Subject: Biomedical Workforce Sustainability and Diversity Recommendations

As part of our SUNY RF initiatives to grow research through recruitment of outstanding scientists, pertaining to the life sciences, we should be mindful, follow, and leverage the following NIH program under development:

NIH Announces Plans to Implement Biomedical Workforce Sustainability and Diversity Recommendations

On December 6, during the meeting of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Advisory Committee to the Director (ACD), NIH officials presented preliminary implementation plans resulting from the recommendations of two recent ACD working group reports, the Biomedical Research Workforce Working Group Report and the Diversity in the Biomedical Research Workforce Working Group Report. Both sets of plans were drafted by Pre-Implementation Teams and modified based on feedback from institute and center (IC) directors.

As part of an ongoing review of the implementation activities and timelines, NIH will issue a series of Requests for Information (RFI) to solicit input from the community before finalizing these plans.

NIH Deputy Director for Extramural Research Sally Rockey, who co-chaired the Biomedical Research Workforce Working Group, presented the following proposed new NIH initiatives aimed at developing a sustainable biomedical research workforce:

A new grant program will encourage innovative training approaches that complement traditional research training in biomedical sciences at institutions receiving NIH funds. NIH is planning to grant 25 of these awards this fiscal year and an additional 25 in the next fiscal year.

All trainees supported by NIH training and research grants will be required to complete Individual Development Plans (IDP), but these will not need to be submitted to NIH.

By recommending that institutions establish an anticipated duration of graduate study and encouraging the duration of NIH grant support for doctoral study to be five years, NIH hopes to reduce the length of graduate training. Also, all NIH ICs have agreed to participate in NIH fellowship programs.

Initial stipends for postdoctoral researchers will be increased to $42,000. NIH will release an RFI to collect input from the community on benefits provided to postdocs.

Awards that encourage independence of young investigators will be increased. Over the next three years, NIH will aim to improve the success rate of K99/R00 award applicants to 30 percent, and the number of Early Independence Awards will be raised from 10 to 15 per year.
NIH and other federal agencies will develop a comprehensive federal tracking system, SciENcv, to pre-populate forms such as the biosketch, and will explore the possible creation of an automated system that would track trainees for 15 years after the completion of training. Institutions will be encouraged to publicly report aggregate career outcomes of grad students and postdocs.

Peer review of training grant applications will be modified so study sections consider a range of career outcomes and consider all graduate students in a relevant program. Study sections will be encouraged to be fair in their consideration of staff scientists on research grant applications.

NIH will begin assessing NIH support of faculty salary by launching a multi-faceted conversation with the extramural community about the potential impacts of a 20-year phase-out of the policy. NIH will consider various salary support options, the data collection needed for deliberation, and input from other federal agencies.

NIH will create a functional unit to continue and update current workforce analyses and create a credible model of workforce dynamics.

NIH Deputy Director Larry Tabak presented the following interrelated approaches for implementing recommendations from the Diversity in the Biomedical Research Workforce Report:

A standing working group of the ACD on Diversity will be created.

An NIH Building Infrastructure Leading to Diversity (BUILD) Program will offer support by facilitating mentorship, awarding scholarships and possible loan repayment to students, and providing salary offset and infrastructure funds to key faculty.

The National Research Mentoring Network (NRMN) will serve to assemble and engage multiple people and organizations into a single, nation-wide consortium to facilitate mentoring.

NIH will work to ensure fairness in the peer review system by forming a subcommittee of the ACD Working Group on Diversity to examine multiple hypotheses related to disparities in research awards. NIH also will implement implicit bias and diversity awareness training for reviewers, pilot anonymizing of grant applications, enhance review feedback to applicants, and continue the Early Career Reviewer Program Pilot.

NIH will create an NIH-wide Working Group on Diversity and recruit a Chief Diversity Officer.