

The Research Notebook

A Publication of the Office of Research

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 2

APRIL 2012

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Dear Colleagues,

Carlos Bustamante, molecular biologist at UC-Berkeley and Howard Hughes Medical Investigator, is quoted as saying, "Being a scientist means living on the borderline between your competence and your incompetence. If you always feel competent, you aren't doing your job." In the same vein is Isaac Asimov's comment, "The most exciting phrase to hear in science, the one that heralds new discoveries, is not "Eureka!" ("I found it!") but rather "hmm....that's funny..." To state the obvious, science is hard. And, it got considerably harder with the tightening in extramural funding pay lines. We lived through the single-digit pay lines of the early 1990's, but it seems worse this time. This is no great insight on my part. It is the daily conversations in darkened microscopy suites, journal clubs at lunch time, and at every lab bench at UTHSC.



Dr. Polly Hofmann

What is not so freely discussed is how extraordinarily disheartening our jobs as academic scientists can be. Perhaps five years back I was at an NIH study section when we were told one of our members had committed suicide since our last meeting. I caught myself wondering if his grant had gotten triaged. It was a wake-up call to realize just how discouraging research had become for me. Although I now see how distorted my thoughts were, in lesser ways, I can still hear it in frustrated tones when we talk about bridge funding, the demise of the A2 NIH grant application opportunity, shortened applications, or low pay lines. I see it now in the faces of young investigators when they ask me, "Now what?" after they have poured themselves into their first independent application and the score stinks. I don't have definitive solutions to such gnawing frustrations, but I do think we can help each other.

Step one is to be open about how defeating it feels to put your best ideas and best pilot data into a grant that you cannot seem to get funded. Step two might be to (1) form new collaborations, inside your department, outside your department, or even outside UTHSC to strengthen good ideas, (2) use the multiple PI or Co-PI mechanism, and/or (3) let colleagues vigorously debate your intended response to the proposal critique. I asked some of our most successful grant writers what they thought was important for competitive grant applications. Extracts from their feedback:

(Continued on page 2)

Research Update (cont.)

“It used to be that if we would submit something on smoking cessation, all three [NIH] reviewers would be an expert in smoking cessation. Now that there are shorter applications and more streamlined reviews, the study sections are getting smaller and smaller to save money. This increases the probability that people will review your proposal that actually do not know much about the topic. As such, we have learned to never assume that the reviewer is aware of the cutting edge issues. The pragmatic part of this is we spend less time on the research plan and more space on significance and innovativeness.” - Dr. Bob Klesges

“Never write a proposal in an area where there is too much competition, in other words, find your own niche.” - Dr. Gadiparthi Rao

“Collaborate! Collaborations allow you to add new dimensions to a research program and to improve the likelihood of submitting an innovative proposal. Collaborate even if you do not need to!” - Dr. Rob Williams

“Multidisciplinary teams of researchers are more likely to get funded. Cross discipline research is also valued (biology and engineering). Anticipate the evolving trends and position your work there. Important new areas include genomics, epigenetics, systems biology, nanotechnology.” - Dr. Ed Cham

“Continually reinvent yourself. Apply as many techniques as possible to answer the problem. Always incorporate the latest techniques.” – Dr. Jon Jaggard

“Success came only because I had strong support from experienced colleagues who read my proposals, the study section's summaries and my replies and gave very specific and detailed advice on how to respond and rewrite the proposals. This took a substantial amount of my colleagues time and I realized from talking to beginning faculty in other departments and schools that this level of support is rather exceptional.” - Dr. Detlef Heck

You should also know the Office of Research is dedicated to doing its best to reduce frustrations and facilitate research at UTHSC. I know you've heard it before in many different forms. I am committed to making it happen. The major areas of focus this year are (1) publicize and improve access to research support services, (2) right size and add new services, and (3) foster, at all levels, an investigator-supportive attitude. To this end, we will be creating a single webpage, “Research Prime Link,” that will be an organized index of links to everything research at UTHSC. This is similar to the student webpage OLSEN (Only Link Students Ever Need) that is so helpful. Further, we are starting to review infrastructure and resources. Finally, we'll be working internally to further improve attitude, speed, and effectiveness of the service we provide to individuals.

Always feel free to e-mail me (phofmann@uthsc.edu) with research problems and/or ideas on how we can better help each other do research. I want to hear from you.



