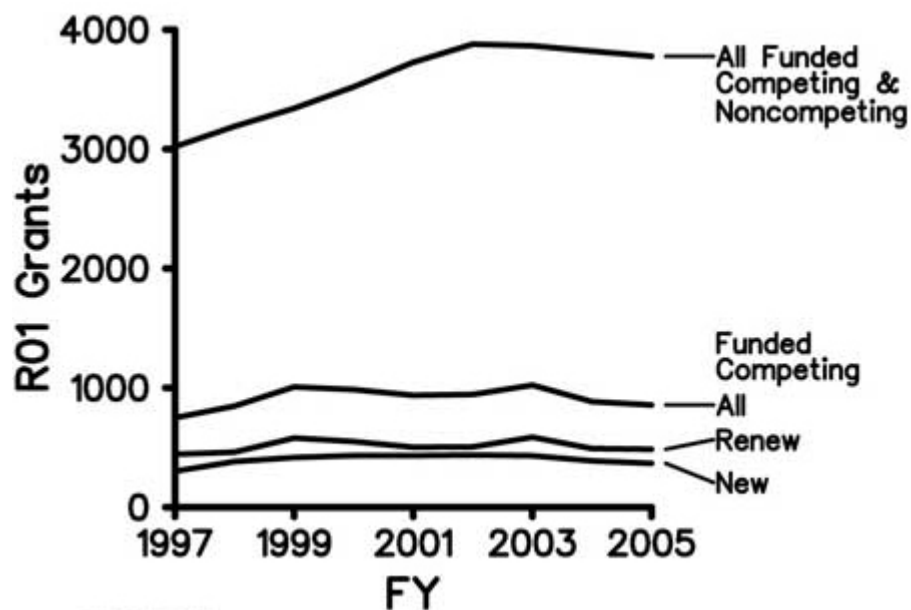


Figure 3: NIGMS-Funded R01 Grants, FY 1997-2005

The second factor—and the one that has had a larger effect—is the significant increase in the number of R01 applications that began in FY 2003 and has continued since then (see Figure 4, which also includes applications for R29 grants, an award category that NIGMS converted to R01 in FY 1999).

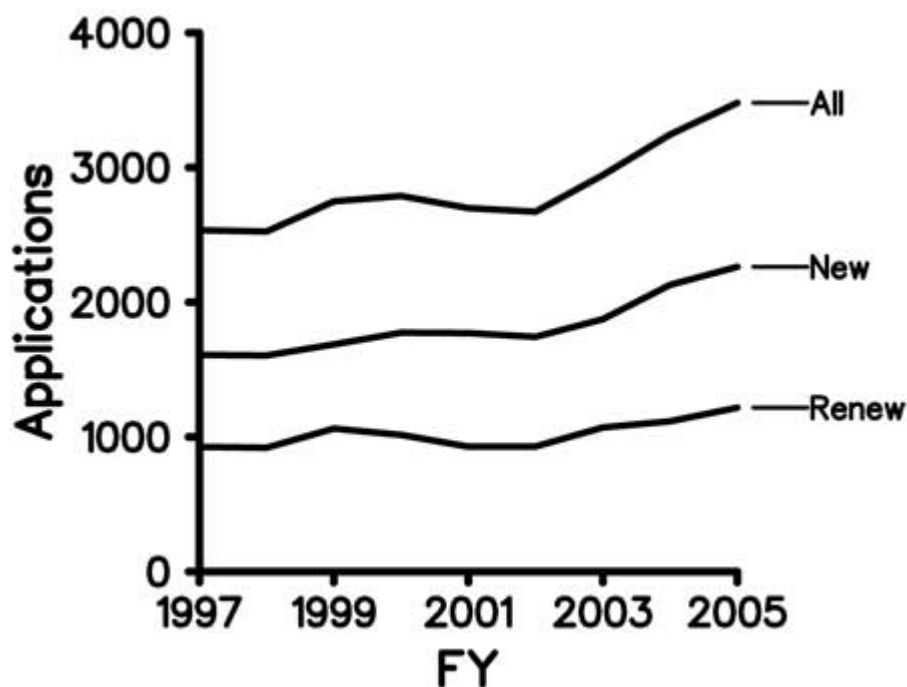


Figure 4: NIGMS R01 Applications, FY 1997-2005 (also includes pre-FY 1999 R29s)

Since the percentile depended both on the priority score and the number of applications considered, this increase in the number of proposals has contributed significantly to the decrease in success rate over the period from FY 2003 to FY 2005.

