

Visit Report
Young Investigator Meeting
12 – 16 February 2011, Bhubaneswar

The Young Investigator Meeting (YIM) is formulated as a networking and learning platform for young Indian scientists wishing to return to India to set up their independent laboratory. The meeting is designed to enable participant interaction with leading Indian and International senior scientists as well as administrators from funding agencies. Through individual talks, panel discussions and a poster session, the YIM aims to create a candid environment for robust debate and discussion on matters important to newly establishing scientists.

The meeting has been held in India annually since February 2009. Since its inception, the India Alliance has been the major sponsor of this meeting.

The Programme schedule for the meeting is online (<http://www.indiabioscience.org/yim2011/schedule>) . Due to the flexible arrival and departure of senior scientists the schedule was not kept as is, but modified as required.

Professor Anuradha Lohia presented a 30 min talk on 12 February on the opportunities available from the India Alliance. She was also an invited panelist on a panel discussion – “Writing & Obtaining grants” on 14 February 2010.

Dr Megha presented a poster on the India Alliance which was on display from 13 – 15 February.

Issues of relevance to the India Alliance that occurred during talks or in private discussions:

The IA’s policy of not accepting resubmissions, unless invited by Committee, continues to be brought up. On one hand, it bolsters the idea that India Alliance Fellowships are considered prestigious while on the other, its continued mention suggests that the competitive aspect of these Fellowships has not yet been fully understood.

Some refused applicants were under the impression that publication record, impact factor, h-index and other citation-related bibliometric parameters were the predominant selection factors. This notion was later traced to feedback included in refusal letters. This feedback is typically comments from reviewers who opined on the application and on one application, out of 3 referees, one had commented on the publication record. Applicants fail to understand that comments provided were individual opinion and that the Selection Committee uses them as just one of the parameters amongst others to make a decision. Based on these and other interactions, the India Alliance would have to reconsider its policy on providing referees’ comments.

Many applicants remarked how difficult it was for them to hear from senior scientists/ directors of institutions. In spite of advertisements for hiring, institutions failed to respond to their email queries. A perception also existed that in order to avail the India Alliance Fellowships, applicants must have an offer of employment from their host institution. In conversation and in our talk, applicants were reminded that it was not necessary for them to hold a position at the host Institution at the time of application or if awarded. We reiterated that IA Fellowships provided full personal support in situations where the host institution was unable to provide a salary.