

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

College of Veterinary Medicine

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February 16, 2011

Drs. Lawrence Tabak and Alan Guttmacher  
Co-Chairs, NCCR Task Force  
Office of the Director  
National Institutes of Health  
6705 Rockledge Drive, Suite 750  
Bethesda, MD 20892  
[smrb@mail.nih.gov](mailto:smrb@mail.nih.gov)

Dear Co-Chairs Tabak and Guttmacher, and Members of the NIH NCCR Task Force:

On behalf of the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine, we are pleased to provide comments and recommendations on the National Center for Research Resources (NCCR) Task Force Straw Model showing the proposed new National Institutes of Health (NIH) homes for current NCCR programs.

We recognize the importance of the NIH's initiative to create the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS), and welcome the potential benefits to our nation's health of an invigorated focus on translational medicine and therapeutics. The faculty of the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine are proud of their significant contributions toward improving human health through transdisciplinary involvement and collaboration in translational research and comparative medicine. The support offered by NCCR programs and resources to our institution and faculty have made possible their important contributions to our nation's health, and we greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide comment and recommendations to further advance the successes of critical NCCR programs. Specifically, the College was awarded an NCCR grant (#C06 RR16515-01), *UIUC College of Veterinary Medicine Completion Shell Space*, in the amount of \$1,476,324. This award assisted the college in developing new research space to accommodate NIH-funded research in the areas of infectious disease and reproductive, developmental and endocrine toxicology. The program model allowed us to easily identify the appropriate NIH institute to interact with and seek advice for funding of our project. Therefore, our recommendation is to maintain the Division of Comparative Medicine as a unit during your deliberations for potential reassignment.

In review of the Straw Model, we have the following comments:

1. To successfully fulfill its mission of accelerating the development and delivery of new, more effective therapeutics, the NCATS will rely on a diversity of appropriately trained laboratory scientists and clinical researchers capitalizing on the development of tools and technologies and making discoveries at molecular and cellular levels that can be tested and proven in animal based studies.

2. Although a logical and rational argument can be made for including NCCR's Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) program, which is designed to develop teams of investigators from various fields of research who can transform scientific discoveries made in the laboratory into treatments and strategies for patients in the clinic, into the new NCATS, the same cannot be said for excluding and dismembering other components of NCCR, such as animal resources, training programs, and high-end instrumentation and technologies which are so critical to NCATS mission.
3. Further, as indicated in the NCCR Task Force Straw Model, proposing to subdivide these other NCCR components disrupts the extant scientific synergies that have been demonstrated meritorious to date, and forfeits the strategic relationships that have been built between programs over the last 20 years. For example, splitting the animal resources into different administrative structures erects a bureaucratic obstacle that needlessly hinders the flow of basic scientific discoveries made in induced genetic mutations in mice to clinically applicable mechanisms-of-action studied and tested in non-human primates.
4. Although it is expected that following this restructuring, NCCR will no longer exist as a center, a rational consideration would be to maintain a large component of NCCR programs together after reassignment of the CTSA program within the new NCATS. Those charged with making these decisions should be mindful that NCCR's unique, cross-cutting programs are and have been successful through careful planning, thoughtful leadership, and effective management by its administrative and scientific staff, program officers, and officials who understand these programs and are most qualified to ensure continued success of their respective programs and initiatives.

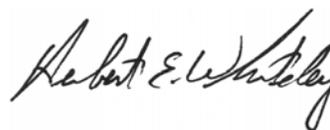
We therefore strongly recommend that the NCCR's Division of Comparative Medicine (both programs and staff) be retained as a functional entity after reassignment of the CTSA program. The optimal location of the unit within the NIH (e.g., NCATS, National Institute of General Medical Sciences, or Office of the Director), should be carefully deliberated with input from NCCR staff and stakeholders.

Please do not hesitate to contact us at 217/333-2760 or [lhoyer@illinois.edu](mailto:lhoyer@illinois.edu) or [hwhitele@illinois.edu](mailto:hwhitele@illinois.edu) if we may provide additional information regarding our recommendations on the Straw Model.

Sincerely,



Lois L. Hoyer, MS, PhD  
Associate Dean for Research  
and Advanced Studies



Herbert E. Whiteley, DVM, PhD  
Dean