Ericka Boone: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Ericka Boone. I am currently serving as the Acting Director for the Division of Biomedical Research Workforce. And I'm also service as your moderator for today's panel discussion. Thank you for joining us. This panel session is focusing on diversification of the extramural research workforce. Diversity is absolutely, inexplicably tied to the success of the NIH mission, thus ensuring diversity within the extramural medical research workforce is of the utmost importance. Today, we're going to talk about the ways in which we're seeking to broaden the faces of science here at NIH. I want to remind everyone that the session is live, L-I-V-E. For your convenience, slides will be posted in vFairs within 24 hours. So if you want to go back and look at them, check out the resources section in vFairs. Also, please be advised that the chat box feature is for participants to engage with each other. I will not be actively monitoring the chat box. However, I will be closely monitoring the Q&A box that is available during this session. So, feel free to submit any questions that you'd like to have answered by the panelists in the Q&A. However, due to the number of individuals that will be participating in today's discussion, we may not get to all of your questions, but we'll do our best. But with that being said, if we don't get to your questions, please feel free to stop by the exhibit hall, speak with staff, and they'll be happy to try to assist you. All righty, go to the next slide, please. There we go. Now, for your panelists or your guides, as I have listed here. I hope that you guys are ready to take notes because today's panel discussion is going to be chock-full of information. I'm absolutely honored to be joined by an all-star lineup, as you see here today. And our panelists are going to discuss how to navigate NIH programs, strategies that you might want to keep in mind when planning and executing your career and more. And I guess that's enough of me chatting away. Let's introduce you to today's panelists, who will serve as your guides for the next 40 minutes or so. So today we're joined by Dr. Jean Shin, a Social Scientist ... Social Science Analyst with the NIH Office of Scientific Workforce Diversity. Dr. Lauren Hill, Acting Director with the Office of Disparities Research and Workforce Diversity with the national Institute of Mental Health. Dr. Marguerite Matthews, Scientific Program Manager with the Office of Programs to Enhance Neuroscience Workforce Diversity with the National Institute on Neurological Disorders and Stroke. And last but not least, Dr. Kenneth Gibbs, Chief of the Undergraduate and Predoctoral Cross-Disciplinary Training Branch with the National Institute of General Medical Sciences. Next slide, please. Today's discussion will be a bit of a mixed-methods approach, as we'll have very brief presentations on the topics that are listed here on this slide. And then we will end with a panelist discussion and Q&A. So let's start off our brief presentations with Dr. Jean Shin. Next slide, please. One more time, there we go.

Jean Shin: Thank you, Dr. Boone. It's my pleasure to be here to start things off by providing an overview of why diversity matters to NIH. Studies demonstrate that diversity has many potential benefits and presents an opportunity to advance the scientific enterprise, specifically there are opportunities that exist for us to enhance excellence, creativity, and innovation, broaden scientific inquiry into health disparities, investigate changing demographics, and achieve global research preeminence. That, in the office that I represent, seems to focus on all of these opportunities. Next slide, please. Our NIH Director, Dr. Francis Collins, established the Chief Officer for Scientific Workforce Diversity, or as we call it, the COSWD position back in 2014. The mission of this position and really the entire COSWD office is to be the NIH thought leader in the science of scientific workforce diversity, using data-driven approaches, to take advantage of the full range of scientific talent, fostering creativity and innovation in science. To that end, our goal, as you can see, is to catalyze the development of cultures of inclusive excellence, allowing NIH and NIH-funded institutions to benefit from a full range of talent. Basically, we are evidence-based in our office. Our goals are to build the evidence using NIH as a testbed for innovative scientific programs, then disseminate this evidence through work with the full scientific community, from trainees to established tenured scientists. And finally and maybe most importantly, act on this evidence by piloting integrated institution-wide systems to address bias, faculty equity, mentoring, and work/life issues. Next slide, please. The COSWD office mission and focus is absolutely necessary because we see that based on data, the representation of groups, pardon me, underrepresented in science as well as women literally diminishes in more advanced positions along the career trajectory from students, starting on the left-hand side of the figure, then to department chairs, all the way on the right-hand side of the figure. These data are from both the NCES, as well as the Association of American Medical Colleges. And the bottom line, as you see these trends, is that we are not truly capitalizing on intellectual capital of all scientists across the career path, in order to address the really complex public health problems and health disparities that exist in the United States. I'd like to point out, in particular, the yellow and blue lines because these represent underrepresented groups for women in the yellow, then light blue for underrepresented men. And you can really see, again, as you go over to faculty and then especially department chairs, how small the representation is for several of those groups. Next slide, please. So what are we doing inside the COSWD office, and at NIH more widely, to address these trends? Well, you can see that on the left-hand side here, there are a number of programs. One would be the Distinguished Scholars Programs, which builds a self-reinforcing community of PIs within NIH committed to diversity and inclusion. Another would be the recently announced cohort of the first program, which is a cohort recruitment effort aimed at increasing diversity across institutions outside of NIH. Our office also assists with NIH-wide searches for tenure track positions, as well as through the NIH Equity Committee, which is focused on transparency and accountability within NIH institutes and centers and the hiring that goes on. Finally, we also are attached to the National Research Mentoring Network, which is housed at NIGMS. And we do work through implicit bias litigation using our interactive toolkit. If you could hit enter, please. This toolkit is actually featured on our website, and I won't go into the details you can read there on screen. But ultimately, this toolkit is really focused on the enhancement of searches and recruitment, as well as the reduction of implicit bias. And if you go to our website, you'll see this information, as well as information on all of our other initiatives. Next click. And then finally, my next slide. I will end by pointing you the COSWD office website, and you can see the address of it below. It's very simple, diversity.NIH.gov. And I encourage everyone to explore this site for additional resourced and information on the science of scientific workforce diversity. Thank you for listening and I'm happy to pass it back to Dr. Boone.

