

# Research Funding Service

## RFS NEWS

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### Grant\$ for Lunch: K Award Series

You may have noticed the posters for our Grant\$ for Lunch series around Health Sciences. This Wednesday, February 16, RFS Director Janet Rasey, Ph.D., will be featured in a Grant\$ for Lunch program focusing on "NIH Career Development 'K' Awards." This session will meet in South Campus Center, Room 303 from noon to 1p.m.

K Awards can be baffling and mystifying, so, how do you know which one is right for you? Dr. Rasey has many years of personal experience in grant writing and served on the Radiation Studies Section for the Center for Scientific Review for NIH. Furthermore, she teaches a wide range of grant writing courses for universities and professional societies all over the country.

With these qualifications, Dr. Rasey will be your guide through a demystifying and delineating process: untangling the world of K Awards. Not all NIH institutes offer all K Awards. The program will clarify which institutes offer which awards, how the natures of these awards differ from institute to institute, and also give you an overview of the "K Kiosk," the K Awards Career Developmental Program. Additionally, you will learn some useful statistics regarding the popularity and award frequency, as well as some helpful insider advice about choosing mentors and preparing your application, including the often quoted: Talk to an NIH program officer first!

Dr. Rasey invites all of you to come: "It's hard to believe that RFS has been offering Grant\$ for Lunch since 1991! ... We welcome any and all questions on the

topic of the day. The sessions on NIH career development grants (K awards) have become an annual event because they are our most popular G\$FL topic."

The next of this series will be held on April 20 from noon to 1pm. Sheila Lukehart, Ph.D., Assistant Dean for Faculty Development at Harborview, will be our featured guest. She will address the two most popular K awards, K08s and K23s. Dr. Lukehart has a great deal of insight and experience with this topic as she has served on K Award study sections for NIAID, the National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases. Because of this personal experience, Dr. Lukehart is more than qualified to answer any of your questions regarding a reviewer's perspective of a "good" K Award application, and offer some priceless advice.

Research Funding Service has been sponsoring Grant\$ for Lunch for many years. The purpose of these sessions is to foster a community atmosphere for the Health Science Schools here at UW, to offer "an informal opportunity for faculty and staff to ask questions, get current information about funding opportunities, career development, NIH, and to learn from colleagues and mentors," explains Ramona Hensrude, RFS Funding Consultant, who is the behind-the-scenes orchestrator of all of these events.

So, bring your lunch and pull up a chair! Grant\$ for Lunch is always informative, free and requires no prior registration! See you there!

Noell Bernard [noelleon@u.washington.edu](mailto:noelleon@u.washington.edu)

## NIH Program Officers - Part 2



**Richard Okita, Ph.D., Program Director,  
Division of Pharmacology, Physiology &  
Biological Chemistry, NIGMS**

I would like to thank Dr. Okita from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences for graciously agreeing to be interviewed for *RFS News*. This is an excerpt from an email interview I conducted with Dr. Okita on December 20, 2004 and a follow-up phone interview on December 29, 2004.

### **1. Tell me about yourself**

“I received an undergrad degree in microbiology from UCLA and my Ph.D. in (Biochemical) Pharmacology from the University of Southern California. I did a postdoc in biochemistry at Southwestern Medical School. My first faculty position was at the Medical College of Wisconsin in the Department of Biochemistry where I was an Assistant and Associate Professor. My research was funded by NIEHS and by NICHD. I then moved to Pullman, WA as a faculty member in the College of Pharmacy. I was Professor in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences. I ran the grant program in Pharmacology and Toxicology for about five years and I was an interim chair of the Pharmaceutical Science Department for a little over two years.”

“After living in the Maryland area, north of Bethesda for three years, my wife (who is also a Ph.D. and works for the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Science) got tired of the long commute into DC on weekdays and weekends so we decided to down-size, sell our house, and move into an apartment in DC. She has a three block walk to her office and although I have a Metro stop within three blocks of our apartment, I try to walk between a mile or two before I board the Metro train to NIH.”

