COMPETITIVE RENEWAL SCORE: 21

DIRECTOR’S NOTE
BY DEANE MOSHER, MD

We received a score of 21 on our competitive renewal. What does that mean?

We went to one of the two study sections of the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (GM) that review training grants funded by GM. (Note that this is different from how a ROI grant funded by GM would be reviewed. Such a grant would be assigned to a study section convened by the Center for Scientific Review (CSR). CSR has study sections that focus on scientific areas, e.g., macromolecular structure, and judge grants that are funded by a variety of NIH Institutes depending on the disease links.) NIH recently changed their scoring system to focus on the “overall impact” of all grants, including T32 training grants. Reviewers score in integers from 1 to 9. The scores are averaged together to two significant figures and multiplied by 10. Thus, 13 of the 15 reviewers probably gave us “2” while the other two gave us “3.” Descriptors of these scores:

1. Exceptional (exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses)
2. Outstanding (extremely strong with negligible weaknesses)
3. Excellent (very strong with only some minor weaknesses, i.e., easily addressable weaknesses that do not substantially lessen impact)
4. Very good
5. Good
6. Satisfactory
7. Fair
8. Marginal
9. Poor

You can appreciate why we should be happy! UW’s Molecular Biosciences Training Grant, which has been in existence for 35 years, commands 34 funded slots, and is one of GM’s flagship

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**On Wisconsin!**

INTERVIEW WEEKENDS!

A REMINDER FROM LISA SUDMEIER:

Our next interview weekend is December 2-5, 2010. Sing up now to meet our prospective students!

We also have interview weekends on January 20-23, 2011 and February 17-20, 2011.

Mark your calendar!!!
The second prong of the study emphasized the role of this group. A group of patients with relapsed or refractory neuroblastos were treated with hu14.18-IL2. 7 of 38 demonstrated complete recovery or showed clinical improvement. Following treatment, the researchers genotyped the subjects for KIR/KIR-ligand matches or mismatches. Genotypic analyses revealed that 24 out of 38 patients were KIR/KIR-ligand mismatches, and the 7 patients that showed improvement with treatment belonged to this group.

The second prong of the study emphasized the role of FcγR3A and FcγR2A in the clinical response to

Richard Yang is a third-year graduate student in the Sondel group (Institute for Clinical and Translational Research) and a fifth year MSTP student.
Director’s Note  Continued from Page 1

training grants, received a score of 20 from the same study section. MBTG probably received all “2”s.

When the detailed critiques are available, we can learn about our perceived weaknesses and how we were viewed in relation to the five criteria that are considered to arrive at the overall impact score:

- Significance
- Innovation
- Approach
- Investigators
- Environment

These criteria make obvious sense in regards to a RO1 grant but less so for a T32 grant. To give you an idea of how the criteria might fit, I included the “Special Requirements” synopsis that must be prepared specifically when a training grant goes to GM. We should discuss this synopsis and make future plans once I have access to the critiques.

NIGMS Special Requirements

1. Mission and objectives. The mission and objectives of the MSTP at UW-Madison are to train physician-scientists in research areas critical to advancing frontiers of medical knowledge and therapeutics.

2. Relationship of the MSTP to UW-Madison's overall graduate training programs and uniqueness compared to other existing pre-doctoral training programs. The MSTP offers integrated training in pursuit of MD and PhD degrees. We recruit classes with diverse research interests so that students, through interactions with MSTP peers, experience the breadth of biomedical research while they acquire research skills and knowledge in a specific research field through interactions with graduate school peers. Current MSTP students are undertaking or have completed PhD training in 16 different graduate programs. Current MSTP trainers participate in 27 other pre-doctoral training programs funded by NIH. These other pre-doctoral training programs and the graduate programs with which they are affiliated complement the MSTP. The programs allow the recruitment of outstanding graduate students who work alongside MSTP students during their graduate training. MSTP students, in turn, enrich the other programs.

3. Collaborative and interdisciplinary features of the proposed training program and addition of scientific disciplines or fields. Research and education related to biomedicine are carried out in a large number of departments, centers, and programs inside and outside of the SMFH (School of Medicine and Public Health) that are integrated and collaborative. UW-Madison’s highly interactive faculty has cooperated in numerous important initiatives for the common goal of training future physician-scientists and scientists and is highly supportive of the MSTP. New training opportunities at the frontiers of biomedical research have been developed by the ICTR (Institute of Clinical and Translational Research), which has established a PhD program in Clinical Investigation as part of its mission of fostering translational research across campus, and in the WIsD (Wisconsin Institutes of Discovery), which brings together scientists from multiple disciplines to accelerate the process of Discovery-to-Delivery in human health care.