Ericka Boone: We can actually have the next slide, please. Next is Dr. Lauren Hill. Next slide.

Lauren Hill: Good afternoon. Can you all see me? Okay. Somebody was commenting that there was trouble seeing the ASL interpreter. So please be sure to pin that so that you can see her. All right, we're going to shift gears a little bit. We started at a very high level with our ... The NIH interest in diversity. And I'm going to talk primarily to our first-time applicants, early stage investigators and trainees, to encourage you and to help to demystify the process of how to start to engage with NIH, if you're interested in submitting an application. The talk today will cover very, very briefly how the institutes and centers are structured, how to find the right scientific home for your research, and how to work with NIH program officers. Next slide, please. So the NIH is a very big place. We are composed of 27 institutes and centers, which we call ICs. And you can see them here on the screen. I will not read them. These ... The ones on the top have funding authority. The three on the bottom are not ... Do not have funding authority. I've highlighted here the Center for Scientific Review because that is the center that receives all applications and then distributes them based on their science to different program areas, different institutes and centers, and different review groups. Next slide, please. Each IC has its own mission. We each have our own budget, we each have our own activities, and our own ways of doing business. Meaning that we may not use the same funding mechanisms in the same way across all the different institutes and centers. And clearly we have our scientific missions. So if you don't hear anything else in this talk, please hear this. Contact a program officer at the institute that you're going to apply to before you submit a grant application. Next slide, please. So this is a typical organizational structure of a an institute or center. Each IC has a director, seen there are the top in the center, and an intramural side, which is seen on the right-hand side of the slide, where research is conducted at NIH, to make a long story short. But if you are at a research institution or a university, you will be interacting with folks on the extramural side of the IC to which you would apply. And that is composed here of scientific programs and divisions, which I'm going to talk a little bit more about in detail for program, review and grants management. Next slide, please. Thank you. So this slide used to say NIH officials or something like that. And I changed it to NIH people, because as you can see, we're just people. And again, I encourage you to reach out and engage with us. Next animation, please. So a Program Officer, that would be if you're an investigator, a trainee. That would be your primary point of contact throughout the process of engaging with NIH. We Program Officers are scientists and administrators. We help to identify areas of scientific need relative to what's in the literature, what's in our portfolios, what the public health needs are. We communicate those priorities to investigators, trainees, mentors, anyone who's interested in applying. We manage a portfolio of grants and applications, and communicate with IC leadership about the science that we receive in the form of applications or the state the field in our specific area of expertise. Next animation, thank you. The Scientific Review Officers are also scientists and administrators, and they manage the grant review process. They convene the review groups, they appoint members to the review groups and panels, and they prepare summary statements at the end of the review process. Next ... Thank you. Grants Management Officer, you would rarely interact with them but you may. I've been told that Grants Management handles anything with a dollar sign in front of it. So they are responsible for overseeing the budget of a grant and making sure the grant is in compliance with NIH grant policy. Next slide. So how do you find the appropriate program officer? There are several ways. One is certainly talk to your mentors and colleagues. If your science is similar to that of your mentors, you may have the same program officer. Search the NIH RePORTER ... If you Google it, it will come up ... For projects that have been funded at NIH, so you can get a sense of which institute and center is funding what, the types of things that are being funded. And this next tool, the NIH Matchmaker, can be especially useful because you can put in key words that would be similar to your project, or you could even plunk in an abstract. And similar projects and their program officers will come up if tell it to do that. And so that you can find the program officer or program officers who have portfolios that are most similar to the science that you're interested in submitting for support. You can also ... Please, before contacting a program officer, do your homework. So review the institute and center mission statement. The various strategic plans that we have, our research priorities. And if you drill down further, the divisions or sub divisions within an IC typically also have their own program web pages. So you get a sense of whether or not it would be a good fit before you even reach out. Next slide. So how do you contact a program officer? The vast majority of people prefer contact by e-mail as opposed to cold calling. It would be helpful to include a one to two-page concept paper about your project. Make sure that you include the specific aims of that project. Obviously include a brief background and significance. But mostly, the PO wants to understand what it is you plan to do, so make sure you do include specific aims. If you're submitting a training grant or a mentored grant of any kind, so an F31, F32, or a K Award, the program officer will also want to know your career development goals. So just a few bullets on what you hope to accomplish in terms of career development, in addition to the scientific portion of that. And if don't hear back from a program officer, please be persistent. It is not a sign that they don't want to talk to you. It's just everybody is drowning in e-mail. So ping again if you don't hear back. Next slide, please. That's it for me.

