An Overview of F31/32 Grant Opportunities

MSPH Doctoral Committee and Office of Research Resources
Mailman School of Public Health
Columbia University
Session Plan

- Introduction
- Preparing an Application
- F31 awards: Integrating all the elements
- Review process
- Importance of grantwriting groups
- Q and A
Today’s Speaker

- Brennan Rhodes-Bratton, MPH,
  - Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Sociomedical Sciences, Recent F31 awardee

- Dr. Leslie Davidson
  - Professor of Epidemiology and Pediatrics at CUMC
  - Director of Doctoral Programs in Epidemiology
How to Pay for a Doctoral Degree

- Training Grants (T32)
- Personal Funds
- School Scholarships
- Other Sponsored Scholarships
- F31 Grants: Individual Predoctoral Fellows
- R36 Grants
- IMSD fellows (for students from underrepresented minorities)
Primary mechanisms of graduate support in the biomedical sciences

![Graph showing the trends of different types of graduate support over time, such as fellowships, research assistantships, teaching assistantships, other types of support, and self-support.](chart.png)
NRSA Fellowships and Training Grants (F & T Awards) for Individuals With or Earning a Research Doctorate
Participating Institutes (F31–PA–14–147)

- National Cancer Institute (NCI)
- National Eye Institute (NEI)
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)
- National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI)
- National Institute on Aging (NIA)
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)
- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID)
- National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS)
- National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NIBIB)
- National Institute Child Health Human Development (NICHD)
- National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD)
- National Institute on Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR)
- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)
- National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
- National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS)
- National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS)
- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)
- National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)
- National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR)
- National Center for Complimentary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM)

- Division of Program Coordination, Planning and Strategic Initiatives, Office of Research Infrastructure Programs (ORIP)
Participating Institutes (F31–Diversity– PA–14–148)

- National Cancer Institute (NCI)
- National Eye Institute (NEI)
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)
- National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI)
- National Institute on Aging (NIA)
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)
- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID)
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- National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR)
- National Center for Complimentary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM)

- Division of Program Coordination, Planning and Strategic Initiatives, Office of Research Infrastructure Programs (ORIP)
Eligibility (F31)

- Skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to carry out the proposed research as the Project Director/Principal Investigator
- Citizen or a non-citizen national of the U.S. lawfully admitted for permanent residence
- At dissertation research stage of their training
- Evidence of high academic performance in the sciences and substantial interest in a research area of high priority to the participating Institutes.
- Enrolled in a PhD or equivalent research degree at a domestic or foreign research institution.
Preparing an Application:
F31s (Parent award)

- Podcast [http://grants.nih.gov/podcasts/All_About_Grants/episodes/F_series_June_2012.mp3](http://grants.nih.gov/podcasts/All_About_Grants/episodes/F_series_June_2012.mp3)
- Doctoral student can receive up to 5 years of funding in aggregate from NRSA
- F31 awards often limited to 2–3 yrs funding
- Not all institutes participate
- Standard deadlines 3 times yearly (HIV/AIDS related are different)
- Must pursue research and training full time
- Must address priorities of the institute
- Individual eligibility: must be at dissertation research stage of doctoral career
Diversity F31s

- Link to announcement: PA-14-148

- Up to 5 years of funding aggregate from NRSA
- Fellowship often limited to 2–3 years (check Institute)
- Many institutes participate
- Standard deadlines as for parent F31s
- Requires letter on institutional stationery with official signature certifying eligibility
- Must pursue research and training full time
- Applicants do *not* need to be at the dissertation research stage of their doctoral program
Diversity Eligibility

- **Individuals from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups**
  - The following racial and ethnic groups have been shown to be underrepresented in biomedical research: African Americans, Hispanic Americans, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders. In addition, it is recognized that underrepresentation can vary from setting to setting and individuals from racial or ethnic groups that can be convincingly demonstrated to be underrepresented by the grantee institution are eligible for support under this program ([http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/showpub.cfm?TopID=2&SubID=27](http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/showpub.cfm?TopID=2&SubID=27)).

