



Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology

— *Quality Life Through Research* —

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 Nutrition
The American Association of
Immunologists
American Association of Anatomists
The Protein Society
Society for Developmental Biology
American Peptide Society
Association of Biomolecular Resource
Facilities
The American Society for Bone and
Mineral Research
American Society for Clinical
Investigation
Society for the Study of Reproduction
Teratology Society
The Endocrine Society
The American Society of Human
Genetics
Environmental Mutagen Society
International Society for
Computational Biology
American College of Sports Medicine
Biomedical Engineering Society
Genetics Society of America
American Federation for Medical
Research

March 2, 2010

Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D.
Director
National Institutes of Health
Building 1, One Center Drive
Bethesda, MD 20892-0160

Dear Dr. Collins:

On behalf of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), I am writing to express sincere appreciation for the recent increases in the Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) stipend level, as well as the President's request for an additional 6% increase in 2011. FASEB also supports the many policy and programmatic changes NIH has made to improve the training and research environments for postdoctoral fellows and early stage investigators.

The NRSA program has been an essential component of our nation's research investment and a vital source of support for trainees in the biomedical and behavioral sciences. It is regrettable, therefore, that stipends for postdoctoral researchers supported on NRSA training grants and fellowships have failed to keep pace with the cost of living since the program's inception in 1975. FASEB is concerned that even with the requested boost in stipends, compensation for postdoctoral scholars is not commensurate with their education, experience, and contribution to the biomedical research enterprise. FASEB recommends raising stipends for entry level (year 0) postdoctoral researchers supported through the NRSA program to \$43,000 as soon as feasible. This number reflects the approximate level at which the year 0 stipend would be set had it been adjusted annually for cost of living since the inception of the program. We also recommend providing postdocs with annual cost of living increases thereafter. FASEB has been an ardent supporter of NIH, and we will continue to advocate for increased funding for the agency so that it has the resources to meet this goal. We urge you to make increases in stipends a priority in future budget requests, as well.

Many institutions benchmark pay for all postdoctoral fellows in the biomedical sciences to the NRSA level. However, there is no mechanism to allow investigators to budget for increased pay for these researchers when NRSA stipends are raised unexpectedly. FASEB encourages NIH to develop a mechanism—separate from those intended to supplement research costs—by which investigators could request supplemental funding to increase compensation for postdoctoral fellows supported on research grants if NRSA stipends are raised beyond the cost of living. This would be a step toward ensuring that postdoctoral fellows supported on research grants receive fair compensation, encourage parity in postdoctoral salaries within institutions, and allow investigators to absorb additional training costs without drawing on funds budgeted for research equipment and supplies.

President

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Thank you for considering FASEB's comments on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Mark O. Lively

Mark O. Lively, Ph.D.
FASEB President