Ericka Boone: All righty, next up is the all-famous Dr. Marguerite Matthews.

Marguerite Matthews: Thank you, Dr. Boone. Next slide, please. My name is Marguerite Matthews. I use she/her pronouns and I will be talking a little bit more with you about ways to make the most of your training and to be able to utilize your resources, networks, to be able to advance in your careers. And for many of us at NIH, we use sort of this systemic approach that your ... As an individual, it's really important for you to focus on funding opportunities that will meet your needs at your career stage and your research interest. Partake in institutional opportunities, such as training grants, which allow for more career development opportunities, but also utilizing your scientific community, relying on support systems. And for many of us who come from underrepresented backgrounds or perhaps more marginalized backgrounds or identities, having other folks who have similar shared experiences can be really beneficial in the way in which we see ourselves. And that, in turn, can help how we approach our training. Next slide, please. So I'd like to point you to the researchtraining.NIH.gov website. On this website, you will see a number of different opportunities, all the way from the undergraduate stage, up through becoming an established investigator. And here is where you can look to find various funding opportunities and related policy notices for each of those funding opportunities. And you may just want to click around and see what opportunities are available, even if you're a graduate student. It may be important to think about what's next, when you move into the postdoctoral phase. If you're a postdoc, thinking about what opportunities you may want to think about as you transition into a faculty-level position. Having a plan is incredibly important, so knowing what's next. Not just for what's right now, but how to move forward. And this website has a very comprehensive opportunity to look at by career stage or by different funding opportunity types, as listed on the right with career development, research training, fellowships, other training related things, and also opportunities within our intramural program. Next slide, please. So one really important way for us to promote diversity amongst our trainees is through our research supplements. Having a research supplement is a ... Essentially supplemental funding to an active NIH grant, and there are many that are eligible. And these can train all the way from high school students through junior faculty. So even if you're perhaps not at a stage where you're eligible to be supported by a diversity supplement, you may be a faculty member who's able to support someone from one of the categories that NIH sees as a priority area for diversity. You can apply to support students who fall into one of those categories. All NIH institutes and centers participate in this program, but it is very important to know that each IC approaches this differently. I think my colleague, Dr. Hill, did a really great job explaining this. And because of this federated model, often times you may hear something different if you are normally receive funding from the National Cancer Institute, but you're now seeking funding from somewhere else. It's important to talk to the program officers at those different institutes to get the most up-to-date and IC-specific information. They are administratively reviewed, so that often means you will get a decision sooner than you would if you were putting in for a competing award, such as a fellowship award or a career development award. And, these supplements provide salary and fringe benefits. There's also opportunities to have money for supplies and travel, and there is tuition remission available for predoctoral fellows ... Or predoctoral trainees, excuse me. They can last anywhere from 1 to 3 years, but these are really seen as bridge funds. So this is an opportunity to be supported, a candidate to be supported by a research supplement, but the idea is to get them to the next phase of their career, whether that's a fellowship award, a career development award or hopefully for many of you out there thinking about research project grants, such as the R01. Next slide, please. So thinking about yourself as the individual, what do I need, you may think about various levels of funding, either fellowships or career development awards. And I won't spend a lot of time on the specifics of each of these, but it should ... I would like to emphasize that depending on sort of once you get out of that graduate school phase, you're now entering the world of how to read a funding announcement, of thinking about who supports what type of funding opportunities. And for a fellowship, for example, for postdoctoral ... For those in the postdoctoral training stage, there's the Parent F32, which