

# Research Funding Service

## RFS NEWS

Published by the Research Funding Service -  
Telephone (206) 685-8036, Box 356340

<http://healthlinks.washington.edu/rfs/>

Ramona Hensrude, Editor  
Noell Bernard, Assistant Editor

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction to RFS News	1
NIH Program Officers	2
January Grant\$ for Lunch	3
RFS Client Success Stories	3
Searching Smart	4
Ask Janet	5

Welcome to the first issue of *RFS News*.

From its inception in 1989 through mid-2004, RFS published the *Funding Bulletin*. It was a newsletter that featured grant funding opportunities in various biomedical fields and information about RFS events and services. In the beginning, we did the hard work to track down funding information directly from the funding agency. We maintained hundreds of files of funding sources. The advent of the Internet changed the funding world. No longer was funding information available only in hard copy. It was now available to anyone with a connection and the curiosity to search. The development of search engines and databases, such as Community of Science, added even more accessibility to funding information. For this reason, we concluded that our old-style *Funding Bulletin* needed to be revamped.

Our goal with *RFS News* is to provide you, our subscribers, with useful information to guide you in the grants process. In our first few issues, we'll feature interviews with NIH program officers, client success stories, and specific ways to show you how to "search smart." An additional feature - *Ask Janet*, is a column that will feature questions asked by you, our subscribers, with answers that reflect Janet Rasey's many years of experience.

*RFS News* will be a monthly publication sent automatically as a pdf file to our FundingB subscribers and posted to our web site. The newsletter will grow and evolve based on your feedback and changing technology.

We hope you will find the articles interesting and helpful. We invite your feedback and welcome your suggestions at [rfs@u.washington.edu](mailto:rfs@u.washington.edu).

Janet Rasey  
Bonnie McTaggart  
Ramona Hensrude  
Noell Bernard

**Program Officers Help You Succeed at NIH**  
**Find out more on Page 2**

## Get to Know NIH Program Officers - Part 1



**Carol Nicholson, M.D., National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Pediatric Critical Care and Rehabilitation Program**

Anthony Coelho, in his NIH Regional Seminar presentation on grant writing asked “Do I really have to contact NIH before I submit an application?” The answer: “Only if you want to get funded!”

There is no piece of advice RFS staff repeat more often than to tell researchers to contact an NIH program officer when they begin their pursuit of an NIH grant. Despite this repetition, we’ve found an initial reluctance by some to make the call, send the email, and some wait too long to do so.

Since I’d never actually talked to a program officer myself, I decided to interview several of them. What I found should reassure you. They were all very approachable and dedicated to helping researchers, especially new ones. I hope you will find the information helpful and encouraging. Their stories and advice will be featured in this, and future *RFS News* editions.

Of the program directors I interviewed, none had a stronger message of hope and encouragement for researchers than Carol Nicholson, M.D. She’s been the program director for NICHD’s Pediatric Critical Care and Rehabilitation Program for three years.

Carol likes “working with young investigators, and helping them approach the idea of NIH funding...calling to congratulate them when they get fabulous priority scores, cheering them up when they don’t.” She says that “one of my favorite things is to work with disgruntled applicants who have been disappointed, and to help them become more successful. They need to (get some) REST! (and) Don’t quit!”

She described her job as “complex, you can’t be too knowledgeable or know too many people.” Prior to this position, Carol ran her own company, which provided pediatric critical care locum tenens coverage and program development consultation. Statistics and methodology courses, pediatric residency, pediatric critical care fellowship, and research experience as an NHLBI project manager, prepared her to be a program director. Carol serves as pediatric intensivist with current research interests in “child abuse and neglect, hemorrhagic shock and resuscitation, and outcomes, especially disability after pediatric critical illness and injury.” Her research program has grown tremendously in the last three years. She’s received 183 applications for her program in this time, including those that were investigator initiated, as well as those submitted in response to RFAs, which she has published in the NIH Guide.