I have always wanted to walk the National Mall and visit the Smithsonian museums on January 1st, and that is something I am now able to do.”

“I enjoy walking the city and shopping - love to shop at Costco although living in a two bedroom apartment severely restricts Costco type purchases. I enjoy live theater, music, museums, and sports events and feeding ducks, geese, and squirrels that live on the National Mall.”

### **2. How long have you worked for NIH?**

“I started my program director’s position in August 2001. Since moving to DC, I have experienced 9/11, the sniper shootings in Maryland/DC/Virginia, a snow storm that dropped about 20 inches of snow on DC over Valentine’s weekend, and hurricane/tropical storm Isabelle in 2003.”

### **3. What prepared you for this position? What do you like about it most?**

“I served on two NIH study sections which reviewed RO1, R21, and R15 applications and a NIEHS review panel which reviewed program projects, center grants, training grants, and K02 grants. I estimate I have reviewed over 250 RO1 grants in my career from 1988 to 2001. When reviewers spoke highly of a grant, I would make the effort to look at it. I did study what made grants stand out to reviewers and I enjoyed counseling junior faculty or colleagues about the grant process. As a faculty member, I served as a mentor for some junior faculty so I bring this attitude of trying to help young faculty to my position at NIGMS.”

“I enjoy working with grantees. I enjoy helping them understand the grant process, talking to them about their research, providing advice about preparing their grants, and to help them understand their reviews after their summary statements are released.”

“Since I know several department chairs and other senior faculty who have new faculty joining their departments, my name has been given to these individuals to contact. I welcome them to the NIH grants process. In many cases, their grants probably would not come to NIGMS, but I still talk to them and direct them about their grant and will try to direct them to the appropriate websites for additional information or give them names of other program staff to contact.”

### **4. What are the most common misconceptions people have about NIH and what you do?**

“That NIH is one institute rather than composed of multiple institutes/centers. They are not aware that CSR is the NIH group that assigns grants to institutes

and to study sections and is responsible for reviews of grants. Investigators are unaware that they can suggest to CSR which institute may be the primary one that funds their grant and the study section that reviews it. Some investigators think program officers are the ones who run the study section that reviews their grants.”

“Another misconception that is “out there” is young investigators are often told to make their grant abstract very medically relevant so the abstract is complete with the diseases that this project will investigate or help understand. This is okay, but often times this is misleading, because the grant is very basic research, but their grant will be directed to certain institutes or study sections that may not be appropriate for real purpose of the grant. “

#### **5. What surprises you most about the people who contact you for advice?**

“I don’t think most people understand who they are writing their grants for. I think they forget that they are writing grants for people whose job it is to be critical and find fault with their proposals. Some investigators often don’t realize that it can be difficult to explain in writing what they want to do and they don’t give themselves enough time to prepare their grants. You can give multiple hour seminars with nice PowerPoint slides, but putting these seminars about what you want to do on paper in a coherent, focused manner is easier said than done. They often will wait too long before beginning the process of grant writing. They often wait too long before contacting program people - they often contact us just before their grants are due with questions. As stated above, they often don’t understand the grant process - what does CSR do, what does program do.”

#### **6. What parts of the NIH web site or your Institute’s web site do you think are the most important for researchers to be familiar with?**

“New investigator websites for basic instructions on how to write a NIH grant and which give information about the grant process. The NIAID website about the grant process is quite good as is NCI’s. The CSR website is important, because it lists the individual regular or special emphasis panels that may review their grants. They also may want to examine the CSR site to view the tape of a mock study section meeting. If they plan to use human subjects or tissues, they need to read the instructions on how to complete the human subject and animal forms. They need to monitor the NIH Guide for appropriate RFAs or PAs, but many universities may do this for the grantee.”

Editor’s Note: Check the RFS web site for links to these NIH resources.

