NIH Extramural Nexus
WHERE GRANTS POLICY, PROGRAM COORDINATION, COMPLIANCE AND ELECTRONIC RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION CONVERGE

January 2007

The Office of Extramural Research extends to the grantee community warm wishes for the New Year

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NEWS FROM THE DIRECTOR OF OER: Women in Biomedical Research, NIH Experience Mirrors that of National Academy of Sciences Report

The National Academy of Sciences recently released the report, *Beyond Bias and Barriers, Fulfilling the Potential of Women in Academic Science and Engineering*, detailing the under-representation of women in leadership positions in biomedical and other scientific fields. *Beyond Bias* offers recommendations for the nation's institutions of higher education, government agencies, and professional societies, focusing on the need for a culture change within the scientific community. The question arises: What can (and should) NIH be doing to ensure that all qualified candidates for academic positions have an equal opportunity to compete?

The *Beyond Bias* report argues that "the pipeline is not the problem." Indeed, NIH has been supporting the post-doctoral training of large numbers of women for more than a decade. In 1990, 41.1 percent of NIH-supported Postdoctoral Fellows were women, a number comparable to today, when 42.6 percent of Fellows are women. The participation rate for women in the Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award institutional research training grant program (T32, T34) had increased to 55 percent of the predoctoral positions and 49 percent of the postdoctoral positions by fiscal year 2004. As an indicator of the achievements of women postdocs, 48 percent of those selected for the first 2007 round of the Pathway to Independence Award winners were women. Not only are women trained in numbers comparable to men, but women are equally competitive with men. The success rate for women is very comparable to that of men on Research Project Grants as a whole.

However, while men and women have been trained in roughly equal numbers for some time, the data continue to support the report's conclusion that "women face barriers to hiring and promotion in research universities in many fields of science and engineering." According to AAMC survey data in 2005, women represent 28 percent of the basic science faculty and 32 percent of the clinical faculty. At the rank of full professor, only 18 percent of the basic science faculty and 14 percent of the clinical faculty are women.

NIH sees these realities reflected in our extramural funding patterns. Over the period from 1990 to 2004, the percentage of R01 awards going to women has increased only from 17 percent to 24 percent. Given that the success rates are so similar, there are clearly fewer women in a position to apply for these grants. It is somewhat encouraging to note that, since 1993, R01 awards with women as Principal Investigators have been

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slightly larger in size than awards to men, but overall women receive a smaller proportion of awarded dollars than awarded grants. Since 1994, research grants to women have remained at about 80 percent of the size of research grants to men. One possible explanation is that women are less frequently the Principal Investigators of the largest grants. For example, over the period from 1983 to 2004, the share of Center grants going to women has increased from four percent to only 17 percent. The disproportionate difficulty women have as Principal Investigators of large grants was obvious in the first round of the of Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSAs) applications, where none of the applicants were women.

We are at a pivotal point in the history of medical research. Now is the time to take full advantage of the entire talented cadre of trained scientists to tackle today's scientific challenges and help revolutionize medicine and health in this country. NIH Director Dr. Zerhouni released a statement endorsing the *Beyond Bias* report, stating, "We have increased the pool of talented women who choose to study science and engineering. We now must focus our efforts on retaining and advancing them."

NIH is examining its own culture. The Office of Intramural Research is finalizing the report of the Task Force on the Status of NIH Intramural Women Scientists. This task force surveyed scientists who have worked or are working in NIH's intramural labs. These surveys should provide some data and insight as to what does and does not work for women in our labs.

In response to the issues raised in the *Beyond Bias* report, and in anticipation of the Intramural Task Force report, NIH is creating a working group to develop innovative strategies that we can implement to address this critical issue. This working group will be co-chaired by Dr. Zerhouni and Dr. Vivian Pinn, Director of the Office of Research in Women's Health, which provided the initial funding for the National Academy of Sciences report. We look forward to sharing our results with the community.