- **Individuals with disabilities**

- **Individuals from socially, culturally economically, or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds that have inhibited their ability to pursue a career in health-related research—these are not usually awarded past the undergraduate level**
## Success rates for F31 applications: 2000–2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th># reviewed</th>
<th># awarded</th>
<th>Success Rate (%)</th>
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<td>2003</td>
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<td>414</td>
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<td>2004</td>
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<td>480</td>
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<td>487</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1770</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>~1800</td>
<td>~550</td>
<td>~30</td>
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## Success rates for F31 applications by institute: 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NIH Institute/Center</th>
<th># reviewed</th>
<th># awarded</th>
<th>Success Rate (%)</th>
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<tr>
<td>NCI</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>95</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIA</td>
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<td>NIDCR</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>NIDA</td>
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<tr>
<td>NHGRI</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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## Success rates for F31 applications by institute: 2014

<table>
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<tr>
<th>NIH Institute/Center</th>
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<th>Success Rate (%)</th>
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<td>NEI</td>
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<tr>
<td>NHGRI</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHLBI</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>$613,743</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIA</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIAAA</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>$490,924</td>
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<td>NIEHS</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIGMS</td>
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<td>$1,922,921</td>
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<tr>
<td>NINDS</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>$3,581,999</td>
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<td>NINR</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>$1,105,942</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1,886</td>
<td>531</td>
<td><strong>28.2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>$19,323,924</strong></td>
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# Success rates for F31–Diversity applications by institute: 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NIH Institute/Center</th>
<th># reviewed</th>
<th># awarded</th>
<th>Success Rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NCCAM</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEI</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>NIEHS</td>
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<tr>
<td>NINR</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30.8</td>
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# F31 Application Receipt Dates and Review Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Receipt Cycle</th>
<th>Application Receipt Date</th>
<th>Initial Review Date</th>
<th>Council Review Date</th>
<th>Earliest Possible Start Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cycle 1</td>
<td>April 8 Diversity April 13 (AIDS/AIDS-related: May 7)</td>
<td>June/July</td>
<td>Sept/Oct</td>
<td>December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle 2</td>
<td>August 8 Diversity August 13 (AIDS/AIDS-related: September 7)</td>
<td>Oct/Nov</td>
<td>Jan/Feb</td>
<td>April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle 3</td>
<td>December 8 Diversity Dec. 13 (AIDS/AIDS-related: December 7)</td>
<td>Feb/March</td>
<td>May/June</td>
<td>July</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which Institute?

- Determine which NIH institute is the best fit for your project (discuss with mentor).
  - See **Table of IC-specific Information, Requirements and Staff Contacts** in PA-11-111 or PA-11-112
- Check NIH Reporter for funded F31s by that Institute
- Does your project fits into current Institute priorities?
- Does your mentor have grants funded by that institute?
- Contact fellowship program officer (PO) at the Institute(s) by phone to discuss proposal and fit with the Institute’s scientific goals
  - Contact Info
- Refer to the conversation and the PO by name in application Cover Letter
Talking to NIH Program Officer

Steps:
1. Find appropriate PO at your institute
2. Send brief email asking to set up a time to discuss your proposal
   - Attach a 1-page specific aims or a brief description training goals, sponsors, and research idea
3. On the phone, briefly review your project and training goals
4. Ask specific questions about your project:
   - Is research in line with the Institute’s priorities? (read website first)
   - Advice about the training aims? (E.g., Do they support projects that use CBPR? Qualitative vs. quantitative approaches?)
   - Any unique issues or concerns about your project (e.g., sponsor/co-sponsor)?
   - Any other advice?
Training Goals for F31

- **Training grant** F31 (not R36)
  - Training central component

- **Training dictates**
  - Mentors (who provide training)
  - Research project (uses the new skills, methods, literature, etc. in which you are getting trained)

- **Must provide** concrete areas for training.
  - For example: Methods (meta-analysis, structural equation modeling, qualitative coding, CBPR); new literatures.

- **How do you obtain this training?**
  - Coursework: check out summer courses (e.g., Michigan’s ICPSR, Columbia’s Epidemiology & Population Health Summer Institute)
  - Mentorship
  - Seminar series: CPRC, HIV Center grand rounds, etc.

