AU Faculty and staff are invited to attend a half-day sponsored research resources information session. During the information session, AU research support operations and outside grants and intellectual property consultants will discuss the following topics:

1. Pre-Award Processes and Services, Post-Award Processes and Services, Library Resources for Funding Opportunities and Increasing Research Impact, Grant Application Writing and Editing Support Services, Campus Research Support Services and Intellectual Property Processes at AU.

Continental breakfast will begin at 8:30am. You are welcome to attend all or part of the information session. A 1-on-1 meeting can be scheduled with the grant application writing and editing consultants.

Please RSVP to Abrown@american.edu
No later than September 5, 2014

Wednesday, September 24, 2014
9:00am to 12:00pm  Hughes Hall Formal Lounge
New Efforts to Maximize Fairness in NIH Peer Review

Unexplained racial disparities have been discovered in R01 grant funding. NIH is working on multiple fronts to maximize fairness in the peer review process. Earlier this month, NIH’s Center for Scientific Review (CSR) launched two America COMPETES Act challenges which called for grant proposals to help identify new methods to detect bias in peer review and strategies to strengthen fairness and impartiality in peer review. Although the winners of the grant challenge will be announced September 2nd a, complementary set of initiatives will uncover additional means to address the problem. These initiatives include:

1. Providing new investigators with opportunities to participate in survey and focus groups to share their ideas about the fairness of peer review and the challenges they have faced in attempting to secure grant funding.

2. Testing — over the next year — the utility of anonymizing grant applications prior to review and conducting qualitative studies to gain a richer understanding of the scientific and technical issues that may play a role in funding disparities.

3. Continuing to examine the process by which reviewers evaluate grant applications for indicators of bias.

4. Continuing the Early Career Reviewer Program to provide opportunities for up and coming researchers to jump-start their careers by serving on a review panel. To date, more than 3,000 researchers have been admitted to the program and more than 1,000 have already had a chance to serve on study sections and report the experience as being quite valuable.

5. Launching initiatives to enhance the diversity of the NIH-funded workforce, as discussed in earlier posts on Rock Talk.

Signatory Policy Update

As of May 16, 2014 there have been recent updates to the AU’s signatory policy and approval process. The original policy has been in place since 1997 and a number of changes since then have made it necessary to update and contemporize the policy.

Moving forward, grant proposals in the amount of 250K and above will no longer require preapproval prior to institutional routing. Thus, all grant proposals, regardless of amount, will route for institutional review and approval in the same manner prior to submission.
The Facilities and Administrative Issue
Article courtesy of Grant and Contract Accounting (GCA)

A recent report on the “Finances of Research Universities” issued by The Council of Governmental Relations (COGR) presented a cogent explanation of Facilities and Administrative (F&A) costs. “Sponsors, including the federal government, private industry, state and local governments, and nonprofit foundations, provide funding to universities for research in the form of grants, cooperative agreements, or contracts, usually through a competitive process. Awards generally include funds for the direct cost of research as well as facilities and administrative (F&A, or indirect) costs, both of which are real costs incurred by the institution to conduct research.”

Federal policymakers and investigators who conduct research projects generally recognize the necessity of the direct costs of research, including salary support for investigators and graduate students, supplies and sophisticated equipment. F&A costs, on the other hand, are often devalued for primarily two reasons: (1) some stakeholders view the F&A budget category as diverting funding from direct costs, and (2) the reimbursement mechanism for F&A costs (i.e. the “F&A rate”) is complex and thus difficult to explain and to understand.

More sponsored research funding would, in fact, be available for direct costs in the absence of F&A cost reimbursement. However, universities cannot implement research programs if sponsors do not support the real costs of research infrastructure and compliance activities.”

As an example, here at American University one of the largest components of our F&A rate is the Office of Information Technology. Hence, for every sponsored project for which we are not reimbursed our full rate constitutes a loss which has to be covered by non-grant funds. One other important concept to remember is the difference between the negotiated rate and the allowed rate:

- **The negotiated rate and base are predetermined based on the university’s F&A rate agreement with the Federal Government.**
- **The allowed rate and base are those specified in the individual award documents or sponsor rules.**
- **The difference between the negotiated rate and the allowed rate is called F&A cost sharing.**
The Office of Sponsored Programs, in collaboration with Grants and Contracts Accounting, is pleased again to announce the Research Administration Certification program at American University.