If you have any comments or questions regarding the status of women in leadership positions in biomedical and other scientific fields, please feel free to write to me at DDER@NIH.gov.

— *Norka Ruiz Bravo, Ph.D.,* Director, Office of Extramural Research and Deputy Director for Extramural Research

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Science in the News

An article by NIH Director Dr. Zerhouni appeared in the November 17 issue of *Science*, entitled, "NIH Funding in the Post-Doubling Era: Realities and Strategies." You can access the article directly from the NIH home page under the "In The News" section on the left side of the page, or directly from *Science*.

NIH 2007 Fiscal Operations Plan Announced

Faced with a markedly increased number of applications and applicants for grant support at a time of flat budgets with no inflationary adjustments, NIH is taking immediate proactive steps in fiscal year 2007 to manage its portfolio of investments in biomedical research. NIH is committed to buttressing core areas of vulnerability, such as the ability of new investigators to compete for support in these difficult financial

Please feel free to share it with colleagues.

NIH Launches dbGaP, a Database of Genome Wide Association Studies

NIH Announces Licensing Opportunities for Rare Disease Technologies

Infectious Disease Researchers Develop Basis for Experimental Melanoma Treatment

NCI Researchers Develop Modified Immunotoxin for Cancer Therapy in Mouse Study

NIH R01 Grant Applications Go Electronic

Benefits to Employers Outweigh Enhanced Depression-Care Costs

NIDA Researchers Complete Unprecedented Scan of Human Genome That May Help Unlock the Genetic Contribution to Tobacco Addiction

NIH Announces More Than 50 Awards in the Pathway to Independence Program

Inexpensive Test Detects H5N1 Infections Quickly and Accurately

INSTITUTE AND CENTER NEWS LINKS

News in Health

NIGMS *Findings*

NIGMS *Minority Programs*

times, and protecting our investment in well-established investigators with little or no other significant support. In addition, NIH is adjusting the number of competing Research Project Grants (RPG) that will be awarded, with the goal of stabilizing to the extent possible the yearly variation in number of awards that are made. Complete information including priorities and operating guidelines is available in the NIH Fiscal Policy for Grant Awards–Fiscal Year 2007 notice published December 15 in the *NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts*.

In addition, NIH is currently operating under a continuing resolution (CR) at fiscal year 2006 budget levels. The CR will be in effect until February 15, 2007 and possibly longer. Under this resolution, NIH will continue to make non-competing awards at 80 percent of previously committed levels. When NIH receives its appropriation for fiscal year 2007, these awards will be adjusted.

If you have specific questions about your award, please contact the grants management specialist identified in your Notice of Grant Award. For all other questions please write to us at DDER@NIH.gov.

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ADDRESSING TERROR AND VIOLENCE RELATED TO ANIMAL RESEARCH

Research organizations, institutions and scientists that use animal models in their research face the possibility of threat and intimidation from individuals or organizations opposed to this practice. In recent months, a number of cases of threatened violence against individuals and institutions in the United States have been reported in the trade and popular press. Consequently, all research institutions face the challenge and expense of creating a secure environment to counter potential threats to their research. At many institutions, Institutional Officials (IOs) and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees (IACUCs) are concerned about ensuring the security of their animal facilities and that of individual investigators who use animals in research. It is worth noting however, that many of these concerns can be addressed

IOs and IACUCs should know that there are resources that can help protect their institutions and scientists, mitigating if not entirely eliminating, the impact of terrorist or violent actions. Mostly, these resources provide guidance for the development of plans to prepare for disasters resulting from natural or man-made causes. For example, the *Applied Research Ethics National Association / National Institutes of Health Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee Guidebook* provides specific guidance that IACUCs and IOs can use to develop an overall in-house preparedness plan that addresses the needs of personnel and animals. And, the NIH's Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) provides additional information, based on the *Guidebook's* recommendations, on their Frequently Asked Questions Web page.