I hope these data are useful in clarifying Institute policies. As always, I welcome your questions and comments. We are preparing additional data on this topic and will be posting it on the NIGMS Web site at <http://www.nigms.nih.gov/research/application/trends>.

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Advisory Council Concept Clearance

Proposed new NIGMS research and training programs are made public at the open session of National Advisory General Medical Sciences Council meetings. Council approval of new initiatives (and major changes to existing initiatives) is called "concept clearance." Concept clearance authorizes NIGMS staff to develop plans, publish announcements in the [NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts](#), and fund grants. During the initiative planning stages that follow concept clearance, NIGMS welcomes comments and suggestions from the community.

At its September 2005 meeting, the Council discussed the concept clearance summarized below. For additional details, see the [Council minutes](#) or contact the identified NIGMS staff member.

NIGMS AIDS Structural Biology Program

James Cassatt, director of the NIGMS Division of Cell Biology and Biophysics, proposed a plan to fund two to three centers for the structural determination of complexes between HIV proteins and cellular components.

Although researchers have determined the structures of many HIV proteins in isolation, they know the structures of only a few HIV proteins interacting with cellular components. Because HIV works through such interactions, knowing the structures of more of these complexes will provide targets for new generations of anti-AIDS drugs.

Dr. Cassatt received Council approval to initiate plans for establishing the AIDS Structural Biology Centers, to replace a group of program project grants whose funding will expire in FY 2007. The new centers would take advantage of the technologies developed through the NIGMS Protein Structure Initiative (PSI) by setting up automated procedures for cloning, expression, and structure determination.

Structures to be determined would originate from the PSI centers and individual research grants (R21s and R33s) linked to the centers. These individual grants would be funded through a separate announcement issued by the Division of AIDS in the National Institute of Allergy and

Infectious Diseases.

For more information, contact Dr. Cassatt at cassattj@nigms.nih.gov or 301-594-0828.

Funding Opportunity

Collaborative Research for Molecular and Genomic Studies of Basic Behavior in Animal Models

NIGMS has teamed with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development to invite investigator-initiated grant applications for collaborative research using molecular or genomic approaches to address questions about basic mechanisms of behavior in animal models. The purpose of the initiative is to facilitate collaborations between behavioral scientists and investigators with expertise in state-of-the-art molecular biology or genomics.

For more information, see [PA-06-038](#) in the *NIH Guide* or contact NIGMS program director Laurie Tompkins at tompkinl@nigms.nih.gov or 301-594-0943.

NIGMS-Sponsored Events

Town Hall Meeting on NRSA Tuition, Fees, and Health Insurance Policies

Warren Jones, chief of the NIGMS Biochemistry and Biorelated Chemistry Branch, encourages interested individuals to participate in an NIH Town Hall meeting concerning possible revisions to fiscal policies governing the Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award program, which comprises both institutional training grants and individual fellowships.

The meeting will be held on November 30, 2005, in Room E1/E2 of the NIH Natcher Conference Center, Bethesda, MD, and will focus primarily on the funding of educational costs such as tuition, fees, and health insurance provided through institutional training grants.

Advance registration for this meeting is required. For more information,

see [NOT-OD-06-003](#) in the *NIH Guide* or contact Dr. Jones at jonesw@nigms.nih.gov or 301-594-3827.

Annual Meeting of the Protein Structure Initiative

John Norvell, chief of the NIGMS Structural Genomics and Proteomics Technology Branch, invites interested individuals to attend the Protein Structure Initiative annual meeting on December 8, 2005, in Room D of the NIH Natcher Conference Center, Bethesda, MD. The meeting will feature presentations from all 10 PSI research centers, followed by a discussion of the initiative's plans and goals.

Space at this meeting is limited; if you'd like to attend, please contact Dr. Norvell at norvellj@nigms.nih.gov or 301-594-0533.

