
CPI Newsletter – February 2024

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2023-24 CPI roster: Chair — Jessica Bernard, CAS • Vice-Chair — Robin Page, Nursing • Past Chair Debjyoti Banerjee, ENG • AgriLife Extension — Tim Hartmann, Jamie Rae Walker • AgriLife Research — Katie Lewis, Anil Somenahally, Qingwu Xue • Architecture — Michelle Meyer • BUSH — Laura Dague • CAS — Lane Baker, Heath Blackmon, Rebecca Brooker, Ryan Ewing, Jessica Fitzsimmons, Jean-Luc Guermond, Wenshe Liu, Daniel Thornton • COALS — Giri Athrey, Rodolfo Cardoso, Paul Straight, Aaron Tarone, Sarah White-Springer, Guoyao Wu • Dentistry — Hua Zhang • Education — Paul Hernandez, Rafael Lara-Alecio • Engineering — Daniel Alge, Jorge Alvarado, Raymundo Arroyave, Suman Chakravorty, Tracy Hammond, Daniel Jiménez, Samuel Ma • Geosciences — Ryan Ewing, Jessica Fitzsimmons, Daniel Thornton • Law — Felix Mormann • Mays — Katy Lane • Medicine — Helene Andrews-Polymenis, Shannon Glaser, Carl Gregory • Nursing — Robin Page • Pharmacy — Jayshree Mishra • Public Health — Gang Han • TAMU at Galveston — Irfan Khan • TAMU at Qatar — Nimir Elbashir • TEES — Keith Biggers, Nathan Tichenor • TTI — Edith Arámbula Mercado • University Libraries — Laura Sare • Veterinary Medicine — Joe Arosh, Candice Brinkmeyer-Langford, Dana Gaddy

The CPI is sponsored annually through funding from Texas A&M University, Texas A&M AgriLife, Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station, and the Texas A&M Transportation Institute

Update from Dr. Jessica Bernard, 2023-2024 CPI Chair

February CPI Chair News – The Council of Principal Investigators Executive Committee (CPI-EC) met with administrators and the Texas A&M Google Storage Team on Wednesday, February 7, 2024. Discussions during the CPI-EC meeting with the administrative leadership began with Ms. Aliese Seawright, Director of Human Research Protection Program providing a Huron update. Ms. Seawright will provide the Huron update to the larger PI community at the February 14, 2024 CPI General Meeting. Mr. Michael Leary and Mr. William Deigaard held discussions with the timeline and recommendations for moving forward with the TAMU Google Storage plan. They too will be sharing their update and asking for feedback at the February 14, 2024 CPI General Meeting. The CPI-EC membership was provided an update on the on the Research Development Fund (RDF) as well as the Texas A&M Core Facilities working group from Dr. Brendan Roark. With several RDF and Texas A&M Core Facilities working group meetings in process, it was suggested that Dr. Roark wait until March to provide an update at full CPI General Meeting.

The 2024 CPI Survey was briefly discussed as the deadline for PIs to respond to the CPI Survey is set for midnight Friday, February 9, 2024. Anticipate at the March 20, 2024 CPI General meeting to have the summary and the findings posted on the CPI Website.

The February 14, 2024 CPI General Meeting is an open meeting, so it will be recorded. Following the February 14th CPI General Meeting, the YouTube video link will be posted on the [cpi.tamu.edu](https://cpi.tamu.edu/meetings) meetings page website for all PIs to have access to view. For the February 14th meeting CPI will have Mr. Michael Hard and Dr. Leslee Gilbert provide CPI members and guests a Government Relations Update.

As CPI continues to meet with President Welsh and Texas A&M and System administrative leadership this spring, I welcome thoughts, concerns, issues and agenda topics that impedes research efforts to all principal investigators within the research infrastructure with the Texas A&M University System. Please contact your CPI Representatives <https://cpi.tamu.edu/council-membership/council-membership/2023-2024-council-membership/>, or email the CPI Officers at cpi@tamu.edu or Rebecca Luckey, rluckey@tamu.edu, our CPI Coordinator.