Since coming to NIH, Carol created “*Seven Steps*” – a step-by-step approach for investigators contacting NIH for the first time. She’s given RFS permission to post it on our web site at: <http://healthlinks.washington.edu/rfs/gw/sevenstepsCarolNicholson.pdf>

In addition to reading the *Seven Steps*, Carol suggests researchers subscribe to the NIH Guide at: <http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/listserv.htm>

“Then, you can know what is going on, and you can get some experience looking at Program Announcements, RFAs, Notices, etc. All have contact information for NIH staff...so, you can ‘mine’ for those you would like to contact. Try to spend some time on the NIH website (<http://www.nih.gov/>), trying to connect with the process of extramural funding.”

Carol told me “she worries about [investigators/applicants]... getting discouraged.” She tries to help them to maximize their chances for success. She helps those whose scores are below the payline to think about how to revise their application for resubmission. “Maybe they can knock 50-60 points off their score. “

She credits her Seven Steps for helping applicants “methodically make their work competitive.”

Her advice for universities training researchers: “Keep them from getting discouraged. Avoid the impression that obtaining NIH support or developing as a researcher is not likely.” Her advice for anyone who would like to pursue a research career: “DON’T LET ANYONE ANYWHERE DISSUADE YOU! Stick with it, we NEED your ideas and creative problem solving!” (Emphasis hers)

Although she enjoys her NIH position, she would like to eventually move permanently to California. Carol is married to a California businessman. Her home is with her husband in Malibu. She lives in an apartment in Rockville, Maryland for all but one week a month, when she telecommutes from home.

She and her husband have two sons. One, who is 27, is an officer on active duty in the U.S. Navy. Their younger son is 22 and is currently on a teaching fellowship in China. He plans to attend law school. She shares her Rockville apartment with her adult cat named Ellwood (after the Blues Brothers).

*Ramona Hensrude, Funding Consultant, RFS*  
UW employee since 1999; BA in Communications,  
UW, member of President’s Staff Forum  
[rhensrud@u.washington.edu](mailto:rhensrud@u.washington.edu)

## January 19 Grant\$ for Lunch Looks at Foundation Funding

Sarah Nicholson, Director of Foundation Relations for the School of Medicine, will be our special guest at this month’s Grant\$ for Lunch. Sarah will talk about the *Top 10 Ways to Strengthen Your Foundation Proposal*. The workshop will be Wednesday, January 19, 2005 from noon to 1 pm at South Campus Center, room 303.

With federal funds tightening up, you may be looking at foundation funding to support your research or program proposal. What do foundations typically fund? How does the application process differ from federal funding? Where do you find information about foundation funding? How can Development offices help you? You’ll get answers to these questions and more.

Sarah Nicholson is Director for Foundation Relations in the UW Medicine Development Office. She has more than ten years of experience in marketing and communications and 14 years of experience in non-profit administration, grant writing, development, and donor relations. She has successfully secured funding from a wide variety of federal, state, and local government agencies as well as foundations and individuals, including \$3.8 million from private foundations in the past twelve months. She graduated with a B.A. in philosophy from George Washington University and a M.A. in psychology from Gonzaga University, and is an active member of professional associations for development officers.

**RFS Client Success Stories, Search Smart & Ask Janet on Pages 4-5**

## RFS Client Success Stories

RFS Client Success Stories will feature profiles of UW researchers who used our services, applied what they learned and were awarded grant funding. We'd like to share their experiences and hope you will find their stories helpful as you embark on a research career. Contact [rfs@u.washington.edu](mailto:rfs@u.washington.edu) if you'd like to share your unique story.

Thomas Neumann, an assistant professor in Bioengineering, recently learned that the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) at NIH will fund his R21 grant, entitled "Development of an In-Vitro Angiogenesis System." His experience reveals that one's grant does not always follow a predictable path and that prior communication with a Program Officer at NIH can be critical. In November, Thomas informed RFS, "I submitted the R21 to the February 1, 2004 deadline. The proposal received a score of 161. Since the preliminary funding line at the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NIBIB) was 155 in September, my program officer at NIBIB and I decided to transfer the proposal to NHLBI." On December 1, RFS received the good news from Thomas: "I talked to my program officer today and heard that my proposal is getting funded by NHLBI (starting date today). I am very happy, especially since this is my first proposal and I got it at the first shot."

