



## **Tips from 2011 Lunch & Learn Session organized by the ASTS Awards Committee**

*Submitted by Chris Anderson and David Mulligan on behalf of the Awards Committee*

The Lunch & Learn program “Maximizing Award Opportunities in Transplantation Research” held during the 2011 ASTS Winter Symposium was a success and supported good discussion by fellows and faculty regarding the current research funding climate and strategies to maximize funding opportunities. The Awards Committee’s focus is on encouraging research and ultimately improving on the low rate of NIH funding for young transplant surgeons (Englesbe, et al. AJT 2011). While there is much concern about the increasing difficulty in obtaining NIH funding for research, our discussion focused on several themes that may be helpful for young transplant investigators.

- Strategically plan your research efforts to insure that you have the best mentorship, colleagues and collaborators (i.e. “environment”), institutional support (finances and personnel), and most importantly a personal desire before submitting a research proposal.
- Identify and understand resources currently available at your institution. Many institutions sponsor grant-writing workshops and have expertise available to help navigate the NIH and other grant agencies. It is important to contact your research office to learn of these opportunities.
- Utilize your mentors and colleagues to review grant submissions. Seek many opinions and seek opinions from researchers whom are not directly involved with your project. Take all comments seriously as they will approximate what reviewer will see. Do not submit a grant that has not been reviewed thoroughly.
- Utilize mentors and colleagues at other institutions (when appropriate) for advice, grant writing assistance, and manuscript/grant proposal review. These individuals are often available through the ASTS. Ask mentors and colleagues if they would be willing to share a copy of a previous grant to help you organize and prioritize your thoughts as you prepare your own grant submission.
- Work to your strengths....i.e. as a clinician you often know the very clinically relevant questions to ask. Identify research collaborators who are particularly skilled at helping answer those questions. Clinician-Basic Science collaborations will often work very well, especially when both parties are striving to answer the same question. In addition, collaborative research is often viewed favorably by funding agencies.
- There is no “set” pathway to obtaining grant funding. Seek advice to determine the correct pathway for you given your individual circumstances. While traditionally the K08 to R01 pathway of funding is popular, it may not work in many instances. Be sure to investigate all options for funding (societies, non-profit, institutional, corporate, governmental (non-NIH), and NIH) to see what opportunities best fit your

needs. Utilize “new-investigator” advantages when applicable. It was also suggested that many research interests of transplant surgeons may fit nicely with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).

The members of the ASTS Awards committee wish to be a resource to encourage young transplant surgeons embarking on a research effort. Please feel free to call on any of us if we can help with identification of appropriate mentors or collaborators. Check the ASTS Awards Website for information.