Upcoming AnSRS4U presentation on NSF Research.gov Proposal Preparation – Thursday February 15, 10-11:00am via Zoom

TAMU Sponsored Research Services (SRS) will host a presentation, Navigating NSF: A Roadmap for New Proposals in Research.gov, Thursday, February 15, 10-11:00am via Zoom. This presentation will walk you step by step through the process of creating a proposal in Research.gov. You will learn what areas of the proposal are the responsibility of the principal investigator and what areas of the proposal that SRS will complete. Danny Trchalek, SRS Proposal Administrator will be the presenter. Register at the link below. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Register in advance for this Zoom meeting at <https://tamu.zoom.us/join/register/tJ0ucOyvzp8sHtV-XV8LXt6YXSNEu1f7aUlc>

Arts and Humanities Fellowship Application

Apply now to become a 2024 Arts and Humanities Fellow. This fellowship is three years and will include \$15,000 award in year one and has no budget. Please refer to the flyer at the back of the newsletter for more information.

Human Research Protection Program Update

Huron IRB Submission System Update

The Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) has added a frequently asked questions [Huron FAQ – Division of Research \(tamu.edu\)](https://vpr.tamu.edu/human-research-protection-program/huron-knowledge-center/huron-faq/) (<https://vpr.tamu.edu/human-research-protection-program/huron-knowledge-center/huron-faq/>) page to the HRPP website. The FAQs will help investigators with questions about the Huron messaging system, PI Proxies, Primary Contacts, adding students and Adjunct/Affiliate personnel to studies and logging into the CITI website.

Please check the [Huron Knowledge Center – Division of Research \(tamu.edu\)](https://vpr.tamu.edu/human-research-protection-program/huron-knowledge-center/) (<https://vpr.tamu.edu/human-research-protection-program/huron-knowledge-center/>) on a regular basis. We add guidance and instructions to our Huron Knowledge Center and FAQs as needed to assist you with navigating through the Huron IRB submission system.

Please continue to send your feedback and comments to [My IRB Contact – Division of Research \(tamu.edu\)](https://vpr.tamu.edu/human-research-protection-program/my-irb-contact/) (<https://vpr.tamu.edu/human-research-protection-program/my-irb-contact/>) or irb@tamu.edu.

Animal Program Updates

AAALAC Site Revisit. Representatives of AAALAC International will be revisiting the Bryan/College Station and School of Pharmacy in Kingsville portions of Texas A&M University's animal program **February 19-23, 2024**. For more information, please visit the **2024 AAALAC Site Revisit** page: <https://vpr.tamu.edu/aaalac-international-main-campus-kingsville-accreditation-revisit-2024-late-january-march/> Please contact the Animal Welfare Office staff at animalcompliance@tamu.edu or 979.845.1828 with any questions you may have about the revisit process.

Student Organization Activities with Animals. Activities with live vertebrate animals performed by TAMU students during sanctioned Student Organization events may need to be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). Faculty advisors for Student Organizations are encouraged to consult with the Animal Welfare Office when such activities are planned to ensure appropriate IACUC oversight. Please contact the Animal Welfare Office at animalcompliance@tamu.edu or 979.845.1828 for assistance.

Focus on IACUC Guidelines - Non-Surgical Procedures. Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) Guidance on procedural standards for animal activities is available on a wide variety of topics. Investigators are invited to view current IACUC Guidance on the performance of non-surgical procedures such as blood collection (TAMU-G-017), food/water restriction or manipulation (TAMU-G-0031), and physical restraint (TAMU-G-051). IACUC Guidance may be found on the Animal Program web page (requires TAMU authentication): <https://vpr.tamu.edu/animals-in-research-and-teaching/texas-am-iacuc-guidance/>. Please contact the Animal Welfare Office at animalcompliance@tamu.edu or 979.845.1828 if you have questions or need assistance with implementing IACUC procedural standards.

Resource for Principal Investigators with Mouse Breeding Colonies. The Animal Welfare Office offers the following valuable resource for Principal Investigators (PIs) who maintain and manage their own mouse breeding colonies: <https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/3rs-resources/breeding-and-colony-management>. The materials offered on this site provide best practice guidance for optimizing the use of animals and avoiding wastage, using principles that apply to genetically modified mouse strains as well as other species. Practical scenarios, examples, strategies, best practices and a no cost web-based breeding calculator tool make this a resource worth checking out. Please contact the Animal Welfare Office at animalcompliance@tamu.edu or 979.845.1828 if you have questions or need assistance.