is for postdocs. But there are also three other types of postdoctoral fellowship opportunities. So you may only apply ... Or may only be eligible for certain types. So it's important to think about this, of what it is that you're looking to do for your specific training opportunity, and talking to a program officer about what funding opportunity is best for you, given your research area and your career stage. And the same can go for career development awards. They have many different flavors of career development awards. There's many different K01s that are mentored research career development awards, as well as the K99. I think many of us grew up hearing about just one. There's only one that you can apply to, and now we have at least four and there may be more coming. So really think strategically about what it is that you're looking to do in your career, and making sure that you're finding a funding opportunity that is specific to what you're trying to do. Next slide, please. There are also these training mechanisms. Most of us are familiar with the T32 NRSA training grants. There are many different institutions across the country, and knowing which institutions have these training programs may influence where you decide to go to continue your training or how you want to be a part of these ... How you want to think about well I'm just an individual in a lab, but I would like to be at an institution that supports my postdoctoral training in a larger setting, do a T32. Or if you're a clinician, for instance, maybe through a K12 career development program award. But this isn't something you would apply to have the grant, but you may apply to be on ... To be appointed to one of these training grants. So just another thing to think about in thinking about your career development. Other opportunities to, again, gather with some of your peers and learn really cutting edge techniques and gaining that different sets of knowledge. Next slide, please. There are also numerous research education programs, which often fall under the category of an R25 activity code. And I've listed just a few of them on slides here, but these, often times, support individuals not to have research training like in a T32, but an opportunity to lean about grant writing or building community and networks that really help expand your scientific community and thinking about what is it that I need at this particular career stage and are there different groups that can help me achieve that goal. Next slide, please. I have a few examples. Well, I must have had my slides out of order. I apologize. You can look for these R25 opportunities, like if you want to know what are these programs that are being funded. Some of them are specific to an institution, so say the University of Washington has a program that's on their campus. It may be specific for trainees or junior faculty at that campus. But it may be to support anyone across the nation to be a part of this program. And the way you can do that is going to the Matchmaker tool that Dr. Hill mentioned previously. Not the Matchmaker tool, the RePORTER tool to be able to look up ... I know you're not meant to be able to really read this exactly, but I can talk more about this later. But you can use a certain activity code if you know about an R25 that you're interested in learning more about. You can look up the ... Using NIH RePORTER, you can look up that particular program and find out more information. Next slide, please. So this is just one example. BRAINS is an R25 that is specifically aimed at postdocs and junior faculty, or those looking for faculty positions. And this is an opportunity for them, for diverse individuals to come together, share experiences, learn from each other, and find what other things that they're not getting, perhaps, at their own institutions, and how they can continue to grow together. So again, this is not something ... You wouldn't apply to have an R25, but you would apply, perhaps, to the program, which would be similar to, perhaps, applying to HHMI. It's not research funding, but if there are programs that are specific for career development and a few other slides I was going to go into, but I'll save that for the very end if we have time. But definitely think about yourself in a holistic manner. What do I need to support my research training? What does the institution that I'm doing my research training have to offer in terms of other career development opportunities? And how can I tap into my scientific community to ensure that I feel supported, that I am not missing out on information, I have access to things and I don't feel like I'm in the dark? And I think all of that can help especially those from more underrepresented backgrounds to be able to feel part of the research enterprise. So I will end there and turn it over to my colleague, Dr. Gibbs. Thank you.

