

HAMPTON UNIVERSITY

Researchers' Informational Forum At-a-Glance

Fall Semester 2015



September 2015

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October 2015

- EXPERIENCE AS A GRANT REVIEWER



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USDA'S NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

The Washington Office of Hampton University



Submitted by: **Mrs. Linda Earley Chastang**
Washington Office of Hampton University

September 2015



The Washington Office of Hampton University puts “boots on the ground” in the nation’s capital, positioning the University to better compete for federal research and other grants and opportunities.

Before Congress suspended earmarks a few years ago, “lobbyists for universities could focus on the top handful of earmarks universities wanted to pursue.” Since then, the focus, resources and energy have shifted to the Executive Branch, where federal funds are *competed*.

Now, those working on behalf of universities have to work harder. They have to cultivate more relationships within the federal agencies. They have to dig down to figure out first, what are the main policy concerns that the university wants to focus on. Then they have to focus on building executive branch agency relationships. And, then they have to figure out what programs at those agencies are of most importance to the university. Where do the university’s capabilities align with the priorities or the agency? That’s what we have to figure out. It’s much harder work than in the earmark era.

Consider the Washington Office your “*deep diggers*.”

Currently, the Washington Office is staffed by Leslie Cash and Linda Chastang. The Washington Office reports to the Executive Vice President and Provost of the University and serves as a resource to *all* faculty, the Vice President, Institutional Development; the Vice President of Government Relations; and the President.

WHAT WE DO....

The Washington Office is just one of the tools in your fundraising and grants toolbox. It is to supplement – *not replace* – any of the tools you have been using or any new tools you might develop. You should not rely exclusively on the newsletter or on us. Continue to expand your networks of information. Let us help you, where and when we can.

Our mission is two-fold: (1) boosting Hampton’s profile in Washington and (2) supporting faculty and staff in their efforts to secure federal funding for their research and activities.

BOOSTING HAMPTON’S PROFILE:

We are at an advantage with respect to the first part of our mission (boosting Hampton’s profile) because Dr. Harvey is well-known, well-respected and well-liked by so many in Washington; and there is no greater, more effective booster of Hampton than Dr. Harvey. In addition, in his role as Chairman of the President Board Advisory, Dr. Harvey has a high profile and unique access among the federal agencies. On the *one* hand, this is a good thing.

On the other hand, Dr. Harvey knows how many federal funding opportunities there are. He knows that from time to time, money is left on the table because no one meets the criteria or submits a competitive application. And while he is “after” the agencies to increase funding to HBCUs, he knows that some HBCUs just are not applying enough or submitting thoughtful, well-written and therefore competitive applications often enough.

He has pushed for agencies to provide technical assistance, which they are now doing more of by way of webinars. He has also pushed agencies to have a more diverse pool of grant reviewers. That does two things – one it teaches you how to write a competitive grant proposal and, two, it introduces you and your institution to the agency – the result of both is that Hampton is likely to be more competitive in the grant process.

So, while Dr. Harvey is well-known in Washington, what is not so well-known are the wide ranging capabilities of our individual faculty.

What Leslie and I are trying to do is to make sure that the program managers and others doing the work at the agencies know who we are, what we do and what we can do with just a little help from them.

We are trying to create a broad “community of interest” in what the University does and can do, so that the members of this community are passionate about the University and think constantly and creatively about relationships, public and legislative strategies, and private and public sector opportunities for Hampton. The results of our building and maintaining a “community of interest” will be: (1) the many, important, exciting and valuable initiatives in which Hampton is engaged will always be at the forefront when the members of our “community of interest” are talking, listening, reading and thinking; and (2) those initiatives will be funded.

Support faculty and staff in their efforts to secure federal funding for their research and activities:

The second part of our mission is to support faculty and staff in their efforts to secure federal funding for their research and activities. In that regard, we help individual faculty, like you, navigate the Congressional committees and executive agencies relevant to your work. We try to steer you toward federal funding opportunities (grants, contracts, fellowships, activities, etc.). And, we make you aware of federal funding trends (proposed policy changes, analyses of proposed budgets, analyses of appropriations bills, etc.) – what funds might be coming down the pike and for what.

