

**Office for Sponsored Programs
NIH New and Early Investigator Policy
Application - The University of Alabama**

On October 31, 2008, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced a policy demonstrating its continued focus on new investigators, www.nih.gov/news/health/oct2008/od-31.htm. Highlights of the policy include:

- Goals to ensure that new investigators are funded at "rates comparable to those of established scientists submitting new grant applications"
- Encouragement for "early stage investigators seeking NIH funding for the first time to apply for traditional research project (R01) grant awards, instead of applying for small grants (R03) or Exploratory/Developmental Research Awards (R21)"

This policy takes effect with the February 5, 2009 deadline for R01's.

New Investigator: An NIH research grant Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) who has not yet competed successfully for a substantial, competing NIH research grant is considered a New Investigator. For example, a PD/PI who has previously received a competing NIH R01 research grant is no longer considered a New Investigator. However, a PD/PI who has received a Small Grant (R03) or an Exploratory/Developmental Research Grant Award (R21) retains his or her status as a New Investigator. A complete definition of a New Investigator along with a list of NIH grants that do not disqualify a PD/PI from being considered a New Investigator can be found at http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/new_investigators/resources.htm.

Early Stage Investigator (ESI): The policy creates this subset of New Investigators, defined as: An individual who is classified as a New or First-Time Investigator and is within 10 years of completing his/her terminal research degree or is within 10 years of completing medical residency (or the equivalent) is considered an Early Stage Investigator (ESI).

This policy change should enhance The University of Alabama's competitiveness for NIH awards. The Office for Sponsored Programs is recommending the following approach:

- New Investigators should apply for R01s as NIH is establishing goals to support new investigators at success rates comparable to those of established scientists submitting new applications. NIH will identify ESIs and take into consideration their career stage at the time of review and award, including clustering of applications during review with the expectation that they will be evaluated more effectively when judged against applications from scientists at the same stage of their careers. Additionally, new investigators have the option of submitting an amended R01 application for consecutive review cycles, saving four months in the review process, <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-07-083.html>.
- Intermediate Investigators need to look at funding in the same way as new investigators. Many of these investigators have some of the exploratory grants and need to follow up by applying to the R01 mechanism at the end of their R03s or R21s. Ideally, the R01 application would be

submitted after the first year of the exploratory award but well before the award ends. Applying to R01s in this fashion will change the way we, as an institution, look at No-Cost Extensions. No-Cost extensions will no longer be inevitable but, instead, will be used when the R01 application has been denied and is in revision. If the R01 is awarded before the exploratory grant's money is spent then the No-Cost would be forfeited (The reward of an R01 far out-weighs the loss of the No-Cost extension).

- Established Investigators should continue to apply for R01s and the like, but this area is our institution's greatest chance for improvement. These investigators should be applying for R03s and R21s all the time, always looking for new R01 proposals on the horizon. Ideally, established investigators become good viral marketers, having multiple R01s and always applying for the seed grants. These investigators should look to grow junior faculty and turn some of their awards over to them when the junior investigator is ready, creating a web with multiple career awards and multiple senior investigators.

Please work with your Grant Specialist regarding NIH and other applications. You may also call Angie Shotts, 348-8070, Coordinator of Research Support, with questions about this NIH initiative.