Kenneth Gibbs: Thank you so much, Dr. Matthews. Tweet, love to see the Tweet. Can we go to the next slide, please? Go to the next slide, please. And the next one. I think Dr. Matthews is making a point there. Social media can be a great resource for learning about NIH funding opportunities. And in fact, many of us actually manage some of the NIH social media. So you can follow @NIGMSTraining to learn more about training opportunities, or NIGMSGenes talking about research opportunities, and Dr. Matthews is @NINDSDiversity. Okay, I'm going to talk about career stage transitions and thinking about how you navigate both the end of your postdoc and the start of your career. Next. And so one program I want to make sure that this crowd is aware of is a relatively new program from NIGMS, which is now a trans-NIH program called MOSAIC. MOSAIC stands for Maximizing Opportunities for Scientific and Academic Independent Careers. And it's designed to really facilitate the transition of promising postdoctoral researchers from a wide variety of backgrounds, including those underrepresented in the biomedical research workforce, at the faculty level into independent, research-intensive faulty careers. We have known for a long time, the NIH transition awards are quite successful. We also have known for a long time that traditional mechanisms do not cultivate and provide awards to the diversity of scientists that exist. And so the overarching goal of this program is to enhance the diversity of independent investigators, conducting research with NIH mission areas with a program priority of addressing documented underrepresentation at the faculty level. You can see examples in the Notice of Interest and Diversity. So next, this is a multi-part program. So if you're a postdoc or a no postdoc with clear and compelling commitments and contributions to enhancing diversity, I would encourage them to apply to the MOSAIC K99 R00 program. You would apply like any other K99 and be reviewed by the cognizant NIH institute or center. What happens after you get the award, if you click next, is the ambition to having your 2 years of mentored career development and up to 3 years of independent research, you also are going to be part of a scientific cohort of colleagues with similar backgrounds and passions, organized by scientific societies. Currently, the three here would be American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, the American Society for Cell Biology, and the Association for American Medical Colleges. We have another call for applications due in a little over a month, so you can reach out to me about that more. But again, what you have is we have a cohort of ... A cohort. There's networking, there's mentoring, additional activities to really create some of the structure that often is missing for scientists from underrepresented groups. Click next. So again, nearly all institutes and centers participate in this program. And again, there's a special emphasis on contributions and commitments to promoting diversity. We accept the application three times a year. The next deadline is February. To date, more than 75 percent of the applicants have been from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. Which is in contrast to the parent award, where it's fewer than about 7 percent. And, three quarters have been women, in contrast to the parent where it's about a third. And we click next. You can see that these are the scholars that we supported this year. And so we have, through this mechanism, attracted a wider diversity of scholars and are providing them with both the funding and the networking and other mentoring to allow them to be on their way. And so I encourage you, if you are from an underrepresented group, know those from underrepresented groups, and with strong and clear commitments to diversity, to consider applying for the MOSAIC award. Once you are past the K phase and you have your independent lab, you will be likely an Early-Stage Investigator. Want to make sure you're aware of this. So Early-Stage Investigator is a new person who has completed their terminal degree in the last 10 years, and has not yet been awarded a substantial competing NIH grant, like an R01. NIH recognized a long time ago that certain groups, by no fault of their own, experience disadvantage in the peer review process. And so there's a policy decision to make a category for a certain group, in this case Early-Stage Investigators, and then make a policy remedy to prioritize those grants as it relates to funding, and make sure they have a clustered review so that they're reviewed fairly. And so this is really important as you're starting your career because it can allow for special attention at the Advisory Councils, you have special attention at peer review, and for institutes that use strict paylines, they often extend the payline for Early-Stage Investigators. So you want to make sure your information is correct in the [Indistinct] Commons so that you can take advantage of this as you start your career. We talked about within the last 10 years, potentially receive your PhD or your terminal degree or medical residency, but it can be extended for issues like childbirth and other reasons like COVID-19 related disruptions on a case-by-case basis. And so you'll want to make sure that you have your information in order and if you believe you need an extension, reach out to the office of extramural research to make that known. Next. So there are a couple of different mechanisms that are important for Early-Stage Investigators. I'm pointing to one at my institute, the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, where this is a single grant to support all of the work and investigators lab that's within the mission of NIGMS. So as Dr. Hill mentioned, each institute has its own mission and priorities. Many are focused on diseases, body parts, or life stages. NIGMS is focused on basic understanding of mechanisms, right. We're largely disease and body part agnostic, but really understanding how the world ... How biology works, chemistry works, so that we can then lay the foundation for diagnostics and disease via diagnostics, treatment, and prevention. And so importantly, through this R35 mechanism, NIGMS has a dedicated R35 mechanism to support Early-Stage Investigators. And so if you are an Early-Stage Investigator doing work within the NIGMS mission, I strongly encourage you to apply for that award. They are prioritized for funding and again, it's work within our mission. So it's not meant to support everything you would do for NIH, but you can have multiple [Indistinct] in your labs. You might have a cancer focus and a neuroscience focus, but also a basic science sub biology and cell division focus. And so if that is part of your lab, I would encourage you to apply for that award. Next. Another Early-Stage Investigator mechanism is the Stephen Katz ESI Research Project Grant. This is named for the late director of NIAMS, and it's really meant to support candidates as they move to new research directions. For example, more approaches, methodologies, techniques, disciplines. This specific attachment that helps you to delineate why this is a new research direction. It can rely on your prior work, but it shouldn't be an obvious incremental advancement. And importantly, unpublished data are not allowed, right. And so again, as Dr. Hill mentioned earlier and Dr. Matthews and Dr. Shin and everybody, you want to make sure that you reach out with the program officials at the institutes and centers that are signed on to each of the relevant funding announcements, that's what FOA stands for, so that you can see if your proposal is within their mission and interest. Next. Want to make sure you are aware also that NIH will pay your bills. So if you have student loan debt, NIH pays that through the loan repayment program. We will have a little bit of time to talk about that. Dr. Boone actually manages that in addition to her role as acting in the Division of Biomedical Research Workforce. And so we tell you to reach out to program officers early. There's about 2 more weeks until the next deadline. That's not necessarily early, but if you're learning about this now and think you can put in a compelling application, we want to make sure that you do that. We'll pay up to $50,000 per year of student debt for those with doctoral degrees who are continuing research in mission critical areas within the biomedical research workforce. Next. And these are some of the categories here. I won't go through them all, but again, there are various categories and high priority needs, and then there's a new category called REACH, which each institute talks about gaps in their areas, and they define their own priorities. Next. And with that, I am happy to turn it over to my colleague, Dr. Boone for question and answer time.