Threats to investigators who use animal models in their research are a major concern

Update

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that NIH shares with the IOs and IACUCs. NIH encourages each institution to evaluate, and revise as necessary, its readiness to respond to potential threats in accordance with the Guidebook's recommendations. And of course OLAW staff are ready to help as much as possible. We welcome your questions and comments.

For readers interested in the use of animal models in research, it is worth noting that the December 14 issue of *Nature includes a series of articles* on this subject from the perspective of scientists, veterinarians and others.

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GET READY FOR CHANGES IN PEER REVIEW

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH Center for Scientific Review

A dramatic rise in applications and growing difficulty in recruiting qualified reviewers are challenging NIH peer review. At the same time, the pace of science has increased and NIH needs a review system that can keep up with it. After a year of listening to leaders of the scientific community and colleagues here at NIH, Dr. Antonio Scarpa, Director, Center for Scientific Review (CSR) in collaboration with other NIH senior officials, has developed a collective vision for NIH peer review. In fall 2006, Dr. Scarpa and his colleagues presented this vision to the NIH Peer Review Advisory Committee (PRAC), which enthusiastically endorsed it. PRAC's support for the key recommended changes, listed below, was particularly strong:

- ***Shorten the Grant Application***: Our applicants and reviewers bear heavy burdens writing and reviewing NIH applications, which run about 25 pages, not counting budgets, bibliographies and appendices. Shorter applications could greatly improve our reviews: each reviewer could read more applications, our study sections could be smaller, and we could be more successful in recruiting reviewers. A trans-NIH Committee to Shorten the Application has been established to advance this objective, and will soon conduct analysis of responses to a recently issued Request for Information (RFI) for a Possible Page Limit Reduction for the Research Plan Section of the Research Project Grant (R01) Application. Additionally, a recent change limiting grant application appendix materials will encourage applicants to be as concise as possible focusing on the information needed for expert scientific review.

- ***Identify more significant, innovative and high-impact research***: Keith Yamamoto, Executive Vice Dean, University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine, told PRAC that the current review process favors predictable research, experimental detail, extensive preliminary data, and the paradigms of established "experts." He called for NIH to develop a new review and funding mechanism that fosters both innovative and transformative research that can lead to rapid

» *Guide* Notices

NIH Fiscal Policy for Grant Awards–FY 2007

NIH Policy on Late Submission of Grant Applications–Clarification for Multiple-PI Applications and New Submission / Receipt Dates

Revision of the Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Awards for Individual Predoctoral Fellowships (F31) to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research

Delays in Grant Application Submission due to Winter Storms

Announcing Availability of Pre-Registration for the NIH Regional Seminars on Program Funding and Grants Administration

Notice of a Report on the Review of Responses to the National Institutes of Health Request for Information (RFI): Standards for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals

Limits on Resubmission of an Application: Clarification of NIH Policy

Clarification of Resubmissions for Ten Recently Released Genome Sequencing Funding Opportunity Announcements

Guidance to Applicant Organizations about Registering Research Fellows in the eRA Commons

NIH and AHRQ Publish Edits to the Ruth L. Kirschstein Individual Fellowship Application (PHS 416-1) Instructions

Reminder: All NIH Research Education (R25) Grant Applications Must Use the SF424 (R&R) Application Form and Apply through Grants.gov for the October 1, 2006, Submission Date and Beyond

NIH / AHRQ Now Using Version 2 of SF424 (R&R) and Agency-Specific Electronic Forms for SBIR / STTR, Conferences / Scientific Meetings, and Other Specific Funding Opportunities

OLAW Guidance on PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals Provided in Frequently Asked Questions

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progress and quantum leaps in science.

- ***Shorten the review cycle***: Data is being collected and analyzed on the pilot started in February 2006, when 631 New Investigators were offered shortened review cycles in 40 CSR study sections. Fourteen percent of those researchers took advantage of the shortened cycles to reapply in the next round, saving four months. Since summary statements and scores are posted one to two months earlier, applicants increasingly are resubmitting applications in the next round.

