



# The University of Georgia

College of Veterinary Medicine

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Mr. Norman Augustine  
Chair, Scientific Management Review Board  
Office of the Director  
National Institutes of Health  
6705 Rockledge Drive, Suite 750  
Bethesda, MD 20892  
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Dear Chairman Augustine and Members of the NIH Scientific Management Review Board:

As the Dean and Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Affairs at the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine (UGA CVM), we write this letter on behalf of our College to provide comments and recommendations on the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR) Task Force Straw Model showing the proposed new National Institutes of Health (NIH) homes for current NCRR programs.

The UGA CVM recognizes the importance of the NIH's initiative to create the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS), and understands the potential benefits to the nation's health of an invigorated focus on translational medicine. Our faculty is proud of the College's contributions toward improving human health through interdisciplinary involvement and collaboration in translational research and comparative medicine. The support offered by NCRR programs and resources, which include our College's T35 veterinary student training program and the NCRR's R13 support for the National Veterinary Scholars Symposium, "Veterinarians in Biomedical Research: Building Capacity" have made important contributions to our nation's health through the training of new veterinary researchers. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comment and recommendations to further advance the successes of NCRR programs.

In review of the Straw Model, we convey 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 NCRR'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 NCRR, 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 NCRR Task Force Straw Model, proposing to subdivide these other NCRR 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, NCRR will no longer exist as a center, a rational consideration would be to maintain a large component of NCRR programs together after reassignment of the CTSA program within the new NCATS. Those charged with making these decisions should be mindful that NCRR'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 recommend that the NCRR'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 NCRR staff and stakeholders.

Please do not hesitate to contact us at (706) 542-5734 or [hwd@uga.edu](mailto:hwd@uga.edu) if we can provide additional information regarding recommendations on the Straw Model.

Sincerely,



Sheila W. Allen, DVM, MS  
Dean



Harry W. Dickerson, BVSc., PhD  
Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Affairs