Ericka Boone: Well, we're actually going to turn it over to all of our panelists that are present today and so we've gotten several questions within the Q&A box, but one of them that I wanted to address was the idea that several of you hit upon, and that is establishing a funding strategy. Or, a strategy to supporting your research career. Can we talk a little bit more about that more broadly? So how would I go about doing that? What things are important and who can help me in order to really craft one that makes sense for me and my career?

Kenneth Gibbs: My mic's on, so I'll talk and I would love to hear my colleagues. There are a couple of things. One, I think ... What I always encourage applicants to do ... Because in addition to my job managing training grants, I also manage the STEM cell biology portfolio for NIGMS, so what I encourage people to do is really look at ... Think about what is important to you, what you think is interesting. Because when you do work that you think is interesting, you'll propose your most creative and rigorous science. Do not try to go payline shopping. It really doesn't often work well for you. It's very obvious. We read applications for a living, so it's obvious you're like, "I'm trying to scoot this in here because NIGMS might pay more or there's more money for Alzheimer's." Although there is a lot of money for Alzheimer's. But you want to make sure that you are doing work that you think is important. And I would say, as Dr. Hill mentioned, reach out to program officers. And when you do that, have a bio sketch, have an aims page because that helps us to really help you navigate your own strategy. Dr. Hill?

Lauren Hill: I shouldn't have raised my hand because my dog is barking, but I did want to suggest a couple things. NIH suggests that trainees and Early-Stage Investigators work with their mentors to develop an IDP or an Individual Development Plan. And certainly, a funding strategy might be a part of that plan, as Dr. Matthews mentioned that you want to match not only the science to the mechanism, but also your career stage to the various mechanisms. Now turn down the recording y'all. NIH is not the only game in town, right? So we encourage you to diversify your portfolio. Absolutely we encourage you, please do apply to NIH funding, but there are foundations, there may be institutional funding. And again, matching the mechanism, the priorities of the funders, and the scope and the focus of your science. So that's my thoughts.