Polly Hofmann, PhD
Senior Associate Vice Chancellor of Research, UTHSC

Biomedical Informatics Services Available

The Office of Biomedical Informatics, a division of the Office of Research, offers UTHSC faculty and staff cost-effective expertise in biomedical informatics, health informatics, and clinical informatics.

The BMI offers secure and accessible biomedical/clinical databasing services to UT faculty – let us worry about your data security so you don't have to! All BMI systems are located in our secure "Slim-Prim" database, maintained on campus by UT Information Technology Services. In addition to HIPAA-compliant databasing services the BMI offers project planning and consultation, and expertise in grant application preparation in the areas of clinical and medical databasing.

Our current 'clients' and users include the Department of Surgery, which has several clinical trials and databases in Slim-Prim. We're working with the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Department of Pediatrics, through a collaboration with LeBonheur Children's Hospital and The Med, to maintain a database of over 20 years of birthing data from The Med. That's over more than 70,000 patients and 5 million data points! We will soon be launching a multisite clinical trial database as part of a major NIH award to the College of Pharmacy. In addition to these large-scale projects, we also work with clinical faculty on developing patient registries and databases. As you can see, we work on any project, large or small.

To find out more about the biomedical and clinical informatics resources available at UTHSC, please contact our Associate Director, Dr. Ian Brooks, at 901-448-5285 or email at ibrooks1@uthsc.edu.



Mock Study Section and Grant Application Consultation Available

The Research Office is pleased to announce two important events scheduled on April 3 and 4, which are designed to help faculty gain grant-writing skills. As described below Dr. Israel Goldberg, UTHSC grant consultant, will be on campus to participate in a Simulated Study Section Workshop and to provide one-on-one or small-group consultations.



1. Simulated Study Section Workshop: Tuesday, April 3 from 3 – 5pm in GEB 204

- Hear an overview of the NIH grant review process presented by Dr. Israel Goldberg, UTHSC grant consultant.
- Observe a simulated study section in session with highly experienced reviewers selected from our own faculty who are experienced NIH grant reviewers.
- Participate in scoring sample grants.
- Off-site faculty (including those in Chattanooga) will be able to view the presentation by videoconference.
- To attend the workshop, please register at http://bit.ly/study_section (Please note that between "study" and "section" is an underscore, so it should appear as: **(study_section)**)

2. Request One-On-One or Small-Group Consultation with Dr. Goldberg: Time slots are available on Tuesday, April 3 and Wednesday morning, April 4.

Contact Ms. Lisa Bronte at lbronte@uthsc.edu to request a meeting with Dr. Goldberg; please include times you are available.

For general questions about either of these events, please contact Dr. Dianna Johnson at dijohnson@uthsc.edu.

Annual Progress Reports and Individual Development Plans for Postdocs

For the first time, all postdocs, in conjunction with their respective mentors, will be required to submit an annual progress report to the Postdoc Office. This requirement is being instituted because postdocs represent the only group on campus not currently subject to an annual review. According to Vice Chancellor Cheryl Scheid, the UT System will be fully implementing the requirement that all regular as well as special employees (including postdocs) be reviewed annually.



The good news is that the Postdoc Office and the Postdoc Association have put together an electronic form that will make it easy for postdocs and mentors to meet this annual requirement. The ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT will allow the postdoc, with input from his/her mentor, to briefly document accomplishments made by listing major research projects, publications, funding, techniques learned, collaborations, and other career development activities in the past year. It is the individual postdoc's responsibility to fill out the form, get input and approval from his/her mentor, and email the approved form to jmaxwell@uthsc.edu by March 31, 2012.

If postdocs have been employed for less than 3 months, they should not use the ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT. Instead, they must complete the Postdoc Individual Development Plan (IDP) which lists their goals for the coming year and email it to jmaxwell@uthsc.edu by the same deadline date, March 31, 2012.

Nominations for 2011-2012 Outstanding Postdoc and Mentor Now Open

The PhDA and Postdoc office are now accepting nominations for the 2nd annual Outstanding Postdoc and Outstanding Mentor Awards. Nominations may come from mentors, fellow lab members, or postdocs.

