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**Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology**

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## **FASEB STATEMENT ON THE CANCELLATION OF OSU PRIMATE ANTHRAX PROJECT**

*Bethesda, MD* – The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) finds the reports of the cancellation of an anthrax study involving nonhuman primates at Oklahoma State University (OSU) to be troubling. "We are concerned that this undercuts the role of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), and blocks the use of appropriate animal models in crucial biodefense research," said FASEB President, Mark O. Lively, Ph.D.

Research dedicated to developing countermeasures to anthrax is a clear priority in our nation's biodefense, and animal models, including nonhuman primates, are critical to studying the pathobiology of the disease and testing vaccines and treatments. Moreover, it is of the utmost importance that any research involving dangerous pathogens conforms to the highest standards of biosafety and biosecurity, which may involve euthanizing animals to minimize the risk of human infection. "Facilities like the one at OSU, where scientists can work with primates under very strict biocontainment conditions, are extremely important to developing new vaccines and therapies against anthrax and other biological threats," according to Lively.

Under law, IACUCs review and oversee research protocols involving animals. These bodies consist of scientists, veterinarians, and public members (non-scientists) whose responsibility it is to ensure that research animals are treated humanely, used appropriately, and that pain and distress are minimized. "The IACUC has the expertise and authority to determine whether a study is scientifically valid and ethically sound, including judging whether euthanasia is a justifiable and humane endpoint for the animals involved," Lively continued. "It is a disturbing precedent to see the president of a university overruling the decision of the IACUC. This is particularly true in this case when the study had also been through the National Institutes of Health peer review process, which includes levels of scientific and ethical review. A great deal of time, effort, and resources were dedicated to validating and approving this research project."

Lively also expressed concern about unconfirmed news reports that the study's cancellation may have been related to pressure from one or more of OSU's donors. "While fiduciary responsibility to the institution is an essential part of a university president's function, equally imperative is the appreciation of the research mission of the university and protection of intellectual pursuit and scientific principles. Animals play a critical role in research that helps save both human and animal lives, and their use is strictly regulated under a system of scientific and ethical oversight," he said. "Research institutions should be prepared and willing to defend both the principle and the system which contribute to the health of our nation."

*FASEB is composed of 22 societies with more than 90,000 members, making it the largest coalition of biomedical research associations in the United States. FASEB enhances the ability of biomedical and life scientists to improve—through their research—the health, well-being and productivity of all people. Our mission is to advance health and welfare by promoting progress and education in biological and biomedical sciences through service to our member societies and collaborative advocacy.*