



Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology

— *Quality Life Through Research* —

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Carol A. Merchant, M.D., PH.D.
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CTSA Education and Career Development Committee
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Dear Ms. Mulligan and Dr. Merchant:

On behalf of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), I am writing to share our perspective on the evaluation of clinical research training programs funded through the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) program. FASEB represents 22 biomedical research societies and over 80,000 basic and clinical scientists. Our organization has had a long-standing interest in biomedical research training, and our Clinical Research Subcommittee (a subcommittee of the FASEB Science Policy Committee) has given a great deal of consideration to the assessment of NIH-supported clinical research training programs, particularly the clinical career development (K) awards.

FASEB believes that an evaluation of CTSA training and career development activities is essential if we are to determine whether or not the CTSA program is meeting its goal to recruit, train, advance, and retain clinical and translational scientists. We were pleased to learn that CTSA applicants are to include an evaluation and tracking plan for research education, training, and career development activities and that the Consortium's Evaluation Steering Committee is planning a national evaluation of the career pathways of CTSA trainees and scholars. As you and your colleagues move forward with this evaluation, we respectfully ask that, in addition to collecting data on the demographic and professional characteristics of this population, you will consider the following suggestions.

- **Standardize the evaluation of CTSA training programs.** FASEB encourages the CTSA Consortium's Education and Training and Evaluation Steering committees to coordinate an effort among CTSA institutions to standardize the evaluation of clinical research training programs. We recommend that these committees work with institutions to develop a common set of data elements and to create a centralized database in

which to store the information gathered. This assessment should include not only the KL2-sponsored CTSA trainees but also other individuals supported by K and T awards at the institution. We encourage the Consortium to share its evaluation metrics with non-CTSA institutions and to invite those institutions to contribute data on their trainees and scholars to the shared database.

- **Collect data on an expanded repertoire of career outcomes.** CTSA institutions should develop a means to examine the career outcomes of their trainees and scholars. Outcome measures should not be limited to traditional measures of success, such as NIH grant funding or academic faculty appointments. Rather, they should take into account the wide range of career and professional opportunities available to clinical and translational researchers, including employment in academic, government, and private sectors; grant support from public and private organizations; contributions to research as a co-investigator; publication of peer-reviewed research reports; and receipt of patents on the development of drugs and medical devices. Outcomes that are not directly related to research, but that are essential for sustaining the clinical and translational research enterprise—such as teaching, mentoring, administration and leadership in clinical and translational research settings—should also be examined.
- **Examine institutional factors that contribute to success.** We encourage institutions to obtain feedback on trainees' perceptions of the institutional factors that may have had an impact on their career progress. This may include collecting information on access to research funding and facilities; availability of research collaborators and mentors; and time contributed to research, patient care, teaching, and administrative activities, among other issues. These data will improve our understanding of the factors that impact trainees' career choices, and help to identify best practices in clinical and translational research training.
- **Prioritize training program evaluation.** We encourage institutions to develop and implement a plan to evaluate their training programs as expeditiously as possible. The data gathered from this analysis will be extremely useful in optimizing the effectiveness of individual training programs as well as the training-related activities of the Consortium as whole.

Thank you very much for considering our input. Please do not hesitate to contact me if FASEB can be of assistance to you in any way.

Sincerely,



Richard B. Marchase, Ph.D.
FASEB President