Biosafety/Select Agent Program Updates

Proposed Changes to the HHS/CDC Select Agent Policies

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has presented important policy changes regarding the HHS list of select agents and toxins. Those who work with biological select agents and toxins are encouraged to review the proposed policy changes and provide feedback as indicated in the [Federal Register Notice by April 1, 2024](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/01/30/2024-01513/possession-use-and-transfer-of-select-agents-and-toxins-biennial-review-of-the-list-of-select-agents) (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/01/30/2024-01513/possession-use-and-transfer-of-select-agents-and-toxins-biennial-review-of-the-list-of-select-agents>).

Below are highlights of the proposed amendments to the list:

- Removing three biological agents
 - *Brucella abortus*, *Brucella suis*, and *Brucella melitensis*,
- Raising one toxin's exclusion amounts
 - Short, Paralytic Alpha Conotoxins,
- Renaming a virus
 - Ebola Virus to the Genus *Ebolavirus*,
- Designating a current agent as a Tier 1 agent, and
 - Nipah Virus
- Removing the designation of Tier 1 status from one agent
 - Botulinum Neurotoxin Producing Species of *Clostridium*.
- HHS/CDC also proposes to clarify language and add requirements.

Please contact Susan Gater, Associate Director & Responsible Official at gaters@tamu.edu or at 979-458-3524 for questions or concerns.

Available on Demand - Recent AnSRS4U presentation on Fulbright Opportunities and How They Can Work for You

If you were not able to watch this presentation live, you have the opportunity to watch it on demand via the SRs website at AnSRS4U – Sponsored Research Services (tamu.edu)

Traci Lacey of the Global Engagement office did an excellent job on covering the eligibility and application process for the program. Professor Marty Regan of the School of Performance, Visualization & Fine Arts, gave an inspiring account on how being a Fulbright Fellow opened many doors for him in Japan and how the experience furthered his research and scholarship and provided additional resources to enhance his teaching at TAMU.

Guidance on Salary Limitation for Grants and Cooperative Agreements FY 2024

NIH NOT-OD-24-057, released January 29, 2024. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 restricts the amount of direct salary to Executive Level II of the Federal Executive pay scale. The Office of Personnel Management recently released new salary levels for the Executive Pay Scale. Effective January 1, 2024, the salary limitation for Executive Level II is \$221,900.

For active awards, including awards that have been issued in FY 2024 (continuation and new) that were restricted to Executive Level II, if adequate funds are available, and if the salary cap increase is consistent with the institutional base salary, recipients may rebudget funds to accommodate the current Executive Level II salary level.

NIH Enforcement of Unilateral Closeout Reporting in the System for Award Management

NIH NOT-OD-24-055, Released January 23, 2024: NIH is strengthening enforcement of longstanding closeout requirements. NIH will report all unilateral closeouts of NIH awards as a Responsibility/Qualification (formerly FAPIIS) record in the entity's information in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov). Please be reminded that, without prior approval from the awarding institute or center for a delay in closeout, NIH will initiate unilateral closeout for all awards that fail to meet closeout requirements within 120 days.

The requirement for timely closeout is generally a recipient responsibility. However, NIH may initiate unilateral closeout if a recipient does not provide timely, accurate closeout reports or does not respond timely to NIH requests to reconcile discrepancies in grant records. In an effort to comply with the regulations, NIH will report unilateral closeout actions in SAM.gov retroactively, beginning with all unilateral closeout actions taken since January 1, 2023.

NSF PAPPG NSF 24-1 New Version Has Been Issued

NSF has announced that a revised version of the NSF [Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide \(PAPPG\) \(NSF 24-1\)](#) has been issued. The new PAPPG will be effective for **proposals submitted or due on or after May 20, 2024**.

You can review the by-chapter [Summary of Changes](#) provided in the PAPPG. NSF will present information about these changes in a webinar on **March 12th at 2 PM EST**. Sign up on the [Policy Office outreach website](#) to be notified once registration opens. While this version of the PAPPG becomes effective on May 20, 2024, in the interim, the guidelines contained in the current [PAPPG \(NSF 23-1\)](#) continue to apply. Changes that affect proposal preparation

- **Biographical Sketch(es):** This section has been revised to remove the 3-page limitation for the biographical sketch. There is no page limitation for this section of the proposal. The Synergistic Activities section has been removed from the biographical sketch. This information must now be submitted by individuals designated as senior/key persons as part of the senior/key personnel documents in Research.gov.
- **Mentoring Plan:** Proposals will require a mentoring plan for postdoctoral researchers or graduate students supported on the project. This page limitation for the Mentoring Plan remains one page.
- **New checkbox on the Cover Sheet to indicate if there are “Potential Impacts on Tribal Nations.”** NSF will not award projects that may impact Tribal Resources or Interests unless the project has prior written approval from officials designated by the relevant Tribal Nations(s).