The Outstanding Postdoc Award is designed to recognize candidates for their research achievements in addition to their commitment as advocates, teachers, and role models for their fellow postdocs and students. Two awards will be given again this year, one for postdocs with less than three years UTHSC postdoc experience and one award for postdocs with 3 or more years of UTHSC postdoc experience.

The Outstanding Postdoc Mentor Award recognizes that a good mentor serves not only as a teacher, but as an advisor, advocate, and role model to postdocs throughout their professional training. The Outstanding Postdoc Mentor serves as a model for the entire University and helps to promote a culture of mentoring and professional development.

The deadline to submit nominations is April 21, 2012. All nominees and winners will be recognized at the postdoc end of the year celebration in May.

Please email Jeddie Maxwell at jmaxwell@uthsc.edu to obtain nomination forms or for more information.

Congratulations to the 2010-2011 award winners:

Outstanding Postdoc: Drs. Zorica Janjetovic (Senior Achievement Award);

Mitulkumar N. Bavaria (Junior Achievement Award); and

Outstanding Postdoc Mentor Award: Drs. Anjapaperavanda P. Naren and Robert N. Williams.



CEIRS Award for Fabrizio

Tom Fabrizio, a graduate student in the Integrated Biomedical Sciences Program at UTHSC, has received an \$8,000 training award from the Centers of Excellence for Influenza Research and Surveillance (CEIRS) network. The award is intended to develop an interdisciplinary understanding of influenza biology and to help foster collaborations among influenza-research laboratories in the CEIRS network. Tom's research focuses on using the swine epithelial cell model developed in Dr. Ralph Tripp's laboratory at the University of Georgia to study the growth kinetics of various historical swine and human influenza viruses, as well as to test these viruses' ability to reassort within this model. Tom will also collaborate with Dr. Tripp's lab to optimize methods to identify and quantify reassortant viruses, especially those that pose agricultural and public-health threats. Tom's research mentor is Dr. Richard Webby, Associate Member of the Infectious Diseases Department at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Dr. Webby is also Director of the World Health Organization Collaborating Center for Studies on the Ecology of Influenza in Animals and Birds. He is affiliated with the Department of Microbiology, Immunology, and Biochemistry at UTHSC.

Fells Awarded Postdoc Ambassador Award

The UTHSC Postdoc Office would like to congratulate Dr. James Fells, Sr. on winning a Postdoctoral Scholar Research Integrity Ambassador Award, sponsored by the Office of Research Integrity (ORI) and selected by the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) Awards Committee. Dr. Fells is the first postdoctoral fellow from UTHSC to receive this prestigious award. Dr. Fells is currently an American Cancer Society Postdoctoral Fellow in the laboratory of Dr. Gabor Tigyi, in the department of Physiology. Dr. Fells is actively involved with the postdoc community here on campus. Currently, Dr. Fells serves as UTHSC PhDA President, while being a member of the postdoc advisory board and steering committee. Dr. Fells will receive this award at the ORI Conference on Research Integrity: "Quest for Research Excellence 2012" on March 15-16, 2012, in Washington, DC. This award recognizes exemplary achievement in leadership, scholarship, professional involvement, and university and community service, especially as it relates to involvement with research integrity. Congratulations again on this achievement!



Dr. James Fells

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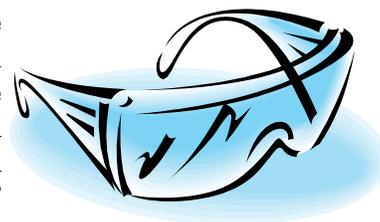
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Adobe Connect Team
connect@uthsc.edu

Access To Animal Facilities and Animal Facility Safety

As a reminder, only authorized individuals are permitted into the UTHSC animal facilities. Access is granted to persons that are listed on an approved protocol, who have completed the required training, and who are enrolled in the occupational health program. Visitors, unauthorized students, and children are specifically not allowed. Authorization is limited to those buildings, areas, or rooms where the principal investigators' animals are housed or research is being conducted. This policy exists to protect UTHSC employees, students, and the general public from unnecessary exposure to potential hazards, to protect animals and research from interference from unauthorized personnel, and to prevent the introduction and spread of infectious diseases that can impact the animals and animal research. Both faculty and staff are encouraged to assist in the enforcement of this policy and to report noncompliance to Dr. Tim Mandrell, Director, LACU at 448-5656 or UT Police at 448-4444. Unauthorized access to any animal facility is considered trespassing, will be dealt with as a police and research integrity matter, and will result in loss of animal facility access privileges. Recent incidents of breach of this policy have included entry into unapproved areas by someone with limited access or no access for the area and unauthorized visitors. Each time, admittance was enabled by the loaning of an ID card or by research personnel escorting unauthorized persons into restricted areas. Per UT Police Policy (www.uthsc.edu/campuspolice/controlled_access.php), persons loaning or otherwise misusing identification cards will be subject to disciplinary action.