Research Administration Notes

Summary Statements Now Only Available Electronically

As of October 1, 2005, NIH is no longer sending hard-copy summary statements to grant applicants. Beginning February 1, 2006, NIH will no longer send hard copies of the notification letters (also known as "mailers") regarding the review outcome of applications. Investigators must use the NIH electronic Research Administration (eRA) Commons Web site to access these documents.

For more information, including instructions on how to register for the eRA Commons, see [NOT-OD-05-075](#) in the *NIH Guide*.

NIH Paperless Grant Process Is Under Way

NIH continues its move toward a paperless grant process with the announcement of a new application form and an electronic submission process that will be phased in by grant type.

Applicants should take particular note of the following changes.

New application form: The PHS398 will be replaced by the SF424 Research & Related application form.

Electronic submission: By the end of 2007, all grant applications will be submitted through the Grants.gov Web site. Applicants will need to register for accounts on both the Grants.gov and eRA Commons Web sites.

The schedule for transitioning to electronic submission is:

- December 1, 2005—Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) Programs (R41, R42, R43, R44)
- December 15, 2005—Support for Conferences and Scientific Meetings (R13 & U13)
- February 17, 2006—Research Dissertation Grant Program (R36)
- February 25, 2006—Academic Research Enhancement Awards (R15)
- June 1, 2006—Small Grant Programs (R03) and Exploratory/Development Research Grant Awards (R21/R33)
- October 1, 2006—Research Project Grant Program (R01)

For more information about the new application form and electronic submission, including instructions on how to register for Grants.gov and the eRA Commons, see [NOT-OD-05-067](#) in the *NIH Guide*.

Hurricane Information for Investigators and Institutions

NIH is working with researchers and institutions affected by this season's hurricanes to sustain the biomedical research enterprise and ensure that NIH-funded research continues.

Those affected by Hurricane Wilma should note that each application submitted late because of an institutional closure or evacuation order should include a cover letter explaining the reasons for the delay. It is not necessary to get permission in advance for hurricane-related delays in grant application submissions. For more information, see [NOT-OD-06-006](#) in the *NIH Guide*.

A Web page is available for the biomedical research community with information related to the [NIH response to Hurricane Katrina](#). This page includes information of particular relevance to affected investigators and their institutions, including *NIH Guide* notices as well as links to Federal agencies, professional societies, and investigators offering assistance.

Resources

Microarray Services for Neuroscientists

NIGMS-funded investigators who study any aspect of neuroscience are now eligible to use the [NIH Neuroscience Microarray Consortium](#). The consortium will do start-to-finish expression profiling, from RNA extraction and labeling through data analysis. It also provides training, reagents, and ancillary services such as laser-capture microdissection, hybridization of investigator-supplied probes, and SNP genotyping. A variety of array platforms are available for human, mouse, rat, *Drosophila*, *C. elegans*, and other species. Costs are reasonable because the consortium is subsidized.

For more information, contact NIGMS program director Laurie Tompkins at tompkinl@nigms.nih.gov or 301-594-0943, or consortium coordinator Sarah Brautigam at arrayconsortium@tgen.org or 602-343-8732.

New NIGMS Web Site

The [NIGMS Web site](#) has a new look—and new features—intended to make it easier to use. The home page now presents timely information about funding opportunities and results, while providing ready access to a wealth of material about the Institute's programs and activities. Some of the site's other changes include:

- up-to-date [lists of funding opportunities](#) generated through tailored searches of the *NIH Guide*;
- an improved [staff contacts page](#) that includes more ways of finding people;
- and an enhanced, Google-based [search function](#).

We welcome your comments and questions about the new site. Please let us know what you think by using the main "Contact Us" form accessible from the footer of any page on the site or by sending e-mail to webmaster@nigms.nih.gov.

And if a survey form pops up, please consider taking the time to complete it. We take the results of visitor satisfaction surveys very seriously, and we are eager to compare your ratings of our new site to those of our old one.

The NIGMS Feedback Loop is produced by the National Institute of General Medical Sciences. For more information about the Institute, visit <http://www.nigms.nih.gov>. For more information about the NIGMS Feedback Loop, please contact coordinator James Deatherage at deatherj@nigms.nih.gov or 301-594-0828. The material in this newsletter is not copyrighted and we encourage its use or reprinting.