The NIH Leadership Forum subsequently endorsed efforts to explore ways to achieve these goals.

- ***Other efforts to improve peer review*** by reducing burdens on reviewers and improving internal efficiencies are focused on:
  - more consistent and efficient reviews
  - shorter meetings
  - electronic referral of applications to review groups

CSR also announced a series of open house workshops with community and NIH leaders to discuss the organization of review groups and initiatives for 2007. Information on these activities is provided in the fall issue of the *Peer Review Notes*.

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ACKNOWLEDGING NIH SUPPORT IS IMPORTANT

We need your help in raising public awareness of the important role NIH plays in providing funding for biomedical research for NIH grant recipients. More than 80 percent of the NIH budget supports research in the extramural environment through grants and cooperative agreements. Making the connection between federal research funding and scientific advances shows the American people that their tax dollars leads to new knowledge and an improvement in health.

As an Investigator, you can help. You are in a position to raise public awareness of the NIH role in your project while satisfying an award requirement and a Congressional directive that grantees "acknowledge NIH's funding contribution when they publicize their research findings." [1] These actions benefit you, American citizens and NIH as we work together to improve the health of the Nation.

- Acknowledge NIH's full or partial support of your research in journal articles, oral or poster presentations, news releases, interviews with reporters, radio and TV appearances, and other communications. When possible, the citation in scientific publications should include the grant

number and the name of the source of support (for example: R01GM012345 from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, National Institutes of Health). For additional details on journal article citation requirements, see the Rights in Data (Publications and Copyrighting) section of the NIH Grants Policy Statement.

- Alert the NIH program officer who manages your grant if you have a significant finding accepted for publication, especially if your institution is planning a news release or if you have other reasons to expect media coverage of your work. You can find the program officer's name and contact information on your Notice of Grant Award.
- Ask your institution's public information officer to contact the communications director of your NIH Institute or Center to coordinate efforts to publicize important research progress. You can reach the communications director through your NIH program officer or by using the information at NIH Media Contacts Web page. When appropriate, we may highlight research advances in news releases, on our Web site (see, for example, the *Research Results for the Public* page, or in other outlets. We will, of course, honor embargoes on journal articles.
- If reporters ask you to suggest an outside expert to comment on your research, you can refer them to the communications director of your NIH Institute or Center, who will arrange an interview with your program officer or another NIH official.

Every American has a right to know and understand how their tax dollars are used by the NIH to improve health through biomedical research. Your continued acknowledgement of our partnership in this research is essential to this understanding.

[1] Report language accompanying the fiscal year 1996 NIH Appropriations Bill

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FROM THE MAILBOX:
The Director of OER Responds to Your Questions

The NIH received several favorable comments and a few questions about my news article on New Investigators that appeared in the September issue of the *Nexus*. Although correspondents were not warned that we might publish their comments in a subsequent issue of the *Nexus*, I think it is important to cover the issues raised. Accordingly, you can see some of the comments here, without specific attribution.

Comment #1: I have been on the faculty at my university for eight years and still have not received my first R01 or R21 grant. I have written applications for other PIs that have scored well and those grants have supported my research. I also have received support from foundations and industry. I feel that there is a lot of bias at the top from

Feedback

COMMUNICATE WITH THE *NIH EXTRAMURAL NEXUS*—WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Feedback from recipients and subscribers of the *NIH Extramural Nexus* is vital. Comments, questions, and suggestions for topics will enable *Nexus* editorial staff to deliver appropriate content to the grantee community.

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(Adobe Acrobat Reader Required)

those who sit on study sections. Reviews are generally too critical and do not support or promote good science in young investigators. I think good mentorship is the key and I think universities should be encouraged to figure out ways to provide better mentorship for young scientists.