- **Research project must use training**
  - E.g., must be a meta-analysis if you get training in that area
Training Forms

- Goals for NRSA Fellowship Training and Career – 1 page
- Activities planned under the award (e.g., research, coursework, teaching) – 1 page
  - Tables can be a good way of showing this information
- Selection of co-sponsors and institution – 1 page
Session Two
Choosing a sponsor/additional co-sponsors

- Sponsor is the Senior/Key Person 1 (Sponsor).
  - Must include: her/his information (up to 6 pages) and biosketch. You may have to assist in preparing this material.

- Sponsor must be:
  - Active investigator in area of research training
  - Committed to your training and
  - Supervising the proposed research
  - Must document availability of research support and facilities
    - These must map onto your training plan and activities as well as research

- If sponsor is a junior faculty member, you might benefit from a Co-Sponsor (tenured faculty member with relevant research and training experience – funded by that institute)

- May want a mentoring team (sponsor is the lead) to cover all training and research needs
As soon as you have identified a mentor, you should reach out to your mentor’s grants administrator for guidance on submitting the application through Columbia’s Sponsored Projects Administration (SPA) office. SPA submits all grant proposals to extramural funding agencies, and are required to review the application for compliance and completeness. SPA deadlines for grants must be met.

The grant administrator will be responsible for filling out much of the NIH application, and coordinating the review process to ensure that you have met all the requirements of the RFA and all internal requirements have also been addressed. The application will be submitted to SPA as a final document for submission to the agency.

While fellowship applications are much smaller in scope than standard NIH research applications, the administrative review process is the same.
Working with your departmental grants administrator

Things to keep in mind:

- SPA requires drafts of the application 10 business days before the agency deadline, which means you must have a complete budget, finalized biosketches, and letters of support submitted to your grants administrator 12–15 business days prior to the agency deadline to allow time for review and compilation.

- A final copy of all components of the research and training section is due to SPA 5 business days before the agency deadline, so should be submitted to your grants administrator 7–8 business days prior to the agency deadline to allow time for review and compilation.
Things to keep in mind:

- You will need to have completed a financial conflict of interest (FCOI) disclosure and completed training courses for HIPAA and human subjects research in RASCAL (TC0019 and TC0087). Your mentor will also be expected to have these courses completed and an up-to-date FCOI on file.

- Even though faculty mentors do not receive salary support from these grant applications, Columbia requires that we obtain approval from the faculty member’s administrative home department for their proposed mentorship. This means that, at minimum, we will need to obtain approval from their Department Administrator in RASCAL, and we might also need to submit an in-kind letter for their support, depending on the proposed time commitment.
Budget

- Budgets are straightforward. See:
  - Standard NIH stipend in FY 2014 is $22,476
  - Tuition and Fees (60% of level requested up to $16,000); In other words, NIH will cover up to a maximum of $16,000
  - Institutional allowance: health insurance, research supplies, equipment, books, travel to meetings ($4,200)
  - No indirect costs for the institution
  - No funds for research expenses (data collection, etc.)
Letters of Recommendation (3–5)

- NOT mentor/sponsor (since s/he writes statement about your qualifications in the grant)
- Usually the Departmental chair, cluster director (if applicable), Director of Doctoral Program, thesis committee member who is not a sponsor, or faculty research collaborator
- Choose someone who knows you well, who likes you, and for whom you have done good work
- Must use fellowship-specific form and be submitted electronically:

  https://commons.era.nih.gov/commons/reference/submitRefereeInformation.jsp
F31 awards:
Integrating all the elements:
Sponsor generated material
(6 pages, uploaded on SF424 in “Other Attachments”)

- Research Support Available [Attach] tailor to specific needs
- Previous Trainees [Attach], want record of prior mentorship
- Training Plan, Environment & Research Facilities [Attach]
- # of Trainees Supervised During Fellowship [Attach] (not too many)
- Applicant's Qualifications and Potential for Research Career [Attach] (this is critical)
Fellow Biosketch

