UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS URGE EXPANDED PROTECTIONS FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS IN UNIVERSITY-BASED RESEARCH

The Association of American Universities, which represents 61 leading North American research universities, today released a report laying out specific recommendations for bolstering protections of human subjects in university-based research. The association is urging its members to adopt the recommendations. The recommendations call for the following:

- Increased oversight of human subjects research on campuses by senior university administrators.
- Mandatory training and testing of all campus personnel directly involved in human subjects research—faculty, researchers, managers, and administrative staff.
- Strengthened training, operations, and resources for campus Institutional Review Boards (IRBs).
- Increased resources both to carry out legal and regulatory requirements and to meet the highest ethical and professional standards of protections for human subjects.
- Voluntary accreditation and other steps to ensure greater public accountability.

The report was produced by a task force of AAU-university presidents and other research experts, who began meeting in March of this year. It has been endorsed by the association's executive committee, and is being transmitted this week to the presidents and other key officials of the association's member institutions.

As the task force was finalizing its report in late May, Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala announced several new federal initiatives to strengthen protections of human research subjects. Many of the recommendations in the AAU report are consistent with those initiatives, and some of the recommendations go beyond them.

The task force that produced the report has been co-chaired by University of Southern California president Steven B. Sample and University of Nebraska president Dennis Smith. A cover letter transmitting the report to AAU campuses is signed by Sample and Smith, the association's chairman and vice chairman, and the association's president. This letter states, in part:

The pursuit of many of these recommendations will undoubtedly involve significant efforts within our campus communities, but changes are necessary if we are to ensure that this important research is conducted consistent with the highest ethical standards and existing laws and regulations—and ensure that the public has complete confidence that human subjects are being properly treated on university campuses.

The report is available on the association's web site at www.tulane.edu/~aau. Printed copies can be ordered from Hannah Crutcher in the AAU office at (202) 408-7500.

The Association of American Universities (AAU) is a 100-year-old organization of 61 leading public and private research universities in the United States and Canada. The association’s 59 U.S. members perform 55 percent of the total R&D conducted at all the nation’s colleges and universities, and they account for 65 percent of the NIH’s academic research grants.

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