RAC is a comprehensive training and certification program designed to assist AU departmental and school/college level staff with research administration and/or grant/contract development and management responsibilities. The RAC program provides pertinent information to enable participants to effectively manage sponsored awards.

The RAC program consists of eight consecutive sessions that will be offered annually during the academic year (September—May). Each session lasts approximately 2 hours (depending on content), and will include topics covering proposal preparation, research compliance, financial management and reporting, as well as applicable regulations, policies, and guidelines governing sponsored grant and contract awards.

The following instructor-led sessions will be offered during the Fall 2014 semester:

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<tr>
<td>September 14th, 10-12pm</td>
<td>MGC Room 245</td>
<td>Session 1: Overview of Research Administration (Pre-Award)</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 10th, 10-12pm</td>
<td>Butler Board Room</td>
<td>Session 2: Proposal Related Issues (Pre-Award)</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 17th, 10-12pm</td>
<td>Butler Board Room</td>
<td>Session 3: Grants Management I (Pre-Award)</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 12th, 10-12pm</td>
<td>SIS Room 300</td>
<td>Session 4: Grants Management II (Pre-Award)</td>
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In addition to the above, online sessions will be offered as an alternative to the instructor-led sessions. The online sessions are ideal for those who need to make up RAC sessions that were missed. The online sessions are also ideal for individuals who want a “refresh” on a particular RAC session. In addition, the online component is ideal for individuals who cannot attend the scheduled instructor-led sessions.

*Sessions 5-8 will be held during the Spring 2014 semester and will cover specific post-award (financial management) and research compliance topics/issues.

A certificate will be issued upon successful completion of all eight RAC sessions and required quizzes.

Interested participants will be able to RSVP beginning August 28, 2014 through ASuccessfulU. Details on how to register will be forthcoming.

For any questions you may have regarding RAC, please send an email to OSPEvents@american.edu.
The Office of Sponsored Programs and Grants and Contracts Accounting (GCA) would like to invite you to the following Grant Administration Roundtable (GAR) sessions.

Topics for the scheduled sessions are forthcoming.

Please RSVP by October 1, 2014 to OSPEvents@american.edu and include your name, academic/business unit.

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OSP has created a calendar on our website that references specific OSP-related information sessions, upcoming events, and important dates for you to see. The At-a-Glance Calendar will be updated frequently whenever changes or additions are added.

View the OSP At-a-Glance Calendar here >>
New Staff Members in OSP

Akidah Felder is OSP’s Operations & Communications Manager and is responsible for managing and coordinating OSP’s administrative operations and communications, which include assistance in developing office processes and standards, the creation of informational materials and reports, and coordinating and implementing departmental training programs and events. She also aides in the delivery and research of funding opportunity announcements to University research faculty and staff.

Cynthia Muhammad is a Sr. Grants & Contracts Manager and serves as a point of contact for matters related to proposals prior to submission to the sponsor. Cynthia provides budget development services as needed, reviews proposal budgets for compliance with AU and sponsor guidelines, and initiates and coordinates the AU routing process with PI, Dept. Chair, Dean and Vice Provost. In addition, Cynthia reviews proposal components for responsiveness, completes sponsor required online and budget forms, and submits proposals when institutional submission is required. Cynthia is assigned to academic units within the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS).

Scott Yoo is a Grants & Contracts Manager and serves as a point of contact for non-financial post-award matters. Specifically, Scott reviews and negotiates award terms and conditions to ensure institutional compliance and acceptance, submits carry-forward and re-budgeting requests, obtains signatures of authorized institutional officials, facilitates award start up meetings to advise of award special terms, conditions and/or restrictions. He also develops project briefs for sponsored awards, reviews and processes non-financial award modifications, supplements and amendments, drafts and issues sub-recipient and subcontractor agreements. Scott facilitates the close out of awards, submits non-financial award/project reports: technical, progress and final reports when institutional submission is required. Scott is assigned to the School of Public Affairs (SPA), School of International Service (SIS), School of Professional and Extended Studies (SPExS), Center for Latin American and Latino Studies (CLALS), and Kogod School of Business.

For a complete list of OSP staff assignments and point of contact information, please Click Here>>
Research Matters

Researcher Spotlight

Each month, OSP Monthly highlights a specific American University faculty/staff member for their contributions in providing cutting-edge research or a research related program that serves to create and advance knowledge, and enrich the resources of our educational community while answering and accelerating challenging issues we face today. This month, we are featuring Michael Robinson, Assistant Professor in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics.