#### **7. What recommendations do you have for universities who are training researchers?**

“Grant workshops are very important. They certainly can provide important information to faculty who are preparing proposals. However, it is important that information provided to grant writers is accurate. Misinformation can be given occasionally because what one faculty may say about the grant process may only apply to certain NIH institutes and not others. Investigators need to be told that they should contact NIH about specifics. Sometimes this is easier said than done.”

“Grantees need to be told that writing a grant is not the same as writing a scientific paper. They are not writing to an audience whose objective is to glean new information from this document. That happens of course, but they really need to think of their audience as CRITICS who are looking for wrongful thinking, mistakes in judgment, other ways to perform the experiment that may be better, missing control experiments, and other omissions. They also need to realize that if what they write isn’t very clear, it really hurts their chances of getting good scores. I often receive complaints from grantees about the summary statement and what a reviewer has said. But when I read their grant, I can sympathize with the reviewer, because what was written was unclear and not very stimulating. I have told grantees of stories that I have read about some famous authors who spent two, three, or more years trying to get publishers to accept their early manuscripts. Often times, they have a file full of rejections before they received an acceptance; even very successful writers had problems getting their first manuscripts accepted.”

“It can be very difficult to go through summary statements and read criticisms. People do not like to be criticized but criticisms and negative comments are present in summary statements. Investigators need to read the reviews carefully and thoroughly and if they want to speak to a program officer, they need to understand that program did not review their grants or write the review, so don’t become angry at their program officer.”

#### **8. What advice do you have for anyone who would like to pursue a research career?**

“This is a very complex question. Of course you need to have a complete understanding of your research area and you need to develop both written and oral communication skills to explain your research to others. And it goes without saying in this age of extramural funding that if you want to become a director of a successful research program, you need to understand

the funding process whether it be from the government or private sources. But the young researcher also needs to develop managerial skills to run their operations, handle their laboratory personnel, interact with other scientists, and plan their scientific careers. Time management becomes very important to balance both their personal and professional lives. They need to develop teaching and mentoring skills, whether it will be as lecturers to students in a classroom or working individually at the bench with beginning researchers.”

“I find the pursuit of a research career a unique circumstance, because in most cases, people who enroll in programs to become the next generation academic researcher aren’t really trained to do it. In most cases, as a grad student and postdoc, an individual is trained to pursue a research problem as an individual, and in most cases isolated from others. Then you are hired as an assistant professor and you are given multiple responsibilities that you really weren’t trained to do. Mentoring of newly hired faculty and of postdocs who want to become faculty is really essential and needs to be taken very seriously by administrators and senior faculty. This may or may not be a problem at UW, but at many places, scientists who find themselves with a RO1 grant are unprepared for the next step, i.e., run their research program, sustain it, and make it grow. Depending how long your grant was funded for (four or five years), this time passes very quickly and before you know it, it is time to renew and you are faced with the fact were you successful. You may think you were successful, but will the reviewers of your competitive renewal have the same thoughts?”

### 9. Do you have any additional words of advice for new investigators? (phone question)

a. “Each individual has to look at their own ability to write. They need to give themselves enough time to do a good job. They have to decide - do they need four weeks, six weeks? - need to have plenty of time.

b. Do they have enough data? Do they have to go back to the lab to shore up data?

Supplemental data can be sent to the study section even after you’ve submitted your grant proposal. They may limit you to one page or maybe up to four pages. This can help substantiate what you’re trying to prove - or if someone else has published something recently that supports yours, then send that information to the study section.

c. New investigators really need to think about their project. Look at the CRISP database. Who else is being published? Look back three years or so. Is it novel? Do you have new aims that aren’t being done by

anyone else?

New investigators are held to a different standard. They need more complete methods section than more experienced investigators.

d Be aware of the CSR reorganization in the past four years. It’s important for new investigators in basic sciences to find the appropriate study section. They are more focused now on diseases and organs. Basic sciences, in some cases, (now) have fewer study sections.

e. You should go back to look at your grant. Some haven’t used spell checker or proofread a hard copy of their proposal. ... in publishing, people are paid to read, edit and catch errors. In academia, it’s expected that you take care of this yourself. I have sympathy - I know how busy investigators are.”