Ericka Boone: One thing that I also wanted to expand upon that just a little bit, and I know that Kenny said ... Or Dr. Gibbs said don't necessarily shop. But, I think ... Well don't payline shop. But what I think that a lot of people kind of miss the mark on is that they're not utilizing that Matchmaker tool. I jokingly call it the Plenty of Fish for researchers and their money, right? So most people don't really understand what other ICs are funding and how it can have some relevance to their own research goals. You don't just have to be an NCI researcher or cancer researcher. Your goals and your research may have relevance for other institutions and centers. So just like you want to diversify your investments, you want to try to also maximize your strategy for funding and diversify your funding pools here, your funding sources here at NIH as well. Did Dr. Matthews or Dr. Gibbs want to contribute to that? Or, I'm sorry, Dr. Matthews, did you want to ... Okay, so I want to talk about a couple things. One is talking to program officers because I don't know how many times that I tell people talk to a program officer and they're like, "Well I ain't going to talk to no program officer. I don't know what I'm supposed to say and what if I say the wrong thing?" And I always say, "As long as you don't talk about their momma, you're probably on good track." So how do you do this? What do you suggest to people? Because I think that this is a real missed opportunity, especially for investigators from underrepresented background.

Kenneth Gibbs: Yeah, so one, I think, I'll echo Dr. ... We are people, right? We're humans, we're scientists, and we're here because we really want to help our colleagues navigate the system and to advance the fields that we're in, right. Because we're humans, you'll see variation in how we engage and some are warmer, and some are not. That said, we're all paid to do a job and we aim to do it well. And so a [Indistinct] conversation is really helpful to have a bio sketch and an aims page, even if it's rough. And, to have adequate time. If a deadline is Tuesday at 5:00pm, Monday is not the appropriate time to reach out and Tuesday at noon is also not the appropriate time to reach to reach out because ...

Ericka Boone: Yeah, child, no, don't do that.

Kenneth Gibbs: So, but I think it's important. So one, reach out before you apply. But it's also important to reach out after the summary statement is released.

Ericka Boone: Absolutely.

Kenneth Gibbs: Because then we can discuss what happened in the context of peer review, what your next steps might be. And so I just really ... I want to impress upon this because I've noticed in my role as a program officer that people from different backgrounds and different institutions reach out with different levels of frequency. Being more plain, those from certain underrepresented groups often reach out less and those at minority-serving institutions often reach out less. Please reach out and if people are not responsive, you can usually, as Dr. Hill mentioned, look at the org chart, find their boss, and say, "Hey, I'm just trying to figure out who to talk to here." If nothing else, each institute has a division of extramural activities, division of extramural operations, extramural being the key word. That person who leads that should be able to point you in the right direction if you're not really even sure where to start.

Ericka Boone: Thank you so much for that one, Dr. Gibbs. So advocate for yourself and resubmit. So important.

Kenneth Gibbs: Yeah.

Ericka Boone. Dr. Matthews. Dr. Matthews.

Marguerite Matthews: Yeah, I'd just like to add having a relationship with program staff is really important and maybe you're at a stage where you're like I don't actually know what I'm doing. I'm not sure if I'm ready for whatever. Use this time at this conference to go have a one-on-one and say, "Look, I ... Since you're here and I already have you on the clock, can I just tell you what I'm thinking about and will you let me know if this is the right opportunity?" Conferences are the best place, I think, to have a conversation with the program officer when maybe you really aren't sure what to do. You don't have your bio sketch all ready, you don't have a specific aims page, but you do want to know what's going on because having that initial conversation, you feel competent. You went up to somebody that may not even be the right person for you. You don't have time to use the matchmaker, you just go up to somebody and say, "Hey, I am a this. This is what my career stage is, this is what I study, can you help me?" And more often than not, when I'm around my colleagues, they're ... Someone will pull someone over to me. You should talk to Dr. Matthews or you should talk to Dr. Gibbs, you should talk to ...

Ericka Boone: The warm hand off.

Marguerite Matthews: Or they... The colleague from this cancer is not here, but here's someone else that you can think about talking to. So utilize these types of opportunities to have that. And then once a program officer has heard from you, they know about you, they can start looking out for you. They know when your application is coming in. They can also have more touchpoints with you to talk about you know what, this actually wasn't a really strong application and this is why, and these are the things that I think you really ... The reviewer comments that I think you really should pay attention to. Because then it doesn't feel like you're being attacked, right? That it's oh, this reviewer two is after me when you're ... If you have a trusting relationship with the program officer who can kind of give you some perspective and really wants what's best for you. We want to be able to fund as many applications as possible, and you wouldn't know that if you didn't talk to us because you haven't had the chance to hear what we really think about you. So I definitely encourage you to see this as an opportunity to create bonds and not as something ... It's just transactional. It doesn't have to be that way.

