NIH Priority Setting
How Peer Review Assists the NIH in Selecting the Best Science

A Congressional Briefing
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Featuring:
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NIH Center for Scientific Review
Danielle Li, PhD
Harvard University
Felice Levine, PhD
American Educational Research Association

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Speakers’ Biographies

Richard Nakamura, Ph.D., is the Director of the Center for Scientific Review (CSR) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). He plays a key role in leading NIH efforts to ensure that the billions of dollars in grants awarded to 2,500 institutions across the country support research with the most promise for advancing science and health. CSR’s scientists and support staff manage 80,000 incoming NIH grant applications a year, and CSR reviews 75 percent of them for scientific merit in its peer review groups. The Center holds about 1,500 review meetings each year, involving about 17,000 experts from the scientific community. Nakamura came to CSR in 2011 after a 32-year tenure at the National Institute of Mental Health, where he served as both Scientific Director and Deputy Director of the institute as well as Acting Director from 2001 to 2002. He holds a Ph.D. in psychology from the State University of New York in Stony Brook. He has expertise in cognitive and comparative neuroscience, science policy/funding, and ethics in science.

Danielle Li, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurship at Harvard Business School. Her research focuses on the determinants of productivity in settings where innovation and talent are important—how do we design organizations that recognize and encourage high impact ideas? Prior to this, she was an Assistant Professor at the Kellogg School of Management.

Her current work examines these issues in the context of life sciences research and pharmaceutical development. In one set of projects, Li is working with the U.S. National Institutes of Health to examine and improve their peer review process. In another strand of research, she studies how new technologies such as online job testing and performance management software impact firm HR practices and worker productivity.

Li graduated from Harvard College and worked at the Poverty Action Lab in Udaipur, India prior to earning her Ph.D. in Economics from MIT. Professor Li’s research interests are in applied microeconomics, particularly organizational economics, productivity, and the economics of innovation.

Felice J. Levine, Ph.D., is Executive Director of the American Educational Research Association. Previously she was Executive Officer of the American Sociological Association. She was also Director of the Law and Social Science Program at the National Science Foundation (NSF) and Senior Research Social Scientist at the American Bar Foundation. She holds A.B., A.M., and Ph.D. degrees in sociology and psychology from the University of Chicago.

Levine’s work focuses on research and science policy issues, research ethics, data access and sharing, the scientific and academic workforce, and higher education. She is currently collaborating on a major NSF-supported assessment of education research doctorate programs in U.S. universities, and is principal investigator of the AERA Grants Program and member of its Governing Board. Levine served on the National Human Research Protections Advisory Committee of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and on the 2000 Decennial Census Advisory Committee. She also served on the National Research Council (NRC) panel that produced the report, Putting People on the Map: Protecting Confidentiality with Linked Social-Spatial Data and chaired the NRC workshop on Protecting Student’s Records and Facilitating Education Research. In addition, she co-authored Education and Training in the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences: A Plan of Action, undertaken at the request of National Science Foundation. This report was published by NSF in 2004.

Levine is Associate Editor of the Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics. She is also the Chair of the Executive Board of the Consortium of Social Science Associations and Chair of the Board of Directors of the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics, and is Secretary General of the newly established World Education Research Association. Levine is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Educational Research Association, and the Association for Psychological Science, as well as an elected member of the International Statistical Institute. She is also a past President of the Law and Society Association.
The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the premier biomedical, behavioral, and social science research institution in the world. Its mission is to seek fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and the application of that knowledge to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability. The agency invests in research across biology, genetics, neuroscience, imaging, behavior, social, and economics research to prevent, diagnose, and treat more than 7,000 rare diseases as well as chronic conditions that are threatening the public health of our nation, such as heart disease, diabetes, obesity, HIV/AIDS, mental disorders, Alzheimer’s disease, and cancer. Many of these conditions and diseases have multiple causes: biological, environmental, behavioral, psychological, and sociocultural.

Thousands of scientists each year submit applications to the NIH requesting funding for their scientific proposals. Briefing speakers will provide an overview of the NIH peer review process. Come learn how the NIH’s Center for Scientific Review with the help of scientific experts from around the country assist the agency select the best science.

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The Coalition to Promote Research is a coalition of national organizations committed to promoting public health, innovation and fundamental knowledge through scientific research. The organizations represent hundreds of thousands of scientists, physicians, health care providers, and patients who support federal investments in basic and applied biomedical and behavioral research.