4. Innovative features and activities that are provided for trainees. Courses and activities unique to the MSTP and its students include: discussion groups/journal clubs during the first four semesters of medical school that foster class cohesiveness and introduce students to emerging areas of biomedical research, cell signaling, models of disease, and scientific approaches to clinical problem-solving; a bridging curriculum consisting of a clinical clerkship prior to embarking on graduate studies that consolidates clinical skills learned in preclinical training and a brush-up course on clinical skills prior to transitioning back to medical school; weekly program-wide seminar; yearly symposium; yearly retreat; and student organization that engages and empowers students to participate actively in the planning and execution of the program.

5. Discussion of whether prospective trainees have adequate quantitative backgrounds relevant to the proposed training to pursue cutting-edge biomedical research and description of what the training program does to ensure that students have appropriate quantitative graduate training. Our students run the gamut in regards to the computational skills required to complete their research training and succeed as independent investigators in their chosen fields. All students are required to have courses in statistics and mathematics (calculus recommended) as undergraduates, make practical use of statistics in “Principles of Population Medicine and Epidemiology” given in the first semester of the medical school curriculum, and will take Biostatistics and Medical Informatics 542 as part of graduate training. Thesis committees alert students to the need and resources to develop further computational skills. Realizing that much learning is informal and from multiple sources, we will use questionnaires and discussions to identify these sources and set up a clearinghouse of resources that will help MSTP students at all levels.

6. Opportunities for exposure to topics related to human health, physiology and disease. We expect that all of our MD/PhD graduates will do translational research in the broad sense. Students are challenged to relate research findings to clinical medicine, address clinical problems with their research techniques, and plan post-graduate training that will build on their skills and experiences. Toward these ends, we provide flexibility in how research and clinical rotations are sequenced in the latter half of the program so that students can explore different clinical areas prior to choosing a residency and have the opportunity, if appropriate, to initiate and complete clinical studies.
M1 Interview: Laura Felley!

BY BRITTANY YOUNG AND JASON CHIANG

Tell us about yourself. How did you end up in Wisconsin? I spent the first half of my life desperately fighting to get away from the sciences (as both my mom and dad were zoology professors), but by the end of high school it was pretty much a given that I was going to go into research. I did flip-flop between psychology and biology in college.

What are you looking for in a soul mate? Intelligence, curiosity, warmth, calm, a sense of direction. Spatially (I still get lost in the HSCL).

What do you like, or not like about the new curriculum? In general, I’ve been very pleased. But as much as cross-course integration is to be applauded, the inevitable nagging sense of “Didn’t I just DO this?” does get obnoxious.

What is your favorite place in the HSCL? Third floor of Ebling, rare books room.

What do your classmates say when they find out you’re an MD/PhD student? Toss-up between “EIGHT years?” and “You’re getting PAID to do this?”

If medicine/basic science research didn’t exist, what would be your alternate-universe career? Organic farmer or bakery owner.

What is the one biggest obstacle constantly getting between you and all that studying you think you should be doing? Youtube.

What's one thing still on your "Exploring Madison" to-do list? Football game, Essenhaus, and walking on the lake when it freezes.

What's your strategy for facing the freezing cold of 1306? Lots and lots of tea.

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Children of the MSTP Photos!

BY HEATHER TAFF

Farsh Moussavi-Harami (G1) proudly holding young Jonah Cash Mirer, son of Anna Mirer (G1). The two have really bonded in their few short months together

Andrew Wentland’s (G2) son, Zaafir. He is not sure if Zaafir is being bashful or mischievous at this moment, but either way he is truly adorable.

Please turn to page 5 for more photos!
MSTP Photos!

BY HEATHER TAFF

N TO DEEP – The second in a series of notable WI license plates captured by the MSTPost

Alice Gauvin Boshoven (M2) with her husband Pieter in their Halloween finest as, what I presume, is a carrot and an... ...asparagus? Whatever Pieter actually intended to be, congratulations to them both for thinking outside the box this Halloween!