Director OER: I especially support your point about the need for mentorship. We all need someone we can talk with and trust when it comes to career development. This is especially important for young scientists. I understand that many institutions recognize this need and are establishing formal mentoring arrangements to help New Investigators set realistic goals and to prepare carefully vetted grant applications. NIH policies regarding New Investigators are clear and review committees are instructed to assume that applications from New Investigators may contain less preliminary information and the review should focus more on the quality of the ideas and the applicant's potential. There is evidence that this is happening. New Investigators comprise about 25 percent of all competing R01 equivalent awards and NIH Institutes and Centers make a special effort to fund applications from New Investigators. Although the incentives for New Investigators seem to work well, there may be review committees that are not as attentive to the needs of New Investigators as they should be. If you have specific concerns about your own experience with the NIH review and funding process, we would like to know. You can send email to the DDER@nih.gov and we will try to address the situation.

Comment #2: Each time I think about applying for a grant it seems so time consuming and daunting that I quickly give up.

Director OER: : I have worked in the extramural environment and I have assembled grant applications, so I know exactly what you are talking about. Nonetheless, most investigators find that the work pays off in terms of planning and organizing a research project. Many research-intensive universities provide mentorship and other resources for faculty preparing grant applications. If such resources are not available at your facility, you might consider working out an arrangement with a nearby university for administrative and professional support. It also might be useful to take a look at the resources, including grant application tutorials, available on the NIH New Investigator Web site. I hope you will consider applying in the future.

Comment #3: The "New Investigator Checkbox" has been in place for some time and it replaces the First Independent Research Support & Transition (FIRST) Award (R29) in intent. The continued downward trend in New Investigator success indicates that the Checkbox has been less than effective. This policy is simply insufficient to cause real change.

Director OER: Thanks for your comment. You are correct that success rates for New Investigators are dropping, but I would like to call your attention to the New Investigators slide set, presented at the Association of American Medical Colleges in 2006. The success rates for both new and experienced applicants has dropped chiefly because of large increases in the number of applications and flat budgets. Nonetheless, NIH incentives for New Investigators have been effective in protecting the proportion of

competing grants going to New Investigators. In fiscal year 2006, the NIH reduced the award amounts for non-competing grants to protect success rates for competing grants. Overall, the success rate was 20 percent, but there was considerable variability across the NIH institutes. You can find that information at the Award Data / Success Rates page. There is no question that the funding environment is more competitive than it has been in the recent past, but the Checkbox seems to be working.

Comment #4: I just read your article in *Nexus* and whole-heartedly agree with you and feel that the fate of the U.S. biomedical enterprise is in doubt because of the extraordinary measures required for New Investigators to become independent. One suggestion that I have is that the NIH should consider funding institutional research grants that could provide a block of money to the university, which then can be given out on a competitive basis by the university to New Investigators.

Director OER: Thanks for your comment and suggestion. In the past the NIH has used institutional grants of the type you suggest. It might be useful to take a look at the program announcement for Biomedical Research Support Grants (BRSG), which were phased out in 1993. Under the BRSG program the NIH considered applications from academic and non-academic research institutions with a certain level of existing NIH research funding. The funds were used to support pilot research, New Investigators, and projects that might have a temporary lapse in research funding. Although these awards were flexible and useful, they lowered the availability of funds for peer reviewed competing research projects so this kind of funding was discontinued. I know that many universities now use non-Federal funds for similar purposes.