- 5 page maximum
- Personal statement – can add 4 pubs
  - How support the goals of the research
  - Specific to application and applicant mentee
- Positions and Honors
- Contributions to science (4/5 with 4 publications each)
- Scholastic performance
- SciENcv: Science Experts Network Curriculum Vitae
- Ensure the biosketch supports application goals
- Review successful fellow biosketches
Mentor Biosketches

- 5 page maximum for mentors
- Personal statement – can add 4 pubs
  - How support the goals of the research
  - How support the mentor role
  - Specific to application and applicant mentee
- Positions and Honors
- Contributions to science (4/5 with 4 publications each)
- Mentors: Research support: (not fellows)

**SciENcv: Science Experts Network Curriculum Vitae**

- Ensure the biosketches support the goals of the application
- Review your mentor biosketches
Developing the Research Strategy Section

- Feasibility of the plan
- Develop design and problem solve issues
- Outline the whole structure
  - One paragraph/major idea
- Complete the whole draft before editing
- **Edit and edit** – and make the format highlight the key ideas
- Don’t pack the page
- Leave time to polish the writing
Specific Aims– Formatting matters

Although the binding of peperoni (Pe) to pizza (Pi) has been well established, the nature of the binding cite (BS) remains elusive, as does the relation between Pe binding and the reward experienced by ingesting food. In this study we sought to explore both of these issues. Our hypothesis is that Pe will bind to Pi and the nature of that binding will affect the reward value of the product. First, will will determine the binding characteristics of Pe and other ligands (LIG) to Pi. We will explore several variable including (a) which Pi surface is exposed, (b) the method of target preparation, and (c) nature, concentration, and size of the ligands. Second, we will use a quantitative structure–activity model and show that there is a strong relation between Pi conformation and reward value. We will use a rodent model to examine how variables explored in our first aim impact on the reward value of the product.

From Fischer BA and Zigmond MJ. An Introduction to Grant Writing. 2008
Although the binding of pepperoni (Pe) to pizza (Pi) has been well established, the nature of the binding site remains elusive, as does the relation between Pe binding and the reward experienced by the individual who is ingesting the food. In this study we sought to explore both of these issues.

**Hypothesis:** Pe will bind to Pi at a single site and the affinity of that binding for a given Pi substrate will be inversely related to the reward value of the product, reward being defined in an animal model as the number of lever presses an animal will make to obtain a Pe–Pi pellet.

**Aim 1:** To determine the binding characteristics of Pe and other ligands to Pi. We will explore several variables including (a) which Pi surface is exposed (dorsal versus ventral), (b) the method of target preparation (including baking and boiling), and (c) nature, concentration, and size of the Pe ligands.

**Aim 2:** To use a quantitative structure–activity model to determine the relation between Pi conformation and reward value. We will use a rodent model to examine how variables explored in Aim 1 impact on the reward value of the product, with reward defined in terms of rate of lever pressing.
1. Intro (1 page, only included in resubmissions)
2. Specific Aims (1 page)
3. Research Strategy (6 pages)
   a. Significance
   b. Innovation (only if specified in FOA or by Institute)
   c. Approach (Research Design & Methods)
      • Overall strategy, methodology, analyses
      • Potential problems, alternative strategies, benchmarks for success
      • If developmental, describe strategy to establish feasibility
      • Mention any hazards and discuss precautions (if applicable)
      • Include courses you plan to take to support the research training
4. Human Subjects and Inclusion etc.
Additional Educational Information: Describe:

- Graduate program in which enrolled,
  - structure of the program,
- Required milestones and their usual timing
  - courses, teaching commitments, qualifying exams, etc.
- Average time to degree over the past 10 years.
- Describe the frequency and method by which the program monitors and evaluates student progress.
- Describe the progress/status of the F31 applicant
  - in relation to the program's time line.
- Include the name of the individual providing this information at the end of the description.
- Check if your department has provided “boilerplate” language for this section.
- Upload in “Other Attachments”
Review process:
Review Criteria

- F31s are training, not research grants
- Reviewers focus on
  - Applicant fellow
    - Potential for a productive career
    - Need for the proposed training
  - Degree to which the research training proposal, the sponsor, and the environment will satisfy applicant’s needs.
Review Criteria (cont’d)

