Welcome to the NSF Webinar on our the Computer and Information Science and Engineering Research Initiation Initiative (CRII).
I am Jim Kurose, the assistant director of NSF's Computer and Information Science and Engineering Directorate. And seated next to me are Jeremy Epstein, Ephraim Glinert and Sushil Prasad, program officers for the CRII program.

I'm going to briefly summarize the goals of the program, requirements for eligibility, areas of interest to the program, the submission process, review process, and a few of the frequently asked questions. Everything I tell you is a synopsis of the solicitation, which has more details. The recently released FAQ also has many questions and answers; if we don't cover whatever questions you have today, please check the FAQ. If you don't' find the answer there, please contact Almadena, Ephraim, Sushil, or me – our contact information is on the CRII web site, and will also be on the last slide of this presentation.
Before I get into the slides, I'll mention that these slides will be posted to the NSF website after the conclusion of this webinar. We're going to try to keep this to an hour, but can stay longer if needed for Q&A.

The goal of this program, as Jim described, is to support researchers in the first two years of their academic positions, so they can establish their own research programs independent of their advisors. The funds provided are intended to allow you to hire graduate or undergraduate students to get your research program going, including acquiring data, developing algorithms and approaches, building prototypes, and developing collaborations within or across research disciplines.

In FY15 (that is, proposals submitted in Sep 2014), CISE programs gave 82 CRII awards, for a total of about $12.4M over the next two years. Past performance is not a predictor of future results, but you can read more about all of the awards by going to www.nsf.gov/awardsearch and typing CRII in the search box.
Of the 82 awards, 81 were in a single program, and one was in both Secure and Connected Health and Cyber Human Systems.
This year's solicitation says "35 to 40 awards", but more are possible, depending on proposal quality and availability of funds.

To find out about last year's awards, just go to www.nsf.gov/awardsearch and enter "crii" in the search box.

You'll get a list of all the awards. Click on any of the titles.

You'll get the basic information about the PI and his/her institution, etc. Further down on the page you'll see the abstract of their research.

If you applied or considered applying in September 2014, there have been several changes.

First, the eligibility rules have been clarified and in some cases tightened. In the previous solicitation, some requirements were at the time of submission, others as of the deadline, and still others as of when an award is made. To simplify the timing question, all eligibility requirements are as of the deadline date, which this year is September 30. I'm going to repeat that, because it's a significant change from last year: all eligibility requirements are as of the deadline date, which is September 30. To address questions about whether "visiting" positions are eligible, and whether they count against the two year limit, we have revised the language to explain that our goal is to distinguish between positions that are similar to those of a regular faculty member who advises students and can serve as a PI, from those that do not typically have those characteristics. A new limit restricts applicants to no more than five years after PhD conferral, except in cases of family and medical leave. And finally, tenured faculty are not eligible for CRII.

Second, the contents of the department chair letter were clarified to note that it should state that the PI is (a) in the first two years of a tenure-track or research science or education position (or equivalent); (b) untenured; and (c) no more than five years since being granted a PhD. Additionally, if the PI has held "visiting" positions, those should be explained in the letter.

Third, we clarified that funds may be used for undergraduates as well as graduate students, and they may be used for postdocs as well as students.

Eligibility for this program has been the #1 item we've received both last year and this year. In short, there are fiveparts to eligibility.

First, you must be in an academic position – not a postdoc or research associate – at a university or two-year or four-year college. It doesn't matter if your position is tenured, tenure-track, or neither, nor does your title such as assistant or associate professor. Your primary appointment must be in an area supported by CISE – computer science, information science, or electrical or computer engineering being most common, but not exclusive. For example, you could be in a mechanical engineering department if your research is in the computing aspects of robotics or smart cars.

Second, you must not be more than five years since your PhD, as of the deadline for submissions, which is September 30 this year. The only exception is family or medical leave, in which case you should discuss the situation with a program officer, and ensure that your department chair letter includes the explanation of the leave.

Third, you must have been in an academic position for no more than two years since your PhD, not counting family or medical leave. This two year limit is as of the deadline for submissions, which is September 30 this year. So if you started in your academic position during the 2014-15 academic year, you will be eligible; if you started in the fall of the 2013-14 academic year or earlier you will not be eligible, unless you took a leave of absence for family/medical reasons   Positions in government or industry do not count against the two year limit. Neither do positions as postdocs or research associates. However, academic positions held overseas, whether tenure-track, tenured, or not, do count towards the two year limit.