What are your research interests?

I am interested in signal processing problems that arise in engineering and the sciences. I have been studying the ways that qualitative (yet precise) information can be extracted from sensors that are either very far from their intended subjects or deeply embedded within them. Remote sensors tend to be rather sophisticated—and very well-studied—but the inferences that one usually tries to make using them are needlessly brittle. Embedded sensors tend to be very simple; drawing any interesting conclusions from their measurements requires treating them in aggregate. Somewhat paradoxically, I have found that sensing problems in both of these situations can be handled in a principled way using the language of topology—a branch of mathematics that studies the notion of position and space without recourse to distances or angles.

Define the main purpose and importance of your research?

Many difficult, unresolved problems in the sciences have mathematical components to them, and are often interesting in their own right. Because topology describes general notions of position, it provides the right tools to understand how disparate pieces of information can be joined together consistently to form a more global understanding. Over the past few years, topology has become a popular context for analyzing semi-structured data sets arising from biology, network theory, and sensing.

I have mostly worked on problems in signal processing—developing systematic methods for extracting useful information from measurements. I find solutions to these problems most compelling when they combine new mathematical results with a working prototype system. Recently, I have developed topological tools to solve engineering problems that have remained outstanding for a long time, and verified their performance in the laboratory. Several of these ideas have transitioned into collaborative efforts with industry or government teams.

What type of research are you primarily focused on?

Several students and I are working to develop new and effective processing methods to measure winds over the ocean from high-resolution radar images collected by the German satellite Terra SAR-X. We’re involved in all aspects of experiment planning, data acquisition, and analysis of the data. More theoretically, we are developing analysis tools for computational networks, network security, data fusion, and tracking problems. The unifying theme in these problems is that local consistency gives rise both to a solid theoretical understanding, but also inspires the development of new processing algorithms. Finally, I usually have a student or two interested in building and testing sonar systems made of simple equipment—like cell phones, laptops, and whatever we can get at the local hardware store. Using such simple equipment forces us to think about errors and uncertainties that can be present in the data, and is an excellent testing ground for the topological ideas that I’m developing on other projects.
Research Matters

Researcher Spotlight  (Continued)  Michael Robinson

How can the AU community learn more about the types of research that you conduct?

The easiest way to access an overview, is to stop by my website: http://www.drmichaelrobinson.net/

And although I've only been an AU for two years, I've also completed a book, *Topological Signal Processing*, that was published in early 2014. It explains the mathematics of topology and contains some detailed case studies of their application.

Finally, you could contact me directly – I'm developing a Computational Topology course for Fall 2014, and would love to hear about any ideas or questions you have!

**What inspired you to enter your field of research initially?**

In high school, I was fascinated with computers. I love to program and was then interested in writing detailed computer simulations. For instance, under the tutelage of one of my father's friends (both worked at Pratt & Whitney, a jet engine manufacturer), I wrote a program to solve the differential equations that describe fluid flow. But instead of studying computer science in college, I went to study electrical engineering because I wanted to learn how to design computers. At the advice of my calculus TA (now my wife, who also teaches math here at AU), I stayed on for a master's degree in mathematics. After this, I took a hiatus in industry, where I worked on problems in radio propagation and radar signal processing. However, I kept running into topology in these areas, and I realized that topology could be a powerful way to think about engineering problems.
John Templeton Foundation – Science & the Big Questions: Philosophy & Theology
Sir John Templeton stipulated that most of the Foundation’s resources would be devoted to research (and disseminating the results of research) about the “basic forces, concepts, and realities” governing the universe and humankind’s place in the universe. In the Philosophy & Theology area, the Foundation supports projects that attempt to develop new philosophical and theological insights, especially (but not only) in relation to advances in scientific understanding.
*Deadline: Letter of Inquiry, October 1, 2014*

Gerda Henkel Foundation – Special Programme: Security, Society, and the State
As security-related issues, the fading role of the state and the gradual elimination of borders are central themes in both political and scholarly debates today. There is good reason for a more fine-grained perspective, however. Current security issues are multi-faceted and dynamic, ranging from military protection to efficient public infrastructure and a viable social negotiation process. As a matter of fact, the state is not irrevocably losing ground in security-sensitive areas. The "Security, Society and the State" research programme reflects these contradictory trends. It targets new security-related issues that are prime examples of the post-Cold-War era but have been largely neglected in mainstream research. Research projects should be closely related to one or more of the five fields of research: (1) cyber security as a governmental task; (2) public administration and human security; (3) patterns of conflict resolution between the state and traditional actors; (4) non-governmental actors as partners and contenders of the state; and (5) security strategies between doctrine formation and implementation.
*Deadline: December 5, 2014*

