Plenary Day 1: Additional Q&As with Dr. Carole Read

Q: If I am using robotics for biomedical applications and the point of innovation is both in robotics and bioengineering, which NSF program/division would be a better fit - Robotics or CBET?

A: You should first put together your 1-page project summary draft that has the overview, intellectual merit, broader impacts, and strategy for integration of education and research and then contact the program directors sequentially to see which program--the CMMI robotics program or programs in CBET--are better potential fits based on your research project. Note: you will not submit to CBET, but to a core program, so you need to discuss with program officers these types of questions.

Q: Are previous NSF awards considered positive or not considered at all for a CAREER proposal award?

A: Your CAREER proposal is evaluated against NSF's criteria of intellectual merit and broader impacts and the integration of education and research. The reviewers evaluate your CAREER proposal package, not your entire research program.

Q: Is the typical budget for 1 month per year salary or 1 month over the five years? Can we request a budget for instruments?

A: Again, contact the program officer of the program you are applying to for the size of typical projects for CAREER Awards. The budget minimum for ENG is $500,000. The guidance is typically funding for one graduate student and up to 1 month of summer salary for the PI. You can request budget for instruments, but again, contact the PD for typical project budgets for their program. Your request for instruments should be substantiated in the project with details on how that is needed for the scope of your project.

Q: What if a school does not have a graduate program, can we support undergraduate students instead?

A: Yes. As long as your institution is eligible to receive NSF funds and your position has at least 50% of the time as an Assistant Professor or equivalent, with research and education

responsibilities.

Q: How diverse will the reviewer panel be?

A: This is an important question to ask the program director of the program you are submitting to, the review environment of the proposal. Of course, reviewer names are not provided. The program officer can describe how she/he typically groups their CAREER proposals. In ENG, CAREER proposals are discussed in dedicated CAREER panels with only CAREER proposals. There will be a diversity of topics and reviewer expertise in disciplines to cover the topics of the panel. The program directors also have a panel with diverse backgrounds as well.

Q: What are the pros and cons of using an external evaluator versus an advisory board and which would you recommend?

A: This is a question best directed to the program director of the program that you are applying to.

Q: I have seen some proposals written in first person and some in third person. Is there a strict rule? For non-CAREER proposals in my field, almost always we use third person.

A: There is not a strict rule. This is a style decision for you to make as the author.

Q: Are NSF CAREER proposals evaluate in the same manner (panel reviews?) across directorates?

A: No. CAREER proposal review does vary across the foundation. In ENG, we use dedicated CAREER panels that involve only CAREER proposals.

Q: Can we ask program officers for funded career proposals as examples?

A: NSF does not provide copies of submitted proposals, regardless of if they were funded. The abstracts of funded projects are available on the NSF website's search function for active and past grants.

Q: Are no previous NSF awards considered a negative?

A: There is not a requirement to have a previous NSF grant to be awarded a CAREER grant. You need to make the case to the reviewers on the merits of your project's intellectual merit, broader impacts, and integration of education and research. Be sure to read the criteria language and address it in the proposal.

Q: If we want to expand our group's expertise to e.g. modeling, can we propose a collaborator that will help us with that, train the students, etc.?

A: Read the solicitation for requirements for senior personnel such as a collaborator. The role of the collaborator should not rise to be perceived as a co-investigator, as a major contributor to the project's intellectual merit, broader impact, and integration of education and research.

Q: Will these presentations be available after the workshop ends?

A: Yes. CUNY will be posting the presentations after the workshop on the website https://nsfengcareerworkshop.ccny.cuny.edu.