

PEER REVIEW NOTES

May 2005

New CSR Director Named

Dr. Antonio Scarpa was recently named to be the new Director of the Center for Scientific Review (CSR). He currently is the David and Inez Myers Professor and Chair of the Department of Physiology and Biophysics at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. Dr. Scarpa has served as a permanent member of three NIH peer review committees between 1983 and 2003, and he has served on peer review committees for the American Heart Association. Dr. Scarpa plans to join NIH on July 1, though he now spends “vacation” time at NIH nearly each week to meet with NIH officials and CSR staff. The press release and an interview with Dr. Scarpa are available on CSR’s Web site:

http://www.csr.nih.gov/Director_CSR/Director_CSR.asp.

NIH Invites Electronic Grant Applications for June and July

Over the past 18 months, NIH’s Electronic Research Administration (eRA) has successfully tested the electronic receipt of more than 100 select competing grant applications through five pilots, with more than 30 institutions participating nationwide.

Building on that experience, NIH went live in January 2005—inviting unrestricted electronic submission of select grant applications. NIH successfully received 40 applications electronically for the Feb. 1 and March 1 receipt dates. NIH is again inviting applicants to submit select competing grants electronically for the June 1, 2005 and July 1, 2005 receipt dates. NIH will electronically accept modular [R01](#), [R03](#) and [R21](#) grant applications. Other restrictions may apply.

Currently, there are two ways an applicant can submit grants electronically to NIH:

- Through a service provider—one of six companies that have developed high-end software systems compatible with NIH systems.
- Through a direct system-to-system interface that an institution can develop with NIH.

At the end of the year, applicants will be able to submit through www.Grants.gov, a federal Web portal that provides grant info and the ability to apply for grants from 26 federal agencies. For updates on NIH’s progress with Grants.gov and detailed information on electronic submission, visit us at

http://era.nih.gov/Projectmgmt/SBIR/sbir_grants.htm.

How NIH Reviewers Launched the Rocket Boys of Buffalo

In 1957, a 9 year old named Terence Boylan sent a request to NIH for \$10 to build a rocket ship. After reviewing his request, the NIH National Health Advisory Council decided to make personal investments in the future: they passed the hat and sent Terence the money he needed for his research. CSR recently found Terence and wrote up the story, which is a tribute to the passion and imagination of researchers—young and old—who seek to do something no one has done before and a tribute to the amazing things that can happen when we invest in the best of them. You can read the whole story by going to CSR’s Web site:

<http://www.csr.nih.gov/history>.

Updated Review Criteria

The NIH Peer Review Criteria for investigator-initiated research grant applications were recently modified to accommodate better interdisciplinary, translational, and clinical projects. Beginning this review round, reviewers will be instructed to use the updated criteria as the basis for evaluating research grant applications and for assigning a single, global score for each scored application. For more information on the updated criteria and their implementation, please go to the following Web page:
<http://grants2.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-05-002.html>.

Model Organism Sharing Plans

All NIH applications proposing development of new, genetically modified variants of model organisms and related resources are expected to include a sharing plan or state why such sharing is restricted or not possible. The term “model organism” includes mammalian models (such as the mouse and rat) and non-mammalian models (such as budding yeast, fruit fly, zebrafish, frog, etc). Examples of model organisms for which a sharing plan is expected when new, genetically modified organisms are developed is posted on the NIH Model Organisms for Biomedical Research Web site: <http://www.nih.gov/science/models>.

Reviewers are expected to comment on the adequacy of the sharing plan and describe their assessment in an administrative note. However, except in defined circumstances, this assessment should not be considered when assigning a priority score to the application. For more information about NIH policy and other resources regarding Model Organism Sharing, visit http://grants2.nih.gov/grants/policy/model_organism.

New Peer Review Advisory Committee

NIH’s new Peer Review Advisory Committee (PRAC) held its inaugural meeting on January 24-25, 2005 and a subsequent meeting was held on May 16, 2005. The committee replaces the CSR Advisory Committee, which last met in September 2004, and the Peer Review Oversight Group, which had not met since February 2003. The reorganization results from a recognition of a need for a single committee to advise all NIH stakeholders—including CSR, the Office of Extramural Research, the NIH director, and NIH Institute and Center directors—about peer review policies and practices. For more information about PRAC, including membership and presentations given to the committee, visit <http://grants2.nih.gov/grants/peer/prac>.

Flat Rate Reimbursement for Reviewers

For close to 50 years, NIH has used the Scientific Review and Evaluation Award (SREA) program to reimburse non-federal reviewers for travel expenses associated with attending scientific review meetings. Though the program has served its purpose, its reimbursement process is labor-intensive, paper-driven, and prone to errors.

Effective October 1, 2005, NIH will unveil a new SREA program similar to the flat reimbursement program that the National Science Foundation has used with much success. CSR is working closely with the NIH Office of Financial Management and other NIH offices to ensure a smooth transition from the old to the new SREA program. A Web site will be deployed soon to keep the NIH and reviewer communities informed about the transition.

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