Corridor Talk:
necessary informal inside information

NIH, Its Institutes, and Its Funding Mechanisms
for Medical Research

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United States of America, North American Continent, Earth
cor-i-dor talk

1: the practice of passing on tips, insights, and strategies about the means of production of academic work (as at professional conferences, where, it is frequently remarked, the most important business takes place “out in the corridor” rather than inside the meeting rooms)

2: nonascribable (off-the-record) but necessary information; practical gossip

3: common-sense, informal (not publicly taught) mentoring; the unsaid, but frequently said anyway (though not to everyone).
Goals

1. Overview of NIH.
2. Briefly cover NIH procedures.
   • Normal pathway for a grant proposal
   • Roles of NIH
   • Roles of PI
   • Ways you can help in process
   • Things not to do

Provide researchers new to NIH with information to help improve the overall quality of new proposals in biomedical engineering research.
The Government is a very big place.
NIH is a pretty big place.

Give a basic introduction to the National Institutes of Health.
Give a basic introduction to the NIH funding picture and some basic differences from NSF

DARPA: $2.91 Billion
NSF: $7.254 Billion
NASA: $17.461 Billion
DOE: $27.941 Billion
NIH: $30.203 Billion

Source: the 2015 Presidential budget request
Mission of the NIH

Promoting the nation’s health through research.

1. Intramural research (NIH labs) - 10% of the budget, 6,000 scientists
2. Extramural research (grants) - 80-90% of the budget

Not a monolithic Agency - 27 Institutes and Centers

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Source: https://officeofbudget.od.nih.gov/pdfs/FY17/31-Overview.pdf
REVIEW PROCESS FOR NIH RESEARCH GRANTS

Principal Investigator Initiates Research Idea

Research Grant Application (PI)

School or Other Research Center (Applicant)

Submits application

Center for Scientific Review

Assign to IC and IRG

Scientific Review Group

Review for Scientific Merit

Institute

Evaluate for Relevance

Advisory Council or Board

Recommends Action

Institute Director

Allocates Funds $$

Takes final action for NIH Director

National Institutes of Health
IRG = SRG = Panel = Study Section
Conducts the scientific review

Primary Reviewer
Secondary Reviewer
Reader

Closed ballot for scores

Reviews are penned before
(Score can seem disconnected)

Others in room, but non-voting
1. Each CSR standing study section has 12-24 members who are primarily from academia.

2. CSR standing study sections convene face-to-face meetings.

3. As many as 60-100 applications are reviewed by each study section.
CSR Standing Study Section Rosters

BCHI (02/05/2016 - 02/05/2016)

Center For Scientific Review
MEETING ROSTER

CHAIRPERSON
MINNOW, DEEMA A, MD, PhD
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE
COLLEGE OF SCIENCE
FORDHAM UNIVERSITY
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MEMBERS
ARONOW, BRUCE J, MD (*)
PROFESSOR
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BELL, RONI A, MD
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CANTOR, MICHAEL N, MD (*)
DIRECTOR OF CLINICAL RESEARCH INFORMATICS AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF POPULATION HEALTH
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NEW YORK, NY 10016

DIXON, BRIAN EDWARD, PhD (*)
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR AND RESEARCH SCIENTIST
DALE BANHAM SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
UNIVERSITY OF INDIANA
INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46202
Institute Council makes funding decision

Score
Relevance
Mission concerns

Program Officer often in room, but non-voting
How do you decide where to send your grant?

• Many institutes to choose from
  Which one is right?
    Look at mission statements of likely institutes
    Does your research fit?

• Is there a PA or RFA on your research area?
  How to find out about these?
    Use the NIH website to search them
      www.nih.gov

• No PA or RFA? OK if no RFA (“Investigator Initiated” R01)

• Which institute(s) is right?
  1. Mission statements
  2. How to narrow them down?
    • Look at portfolio for those institutes
  3. Perhaps it is better not to narrow them down
    • Double listing can be best
    • Paylines and priorities differ

• Speak with Program Officers
Ask ADVICE from the Program Officer

• Tell him/her about your research goals
  – What type of grant are you going for?
• Ask:
  – Is this the right institute?
  – Should I have a dual funding assignment?
  – What study section would be good for my grant?
  – Any comments on the science?
• How are new PIs helped?
  – On your PHS398, check the box for new investigators
    You are new until you get your first RO1, smaller grants don’t count
  – If you have a good relationship with Program officer and he/she needs your app to fill in a gap in his portfolio
    You might get rescued from the no fund pile and put in for funding even with a worse score than others

Your number one goal must be to become a face or name, rather than a proposal number!
Investigate study section

- Make sure that someone on that panel knows your field and the techniques you will be using
- If no one is available on panel
  - Once you get your SRO and study section assignment, write a letter asking for someone in a particular field or area of expertise to be added to the study section
What not to do?

1. Never Demand
2. Never ask for snap decision (ask advice)
3. Never contact IRG members!
4. Never assume that the IRG member you don’t like did you in in the meeting.
5. Never ignore comments, even from “stupid” reviewers