We also make agency officials and Congressional staff aware of your capabilities and priorities. And, we monitor legislative and regulatory developments that may impact your work.

We use the faculty’s biographical information, now more readily available online, to promote Hampton. Make sure your bio is current and reflects current activities, research and capabilities.

And, we are using the one-pager to elicit information about what you are doing and want to do and how those things are aligned with things various agencies are doing and want to do.

You have terrific ideas. I know because I have talked with a number of you and – even if I don’t know the subject matter (which is most often the case) – I understand what you are proposing and why you are proposing it. We really need you to commit that information to a one-pager, a template for which is here and online. The bottom line is this: if you tell us what you are looking for, we will do our best to help you find it.

We make sure you know about technical assistance being offered by agencies, especially those webinars that many agencies now offer to preview a solicitation, to tell you what is expected in your grant application.

We encourage you to follow-up on unsuccessful grant applications. Many agencies will meet with you to discuss your unsuccessful application so you can learn from it and better compete next time. If you need help getting a “follow-up” meeting, let us know and we will do what we can to help you.

We also encourage you not to give up on a good idea just because one agency didn’t fund it. The competition may have been “off the chart” for that opportunity. The pot of money for that particular competition may have been small. Other agencies may be interested in your idea. In fact, you may get good ideas about how to refine the proposal in your “follow-up” meeting.

Don’t trash a good idea. Reinvent and re-submit.

Experience as a Grant Reviewer



Submitted by: Dr. Anand Iyer

Assistant Dean of Academic and Student Affairs in the School of Pharmacy



October 2015

The Researcher's Informational Forum (RIF) is organized monthly by the Grants Management office and directed by Dr. JoAnn W. Haysbert, Executive Vice President and Provost at Hampton University (HU) to discuss important aspects of grant governance. As part of the ongoing series, Dr. Haysbert invited Dr. Anand Iyer to provide information on grant writing and share important pointers on becoming a grant reviewer. This document summarizes the salient aspects of Dr. Iyer's presentation on 8th October 2015 at the forum.

Dr. Iyer serves as a senior investigator on two investigator-initiated grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). He also serves as a grant reviewer for the American Heart Association (AHA) and for the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Dr. Iyer provided a brief summary of the grant review process within the NIH. He also provided avenues that faculty may explore to be selected as potential grant reviewers as well as resources that are available to facilitate this process.

The NIH, a governmental agency within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), is tasked with directing the nation's medical research and seeking discoveries that improve health and save lives. In order to fulfil this mission, the NIH is allotted an annual budget of over \$30 billion, a substantial portion of which is disbursed to research investigators and universities through competitive grants and contracts. The NIH consists of 24 Institutes and Centers (ICs) that encompass almost all disease areas including cancer, HIV, cardiovascular disease, stroke, mental health and drug abuse. Each IC issues requests for proposals in areas that are in line with its missions and goals, and these announcements from all ICs are made available centrally through the NIH grants website [<http://www.grants.gov>].

When proposals are received at the NIH, the review process starts within the Center for Scientific Review (CSR), which is the administrative arm of the NIH tasked with receiving and processing more than 70,000 applications received each year, and assigning them to appropriate Integrated Review Groups (IRGs). Once a research proposal is assigned, it is reviewed through an "enhanced peer review" process whereby each IRG brings together a panel of researchers who are experts in that particular field of study. For each proposal reviewed, three experts within the panel provide written critiques and criterion scores in predetermined areas of evaluation.

A Scientific Review Officer (SRO) identifies the appropriate panel of experts, and the proposals are sent out for review. In order to facilitate the review process, feedback is solicited within 8-12 weeks of assignment of proposals, following which the panel is invited to the NIH (Bethesda, MD) for a face-to-face discussion. Each proposal is then scored by the entire study group (referred to as impact score), and final funding decisions are made depending upon the number of applications within a certain scoring range as well as the budget available for each announcement.

