



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

February 23, 2009

Norman R. Augustine, Chair
Strategic Management Review Board
Office of the Director
National Institutes of Health, Building 1
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Mr. Augustine:

I am writing with regard to the agenda for the Strategic Management Review Board (SMRB) meeting scheduled for April 27-28, 2009. With respect to one of the anticipated agenda items, the potential merger of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), it is our understanding that the NIH Acting Deputy Director Dr. Lawrence Tabak will provide an overview of the issue and then the two institute directors will provide presentations about their respective institutes. During Dr. Tabak's presentations at the recent NIDA and NIAAA Advisory Council meetings, he explained that the SMRB will take a deliberative approach in examining the research portfolio and organizational structure of the NIH at the upcoming meeting.

The American Psychological Association (APA) would appreciate the opportunity to provide commentary at this first meeting, though we understand that the meeting is only intended to help the SMRB decide whether to take up the issues related to a potential merger. We believe APA has a unique perspective to bring to bear on this matter. NIDA and NIAAA have demonstrated a long commitment to psychological research and these two institutes stand out at NIH in that regard. In absolute dollars, NIDA funds more behavioral and social science research than any other NIH institute; and while smaller, NIAAA spends nearly half of its budget on behavioral and social science research. So the potential merger of these institutes is of immense interest to the psychological science community.

Not surprisingly, psychological scientists serve in leadership positions in the three major academic organizations dedicated to substance use research as: Past-President and President-elect of the College on Problems of Drug Dependence; President of the Research Society on Alcoholism; and Past President and President-elect of the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco. In addition, over 2,000 APA members demonstrate their commitment to substance use research through their membership in our

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Divisions of Psychopharmacology and Substance Abuse (Division 28) and Addictions (Division 50).

Further, psychologists are involved at every level of the research enterprise -- whether studying gene/environment interactions in the treatment of nicotine addiction; developing interventions to counter the consequences of perinatal alcohol use; developing behavioral treatments for dependence on drugs, like methamphetamine, for which no pharmacotherapy currently exists; or evaluating pharmacotherapies for the treatment of opiate and alcohol dependence. Beyond the conduct of research, tens of thousands of psychologists use the results of NIAAA and NIDA funded research to treat clients with substance use disorders in clinical settings across the United States.

Given the primacy of psychology both in the conduct of substance use research and in the practical use of the results, we believe the SMRB would benefit greatly from a briefing that would include the multiple perspectives of psychological science related to a potential merger of NIDA and NIAAA. Therefore, APA would welcome the opportunity for a representative of APA to address the Board at its April meeting.

While we appreciate the role of the SMRB in evaluating efficiencies for the NIH, among the issues we would like to comment on include: 1) our concerns that a discussion of the proposed merger is ill-timed in the absence of a DHHS Secretary, a Director of the NIH, and a Director of the NIAAA; 2) any merger of institutes should include a guarantee that the overall quality of, and funding levels for, substance use research would not suffer; and 3) within any discussion of a merger, the SMRB must also consider the overall allocation of NIH resources with respect to the public health consequences of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and response to this request. If you have any questions or would like any additional information, please contact Dr. Geoff Mumford, who directs our Science Government Relations Office, at gmumford@apa.org or at (202) 336-6067.

Sincerely,



Norman B. Anderson, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Dr. Raynard Kington
Dr. Lawrence Tabak
Rep. Henry Waxman
Sen. Ted Kennedy