

# Writing a CAREER proposal

**Christine K. Luscombe**

Assistant Professor,  
Materials Science and Engineering Department,

May 2nd 2008

# About me

---

- BA, MSci in chemistry (2000)
- PhD in organic chemistry (2003)



- Post-doc in organic chemistry (2004-2006)
  - Assistant Professor in Materials Science and Engineering (Sept. 2006 - )
-

## About me

---

- Completely naïve when I joined...
    - Had never written a single proposal
    - Had most of my education in the UK, so didn't have a clue about the American system
    - Becoming an Assistant Professor was more of an accident...
  - But now have been awarded every grant that I have applied for (apart from an NIH grant) including NSF Career Grant and DARPA Young Faculty Award.
-

## Identify the correct program

---

- Phone/e-mail/visit program officers
    - If you're in DC, make an appointment to see them
    - If you're shy (which I am), e-mail beforehand to set up a time for the phonecall
  - Some programs are more supportive of young faculty than others
  - Do what the program officer tells you to do!
  - Although the funding is based on the reviews, the program officer makes the final decision
-

# Proposal writing

---

- A good proposal needs to have:

*A good idea + Effective communication*

- Read successful proposals.
  - Make it as easy as possible for the reviewers to figure out what you're trying to do.
    - Use *italics*, **bold**, diagrams etc. etc.
    - At the beginning of each section, have a boxed section summarizing the work
  - Be shameless in self-promotion. Don't just rely on your CV.
-

# Proof reading

---

- Have at least 2 people read your proposal
    1. *An expert in your field*
    2. *A related expert in your field*
    3. *A non-expert*
-