

News from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS)¹

WHAT IS THE CURRENT NIGMS SCORING EXPERIMENT? HOW DOES IT WORK? WHAT IS IT ATTEMPTING TO ACCOMPLISH?

The National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is currently assessing a modified method of reporting priority scores and percentiles to applicants. This modified system does not affect how study section members review or individually score the applications. It only affects how scores are reported to the applicants, to NIH staff, and to the members of the National Advisory General Medical Sciences Council (NAGMSC) that performs the second stage of review and reports to the Director, NIGMS. For the modified scoring system, two principles will be applied:

- a. The average priority score will be computed to only two significant digits (e.g., 150 or 160, rather than 153 or 159).
- b. The calculated percentile will be rounded to the nearest odd integer between 1 and 99 (e.g., 7, 31, 53, etc.).

The goal of the modified reporting system is to maintain approximately the same degree of resolution that reviewers have available to them when scoring applications, and not

create an artificial degree of precision. This will have the effect of placing many applications at the same rank where in the past those applications may have been ordered by their scores (e.g., priority score/percentile pairs 146/24.1, 151/24.8, and 154/26.0, would all now be reported as 150/25). Funding decisions will be made among applications judged to be of comparable quality by the peer-review system based upon the institute's scientific interests, program balance, and diversity, and other support information. This trial has been approved for 1 year by the NAGMSC and is operating independently of other alternative scoring plans under discussion within the NIH as part of the government reinvention activities. This modified reporting system is in effect for the NIGMS only, and does not affect other institutes. Applicants who are affected by this experiment were informed by letter prior to the study section meetings. If you have any questions about modified score reporting, contact your program director at the NIGMS.

Rochelle M. Long, Ph.D.
*Program Director, Pharmacological and
Physiological Sciences (PPS) Branch
Pharmacology, Physiology, and Biological
Chemistry (PPBC) Division
NIGMS, NIH*

¹ Future topics for this column: NIGMS on the WWW, RFAs vs. PAs, block grants at the NIH?
Comments to: LONGR@GM1.NIGMS.NIH.GOV