The Infinity Foundation – Media Coverage of India
The Infinity Foundation is calling for project proposals to undertake a scholarly, journalistic analysis of the coverage of India and Indian religious traditions in the US media. Such an analysis should develop criteria for measuring both the quantity and quality of this coverage relative to other major world regions. Analysis of the quality should take into consideration the authenticity of the portrayal however defined, as well as the degree to which simplistic, stereotyped images or outright misinterpretations occur in major media sources. Such analyses could be historical, focusing on a single media source over a period of time, or wide ranging, looking across a variety of contemporary media. These projects would result in one or more of the following: books, articles, conference presentations, CD-ROMs, internet publications, and audio/video materials.
*Deadline: rolling*

Ford Foundation – JustFilms
Beginning in 2011, we are investing $10 million a year over five years in documentary projects that address urgent social issues and help us understand our past, explore our present and build our future. Our goal is to expand the community of emerging and established filmmakers who often lack funding, and help them to realize their visions and reach audiences.
*Deadline: rolling*
National Science Foundation – Science of Organizations
Organizations -- private and public, established and entrepreneurial, designed and emergent, formal and informal, profit and nonprofit -- are critical to the well-being of nations and their citizens. They are of crucial importance for producing goods and services, creating value, providing jobs, and achieving social goals. The Science of Organizations (SoO) program funds basic research that yields a scientific evidence base for improving the design and emergence, development and deployment, and management and ultimate effectiveness of organizations of all kinds. SoO funds research that advances our fundamental understanding of how organizations develop, form and operate. SoO welcomes any and all rigorous, scientific approaches that illuminate aspects of organizations as systems of coordination, management and governance. In considering whether a particular project might be a candidate for consideration by SoO, please note: Intellectual perspectives may involve (but are not limited to) organizational theory, behavior, sociology or economics, business policy and strategy, communication sciences, entrepreneurship, human resource management, information sciences, managerial and organizational cognition, operations management, public administration, social or industrial psychology, and technology and innovation management. Phenomena studied may include (but are not limited to) structures, routines, effectiveness, competitiveness, innovation, dynamics, change and evolution.
Deadline: September 3, 2014

National Institutes of Health – mHealth Tools to Promote Effective Patient-Provider Communication, Adherence to Treatment and Self-Management of Chronic Diseases in Underserved Populations
The purpose of this initiative issued by the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) and the Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS) is to stimulate research utilizing Mobile Health (mHealth) tools aimed at the improvement of effective patient-provider communication, adherence to treatment and self-management of chronic diseases in underserved populations. With the rapid expansion of cellular networks and substantial advancements in Smartphone technologies, it is now possible - and affordable - to transmit patient data digitally from remote areas to specialists in urban areas, receive real-time feedback, and capture that consultation in a database. mHealth tools, therefore, may facilitate more timely and effective patient-provider communication through education communication around goal setting, treatment reminders, feedback on patient progress and may improve health outcomes. This announcement encourages the development, testing and comparative effective analysis of interventions utilizing mHealth technologies in underserved populations.
Deadline: September 7, 2014

Department of Health and Human Services – Modeling Social Behavior
This Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) encourages applications for developing and testing innovative theories and computational, mathematical, or engineering approaches to deepen our understanding of complex social behavior. This research will examine phenomena at multiple scales to address the emergence of collective behaviors that arise from individual elements or parts of a system working together. Emergence can also describe the functioning of a system within the context of its environment. Often properties we associate with a system itself are in actuality properties of the relationships and interactions between a system and its environment. This FOA will support research that explores the often complex and dynamic relationships among the parts of a system and between the system and its environment in order to understand the system as a whole.
Deadline: October 5, 2014