There are several pointers that faculty should consider in order to be successful grant writers. While the list below is not all-encompassing, principal investigators of the most highly scored and eventually successful grant proposals follow these general guidelines:

- **Highlight the significance of the work** – The reviewers should clearly see how the field will be furthered if the proposal is funded.
- **Do not propose just collecting more data.** The proposal should not be too descriptive – there needs to be a clear hypothesis and the approach should provide the "what's, how's, why's and why-not's" of the study.
- **Aim Each Aim** – Focus on Expected Outcomes, Data Interpretation, Pitfalls, Contingencies.
- **Do not assume that the reviewer knows everything about your field, but also leave out stuff everyone knows.**
- **Do not make the content too dense both qualitatively and quantitatively** – the most important thing is to make it easy to read.
- **Clearly define the proposal in accordance with the criterion score areas as defined within the scope of enhanced peer review (Significance, Innovation, Approach, Investigators, Environment, Impact and Mission).**
- **End with a brief summary of the project and list important prospective findings if the study were to be successfully completed.**
- **Make it Impactful** – reviewers typically discuss between 60-100 proposals over two days during each meeting – this only allows between 12 to 16 minutes for a proposal to be discussed.

The enhanced peer review model has been extremely successful, and has been adopted by several other agencies including the Department of Defense (DOD), the National Science Foundation (NSF), HRSA and various private foundations including the AHA, American Diabetes Association (ADA), American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) and several others.

In order to train the next generation of reviewers and encourage junior investigators to gain insight into the review process, multiple agencies have developed training programs that provide opportunities for experiences in grant review. For example, the CSR has established the Early Career Reviewer Program, which promotes researchers from various disciplines to get involved in the review process by providing hands-on training in Enhanced Peer Review. In addition, the HRSA has an open access portal where researchers may sign up as reviewers for grants.

It is widely acknowledged that while not all good grant writers may become successful reviewers, almost all grant reviewers become more successful grant writers. This is primarily because the grant review experience offers valuable insight into the internal workings of grant review and provides pointers that may be critical to success. Therefore, grant review opportunities and experiences are very important and useful, especially for junior faculty and researchers. There are several online resources available, which provide further insight into not only the grant writing process, but also to gather general information about grant announcements, funding rates for each of the governmental agencies and a host of other areas related to grants management.

There are several steps that faculty and researchers may take in order to be called upon as reviewers by funding agencies, some of which have been listed below.

- **Build a strong resume.**
- **You must publish in your field of study – that is the only way to demonstrate expertise in your respective fields.**
- **Try to obtain funding – any level of funding from any agency (private or public) is a positive.**
- **Do the ground work – Explore websites that offer information on grant review opportunities.**
- **Reach out directly to the decision-makers. Most often, these would be scientific review officers that direct the review process or program officers (POs). Remember – they need you as well. Grant review is a very involved process that requires a lot of time and effort that not all experienced researchers may be willing or able to provide.**
- **Become a part of an editorial board – Review other work in your field.**
- **Attend meetings to network with individuals at various funding agencies (frequently, SROs and POs attend these meetings).**
- **Reach out to your colleagues who serve as reviewers in various organizations and enquire about potential review opportunities.**

Lastly, if you are successful, the following guidelines may help in becoming a strong reviewer, which in turn might ensure that you may be invited back to review again.

- **Write a concise critique – don't rewrite the entire proposal.**
- **Provide a balanced assessment of the work presented. Don't just express your personal opinions on the subject matter.**
- **During discussion of the proposal, stand your ground if you believe in the merits of the proposal even if your colleagues think otherwise.**
- **Avoid repetition of the facts both in your written critique as well as the panel discussion – keep the focus on the overall merits of the application.**
- **Keep the discussion balanced – Don't be overly critical.**
- **Be prepared.**

Engaging in the grant review process is extremely important for professional development and growth of researchers. There are several resources listed below that may help facilitate both grant writing and review.

List of Resources:

- <https://writedit.wordpress.com/about/>
- <http://public.csr.nih.gov/Pages/default.aspx>
- <https://internet.csr.nih.gov/ECRV2/ECRMain.aspx>
- <http://www.xavier.edu/grant-services/documents/becomeagrantreviewer.pdf>
- http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit_review/reviewer.jsp
- <https://projectreporter.nih.gov/reporter.cfm>
- <https://era.nih.gov/>
- <http://www.niaid.nih.gov/researchfunding/grant/pages/newpiguide.aspx>
- <http://www.hrsa.gov/grants/reviewers/>
- <https://research.americanheart.org/ris/template.jsp?pid=ris.reg.newreviewer>

