

PEER REVIEW NOTES

January 2004

CSR Releases Peer Review Video

The Center for Scientific Review (CSR) has produced a video of a mock study section meeting: *Inside the NIH Grant Review Process*. It is an introduction for both applicants and new reviewers to the NIH peer review system. The video also provides information on what applicants can do to improve their applications. The video may be viewed in streaming media via the Web. Go to the following address for more information and to download the video: <http://www.csr.nih.gov/video/video.asp>.

Institute of Medicine Members Well Represented on CSR Study Sections

Thirty-four of the 65 individuals elected to the Institute of Medicine (IOM) this past summer have served on CSR study sections—33 within the last 10 years. This is just one demonstration of the extraordinary caliber of reviewers that serve on CSR's study sections. For more information about the mission of the IOM and how its members are selected, visit <http://www.iom.edu>.

In the Center of the Storm—Meet the Chief of CSR's Infectious Disease and Microbiology IRG

In the early months of 2002, most of us were still in shock from the 9-11 and anthrax attacks. Few knew what might happen next. It is safe to say Dr. Alex Politis did not quite know what he was getting into when he applied for a new job as chief of CSR's Infectious Disease and Microbiology Integrated Review Group (IRG). Read his story on the CSR Staff Stories Web site: http://www.csr.nih.gov/staff_stories/staffstories.asp.

The Workload Continues to Increase

The number of applications received by CSR jumped a dramatic 24% between fiscal year (FY) 2002 and 2003—from 55,030 to 68,478 applications. The vast majority of these applications are for NIH grants, although CSR receives a small percentage of grant applications for other components of the Department of Health and Human Services.

This unprecedented increase appears to be continuing. In the first 3 months of FY 2004 (October 2003 - December 2003), CSR received over 23,000 applications—an increase of more than 15% over the number of applications received in the same period last year (20,060).

CSR generally reviews approximately 70% of the research grant applications submitted to NIH. In FY 2003, CSR reviewed 23% more applications than it did FY 2002.

All of these increases exacerbate other increases that occurred as the NIH budget was doubled between FY 1998 and FY 2003. During this period, CSR's receipt workload increased 65% and its review workload increased 55%.

Reorganization Update

Implementation Cycle 3: First Meetings of Five Reorganized Groups of Study Sections

CSR is nearing the end of the third of six cycles to implement new IRGs developed in the process established by the Panel on Scientific Boundaries for Review (PSBR). In February/March 2004, new study sections created within the following IRGs will hold their first meetings: (1) Bioengineering Sciences and Technologies, (2) Cardiovascular Sciences, (3) Digestive Sciences, (4) Respiratory Sciences, and (5) Renal and Urological Sciences. In the previous two cycles, CSR implemented four IRGs: (1) Hematology; (2) Biology of Development and Aging; (3) Musculoskeletal, Oral and Skin Sciences; and (4) Oncological Sciences.

Implementation Cycle 4: Provisional Rosters and IRG Descriptions Available for Three More IRGs

In February 2004, CSR will begin referring applications to several reorganized or newly created IRGs, including (1) Endocrinology, Metabolism, Nutrition and Reproductive Sciences; (2) Immunology; and (3) Surgical Sciences, Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering. These IRGs will hold their first meetings in June/July 2004. The provisional rosters for the new study sections are currently available on the Web via the PSBR Implementation Timeline (<http://www.csr.nih.gov/events/timeline.htm>) and CSR's Roster Index (<http://www.csr.nih.gov/Committees/rosterindex.asp>). The guidelines for each IRG are available on CSR's IRG Description page (<http://www.csr.nih.gov/review/irgdesc.htm>).

Implementation Cycles 5 and 6: Recent Approvals and Approvals in Progress

By May 2004, CSR will post the IRG descriptions and provisional rosters for the study sections within the Infectious Diseases and Microbiology and the Genes, Genomes and Genetics IRGs. Application referral to these IRGs will begin in June 2004, and their first study section meetings will occur in October/November 2004.

The last two IRGs to be implemented are (1) Cell Biology, and (2) Biological Chemistry and Macromolecular Biophysics. CSR hopes to convene their new study sections in February 2005. News on the status of these two IRGs and other late-breaking reorganization news will be posted on CSR's Reorganization Activities Web page: (<http://www.csr.nih.gov/review/reorgact.asp>).

Third Amendment Rule for CSR's Reorganization

NIH and CSR have taken steps to ensure that applicants are not disadvantaged due simply to the timing of CSR's study section reorganization. NIH policy generally allows consideration of applications that have been revised or amended up to two times (A1 and A2). NIH recently announced that a third revision (A3) will be allowed if an application meets all of the following criteria: its first revision (A1) was reviewed in a to-be-disbanded study section and it failed to receive funding; it was then reviewed in a newly created study section as a second revision (A2) and not funded; and a note citing the opportunity for a third revision appears on the A2 summary statement. For more information about the A3 rule, please visit the following Web page: <http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-03-065.html>.