Plagiarism Detection Software Available

iThenticate is the leading provider of professional plagiarism detection and prevention technology used worldwide by scholarly publishers, funding agencies, and researchers to ensure the originality of written work before publication.

The Division of Research makes iThenticate available to TAMU researchers free of charge. Faculty are strongly encouraged to use the tool as a pre-submission check of papers, proposals, or any other document that will be made available to the broader research community. Login is available at [iThenticate – Division of Research \(tamu.edu\)](#)

Biosafety Program

Guidance for Researchers on Nucleic Acid Synthesis

Over the past 6 months, benchtop nucleic acid printers (DNA printers) have become more affordable and accessible, which has allowed researchers to purchase them for use in their own laboratories. Although the increased accessibility of benchtop nucleic acid printers enhances discovery and innovation and reduces the need for commercial nucleic acid synthesis, it also poses unique challenges. Until recently, nearly all synthetic DNA was produced by centralized providers who screen their customers and orders to ensure that sequences of concern (e.g., sequences associated with select agents or agents on the commerce control list) are not sold to customers who do not have a legitimate use for them. Without sufficient oversight, widespread distribution of benchtop DNA printers could have significant biosafety and biosecurity implications. While these advances in synthetic biology have made it easier than ever for scientists across disciplines to generate organisms using only genetic sequence data, broader availability to such material via benchtop DNA printers further removes the need for direct access to naturally occurring pathogens, which could result in potential misuse and pathogen engineering.

Recognizing this increased risk, the Department of Health and Human Services issued an updated [Screening Framework Guidance for Providers and Users of Synthetic Nucleic Acids](https://aspr.hhs.gov/legal/synna/Pages/default.aspx) (<https://aspr.hhs.gov/legal/synna/Pages/default.aspx>) in October 2023. This guidance serves to assist all entities involved in the provision, use, and transfer of synthetic nucleic acids with developing best practices for screening for sequences of concern and mitigating the risks associated with those sequences. The updated guidance recommends that the definition of a sequence of concern be expanded to include any sequence that contributes to pathogenicity or toxicity, whether that sequence is from a regulated or unregulated agent. It also recommends that all customers, providers, and vendors of synthetic nucleic acids verify legitimacy of recipients of sequences of concern and that all parties maintain records of transfers of such sequences. Included in the updated materials is a [Companion Guide](https://aspr.hhs.gov/legal/synna/Documents/SynNA-Companion-Guide-508.pdf) (<https://aspr.hhs.gov/legal/synna/Documents/SynNA-Companion-Guide-508.pdf>) to the HHS Guidance which describes several potential scenarios for implementing these recommendations.

Please review this material if your work involves synthetic nucleic acids. Additional updates and guidance pertaining to institutional oversight of benchtop nucleic acid printers, and any measures needed to prevent their misuse, will be provided to researchers as they become available.

Please contact Dr. Jessica Bourquin, Director of Biosafety, at jrbourquin@tamu.edu or at 979-845-7189 for questions or concerns.

Limited Submission Proposal Opportunities

The Division of Research has a limited proposal submission and review portal. The system will be used for limited submissions and most internal grant programs. You will find available opportunities at: <https://tamu.infoready4.com/#/limitedsubmissions>. If you have any questions, please contact limitedsubmissions@tamu.edu.

Proposal Assistance for Large Multidisciplinary Funding Opportunities

The Division of Research, Research Development Services, offers free assistance to teams pursuing large multidisciplinary funding opportunities. To learn more about the types of assistance offered or to request assistance, [click here](#).

Bulletin for Principal Investigators

The Division of Research at Texas A&M University publishes a weekly bulletin about research. The Research Bulletin accepts news items about researchers and their teams from the colleges, schools, campuses and agencies within the Texas A&M research enterprise, including honors, funding, presentations, and appearances in news media. To subscribe or unsubscribe to the Research Bulletin, email: research-communications@tamu.edu.

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