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Professional Development Session: “Obtaining an Individual Postdoctoral Fellowship Award”

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Outline

- I. Why apply?
- II. Where to apply?
- III. How to write a (successful) post-doctoral grant
- IV. Common mistakes
- V. What if I don't get funded?
- VI. Final thoughts



Why apply?

1. Scientific independence (sort of)
 - a. Design your own project
2. Gain experience in grant writing
 - a. Essential for future success (in academia or industry)
3. Establish a track record of obtaining independent funding
4. More \$\$\$ (maybe)



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Where to apply?

1. NIH (F32)
2. Department of Defense Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (DOD CDMRP)
 - a. Disease-specific (Breast, prostate, lung, ovarian, etc.)
3. Private foundations: American Cancer Society, Komen, Cancer Research Institute, Lymphoma and Leukemia Society, Melanoma Research Alliance, Melanoma Research Foundation, AACR, etc.
4. Industry: Pharmaceutical companies (Pfizer, Amgen, Genentech, etc.)
5. Search the web:
 - a. <http://www.einstein.yu.edu/administration/grant-support/post-doc-awards.aspx>
 - b. GrantsNet
6. **Always check eligibility requirements!**
 - a. Limits on time since receiving degree (# yrs since MD/PhD)
 - b. Citizenship, visa status, minority, etc.



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- III. How to write a (successful) post-doctoral grant
 - a. (Adapted from Janet Gross, Ph.D., Office of Post-doctoral Education, Emory University)



How to write a post-doctoral grant

1. Novel aims/project
2. Need to sell your research, institution, and mentor
(Yes, it's marketing)



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How to write a post-doctoral grant

1. Novel aims/project
2. Need to sell your research, institution, and mentor
(Yes, it's marketing)
 - a. Lots of excellent grants, but not enough \$ to fund all of them - need to makes yours stand out!
3. The grant is not: a research manuscript, review paper, progress report, or thesis
4. Must communicate ideas clearly
5. Convey excitement about your work
6. Convey your commitment to discovery and further research



How to write a post-doctoral grant

1. Other requirements:

- a. Allow sufficient time to write (and re-write) the proposal
- b. Excellent written English skills
- c. Supportive Mentor(s)
 - i. Have multiple colleagues/PI's read your grant
- d. A competitive biosketch

2. Follow all directions!

- a. Guidelines may be confusing – read and re-read
 - i. Font, font size, margins
- b. There may appear to be inconsistencies, conflicts, redundancies
 - i. Call funder for clarification - mistakes in written guidelines can happen
- c. Submit on time – plan accordingly for internal deadlines



How to write a post-doctoral grant

1. The Career Development Plan

- a. Can be 25-50% of your score!
- b. Seek examples from colleagues
- c. Include career development committee
 - i. Similar to a graduate committee
 - ii. Includes PI, colleagues, pre-clinical and clinical members
- d. Training (coursework, seminars, workshops, etc.)
- e. Career goals / future plans

Avoid mistakes:

- Lacks cohesiveness – can the reviewer easily summarize in what and how you will be trained?
- Too brief; generic; not personalized – must mention you by name!
- Doesn't include future research plans/career goals