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YOU'VE GOT QUESTIONS. WE'VE GOT ANSWERS

The NIH and its individual Institutes and Centers offer an array of Frequently Asked Questions (and answers) in response to inquiries on policies and programs affecting the grants process. Bookmark the links in the following list for future reference and watch for updates:

- **Grant Application Information:**:
  - Electronic Submission of Grant Applications
  - eRA Commons
  - Person Months
  - Person Months Interactive Conversion Chart
  - Replacing Principal Investigator Signature with Institutional Compliance Requirement
  - Modular Grant Applications
  - Multiple Principal Investigators

- **Animal Research**:
  - Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW)
- **Human Subjects**:
  - Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP)
  - Requirement for Education on the Protection of Human Subjects
  - Stem Cell Information
- **Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) Research Training Grants and Fellowships Information**:
  - New NRSA Funding Policy
  - NIH Research Training Opportunities: NRSA Fellowships
  - NIH Research Training Opportunities: NRSA Training Grants
- **Resources**:
  - PubMed

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Web Tool to be Launched for Finding Funding Information

The NIH tracks its funding of critical biomedical research and other support at universities, hospitals, small businesses and other organizations, and annually compiles this information and makes it available to the public. Up to now, this funding information was available in the form of tables that showed comparative rankings in terms of dollars received.

However, the NIH no longer will provide these comparative ranking tables on its biomedical research funding. Instead, NIH has developed a Web-based tool that allows you to determine the dollars awarded to any one organization or department. The tool will allow you to download aggregate data, on a per fiscal year basis, so that you can conduct your own analysis.

This change comes in part from responses received from the grantee community that suggested that the current ranking tables were used only by a subset of the community and in part by the establishment of Multiple Principal Investigator Awards, which will make tracking and ranking funds received by individual departments impractical.

The Web tool will allow you to search for organizations by name and download of institutional and department-level data

The funding information will include: name of organization receiving the award; fiscal year; type or category of the award; number of individual awards in each category;

dollar amount awarded in each category; and total dollar amount and number of awards.

The information will be provided as a snapshot in time. Changes in information from events such as institutional reorganizations or post-award budgetary adjustments will not be included until the next scheduled update.

If you would additional information or have a comment or question, please contact Dr. Israel Lederhendler, Director, Division of Information Services, Office of Research Information Services, Office of Extramural Research.

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Congress Reauthorizes NIH

The U.S. Congress passed legislation reauthorizing the NIH on December 8. In response to the *National Institutes of Health Reform Act of 2006*, NIH Director, Dr. Elias A. Zerhouni, M.D. said in part, “The passage of the 2006 NIH reauthorization bill is an affirmation of the importance of NIH and its vital role in advancing biomedical research to improve the health of the Nation.” He added that, “This support from Congress could not have come at a better moment. We are at a pivotal point in the history of medical research—now is the time to take full advantage of the tremendous momentum in science to help revolutionize medicine and health in this country.”

The NIH was last reauthorized in 1993. An authorization is legislation enacted by Congress that establishes or continues the operation of a Federal program or agency. Authorizations may be indefinite or time-specific, and may include terms and conditions under which Federal programs or agencies conduct their business and activities.

Authorization of the NIH falls under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Energy and Commerce in the House and the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee in the Senate.

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EYE ON PI

Electronic Submission of R01 Applications Soon Approaches

Are you prepared for the upcoming transition of the R01 Research Project Grant to electronic application submission? As announced on November 20, the NIH will require electronic application submission of R01 Research Project Grants for the February 5, 2007, receipt date and beyond. In anticipation of electronic submission of the NIH’s most heavily used grant mechanism application, the Office of Extramural Research

dedicated its previous issue of the *NIH Extramural Nexus* exclusively to this important event.

If you have not familiarized yourself yet with the electronic application process and the important changes it will bring, you are encouraged to review the many resources NIH has made available to grantee institutions and the applicant community. The November 2006 *Nexus* provides a comprehensive source for information about the transition, including articles about the electronic application process, Parent Announcements for investigator-initiated research applications, answers to questions about electronic submission, links to numerous resources and more.

In addition, training for the electronic submission of grant application is offered at the NIH Regional Seminars on Program Funding and Grants.

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NIH Regional Seminars: Pre-Register Now

Twice annually, typically once in the eastern U.S. and once in the western U.S., the NIH Office of Extramural Research conducts NIH Regional Seminars on Program Funding and Grants. These seminars help demystify the NIH grant application and review process, clarify Federal regulations and policies, and highlight current areas of special interest or concern. The seminars are appropriate for grants administrators, researchers new to NIH and graduate students.

