Public Statement Regarding Organizational Change/Merging Institutes
NAEVR Executive Director James Jorkasky
Scientific Management Review Board (SMRB) Meeting
Substance, Use, Abuse, and Addiction (SUAA) Working Group
September 15, 2010

Thank you, Chairman Augustine.

I am James Jorkasky, Executive Director of the National Alliance for Eye and Vision Research, or NAEVR, which serves as the privately funded ""Friends of the National Eye Institute (NEI)." NAEVR is a research advocacy organization that does not speak for the NEI, but about its accomplishments.

Yesterday, in my public comments on translational research, I detailed NEI's rich repertoire of patient solutions in clinical and translational research, including that in both the retinal ("back of the eye") and corneal ("front of the eye") research.

Why am I back up here commenting today on the potential merger of the Institutes on Drug and Alcohol Abuse?

NAEVR maintains that the breadth of NEI's deliverables described yesterday could NOT have been accomplished had the NEI NOT been pulled out of the old National Institute for Neurological Disease and Blindness 40 years ago and made its own free-standing Institute. That especially relates to the "non brain" related research into front of the eye disease and vision impairment.

As you heard me testify at the May 18, 2010, SMRB meeting, NAEVR opposed the merger of the Drug and Alcohol Institutes and urged the SMRB to carefully consider the impact on the actual research being funded by those Institutes. Based on my attendance at all prior SMRB meetings and my review of the Substance Use, Abuse, and Addiction (SUAA) Working Group's excellent written report, NAEVR urges the SMRB to recommend to Dr. Collins Option 2, which is the SUAA's recommendation for a functional change to the operation of these two Institutes through the creation of a trans-Institute Addiction Blueprint.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide these public comments.