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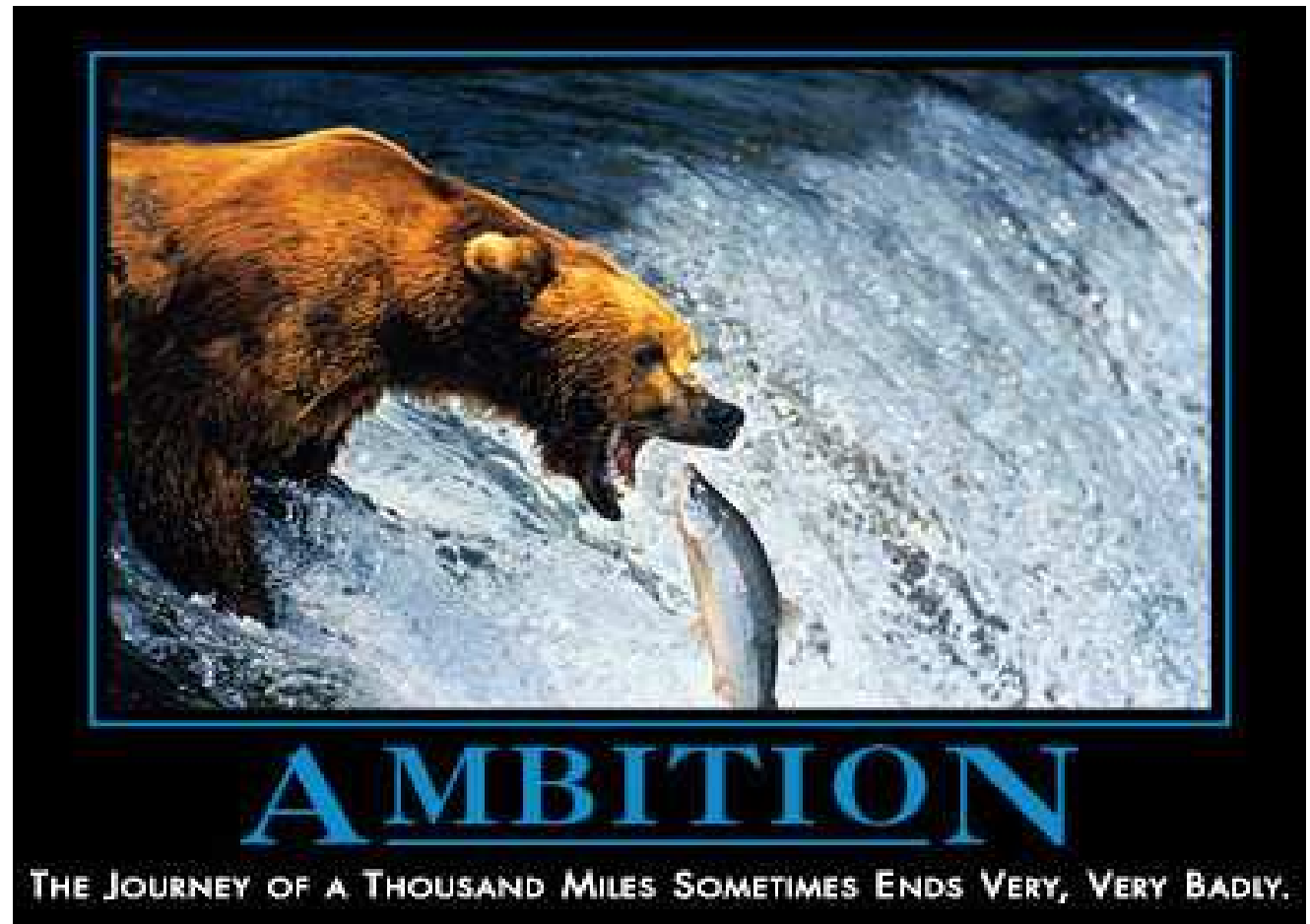
1. The messy proposal

- *“The committee commented on the less than stellar grantsmanship throughout the proposal.”*



2. The overly ambitious research plan

- *“Overall, the research plan is too broad and too large to have any hope of being successful.”*



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3. Administrative reasons

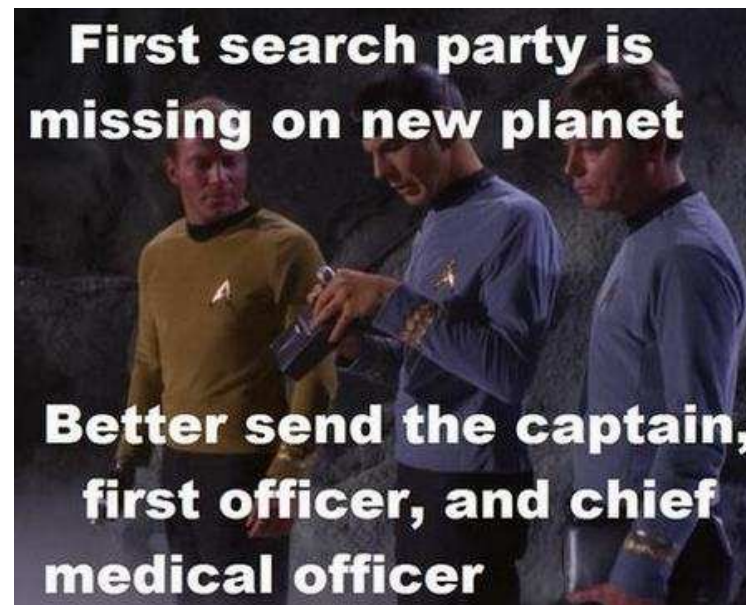
- *“A formal course in the responsible conduct of research...is required; the candidate must provide specific information on the course content.”*
- *“In this application, the course content and the date it will be taken are not specified, which is unacceptable.”*



