

## MEG'S CHECKLIST for Specific Aims drafts

### Questions to ask yourself

Based on comments I typically see in Summary Statements

- Are my Aims **related**, but able to **stand alone** if necessary? *If possible, failure on the first Aim should not mean you cannot continue with the project.*
- Do I anticipate concerns about **recruitment or retention**? *Assure reviewers that you are aware of competition for recruitment and sources of attrition toward project completion.*
- Is my **N large enough** to power the study?
- Do my Aims sound like **methods**? *Methods are used to accomplish your aims.*
- Do I state my **hypotheses**? Is the work hypothesis-driven?
- Are there **deliverables** associated with each Aim? *Not strictly necessary, but nice if you are able to map to timeline, determine when you have accomplished the goal (yes/no) and succeeded (yes/no). You will have to address these questions in progress reports.*
- If appropriate, have I underscored my project's relevance to **medically underserved populations**, including rural communities, racial/ethnic minorities, low SES groups, and disabled individuals?
- Have I discussed my **preliminary data**, and stated if they support my hypotheses?
- If working with a clinical population, and especially if that population is medically underserved, is the target population (or a representative) involved in the design of the study? Do the PIs have "**buy-in**" from the community? Are they seen as credible and trustworthy?
- Is my project **overly ambitious**; is the study design **too diffuse**? *This comment may be the most frequent I see on Summary Statements for junior faculty. Make sure you can accomplish your Aims with the time/budget allowed; design Aims in publishable units.*
- If the project is a basic science study with an eventual **clinical application**, do I have representation from that clinical community? *Bring on an M.D. as consultant at 5% effort.*
- Will I explore **differences in race/ethnicity, sex, ages**? *If not, be sure to at least include such language in the Future Directions section of the Approach.*
- Do I mention our **competitive advantage**—a technique, database, software program, prestigious person/institution, access to an unusual population, etc. that sets us apart?

Gather more strategies via my  
[Specific Aims Training Course](#)