Ericka Boone: Right, right.

Marguerite Matthews: We want to help.

Ericka Boone: Thank you so much for that, Dr. Matthews. We're running over time now and I'm going to have to jump to another panel discussion. But, Dr. Gibbs, really quickly, you can make your point and then I want to ask each of you for one final point, whether it's the best advice that you never got when you were in academics, or whether it's about mentoring or whatever that thing may be. What's the last tidbit, what's the last nugget that you want to leave our audience with? But Dr. Gibbs, you had a point to make?

Kenneth Gibbs: I had a quick question. I was going to play moderator, can you expound for 30 seconds on the loan repayment program? I think I highlighted it quickly...

Ericka Boone: Yes.

Kenneth Gibbs: ... But I think it's a very important tool. That's one way that you can build your career is by not having loans so you can stay in biomedical research. So if you could talk about that, then I will happy to give my last piece, so.

Ericka Boone: Have mercy, and y'all know that I can wax on about loan repayment program for forever because loan debt is the biggest impediment, especially for researchers from underrepresented backgrounds to be able to enter into and to stay in their research careers. Loan debt is real and it makes you make choices for your family and with regards to your career. How do I know? Because it happened to me and other people that I know. So if you haven't heard about that loan repayment program, log onto to www.lrp.nih.gov. And also Omar, I know that you're out there, can you put the phone number for the information center in there as well? I know that they're going to kill me for doing that, but call, find out more information. Research on the website, find out what programs you might be eligible to apply under, and reach out to a program officer. We give away ... I think this past year in '21 ... $90 million now. This is the highest amount that we've given out in probably a decade. Somebody's going to get this money, and the only thing you have to do is apply. Now, do we pay it into your bank accounts? No. Right? Sallie Mae, Aviant, all of them will be very, very happy. But you can focus on your work and not your debt. So 30 seconds, Dr. Matthews. She's like I'm good.

Kenneth Gibbs: Piece of advice I would give is don't self eliminate. So my mother always told me and my sisters this. You got to go for it, right? Make other people tell you no, don't tell yourself no. Make other people tell you know, and then reapply, right. Because again, there's data that black scientists specifically reapply less, right? Some people, it's like three strikes right? And it's not to be discouraging, it's just to give you a realistic expectation that sometimes it takes a while, but perseverance does pay off. Do not self eliminate and reapply, and reach out to your program officers. All right, I'm done.

Lauren Hill: And listen to your program officers, right? Listen to what they're saying. Don't just keep insisting on a particular approach if you're being given other advice.

Ericka Boone: Right, and make sure that you're talking to different program officers, right? And don't let one conversation with someone who might not have been as warm and pleasant as you'd like them to be discourage you and discourage your other ... I mean, reaching out to other people. Dr. Matthews, I'm sorry about that.

Marguerite Matthews: Yes, I was going to also say that often times we hear the word diversity program and we think that somehow ... Or we've been conditioned to believe that a diversity program is somehow lower than, less than, inferior to other programs that do not have a special interest in diversity, and that's just not the case. So I would also say that take advantage of the programs that you feel are best for you, but you also don't have to feel like oh, well because I have this name on my funding opportunity that I've applied to that that somehow excludes me or differentiates me from others. That's just not the case and if you want to talk to me on the other platform, I can give you my spiel about what is like. But on the flip side, simply because you are a person who fits into one of the diversity categories does not mean you only have to apply for diversity targeted programs. So the choice is yours. Any program officer will tell you it is up to you, but you also, as Kenny ... Sorry, Dr. Gibbs said, don't count yourself out. Make the best decision for you, but also don't let it be one that is based in fear or stereotypes. It should be one that you're like no, actually I really want to lean into this or you know what, no, I don't. And so that is really something that we hear a lot and I hope that you feel empowered to make the decisions for yourself.

Kenneth Gibbs: Amen, amen.

Ericka Boone: Thank you so much, Dr. Matthews, Dr. Gibbs, Dr. Hill, and Dr. Shin. I think that the point that everyone was making here is that the power is within you, right? So advocate for yourself. Practice reaching out, asking questions. We're here to help you. So thank you all for attending. Have a wonderful afternoon, and we'll see you for the rest of the conference. Bye-bye.