

Contacts

Publisher: Ben Crowe

Editor: Paul Smaglik

Marketing Manager: David Bowen

US Head Office, New York

345 Park Avenue South, 10th Floor,

New York, NY 10010-1707

Tel +1 800 989 7718

Fax +1 800 989 7103

e-mail: naturejobs@natureny.com

US Sales Manager/ Corporations:

Peter Bless

Classified Sales Representatives:

Phone: +1 800 989 7718

Pennsylvania, New York,

Maryland/ Latin America/ NIH:

Michael McGillion

Midwest USA:

Wade Tucker

East USA/ Canada:

Janine Taormina

San Francisco Office

Classified Sales Representative:

Michaela Bjorkman

West USA/ West Corp. Canada

225 Bush Street, Suite 1453

San Francisco, CA 94104

Tel +1 415 781 3803

Fax +1 415 781 3805

e-mail: m.bjorkman@nature.sf.com

European Head Office, London

The Macmillan Building, 4 Crinan Street,
London N1 9XW, UK

Tel +44 (0) 20 7843 4961

Fax +44 (0) 20 7843 4996

e-mail: naturejobs@nature.com

Naturejobs Sales Director:

Nevin Bayoumi (4978)

Production Manager: Billie Franklin

To send materials use London
address above.

Tel +44 (0) 20 7843 4814

Fax +44 (0) 20 7843 4996

e-mail: naturejobs@nature.com

Naturejobs web development:

Tom Hancock

Naturejobs online production:

Stefan Hales

European Satellite Office

Germany/ Austria/ Italy/

The Netherlands/ Belgium:

Patrick Phelan, Odo Wulffen

e-mail: p.phelan@nature.com

o.wulffen@nature.com

Japan Head Office, Tokyo

MG Ichigaya Building (5F),

19-1 Harakatomachi,

Shinjuku-ku,

Tokyo 162-0841

Tel +81 3 3267 8751

Fax +81 3 3267 8746

Asia-Pacific Sales Director:

Rinoko Asami

e-mail: r.asami@nature.jp.com

naturejobs

The secrets of success

Grant applications often fail — it's a fact of life. But the deliberations that lead to rejection are not made public, much to the relief of the applicants. The value of breaking this vow of secrecy, however, was made clear at the end of last month at a meeting held in Toronto, Canada, by the American Society of Human Genetics.

To give junior scientists an insight into the grant-reviewing process, the meeting featured a mock assessment of applications. Decisions are made by weighing up five factors: significance, approach, innovation, investigator and environment. And the panel, which featured actual grant reviewers grading fictional proposals, aimed to show how these factors come into play.

First up was a proposal to analyse genetic variation based on small deletions. All of the panellists agreed that the approach was technologically innovative, scientifically sound and would produce quality data. But Vishwajit Nimgaonkar, a geneticist from the University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, scored the proposal low on the basis of significance. "It's not clear to me why we need another set of polymorphisms," he said. "It looks like an application in search of a use." Another panellist had some questions about the 'environment' — in this case whether a key collaborator was really committed to the project.

At the end of the session, the panellists debriefed the audience. As in the real world, they said, many of the applicants were able to cover all five factors adequately in their proposals — but they hadn't, assuming instead that the reviewers would be able to read their minds. In fact, the panellists had repeatedly been lenient to new scientists, saying that not spelling out how the proposal met the five criteria was a typical 'young investigator error'. One senses that the young scientists present all hoped that real reviews are undertaken in a similar atmosphere of understanding.

Paul Smaglik

Naturejobs editor



Contents

SPECIAL REPORT

Getting on the fast-track to full-time employment p254

WWW.NATUREJOBS.COM

Career centre
Information on the
scientific job market

FOCUS

SPOTLIGHT

RECRUITMENT

ANNOUNCEMENTS

EVENTS