Understanding The Peer Review Process



Submitted by: Dr. Elnora D. Daniel
Professor Emerita, Hampton University



November 2015

I. Introduction

The National Institutes of Health [NIH] is responsible for conducting the peer review process for various forms of federal funding. The first level of peer review is carried out by a Scientific Review Group (SRG) composed primarily of non-federal scientists who have expertise in relevant scientific disciplines and current research areas. The second level of review is performed by Institute and Center (IC) National Advisory Councils or Boards. Councils are composed of both scientific and public representatives chosen for their expertise, interest, or activity in matters related to health and disease. Only applications that are recommended for approval by both the SRG and the Advisory Council may be recommended for funding. Final funding decisions are made by the IC Directors.

A. First Level of Review

Initial peer review meetings are administered by either the Center for Scientific Review (CSR) or another NIH IC. The focus of review is specified in the Funding Opportunity Announcement. The meetings are closed to the public, although some meetings may have an open session.

B. Peer Review Roles and Meeting Overview

1. Scientific Review Officer. SRG is led by a Scientific Review Officer (SRO). The SRO is an extramural staff scientist and the Designated Federal Official responsible for ensuring that each application receives an objective and fair initial peer review.

2. Peer Review Meeting Procedures. [1] Applications are reviewed based on established review criteria; [2] Assigned reviewers summarize their prepared critiques for the group; [3] An open discussion follows; [4] Final scoring of overall impact scores is conducted by private ballot.

C. Peer Review Criteria and Considerations

1. Review Criteria for Research Grants and Cooperative Agreements. Applications submitted to the NIH for grants or cooperative agreements to support biomedical and behavioral research are evaluated for scientific and technical merit through the NIH peer review system.

a. Overall Impact. Reviewers provide an overall impact/priority score to reflect their assessment of the likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the research field(s) involved, in consideration of the following review criteria: [1] **Significance**; [2] **Investigator(s)**; [3] **Innovation**; [4] **Approach**; and [5] **Environment**.

b. Scored Review Criteria. Reviewers consider each of the review criteria and give a separate score for each. An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major scientific impact. For example, a project that by its nature is not innovative may be essential to advance a field.

D. Scoring

The NIH utilizes a 9-point rating scale (1 = exceptional; 9 = poor) for all applications; the same scale is used for overall impact scores and for criterion scores. The final overall impact score for each discussed application is determined by calculating the mean score from all the eligible members' impact scores, and multiplying the average by 10; the final overall impact score is reported on the summary statement. Thus, the final overall impact scores range from 10 (high impact) through 90 (low impact).

Competitive Grant Programs

USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture



Submitted by: Dr. Edwin Lewis
National Program Leader, Division of
Community and Education - UDSDA



Submitted by: Dr. Jodi Williams
National Program Leader, Division of
Food Safety- USDA

December 2015

Mission Statement

We provide leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues based on sound public policy, the best available science, and efficient management.

And more for all Americans

We provide leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues based on sound public policy, the best available science, and efficient management

Research, Education, and Economics (REE)

1. National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)
2. National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS)
3. Agricultural Research Service (ARS)
4. Economic Research Service (ERS)

NIFA's Mission

Invest in and advance agricultural research, education, and extension to solve societal challenges

1. Science – Catalyze exemplary research, education and extension programs
2. People – Transform NIFA into a model agency with a motivated work force
3. Process – Institutionalize streamlined effective policies and process
4. Communication – Advance American's global preeminence in food and age sciences

What we do?

We do research and take action.

So that we can.....

- Meet the growing global food demand
- Fight hunger and food insecurity in vulnerable populations
- Develop regional systems for sustainable production of optimal biomass
- Help farmers and ranchers adapt to changing weather patterns
- Ensure that nutritious food are available at affordable prices
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Enhance youth and family development
- Build energy independence
- Strengthen educational capacity to prepare the next generation of scientists, agricultural producers, and educators
- Restore and sustain natural resources supplies
- Ensure the health of delicate ecosystems

How we do it.....

- Research – Provide answers to the complex issues facing the nation and world
- Education – Strengthen schools and universities to train the next generations
- Extension – Provide the knowledge gained through research and education to the agricultural workforce – theory into practice



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