As warm weather approaches, all animal facility users should be reminded that open toed shoes, sandals, and flip flops are strictly forbidden in the animal facility. This policy exists to protect all authorized users from accidental injury or risk of exposure to hazards.

If you have any questions regarding access to UTHSC research animal facilities, animal facility safety, or proper use of personal protective equipment, please contact the LACU supervisory or veterinary staff.

Miller Named IBC Chair

The Office of Research is pleased to announce that Mark A. Miller, Associate Professor in the Department of Microbiology, Immunology and Biochemistry (MIB), has assumed the role of Chair of the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC). In doing so, Mark replaces Michael Whitt, who was recently appointed Interim Chair of MIB. Mark received his undergraduate degree in Biology and Chemistry from West Texas A&M University, his graduate degree in Microbiology from Louisiana State University, and his post-doctoral training in Immunology at Emory University. Mark has served in various roles at UTHSC including as a member of the University of Tennessee Regional Biocontainment Laboratory Executive Committee (UTREC), the Committee On Biocontainment and Restricted Entities (COBRE), which is a sub-committee of the IBC, and most recently as a member of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. He is one of the Principal Investigators conducting select agent biodefense research in the Regional Biocontainment Laboratory (RBL), of which he is the Associate Director. His research interests are to gain an understanding of the pathogenic mechanisms used by the highly virulent bacterial pathogen *Francisella tularensis* and to better understand the host response to the bacterial pathogens *Acinetobacter baumannii*, *Burkholderia pseudomallei*, and *Francisella tularensis*. The overriding goal of his work is to develop strategies for detection, prevention, or treatment of infection with these dangerous bacterial pathogens.



Dr. Mark Miller

Advanced Notice Proposed Physician Payment Sunshine Provision

CMS Releases Proposed Regulations

Excerpted from the UT COMMunicator, Volume 13, Issue 1, Jan-Feb 2012

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released their proposed rule for the Physician Payment Sunshine Provision for section 6002 of the Affordable Care Act. The proposed rule will require manufacturers of drugs, devices, biologicals, and medical supplies covered by Medicare, Medicaid, or the Children's Health Insurance Program to report to CMS payments or other transfers of value they make to physicians and teaching hospitals. Teaching hospital is defined as "any institution receiving payments under the IPPS Indirect Medical Education (IME) Act or the psychiatric hospitals IME during the most recent year for which such information is available."

The rule applies to all payments to physicians of \$10.00 or more or any combination of payments that total more than \$100.00 in a calendar year. The following forms of payment apply:

- Consulting fees;
- Compensation for services other than consulting;
- Honoraria;
- Gifts;
- Entertainment;
- Food;
- Travel (including the specified destinations);
- Education;
- Research;
- Charitable contributions;
- Royalty or license;
- Current or prospective ownership or investment interest;
- Direct compensation for serving as faculty or as a speaker for a medical education program;
- Grant;
- Any other nature of the payment or transfer of value.

CMS is proposing that manufacturers and group purchasing organizations will be required to submit a partial year on March 31, 2013. Once the data have been submitted, CMS will aggregate manufacturer submissions at the individual physician and teaching hospital level, provide them with a 45-day period confidentially review, and if necessary correct that data, and make the data publicly available by September 30, 2013.

The public website must be searchable, understandable, downloadable, and easily aggregated on various levels, as stated in the statute.

The Affordable Care Act provides that violators of the reporting requirements will be subject to civil monetary penalties, capped at \$150,000 annually for failing to report, and \$1,000,000 for knowingly failing to report.

"Disclosure of these relationships will discourage the inappropriate influence on clinical decision-making that sometimes occurs while still allowing legitimate partnerships," Peter Budetti, CMS deputy administrator for program integrity, said in announcing the proposed rule. The increased transparency is intended to help reduce the potential for conflicts of interest with physicians or teaching hospitals might face as a result of their relationship with manufacturers.