For questions or comments, please contact Ramona Hensrud [rhensrud@u.washington.edu](mailto:rhensrud@u.washington.edu)

## Ask Janet

### Q. I can’t decide whether to apply for an NIH R21 grant (NIH Exploratory/Developmental Research Grant Award), or NIH R01 (Investigator Initiated Research Grant). How do I know which grant mechanism is best for me?

A. An R01 is the Holy Grail of grant mechanisms in biomedical research. Everyone wants one and senior colleagues often encourage, or even pressure, junior colleagues to apply as soon as possible. Sometimes an R21 looks like a good alternative, but remember that it is a different beast and serves a different purpose than an R01. R01s typically run three to five years and have much greater budget flexibility while the R21 is a two-year grant with a budget limit of \$275,000. In an R21 application, items a - d of the Research Plan (Specific Aims, Background and Significance, Preliminary Studies, and Research Design and Methods) may not exceed a total of 15 pages, yet the limit for an R01 is 25 pages. No preliminary data is required for an R21 proposal but may be included if available.

Note how NIH defines the specifics of an R21 grant:

The R21 is intended to encourage exploratory and developmental research projects by providing support for the early and conceptual stages of these projects . . . Applications submitted under this mechanism should be exploratory and novel. These studies should break new ground or extend previous discoveries toward new directions or applications. . . . These studies may involve considerable risk but may lead to a breakthrough...Applications for R21 awards should

describe projects distinct from those supported through the traditional R01 mechanism. For example, long-term projects, or projects designed to increase knowledge in a well-established area will not be considered for R21 awards. (quoted from NIH PA PA-03-107)

Try considering the following things to help you decide:

- \* For an R21 application, your idea should be more innovative than for an R01 application. Discuss your idea with an NIH program officer.
- \* If you do not have any, will your R21 be competitive without preliminary data? If most R21 applications in a specific field come in with preliminary data, yours may not compare well. In other words, do not think you should try for an R21 just because you do not have enough preliminary data for an R01. Be sure to discuss this with an NIH program officer
- \* Even though only a modular budget (increments of \$25 K; no detailed budget justification required) is required for an R21, create a detailed budget for your own planning purposes. You need to be confident that you can live with the \$275,000 limit, and ask yourself if two years is indeed enough time to get meaningful results.

**Q. I just got the Summary Statement with the review of my first NIH R01 grant, and it sounds like the reviewers just didn't understand me! I wonder if they read the proposal thoroughly. What is a new investigator supposed to do when this happens to her?**

A. I can assure you, the reviewers did read your proposal. When the Summary Statement leaves the applicant thinking that the reviewers just did not understand her/him, the most likely explanation is that the proposal was written unclearly. The best solution is to revise and resubmit, but only after you have had several reviewers critique drafts of the revisions. Look for several different reviewers who have different skills. Some attributes you might look for are individuals who have success in grant writing, experience in grant review, expertise in your discipline, status as an "intelligent non-expert," and expertise in scientific writing and editing. You may find one person who fills several of these roles, but be sure you include an intelligent non-expert as a reviewer. Such a person is best at identifying unfocused or muddled writing. Good luck.

Do you have a question you'd like to ask Janet Rasey? Send to [rasey@u.washington.edu](mailto:rasey@u.washington.edu)

## RFS Clients' Success Story



Diane Frank is an RFS client who recently received a FHCRC/UW Cancer Consortium Pilot Funds Award, which covers research expenses and part of her salary. This is a seed grant that provides important resources for obtaining preliminary data for a larger grant.

Diane is in career transition. She consulted with Ramona Hensrude in RFS early in 2004 about what options were available. She has been a postdoctoral fellow for eight years at the Hutch, and plans to become a staff scientist in the same lab where she has worked, making her eligible to apply for an NIH R01 grant.

Ms. Frank has also submitted a Career Development grant through the UW Dermatology Department to the Dermatology Foundation. This grant would pay Diane's salary and is renewable for up to three years. She will learn the decision on this proposal in mid-February.

