

in Europe and in many countries across the world, where most universities are public and faculty are state employees.

Scientists affiliated with government-funded institutions can seek other modes of entry to UNEP meetings, such as joining national delegations or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). However, participating in this manner undermines scientists' ability to operate independently given that their true affiliations might be obscured. In addition, because some NGOs might be branded as activists (i.e., viewed as biased), the credibility of scientists' policy recommendations may be questioned (7).

A preferable option for scientists affiliated with government-funded institutions is to register through accreditation not directly with UNEP, but under multilateral environmental agreements, such as the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions. This option is available to everyone but underused. Because the requirements are less stringent, scientists are more likely to gain eligibility. Institutions can also register through this process. UNEP should make this option more visible and accessible.

Scientists with no conflicts of interest must be given the ability to participate in and contribute to effective, comprehensive, and equitable outcomes. To facilitate the admittance of such scientists, UNEP—with the support of member states—should accept universities as independent, self-governed entities that can be directly accredited. Academic institutions should support their employees in these processes. Improving the accessibility of global negotiating processes will allow independent scientists, whose trusted collective knowledge is essential in securing a path toward a sustainable future, to participate fully in policy negotiations.

**Bethanie Carney Almroth**<sup>1\*</sup>, **Amila Abeynayaka**<sup>2</sup>, **Miriam L. Diamond**<sup>3</sup>, **Trisia Farrelly**<sup>4</sup>, **Marina Fernandez**<sup>5</sup>, **Sedat Gündoğdu**<sup>6</sup>, **Ibrahim Issifu**<sup>7</sup>, **Idun Rognerud**<sup>8</sup>, **Andreas Schäffer**<sup>9</sup>, **Martin Scheringer**<sup>10</sup>, **Patricia Villarrubia-Gómez**<sup>11</sup>, **Rufino Varea**<sup>12</sup>, **Penny Vlahos**<sup>13</sup>, **Martin Wagner**<sup>14</sup>, **Marlene Ågerstrand**<sup>15</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences, University of Gothenburg, Göteborg, Sweden.

<sup>2</sup>Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, Hayama, Japan. <sup>3</sup>Department of Earth Sciences and School of the Environment, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada.

<sup>4</sup>Political Ecology, Research Centre, Massey University, Aotearoa New Zealand. <sup>5</sup>Laboratorio de Neuroendocrinología, Instituto de Biología y Medicina Experimental, Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (IBYME-CONICET), Buenos Aires, Argentina. <sup>6</sup>Faculty of Fisheries, Cukurova University, Adana, Turkey.

<sup>7</sup>Fisheries Economics Research Unit, Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. <sup>8</sup>Norwegian Institute for Water Research, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>9</sup>Institute for Environmental Research, North Rhine-Westphalia Technical University of Aachen (RWTH) Aachen University, 52074 Aachen, Germany.

<sup>10</sup>Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland. <sup>11</sup>Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden.

<sup>12</sup>School of Agriculture, Geography, Environment, Ocean and Natural Sciences, The University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji. <sup>13</sup>Department of Marine Sciences, University of Connecticut, Avery Point, CT, USA. <sup>14</sup>Department of Biology, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway. <sup>15</sup>Department of Environmental Science, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden.

\*Corresponding author. Email: bethanie.carney@bioenv.gu.se

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#### COMPETING INTERESTS

T.F. is on the UNEP Scientific Advisory Committee.

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## Evaluating peer review at NIH

The National Institutes of Health (NIH), in an effort to ensure equity and reduce bias, has proposed a plan to change how grant proposals are peer reviewed (1). However, the proposed changes do not address previous evidence about bias in the peer review process, and the agency has not specified how it plans to evaluate progress. NIH should ensure that the policies and practices that control the conduct and communication of grant reviews are informed by evidence and subject to accountability.

The NIH's Center for Scientific Review (CSR) has published research showing that Black applicants are less likely than white applicants to receive funding for comparable proposals because of bias in peer scoring (2). CSR then designed and implemented a randomized experimental study demonstrating that double-blinding the review process would reduce that bias (3). An independent analysis of NIH grant funding over the past 30 years also shows persistent inequities related to gender, race, and ethnicity in the awarding of grants (4). However, the proposed grant review policy does not mention race or diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Instead, it aims to reduce reputational bias and enable reviewers to focus on scientific merit through a modest reorganization of scoring criteria.

Neither the proposal nor its accompanying report (5) provides a rationale for the specific changes or plans for future evaluation. The report identifies persistent racial disparities in funding but does not explain how the changes will alleviate them. It cites no external research and describes no internal evidence that supports the proposed policies. Although NIH committed to "continuous review" of peer review after making policy changes in 2012, the evaluation consisted only of satisfaction surveys and ceased after 3 years (6).

We should not expect NIH's system to be optimal, nor that all changes to its operational science policies will succeed. However, the scientific community should expect NIH to build on scientific research, communicate its aims and rationale, and include (and fund) assessment mechanisms. The community should understand the changes' goals and how NIH will accumulate knowledge about what does and does not work.

**Micah Altman**<sup>\*</sup> and **Philip N. Cohen**<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Center for Research on Equitable and Open Scholarship, MIT Libraries, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, USA.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Sociology, University of Maryland, College Park, College Park, MD, USA.

\*Corresponding author. Email: [escience@mit.edu](mailto:escience@mit.edu)

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#### ERRATA

**Erratum for the Report "Synthetic transcription elongation factors license transcription across repressive chromatin" by G. S. Erwin *et al.*, *Science* **380**, eadi0634 (2023). Published online 7 April 2023.**

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**Erratum for the Report "Geometric deep learning of RNA structure" by R. J. L. Townshend *et al.*, *Science* **379**, eadg6616 (2023). Published online 27 January 2023.**

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