Office of Research Administration

Contract Signature Requirements

You may have noticed that some UTHSC contracts are routed to Knoxville for signature, and you may wonder why. Under current UT system policy, all payable contracts over \$50,000 and all foreign contracts require signature by a system-level authorized signatory (usually Mr. Charles Peccolo, UT System Treasurer and Interim Chief Financial Officer).

Mr. Ferrara is working with the other campus business officers and system-level administrators to revise the current policy to provide for broader signature authority at the campus level. Until such revisions are approved, we must continue to send all payables over \$50K and all foreign contracts to Knoxville for signature and request that they be expedited.

We will keep the campus updated of any policy changes.



NIH Continuous Submission Policy for Reviewers with Recent Substantial Services

Individuals who serve on NIH study sections may be eligible for “continuous submission” of R01, R21, and R34 applications. The policy is applicable to “peer reviewers who have served as regular or temporary members of NIH peer review committees six times in 18 months (recent substantial review service).” MPI applications are eligible if one or more of the PD/PIs are eligible for continuous submission.

Applications submitted for continuous submission must include a cover letter stating the eligibility of the PI and may also include a request for an institute/center assignment. These applications will be reviewed no later than 120 days after receipt.

Specifics about the policy can be found at: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-11-093.html>

A list of eligible PIs can be found at: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/peer/CS_2012_combined.pdf



PAMS Tip

When entering proposals of all types (including MTAs and CDAs), you may want to include your departmental business manager or other administrative staff on the “Investigator/Research Team” page as “administrative contact” with zero effort and zero percent so that they can help track the progress of the proposal.

When entering CDAs and MTAs, be sure to use the template abstract language provided via the link provided for this purpose.



Office of Research Administration

American Heart Deadline Time Changes to 5pm Central

Effective July 1, 2012: The AHA has decided to change its application submission deadline time to 5:00 pm CT to provide greater support to applicants, institutions, and third parties. AHA staff will now be able to respond to inquiries and assist with programmatic questions and technical issues leading right up to the deadline time.



The Dangers of Delay

Reprinted from the NIH Nexus Posted on December 28, 2011

As the electronic submission process has improved, so have the potential dangers when submitting an application near the deadline.

One of the most fundamental steps you can take to ensure consideration of your application is to make certain we receive it successfully. This means applying well before the due date. Now we know we preach this often, but it is as true now as ever before.

As people become more confident in the ability of eRA to process applications quickly, we see an increasing backlog of “last minute” applications on submission due dates. For a recent December due date, more than 1,000 applications were submitted in the final hour. Here is the rub. This rush of submissions can create a potential back-log in processing; checking for errors can take up to 4 hours. Remember that a submission must be error free before it can be sent on for review.

What does this mean for you? Take this possible scenario...

The application is due at 5 p.m.

You submit at 4 p.m. on the due date.

Processing takes an hour and 45 minutes.

Two errors were identified.

You are now 45 minutes past the submission deadline with no chance to correct the errors that were identified. Not good. NIH's late policy will not allow for the consideration of this application. Had you submitted in the morning of the due date, or even the day or two before, you would have had plenty of time to correct the errors and submit a error-free application.

Please, we want your applications. Submit early.

NOTE from UTHSC ORA: The 5-working-day advance deadline for having grants routed to our office is set to allow time for our staff to fully review the proposal, make necessary corrections, submit to NIH, and check for agency-detected errors, well before the final deadline. One recent proposal went in about 15 minutes before the deadline and had errors. Luckily we were able to correct the errors and resubmit 4 minutes before the deadline. If there had been additional errors, it would have been too late. Also, as noted above, it sometimes takes hours to receive the error messages . . . and additional time is needed to figure out what the errors are and get them corrected. We have sometimes had to download, correct, rename, and re-upload files so the package could be resubmitted . . . all of this takes time.

PLEASE, get those proposals (in final form) to us early. We want to be certain your proposals meet the agency deadlines!



Contact List



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The Office of Research provides support for the faculty and staff of the Health Science Center in their efforts to obtain external funding for research and other sponsored projects, while ensuring compliance with UT policy, sponsor policy, and applicable law.

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