Fourth, you must not be tenured already.

The fifth part of eligibility is that you have not received any grants from NSF or other agencies in the PI role. Being in the co-PI role does not disqualify, nor do any of these other types of NSF grants. Additionally, awards from your university or contracts from a company or private foundation, do not disqualify. Note that if you have a collaborative NSF grant, the lead PI from each institution is considered a PI, so even being the PI from a non-lead institution would disqualify.

The two questions in determining eligibility are (1) where does the money come from and (2) what is your role. The amount of money involved does not matter – be it small or large.

Note that the rule is as of the deadline for submission. So if receive notification of another award after the submission deadline, that will not affect your eligibility.

As I said earlier, this program is open to faculty doing research in any of the areas supported by CISE. This slide lists the current CISE programs that are accepting CRII submissions. Your proposal must list at least one program which is relevant to your research proposal. Descriptions of each of the programs can be found on the NSF web site.

As described in the solicitation, proposals are limited to 10 pages, not the 15 page limit most typical for NSF proposals. I am not going to review the rules for fonts and margins – please see the NSF Grant Proposal Guide for instructions. Trying to squeeze in more text by reducing fonts or margins is not only frustrating to reviewers, but is also likely to have your proposal returned without review.

A few other points on submission: No co-Pis or other senior personnel are permitted, however, consultants and subawardees are allowed. The proposal must be for no more than $175,000 over 2 years. You may only submit one CRII proposal. A common question is whether a PI may submit both a CRII and CAREER proposal; the answer is yes.

An important point with respect to eligibility is the two year rule. As mentioned previously, you must be no more than two years in your academic position as of the submission deadline. Unlike last year, you cannot submit your proposal early to have it considered based on submission date – eligibility is as of the deadline date.

The Data Management Plan is required to be submitted as a supplementary document in Fastlane. If you have included postdocs in your budget, you must also have a one-page postdoc mentoring plan, submitted as a supplementary document. Your proposal must include a letter from your department chair certifying that you meet the eligibility requirement, including the two-year rule. If you joined your institution prior to Sep 24 2012 (two years before the solicitation due date), the department chair letter must state the exact date when you joined, and if you are using the medical or family exemption, should explain that time window.

As previously noted, every proposal must be targeted at one or more of these CISE programs. The title of your proposal should begin with the string CRII:, followed by the acronyms (in parentheses on this slide) of the program or programs that are

appropriate. We suggest one or two programs, although there is no limit. This program name does not guarantee which program will look at your proposal, but will help us find the most appropriate program officer to manage your proposal.

Proposals will be reviewed using the standard NSF merit review process, which will include consideration of both intellectual merit and broader impact. Unlike CAREER proposals, there is not a specific educational component required.

Factors that will be considered in the review process include relevance to one or more of the CISE programs (as mentioned on the previous slide), the appropriateness of the research to a 2 year window, the potential to produce sufficient preliminary research to help you prepare for other research awards such as CAREER, and whether the activities are appropriate to help you

The budget is intended to mostly be spent on students, including both undergraduates and graduates. Some fraction may go to specialized equipment, such as unique hardware or software. Ordinary laptops and servers should not be included in the budget. Some travel funds are expected. No funds may go to the PI, whether for summer salary, course buyouts, or academic year support. As noted, the total must not exceed $175,000. REU supplements may be embedded in the proposal (see the GPG for instructions) in which case the budget can exceed $175,000 by the amount of the REU supplement. REU supplements can also be added after the fact, following standard NSF policies.

While we are anticipating 35-40 awards, I'll note that last year there were 82, so it's quite possible there may be more, depending on quality and funds available.

I'm going to go over just a few of the common questions we've been hearing a lot over the past few months, and then will open the phones.

Operator, while I'm going through these next FAQs, please start queueing questions.

Questions……..

Thanks for participating in this webinar. We hope the CRII program will enable new faculty members to initiate independent research through funding students and related support.

The slides and audio will be posted to the CISE web site in the next few days.

As a final reminder, proposals are due September 30.