Please send photos for the next issue of the MSTPost to htaff at wisc dot edu

The M2’s embraced their primitive side this Halloween by becoming the characters from the Flintstone’s classic TV show. Above, we see Chadd as Dino, Jon as Barney Rubble, and Arick as Bam-Bam.
What’s your favorite book of all time? The Boy Detective Fails, by Joe Meno. Former Hardy-boy style boy detective’s sidekick beautiful sister kills herself, causing him to crack up epically. It’s a love-it-or-hate-it book, so I never feel comfortable recommending it to anyone. But the writing style tickles me to the core, being a closeted extreme Type A, its central message of “You have no idea what you’re doing, and you never did, so just wing it and enjoy your life” was very well received.

If you could ask Paul Cook any one question, what would it be? What do I need to do so that I might become as awesome as you someday?

Tell us something interesting about yourself that nobody in the program yet knows. Until I was 16, I thought that Cuba was next to Hawaii. The Pearl Harbor bombings absolutely baffled me—how on earth did the pilots fly across the continental US without anyone noticing?

Do you have any special talents? I’m surprisingly adept at finding four-leaf clovers and fossilized shark teeth. Generally not simultaneously.

What’s your biggest fear? As a life-long hypochondriac, that depends entirely on what we’re studying.

What doctor-skill are you most looking forward to learning/doing? All of it?

Besides water, what food and/or beverage would you not want to live without? I could live pretty happily on tea and black beans and rice...throw in a few avocados and I’d be all set.

Name three unexpected things currently in your HSLC locker. Socks, a AAAS tote bag, and a towel.

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Gossip Alerts!

BY HEATHER TAFF

Chloe McCoy (G3) won 3rd place in the Bronze International Jive competition at the Purdue Ballroom Classic over Halloween weekend.

Go Chloe!

Brendan Floyd (G1) is engaged to the wonderful Sally Salvador! We are all very happy for the couple and are excited about getting to spend more time with his fiancée.
Selected New MSTP Publications

Three papers from Richard Yang:


Beverly J. Lange, Richard K. Yang, Jacek Gan, Jaquelyn A. Hank, Eric Sievers, Todd A. Alonzo PhD, Robert B. Gerbing, Paul Sondel. Soluble Interleukin-2 Receptor alpha Activation in a Childrens’ Oncology Group Randomized Trial of Interleukin-2 Therapy for Pediatric Acute Myeloid Leukemia. (Accepted with Minor Revisions, Pediatric Blood & Cancer, 9-29-2010)

A paper from Andrew Wentland:


A paper from Lisa Maurer:

Maurer LM, Tomasini-Johansson BR, Ma W, Annis DS, Eickstaedt NL, Ensenberger MG, Satyshur KA, and Mosher DF. 2010. Extended binding site on fibronectin for the functional upstream domain (FUD) of protein F1 of Streptococcus pyogenes. JBC. in press.

Cook’s Corner

*What you always wanted to know about Paul, but were afraid to ask until now: (We know it’s a long special edition! But it’s still a corner!)*

**So, tell us about your summer!**

I drove to Greenbrier County, West Virginia (where I spent over 15 years carving out a homestead on top of a mountain, really a hill) to help my friend down the hollow, Jeff, put a white oak floor in his 1854 log cabin. We helped each other with various projects over the years, with him helping me peel the logs for my log house and putting up logs and rafters, working on the road (one and a half miles of gravel, much of it uphill which was constantly being washed down the hill and into the ditches by hard rains and gravity), etc., etc. So many great memories...! This trip gave me the chance to catch up with all my dear friends there, spend time clearing brush with Jeff, walking in the woods, etc.

A little over a week later my wife, Beverly, took the train from Chicago to the little town of Alderson, WV to join me. I picked her up, we had brunch with friends and then went to Jeff’s. That night we camped out in his upper field, had a bonfire looking at the moon over the mountains. The next day we drove to Ocean City, New Jersey to visit her brother for a few days and then returned to WV to stay with friends in their beautiful old home. After a few days they went to a trade fair in Columbus, Ohio and Beverly and I took care of their farm. I got to feed the chickens, gather eggs, take his energetic dog for a walk, work in their garden and try to round up wayward cows that had broken through a fence (they really are not very smart animals). We spent a good bit of time just reading on the back porch, listening to the sounds of nature.

One of the many highlights of the trip was the opportunity to have dinner with the folks who bought our property and see how they have changed things. They love being there and were very interested in what we thought of their renovations. Actually, they had asked when they bought the place about the history of the house, etc. and I told them why I had done some things and what my future plans were for the house and land. They moved many of them to completion, which was delightful to see.

All in all, it was three weeks of fun, and I got back in time for mosquito season here, too. What a bonus!