In 2007, the OER will conduct seminars at the University of Utah at Salt Lake City, March 5-7, and in Research Triangle Park, NC, April 24-26, sponsored by several local higher education and research institutions. Pre-registration for the seminars is available now. For additional information, visit the NIH Regional Seminars on Program Funding and Grants Web site.

Also offered at the seminars is the NIH Electronic Research Administration (eRA) Computer Lab, which will provide institutional grant administrators and principal investigators hands-on-keyboard training on the steps for completing and submitting an application for an NIH grant using the SF424 (R&R) form via Grants.gov, how to register for an eRA Commons account, and how to obtain DUNS and CCR numbers. Trainees will be instructed on how to make use of the eRA Commons, a virtual meeting place where NIH extramural grantee organizations, grantees, and the public can receive and transmit information about the administration of biomedical and behavioral research.

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2007 NIH Director's Pioneer Award: Call for Applications

The NIH Director's Pioneer Award supports exceptionally creative scientists in a wide

range of fields who propose highly innovative—and potentially transformative—approaches to major challenges in biomedical research.

In September 2007, NIH expects to make five to ten new Pioneer awards of $500,000 each in direct costs per year for five years.

The program is open to scientists at all career levels and in any field of research, provided they are interested in exploring biomedically relevant topics. NIH particularly encourages applications from women, members of groups that are underrepresented in biomedical research and individuals in the early to middle stages of their careers.

The streamlined, electronic application process includes a three- to five-page essay and three letters of reference. The application period opened on December 1, 2006, and closes on January 16, 2007.

Detailed instructions are at the 2007 NIH Director's Pioneer Award Program announcement. For more information, see the Pioneer Award Web site or send questions to pioneer@nih.gov.

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NIH Genes and Environment Initiative Focuses on Genetic and Environmental Causes of Human Disease

The NIH Genes and Environment Initiative (GEI) was announced in February 2006 to support research that will lead to the understanding of genetic contributions and gene-environment interactions in common disease. GEI is led administratively by the NHGRI and the NIEHS. The President's proposed budget for GEI is $68 million. The program will commence upon approval of the fiscal year 2007 budget, and will continue for multiple years.

GEI has two main components:

- **Genetics Program**: a pipeline for analyzing genetic variation in groups of patients with specific illnesses
- **Exposure Biology Program**: an environmental technology development effort to produce and validate new methods for monitoring environmental exposures that interact with a genetic variation to result in human diseases

The proposed Federal funding will enable GEI to perform genetic analysis—genotyping—studies for several dozen common diseases. The exact diseases to be studied will be determined by peer review. An initial survey of existing NIH-supported clinical studies identified more than 100 with sufficient numbers of already characterized

patients to get this venture started. In addition, NIH expects to develop four new environmental monitoring devices a year.

NIH has dedicated a Web site to GEI that provides complete information about the program and links to associated announcements and funding opportunities.

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Updated On-Time Grant Application Submission FAQs

The NIH has received several questions inquiring about what is meant by "on-time grant application submission." In response, the NIH has updated its Electronic Submission Frequently Asked Questions Web page with a section devoted to the grant application submission deadline.

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Preparing for NIH Electronic Grant Application Training Session Archived for Viewing

Nearly 9000 members of the grant applicant community logged onto NIH VideoCast to watch the *Preparing for NIH Electronic Grant Application* training held on December 5. If you missed the training, designed to prepare the applicant community for the upcoming transition of Research Project Grant (R01) application to electronic submission in February 2007, the archive now is available at the NIH Electronic Submission of Grant Applications training Web page. Also available are presentations and other event materials from the training.

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National Institutes of Health
OFFICE OF EXTRAMURAL RESEARCH

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