

# Conversations with Scientists: Funding & Fellowships <sup>[1]</sup>

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## *Funding & Fellowships*

During this conversation, panelists with experience obtaining grants, fellowships and other funds shared practical strategies to get funding from diverse sources (federal and state government, foundations, private industry, etc.), particularly graduate and postdoctoral fellowships. Panelists also provided general advice for successful fundraising in or outside academia, for example, making sure you have an organized, solid narrative; reading the call for proposals carefully; seeking feedback from mentors and peers; anticipating reviewer questions, etc.

Below are some helpful articles and resources related to the topic of securing funding:

- [Graduate and Postdoctoral Database for Extramural Support \(GRAPES\)](#) <sup>[3]</sup>
- [Grant-Writing Tips for Graduate Students](#) <sup>[4]</sup>
- [Murder Most Foul: How Not to Kill a Grant Application](#) <sup>[5]</sup>
- [Advice for Writing Grant and Fellowship Proposals](#) <sup>[6]</sup>
- [Ten Tips for Applying to the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program](#) <sup>[7]</sup>
- [Videos from a Grants and Fellowship Conference](#) <sup>[8]</sup>



**Dr. Daniel Colón-Ramos** is an Associate Professor of Cell Biology and

Neuroscience at Yale University. Born and raised in Puerto Rico, Daniel completed his A.B. in biology at Harvard University and his PhD in molecular genetics from Duke University School of Medicine. As a postdoc, he was a Damon Runyon fellow in cellular neuroscience at Stanford University and a recipient of the NIH Pathways to Independence Award (K99/R00). His lab is interested in understanding the developmental events that direct precise neural connectivity in vivo. In particular, they are interested in how neural circuits form, how they influence behavior, and how they are changed during learning. They use the nematode *C. elegans* to examine these questions in vivo and with single cell resolution. The work of the Colón-Ramos lab has been recognized by a number of awards, including the Sloan Fellowship, given to scientists with “distinguished performance and a unique potential to make substantial contributions to their field”. Dr. Colón-Ramos has also worked to expand access to scientific knowledge, experiences and careers among communities or populations traditionally underrepresented in, or underserved by, the scientific enterprise. In 2006 he founded Ciencia Puerto Rico, a non-profit organization that promotes scientific research and education in the Puerto Rican archipelago and among Hispanics in the US and in Latin America. He received the AAAS Early Career Award for Public Engagement with Science in 2011 in recognition for his outreach and research work. You can find him on Twitter at @dacolon.



**Ms. Chris O'Brien** has worked at the Fellowships Office of the Policy and

Global Affairs Division of the National Academies since the mid-1970's. She has been involved in the administration of numerous fellowship programs, varying in level from predoctoral through postdoctoral and varying by funding source (public and private). Since 1979, Chris has worked primarily on the Ford Foundation Predoctoral, Dissertation, and Postdoctoral Fellowship Programs. These fellowships are designed to increase and support diversity in higher education. Over 3300 Ford Fellowships have been awarded by the Fellowships Office of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. Chris is the co-founder of the Fellowship Roundtable in 1995. This biannual meeting—in its 21<sup>st</sup> year—brings together fellowship administrators whose goal is to share best practices and discuss innovations in the administration of fellowships. She received her BS degree at St. Joseph's University and a Master of Arts degree



University.

**Dr. Alberto Rivera-Rentas** is Director of Extramural Research Training

Programs at the National Institute for Deafness and Communication Disorders (NIDCD) at the NIH. Before joining the NIDCD, he was a program officer and the research training officer at the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH). He also previously served as a program director at the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS), managing a portfolio that included investigator-initiated research development awards, institutional student development, and research training programs. In addition, he was responsible for two (2) NIH-wide programs: the NIH Blueprint for Neuroscience Research's *Enhancing Neuroscience Diversity through Undergraduate Research Education Experiences* (ENDURE) program and the prestigious NIH Director's New Innovator Award. In 2011, he received the NIGMS Diversity Awareness Award for his commitment to inclusion and evidence-based/data-driven approach to research-training. Dr. Rivera-Rentas earned his Ph.D. in biology with a concentration in neurobiology at the University of Puerto Rico. Before joining the NIH, he studied the biological, chemical, and physical factors associated with toxicological actions in the nervous system, and the role of environmental and anthropogenic factors in respiratory and neurodegenerative conditions in Puerto Rico. His publications include peer-reviewed articles in neuroscience, toxicology, environmental sciences, public health, and science education.

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