The Beauty of Being Unique (ORCID iD)

If you get bored one day, Google “orchids that look like other things.” It is fascinating. The one pictured here is the White Egret Orchid (Habenaria Radiata). Flowers are amazingly diverse and look like anything from weird aliens to dancing ballerinas, to babies swaddled for nap time. Could you guess I was a backyard botanist?

Well, I’m not really. It was just a great lead for the ORCID iD. If you are not familiar with the ORCID iD, ORCID stands for Open Researcher and Contributor ID. This is a unique personal digital identifier that distinguishes every researcher and is a global effort for adoption by the scientific community. Eventually the ID will allow you to link your eRA Commons account to various other resources to reduce your administrative burden. Currently for NIH, your ORCID iD will link to your eRA Commons account so that publications can be easily associated with your grants.

Like these unique plants, you are unique as well. And we need to be able to identify you as you advance through your research career. So, starting in October 2019, ORCID iDs will be required for new appointees to institutional training grants and other awards who make appointments through xTrain.

When a 2271 appointment form is submitted for Training and Institutional K awards, eRA systems will check to ensure that the ORCID iD is present in the Personal Profile associated with the Commons IDs listed in the form. Starting this month, a warning will be issued if the ORCID iD is not present. This warning will be switched to an error in October of 2019 and must be cleared to successfully submit the new appointment.

How do you get an ORCID iD, you ask? Well, that is very easy. Logging into eRA Commons, you can go to your Personal Profile. Just under your name and your listed eRA Commons roles, you will find a link to create your ORCID iD. Following that link to ORCID.org, you will be able to register and link your Commons account to your ID. See steps and screenshots in the ORCID topic in the eRA Commons online help.

For more information, see Guide Notice NOT-OD-19-109.

And if that is not amazing enough, at least check out the Skull Orchid (Antirrhinum majus).

Badda Bing, Badda Boom! (ESI Status Extension)

I started my adult life as a high school science teacher, predominantly teaching physics and oceanography. Oceanography, as you can imagine, included physics, biology, and chemistry. One day we were discussing various categories of chemical reactions. As a demonstration of an exothermic reaction, I found it fun to drop a small amount of pure sodium in water. Now if you have forgotten your high school chemistry, this is a highly exothermic (releasing heat) reaction. The water and sodium combine to create sodium hydroxide, hydrogen gas, and heat.

In the right conditions, the sodium sparks, the sparks ignite the hydrogen gas, and BOOM! You have a lab issue! Which, coincidently is an option for requesting an extension to your Early Stage Investigator status! See what I did there…?

Stage Investigator status! See what I did there…?

And for that reason, as well as many others, NIH has a process where you can request an extension of your ESI status. ESI stands for Early Stage Investigator. An Early Stage Investigator is a status granted to an applicant who has “completed their terminal research degree or end of post-graduate clinical training, whichever date is later, within the past 10 years and who has not previously competed successfully as PD/PI for a substantial NIH independent research award.” The benefit of this status for applicants is that applications with meritorious scores are often prioritized for funding.
A lot can happen in ten years. Family care responsibilities, military service, medical concerns, and more can interrupt that ten-year period when you may have originally been planning to work full time in your area of research. So NIH permits you to request an extension of that ten-year period under extenuating circumstances. The current process consists of completing an Extension Request Form, which is submitted to a review committee for consideration.

This process will soon be moving to the eRA Commons. It is important to note that ESI eligibility is calculated based on the data you complete in the Education section of the Personal Profile. So it is very important this information is accurate. To request an ESI status extension, the process will be to log into Commons, open the Personal Profile, and click the Edit button for the Education section. There you will see your current ESI status and status end date. You will also find an ESI Extension Request button. This will open an online form where you complete the required information, with options to provide justification information in text fields, and/or upload supporting PDF documents. You can start a request, save it and return later to complete it and submit it to NIH. Once completed and submitted, the request will reviewed by the ESI Extension Committee. The new ESI date will appear in the Education section of the Personal Profile when viewed in edit mode.

The release of this feature to the production environment is currently scheduled for July 31, 2019. You can find more information on the ESI Application Status on the Early Stage Investigator Policies page, the ESI FAQs page, or review the video tutorial ESI Status Extension Request on the eRA Videos page.

In case you were wondering, no students were harmed during the demonstration. There was a blast shield protecting them. Of course the same cannot be said for the ceiling tiles, but that’s why classrooms have fire extinguishers…

What’s in a Name? (xTRACT)

We work for the federal government, which means we name a lot of stuff. And of course we want the name to spell something meaningful, like ASSIST: Application Submission System & Interface for Submission Tracking. That one is actually my fault, I came up with that one. Or RPPR: Research Performance Progress Report; and BO: Business Official (maybe not our best effort); and xTRACT: Extramural Trainee Reporting And Career Tracking (with a little creative license on that one); and many more, but I will stop there because it is xTRACT that I want to talk about.

In case you are unfamiliar with xTRACT, xTRACT is a module in the eRA Commons that allows applicants, grantees, and assistants to create research training tables for NIH progress reports and institutional training grant applications.

Because xTRACT is integrated with eRA Commons, some training data will be prepopulated in the system, including trainee names, selected characteristics, institutions, grant numbers, and subsequent NIH and other HHS awards.

Now here is the important part, beginning with RPPRs due on or after October 1, 2019, NIH and AHRQ will mandate that required training data tables submitted with T32, TL1, T90/R90, and T15 applications, and progress reports be created via the xTRACT system.

System validations in the RPPR module will check to ensure that tables were created via xTRACT, and tables not created in xTRACT will not be able to be submitted.

You can check out the NIH Guide Notice NOT-OD-19-108 for more information. And check out the Help and Tutorials page for xTRACT for additional resources!
And all this got me to thinking that we could use some updated names for various aspects of the grant process. So I present to you Joe’s Words That Should Be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desiregate</td>
<td>/ˈdɛr-əz-i(ə)rˈɡæt/</td>
<td>The wish that every aspect of working in Commons could be delegated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditures</td>
<td>/ɪkˈspenˈden(t)ʃər/</td>
<td>When financial reporting is so accurate, your smile looks fake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earffree</td>
<td>/ˈər(ə)l frē/</td>
<td>The nickname given to an application that is submitted early and error free.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passification</td>
<td>/pa-sə-fə-ˈkɑ-ʃən/</td>
<td>The act or process of giving up trying to remember the password requirements for all the various systems/programs you use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AREA-R51</td>
<td>/ˈeriə/ /R 51/</td>
<td>A non-existent secret government funding mechanism soon to be stormed by thousands of social media users.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Like a Phoenix (NIH Regional Seminar)**

Awaken your NIH grant knowledge like the phoenix that rises from the ashes! And we have just the place to do it… Phoenix, AZ! Come join us November 6 – 8, 2019.

Optional pre-seminar workshops include detailed information on topics like human research protection, application preparation, post-application submission, intellectual property, iEdison, and more!

During the 2-day seminar, you’ll find an array of concurrent sessions, designed for administrators, researchers, grant writers, etc. In addition, get more personalized guidance during the 1:1 Meet the Expert chats available between attendees and NIH staff. Check out all the information at the NIH Regional Seminar web page.

Need help convincing your boss you should attend? Check out this wonderful video that outlines all the advantages of attending the 2019 NIH Regional Seminar.

This event takes place at the Hyatt Regency Phoenix, located in the heart of the beautiful downtown area, just steps from museums, the arts, and entertainment.

Register today to reserve your spot!