Dr. Neumann worked hard to assure that his proposal would be competitive. He participated in the basic Grant Writing Workshop in December 2002 and comments "I found the workshops very valuable. I learned to get an idea about the many possibilities for grant proposals, besides the common sources." Thomas consulted with Martha Means in November of that year and with Ramona Hensrude in January 2004. Thomas followed Ramona's advice to talk to his program officer at NIBIB, an action which paved the way for the help this official provided and the ultimate successful outcome. He also sought expert review of the content of his proposal before submitting it.

Dr. Neumann also noted, "I learned that it can be fun to write a grant proposal. I really enjoyed putting my ideas into a concise form. It also helped to clarify my research plans." This bodes well for a future in academic research.

Thomas is in transition from Bioengineering to a new research institution in the Seattle area and will conduct his grant research in a new position there.

## Searching Smart: Strategies for Finding Funding Opportunities

Do you know if you are using the best tools and methods for finding funding announcements? Would you like to improve your grant seeking and searching skills? Information regarding funding is prevalent and copious, but this does not necessarily mean you can find the information quickly and efficiently.

In every issue we will focus on a rotating subject discipline, starting with cardiovascular and heart disease in February. This approach will feature relevant funding information for University researchers by analyzing search strategies and exploring the best resources to use.

This column is intended to help you navigate your way through the funding process by:

- Highlighting applicable sponsors such as federal agencies, foundations, professional societies, associations, and organizations
- Providing new ways to think about everyday resources you may already use
- Introducing you to new funding tools and useful services
- Pointing to helpful links on funding announcements, sponsors, and program information

*Bonnie McTaggart, M.L.I.S.  
Research Consultant and Librarian*

Bonnie joined RFS early in 2004 having received her Master's degree in Library and Information Science in August 2003. She has a background in speech and hearing sciences and has worked on campus since 1995. Her professional interests include expert

searching, biomedical informatics, and competitive intelligence.

## Ask Janet

Do you have a question about funding or research career development? This monthly column will draw on Janet Rasey's over 30 years of experience with grant writing, NIH, teaching grant writing workshops, and serving on study sections. The column will consider a combination of questions posed at grant writing workshops, as well as your own questions. Send your questions to [rfs@u.washington.edu](mailto:rfs@u.washington.edu)

Q. Basically, I have three potential projects in my mind for a grant proposal. For all the projects, we have preliminary data showing each is promising and practical. How do I decide which project to submit, to maximize my chances of being funded?

A. If you answer the following questions, you should be able to decide which project is the best one to submit as a proposal.

(1) Which project do you find most compelling? Which one interests you the most?

(2) All projects require some help from colleagues. For which project would you have the best team of co-workers - individuals whom you are certain are interested and will invest their time and creativity into the project? (Keep in mind that a proven track record of cooperation is much better than promises)

(3) For which project do you have the best preliminary data?

(4) Based on comments from colleagues, which project has the best idea behind it? To state the idea behind a project, try this general format: It is established or well known that xxx. The problem or unanswered question is xxx. We propose to explore or investigate xxx, and we expect to solve this specific stated problem, xxx or gain insight into this specific, stated biological or chemical or disease process, or further our fundamental knowledge in the discipline of xxx which will be important because xxx.

(5) VERY IMPORTANT: What have you learned from program announcements, lists of recently funded grants, and conversations with program officers about the interest level of your target agencies are in your ideas? For NIH, search the NIH Guide for Grants and contracts for Program Announcements (PAs) and Requests for Application (RFAs). For grants funded by NIH, search the CRISP database. For names of program officers, check the very end of PAs and RFAs, also staff directories on the web sites of the NIH institutes most likely to be interested in your research. For other organizations, search their web sites; no two will be organized quite the same way, so you have to be creative.

*Janet Rasey is the director and founder of Research Funding Service. [rasey@u.washington.edu](mailto:rasey@u.washington.edu)*