- Fellowship applicant
- Sponsors, Collaborators, and Consultants
- Research Training Plan
- Training Potential
- Institutional Environment & Commitment to Training
- Additional criteria (among others)
  - Human subjects, budget, training in responsible conduct of research
Scoring

- Only top half of all applications are “discussed”
- All receive a score
- All receive a written critique
- Priority Score (1 to 9) (see handout)
  - 1 to 3 High Impact
  - 4 to 5 Moderate Impact Very good – good
  - 7 to 9 Low Impact
  - Note: 9-point system effective Jan 2009
- Percentile: Varies (percentile of all applications in current and two previous rounds)
The Review Group

- 10–12 Members
- “Standing” committee or Special Emphasis Panel
- Reviewers
  - Primary and Secondary: read grant, write critiques, present application to group
  - Tertiary: reads grant, writes brief critique, adds additional comments as necessary
- Discussion (all members)
- Attempt at “consensus”; dissenting opinions
- Assignment of score (all members)
- Reviewers are “blind” to final score and funding decisions
The NIH Review Process

- eRA Commons notifications via email
- Assignment to Scientific Review Group (SRG)/Study Section
- Review of applications
- Notification
  - Priority Score, percentile (not always calculated)
  - Posting of summary statement reviews (critiques) may take several weeks
- Advisory Council
Award Factors

- Scientific merit
- Program priorities
- Availability of funds
- Rare to receive funding at first submission so build need for resubmission into your timeline
Tips on resubmission

- Get feedback!
- Speak to program officer
- Carefully address reviewers’ comments
  - Address comments in resubmission
- Resubmissions usually go to same review group, but not always to same reviewers
  - Can make request: “there was no one with public health expertise on the panel. They were all laboratory scientists”. Talk with the program officer
- Persistence pays
  - Don’t get discouraged
Peer review

- NIH Mock Study Section Video
R36: a dissertation grant

- Offered by AHRQ: Health Services Research Dissertation Awards
- [http://www.ahrq.gov/funding/training-grants/rsrchntng.html](http://www.ahrq.gov/funding/training-grants/rsrchntng.html)
- and by some other NIH institutes, for instance, NIDA
- Check if your institute offers them
- This is a dissertation grant, not a training grant unlike the F31
- Time frame is shorter than F31: varies by institute. AHRQ is 9–17 months
- Turnaround time is quicker
- Different deadlines
Overall goal of the AHRQ Health Services Research Dissertation Grant Program: ensure a diverse pool of highly trained health services researchers in appropriate research areas to address research mission and priorities of AHRQ

http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-12-256.html

3 due dates/year, one resubmission allowed
Expires August 2 2015
Can be from 9–17 months– Budget maximum 40K (20K if ancillary to an F31)
Must be ABD by the time the grant funding begins
AHRQ R36

- PHS398 (Items 2–5) may not exceed 6 pages, including tables, graphs, figures, diagrams, and charts (include Significance, Innovation, and Approach).
- Specific Aims is limited to 1 page.
- Does NOT include the Plan for Instruction in the Responsible Conduct of Research, limited to one page.
- February 1, May 1, August 1, November 1
- Review around 4 months after submission
- Receipt around 4 months after review
To support dissertation research costs of students in accredited research doctoral programs in the United States (including Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories or possessions). Dissertation awards are not renewable.
R36: NIH examples

- Application deadlines
  - March 16    July 16    November 16

- NIDA
  - Expires May 8 2016

- NIMH Diversity
  - 12–24 months Stipend and up to $15,000
  - Expires Jan 8 2015 – last posted submission December 22, 2014
Grant writing groups
What $R^2$ Can Do For You

- If there is enough interest, set up small grant writing groups (4–5 members)
- Members would bounce ideas and text off each other, and critique
- $R^2$ facilitate groups
Q & A
For Further Information

- Dr. Leslie Davidson or your lead for doctoral programs – LLD1@cumc.columbia.edu

- Office of Research Resources
  
  Craig Kandell
  - ckk7@columbia.edu
  - 212–305–3615

  Dr. Pam Factor–Litvak
  - prf1@columbia.edu
  - 212–305–7851