Diane's initial contact with RFS came with an Introduction to Finding Funding class in November 2003, followed by attending our basic Grant Writing Workshop in December 2003. She honed the skills she learned in the basic workshop by attending a Hands On Grants Workshop in July 2004, during which she presented ideas and plans for the FHCRC-funded project Functional Proteomic Screen for Early Activation Markers in Zebrafish Wound Model. This is a \$45,000 one year grant that started last November.

Diane remarked, "I found that the (basic) grant writing workshop was very helpful in learning to navigate the resources and procedures. The hands-on workshop was also useful in that it showed me how similar the approaches to grant writing are regardless of the topic or field." She also told RFS that she found that "the most challenging and crucial part of preparing the grant

was to formulate the main focus (specific aim) so that it clearly conveyed the importance, relevance and approach of the proposal.”

Diane has learned the importance of getting help from her colleagues, noting, “I also learned that “it takes a village” to give birth to a grant submission! My experience with submitting two grants has taught me the importance of establishing mentoring and collaborative relationships with people who will help you reach your goals.”

In a recent email Diane told RFS that she plans to submit an R01 this summer, “so I might be back for more support in a couple of months!” RFS welcomes return business from clients who feel they still have more to learn in the ever-changing world of grants.

Do you have a success story you'd like to share with the UW research community? Send to Janet Rasey, Ph.D., Director, RFS [rasey@u.washington.edu](mailto:rasey@u.washington.edu)

## Searching Smart: Cardiovascular Disease Funding Opportunities

Over 500,000 women die each year from heart disease. That is more than the next 7 causes of death for women combined. In honor of Go Red for Women, the American Heart Association's campaign to raise awareness of women's heart disease, February's *Searching Smart* will focus on cardiovascular and heart disease funding opportunities.

Embarking on a subject specific funding overview can be overwhelming, but with the help of a few key resources, the task will become much more manageable.

One of the resources available to current faculty, staff, and students is the Community of Science (COS) database. One COS feature is a funding opportunities database, which contains an impressive number of public and private-sector funding opportunities. These sources are drawn from federal and regional governments, foundations, professional societies, associations, and corporations. There are at least 23,000 grant and award opportunities posted.

Since COS is a restricted resource, a link is available through RFS's website, Health Sciences Library or the University's main library page. Once you register for a COS Workbench, you can log in at [www.cos.com](http://www.cos.com), eliminating additional steps.

Using COS's funding opportunities *Main Search*, I selected seven COS Keywords: Cardiovascular Biology, Cardiovascular Diseases, Cardiovascular Physiology,

Cardiovascular System, Heart, Heart Diseases and Thoracic or Cardiovascular Surgery. I restricted my search to opportunities and awards intended for M.D.'s, Ph.D.'s or Other Professionals, and in order to keep the return list manageable, I also limited my search to research prospects taking place within the U.S. The following funding opportunities are reflections of my COS search results:

National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's (NHLBI) mission is to support “research training and career development of new and established researchers in fundamental sciences and clinical disciplines to enable them to conduct basic and clinical research related to heart, blood vessel, lung, and blood diseases; sleep disorders; and blood resources through individual and institutional research training awards and career development awards.” Available Research and Training Career Development Programs from NHLBI:

*Predoctoral Students*

*Postdoctoral Individuals*

*Postdoctoral Individuals/New Independent Investigators*

*Established Researchers*

If you would like to automatically receive NHLBI announcements and funding opportunities, subscribe to the NHLBI Research and Policy Update Listserv.

While NHLBI is the primary NIH institute for cardiovascular research, you should not omit looking at the National Institute on Aging (NIA) or National Institute on General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) for funding possibilities.

The American Heart Association (AHA) is a national voluntary health agency whose mission is to reduce disability and death from cardiovascular diseases and stroke. The association is interested in supporting the development of new investigators and “offering innovative funding mechanisms to stimulate research in promising areas of cardiovascular science.”

