



Member Societies

The American Physiological Society
American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics
American Society for Investigative Pathology
American Society for Nutritional Sciences
The American Association of Immunologists
American Association of Anatomists
The Protein Society
The American Society for Bone and Mineral Research
American Society for Clinical Investigation
The Endocrine Society
The American Society of Human Genetics
Society for Developmental Biology
American Peptide Society
Association of Biomolecular Resource Facilities
Society for the Study of Reproduction
Teratology Society
Society for Gynecologic Investigation
Environmental Mutagen Society
International Society for Computational Biology
Association of American Physicians
American College of Sports Medicine

President

Bruce Ryan Bistrian, M.D., Ph.D.
Chief, Clinical Nutrition
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center
Harvard Medical School
1 Deaconess Road
Boston, MA 02215
Tel: (617) 632-8545
Fax: (617) 632-0204
E-mail: bbistria@bidmc.harvard.edu

Office of Public Affairs
9650 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, Maryland 20814-3998
Telephone: 301-634-7650
FAX: 301-634-7651
WWW: <http://www.faseb.org/opa>

Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology

----Quality Life Through Research----

February 8, 2006

Re: NRSA Tuition, Fees, and Health Insurance Policies

To Whom It May Concern:

The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) appreciates having had the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes to the Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) program's tuition policy. Due to the importance of this issue, and in consideration of the views expressed by other institutions during the November 30, 2005 Town Hall meeting, we hope that you will consider these additional comments.

Representing 22 scientific societies and over 84,000 biomedical researchers, FASEB strongly believes that every effort must be made to maintain the current level of financial support for NRSA trainees. Yet we acknowledge with regret that today's funding climate has prompted the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to consider capping the tuition and health benefits allowances provided to institutions via the NRSA. Options for implementing this cap include placing a ceiling on or fixing the tuition allocations made to grantee institutions. Both of these options will shift a portion of the tuition costs from NIH to the grantee institutions, forcing some institutions to decrease the number of training positions.

Solutions to the current funding shortfall need not be limited to those proposed by NIH. Indeed, we are in agreement with the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) that institutions should have the option to decide whether to cover the tuition shortfall or to accept fewer training positions. Under AAMC's proposal, NIH would deliver an across the board cut to all competing training grants. Institutions would be able to retain all approved positions if they could cover the portion of tuition costs not provided by NIH. Alternatively, they could accept fewer training positions and receive tuition reimbursement at the current level. This proposal avoids a one-size-fits-all solution to the funding dilemma by allowing institutions the flexibility to choose the option that works best for them. Importantly, this proposal would not diminish the stipend and benefits on which trainees currently rely.

As stated previously, FASEB strongly opposes any change to the NRSA tuition funding policy that would diminish the benefits and compensation received by individuals funded

FASEB Statement
NRSA Tuition, Fees, and Health Insurance Policies
Page 2

through NRSA training awards. For this reason, we reaffirm our position that funding for health benefits should be allocated separately from funding for tuition. Separate allocations will ensure that any changes in tuition funding will not affect the benefits that trainees receive.

FASEB is a strong supporter of the NRSA program and believes that it is a critical mechanism for attracting talented young people to biomedical research. If funding cuts to the NRSA are absolutely necessary, we believe it is important to grant institutions sufficient flexibility to adapt to fiscal constraints in an institution-appropriate manner. Moreover, because the provision of competitive health benefits is essential for recruiting and retaining researchers, we urge you to avoid any actions that may diminish the benefits and compensation provided to NRSA-supported trainees.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce R. Bistrain". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bruce R. Bistrain, M.D., Ph.D.
FASEB President