Gay and Lesbian Medical Association – Lesbian Health Fund
The Lesbian Health Fund (LHF), a program of GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality, was established in 1992 to define, study, and educate lesbians and their health care providers about lesbian health issues. LHF’s mission is to improve the health of lesbians, other sexual minority women (SMW) and their families through research. Research areas include: understanding social, family, and interpersonal influences as sources of stress or support; eliminating inequalities in health care, including barriers to care, and improving quality of care and utilization rates; development and testing of interventions to address mental and physical health needs of lesbians and other SMW, including but not limited to depression, identity related issues, eating disorders, substance abuse, obesity, cancer risks, cardiovascular disease and sexually transmitted infections; and sexual and reproductive health, including family & parenting issues.
Deadline: October 15, 2014
Spence Foundation – The New Civics

The New Civics initiative is embedded within the broader Foundation belief that cultivating knowledge and new ideas about education will ultimately improve students’ lives and enrich society. The designation “new” refers to an expanded understanding of civic education and its relationship to civic action. Ultimately, we see civic education not simply as a grounding in historical and procedural knowledge of systems of government, but, more broadly, as education, whether in schools or elsewhere, that develops skills, knowledge, and dispositions that lead to informed and reasoned civic action. With this expanded understanding, we aim to support research that deepens our understanding of educational and other influences on civic action, that attends to social inequalities in civic education and civic action, and that has the potential to shape future research and practice in these fields. And we aim to create occasions for scholars’ learning, inquiry, and exchange – to strengthen the research community and its connections to educational policy and practice.

Deadline: August 28, 2014; November 18, 2014

National Science Foundation – Discovery Research K-12 (DRK-12)

The Discovery Research K-12 program (DRK-12) seeks to significantly enhance the learning and teaching of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) by preK-12 students and teachers, through research and development of innovative resources, models and tools (RMTs). Projects in the DRK-12 program build on fundamental research in STEM education and prior research and development efforts that provide theoretical and empirical justification for proposed projects. Teachers and students who participate in DRK-12 studies are expected to enhance their understanding and use of STEM content, practices and skills. DRK-12 invites proposals that address immediate challenges that are facing preK-12 STEM education as well as those that anticipate radically different structures and functions of pre-K 12 teaching and learning. The DRK-12 program has four major research and development strands: (1) Assessment; (2) Learning; (3) Teaching; and (4) Implementation Research. The program supports three types of projects: (1) Exploratory, (2) Full Design and Development, and (3) Conferences, Workshops, and Syntheses. All three types of projects apply to each of the four DRK-12 strands.

Deadline: October 16, 2014

Alfred P. Sloan Foundation – The Science of Learning STEM

Grantmaking in this program aims to improve the quality of higher education in STEM fields through the support of original, high-quality research on the factors affecting undergraduate and graduate student learning and retention in STEM fields. Grants primarily support consortia of colleges, universities, and other educational institutions with plans to develop and to study the impact and effectiveness of new approaches to STEM pedagogy, especially in “gateway” courses, with an explicit commitment to institutionalize successful initiatives. Successful proposals are expected to be hypothesis-driven, sensitive to the heterogeneity of STEM disciplines, attentive to differences in student motivations to choose STEM majors and persist in STEM careers, and concerned with the dissemination and portability of results to other institutions.

Deadline: Rolling
Academic Research Enhancement Award (AREA) Program—The AREA program supports small-scale research projects in the biomedical and behavioral sciences conducted by faculty and students at education institutions that have not been major recipients of NIH research grant funds. These grants are intended to create a research opportunity for scientists and institutions otherwise unlikely to participate extensively in NIH programs. It is anticipated that investigators supported under AREA will:

- benefit from the opportunity to conduct independent research;
- that the grantee institution will benefit from a research environment strengthened through AREA grants and furthered by participation in the diverse extramural programs of the NIH;
- and that students at recipient institutions will benefit from exposure to and participation in scientific research in the biomedical and behavioral sciences.

The application should include plans to involve undergraduate or graduate students in the proposed research, however the AREA program is a research grant, not a training or fellowship program. The application should include plans to expose students to hands-on research and should not include training plans.

**Deadline: September 8, 2016**

You can view more information about the AREA program on the NIH website here.

FEDERAL CONTRACTS

Federal Business Funding Opportunities

(Search by keywords to narrow down your search to locate funding opportunities)
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- First and Last Name

What to expect in next month’s OSP Monthly:

- Writing an NSF Grant Proposal: A First-Timer’s Perspective.
- Topics for The Grant Administrators Roundtable (GAR), additional dates for Research Administration Certification Program (RAC) and the Funding Search Information Sessions.
- New Tenure-Tracked Faculty Welcome