COBRE Grant Writing Workshop, Spring 2018

The COBRE Grant Writing Workshop is a mentored activity in which the participant (author) writes, revises and ultimately submits a major (NIH R01-type) grant application. The workshop consists of three required activities as outlined below. Note: Participating authors must recruit an experienced colleague who agrees to mentor them through the process AND agrees to participate in the two critiquing sessions described below.

Role of Senior Mentor/Reviewer
As a prerequisite to participation, each author must recruit an experienced senior colleague who will provide written (or oral) feedback as the author develops a Specific Aims Page and the subsequent Full Proposal. Mentors must agree to participate in both the Specific Aims Critiquing Session and the Mock Study Section (both in Lawrence). As part of this, Mentors are asked to serve as primary and tertiary reviewer of specific aims pages and final proposals for two workshop participants other than their mentee. We realize that this is a big “ask” of a busy senior colleague. However, past mentors have uniformly enjoyed participating this way and contributing to their colleague’s success.

1. Introduction to Grant Writing Seminar
It’s more than just filling out the forms. In this session, we will discuss strategies to follow and pitfalls to avoid to achieve your goal of writing a successful NIH-style proposal (R01, R15, R21, etc.). The workshop will focus on the proposal as a form of communication and persuasion, the identification and analysis of the audience for the proposal, and writing for the audience. Both Participants and Mentors are required to attend this session, either in person or via ZOOM videoconferencing for those Mentors not located on the KU-Lawrence campus.

2. Specific Aims Critique Session
All participants will be asked to submit a Specific Aims (SA) page to Workshop administration (beall@ku.edu) at an assigned deadline. In advance of this deadline, each SA page should be reviewed by the chosen mentor. Each submitted SA page will be distributed to all participants and assigned to (i) two other Mentors and (ii) one participating author for critiquing. Critiques will be provided in writing (by a specified deadline) but delivered orally in the session; group discussion will follow. This gives participants the experience of critiquing another author’s SA page, a process that helps them strengthen their own writing.

3. Mock Study Section
All participants will be asked to submit their Full Proposal by a set deadline. In advance of this deadline, each proposal should be reviewed by the chosen mentor. As in the SA critiquing session, each submitted proposal, along with an NIH scoring sheet, will be distributed to two senior reviewers (as primary and tertiary reviewer) and one participating author (as secondary reviewer). Reviewers will provide written critiques and present them orally at the Mock Study Section, which will operate more formally and follow the quick pace required of a real NIH study section. The primary (senior) reviewer provides a detailed critique, the secondary reviewer (a participating author) will agree or rebut and add any points not brought up by the first reviewer, and finally the tertiary reviewer will provide any points not mentioned by the other two reviewers. After all the proposals have been critiqued and scored, participants will have a chance to meet with their reviewers to discuss their projects. Participating authors thus are both silent spectators (as their proposal is critiqued) and contributing reviewers (of other proposals). The program ends with a social hour off campus where discussions can continue.