AHA, Affiliate Research Programs, Pacific Mountain Affiliate

*Predoctoral Fellowships*

*Postdoctoral Fellowships*

*Beginning Grant-in-Aid*

*Grant-in-Aid*

AHA, Young Investigator Awards

*Cournand and Comroe Young Investigator Prizes in  
Cardiopulmonary and Critical Care*

*Samuel A. Levine Young Clinical Investigators Awards*

*Melvin L. Marcus Young Investigator Awards in  
Cardiovascular Science*

AHA, National Research Program

*National Scientist Development Grant*

*Established Investigator Grant*

*National Fellow to Faculty Transition Award*

Click here for an exhaustive list of AHA funding opportunities.

“The American Heart Association partners with other organizations to support cardiovascular research beyond its own financial resources. This includes enlisting the help of corporations such as the pharmaceutical firms that make up the AHA Pharmaceutical Roundtable, and foundations such as the Henrietta B. and Frederick H. Bugher Foundation in the fight against cardiovascular disease and stroke.”

The Lasker Foundation's (Albert and Mary Medical Research Awards Program) purpose is to “recognize and honor individuals who have made significant contributions in basic or clinical research in diseases that are the main cause of death and disability. The Basic Medical Research Award honors the scientist or scientists who have made fundamental investigations that open new areas of biomedical science.” *Deadline: November 1, 2005.*

The American Federation of Aging (AFAR) supports both basic and clinical biomedical research into aging and age-related diseases including heart disease. AFAR is interested in assisting medical students, Ph.D. students, and junior faculty become new investigators. *Deadline: December 15, 2005.*

The Henrietta B. and Fredrick H. Bugher Foundation is a national private foundation solely dedicated to cardiovascular research. The foundation is interested in supporting seminal and innovative research projects by established faculty. *Deadline: various.*

In addition to the COS funding opportunities database, I recommend using the Foundation Center to augment your search. The Foundation Center is a leader because of their Online Foundation Directory, grant writing and proposal development tools. To access the Foundation Center's database for foundation funding

opportunities, you can pay monthly subscription fee, or you can make an appointment with RFS staff to search using our copy. We hope to make the Foundation Center database more accessible in the future, but, for now we must adhere to our license agreement. Seattle Public Library and the Redmond branch of the King County Library System both have access to the Foundation Center's database from within their library.

Using the Foundation Center's Advanced Search, I selected the database's keywords, Heart and Circulatory Research. To limit my search, I wanted to view foundations giving on a national basis. The following funding opportunities are reflections of my Foundation Center search results, minus any duplicates from COS:

Children's Heart Foundation supports clinical and basic science research in congenital heart disease. *Deadline: June 3, 2005.*

The Children's Cardiomyopathy Foundation (CCF) accepts grant proposals annually for innovative basic, clinical or translational research relevant to the cause or treatment of cardiomyopathy in children. The grant program is intended to provide seed funding for investigators testing initial hypotheses or preliminary data collection, which will lead to long term funding from major granting institutions such as NIH. *Deadline: October 3, 2005.*

Cardiac Rhythm Management and Research Foundation 4100 Hamline Ave. N, St. Paul MN 55112

Independent Foundation supporting cardiac rhythm research and education. *No deadline, no application form.*

National Emergency Medicine Association, National Heart Council division. Their mission is the prevention of injury and illness by addressing health and social issues through education, applied research and technology. No deadline, no application form, request grant guidelines before submission.

The Stanley J. Sarnoff Endowment for Cardiovascular Science, Inc. provides funding for medical students and physicians in training to conduct one to two years of research in cardiovascular science. *Deadline: various.*

*This is not an exhaustive list of funding opportunities for cardiovascular research because it's intended to facilitate your own funding search. For questions, comments, or individual assistance to start your own funding opportunity overview, please contact Bonnie McTaggart, Research Consultant and Librarian, at [bmctag@u.washington.edu](mailto:bmctag@u.washington.edu) or 206.685.8036.*