4. The flawed methodology

- *“It is clear that the applicant is not familiar with the drug interactions that follow the combined administration of substance x and substance y.”*
- Are the Specific Aims logical and related?
- Are they independent?
 - Aim 2 can't be dependent upon the success of Aim 1

1 = A Number
2 = A Number
1 = 2



5. The rush job

- *“The applicant has not considered the recently published research...while much older literature has been discussed.”*
- Provide sufficient time for colleagues to review your grant!

**Lack of planning on
your part
does not
constitute an
emergency on
my part**



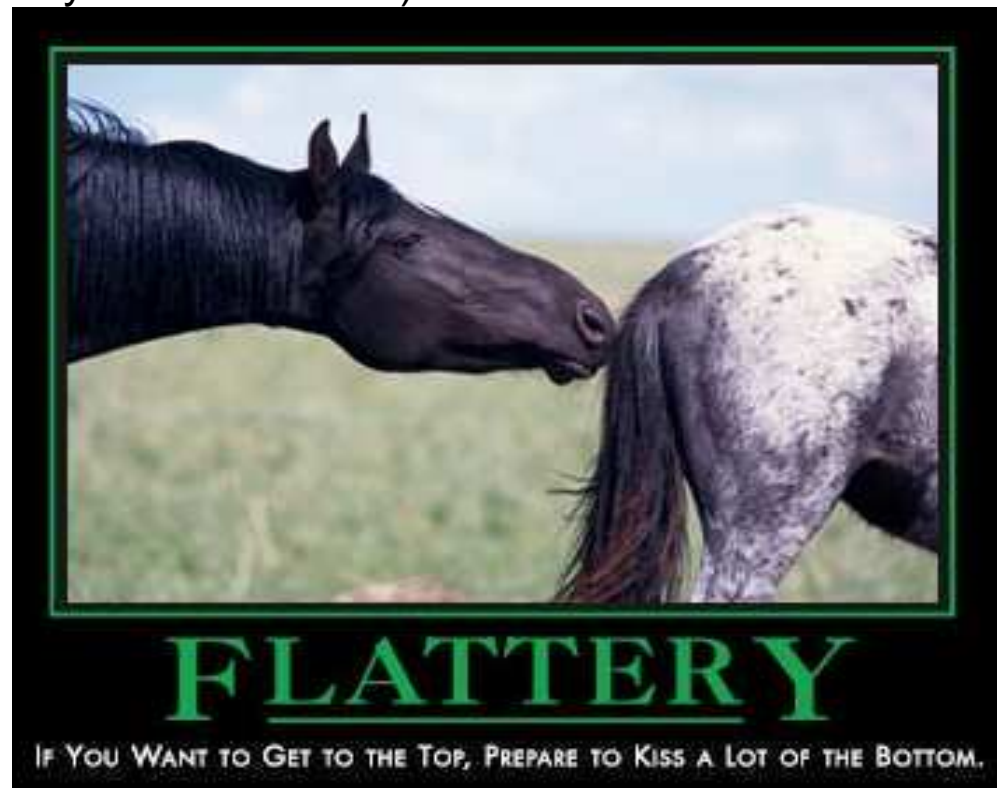
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What if I don't get funded?

1. Re-submit (typically get one re-submission, some grants allow 2)
2. Check eligibility (e.g., # yrs since PhD, etc.)
3. Point-by-point response letter
 - a. Thank the reviewers (be polite - it will be you one day)
 - b. Address all concerns (even if they make mistakes)
4. Publish



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Final thoughts

1. Allow enough time to create an outstanding application (revise, revise, revise)
2. Identify an outstanding mentor with expertise that clearly overlaps with your own research
 - a. Hopefully your PI!
 - b. Can include co-mentors
3. Seek advice from successful applicants (and reviewers)
4. Read (multiple) successful applications



Thank you!

