



ASSOCIATION OF  
AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

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PUBLIC AND  
LAND-GRANT  
UNIVERSITIES



February 11, 2011

Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D.  
Director, National Institutes of Health (NIH)  
Building 1, 1 Center Drive  
Bethesda, MD 20892-2152

Dear Dr. Collins:

On behalf of the Association of American Universities and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, we support your goal of accelerating translation of basic biomedical research results into lifesaving medical advancements. We have been following, with interest, the proposal to establish a new National Center for Advancing Translational Science (NCATS) and subsequent elimination of the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR). We applaud the effort to improve coordination of translational research across NIH Institutes and streamline barriers to the effective commercialization of NIH-funded basic discoveries.

As this reorganization moves forward, AAU and APLU urge NIH to ensure continued support of the critical infrastructure currently supported by NCRR. Shared research resources should be recognized as a crucial component of NIH's basic and translational research mission and an integral part of biomedical research, particularly as the life sciences move into an era of unprecedented large-scale projects and multidisciplinary research. Unfortunately, during times of constrained budgets, which appear likely in the near future, investment in research infrastructure is often sacrificed for shorter-term programs. As NIH makes its final decisions about the fate of the many valuable programs supported by NCRR, we hope that their placement is accompanied by an expectation of sustained support.

Moreover, we would recommend that, following final reorganization decisions, that NIH revisit these programs after an appropriate amount of time to evaluate the impact of their movement out of a dedicated research resource center. Perhaps this could be accomplished via a study and report of the Scientific Management Review Board, whose stated duties include, "analyz[ing] the consequences for the progress of research in the areas affected by the proposed changes."

We look forward to continuing to work with NIH in ensuring that the university-government partnership in biomedical research remains vital in continuing our work for the health of the nation.

Respectfully,

Robert M. Berdahl  
President  
Association of American Universities

Peter McPherson  
President  
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities