



17 February 2011

Drs. Lawrence Tabak and Alan Guttmacher  
Co-Chairs, NCCR Task Force  
Office of the Director  
National Institutes of Health  
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Dear Co-Chairs Tabak and Guttmacher, and Members of the NIH NCCR Task Force:

The School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Wisconsin writes this letter 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.

The support offered by NCCR programs and resources to our institution and faculty have been instrumental in training the next generation of veterinary clinician researchers. Currently we have two training grants through the NCCR Division of Comparative Medicine. One of these (T32; PI: Bjorling) supports veterinary students who choose to take a year out of their professional curriculum to do research. The other training grant (T32; PI: Czuprynski) supports DVMs who wish to pursue advanced research training (PhD). Furthermore, we have recently submitted a proposal to NCCR (T35; PI: Behan) to support veterinary students who wish to spend a Summer doing research during their professional curriculum. Together these programs broaden the pipeline of potential clinician scientists. We have also received support from the NCCR to hold a Clinician Scientist Training Workshop to provide entry level training in applied research skills to veterinary clinicians (R13; PI: Trepanier). In addition to these grants to faculty in the School of Veterinary Medicine, we have several veterinary clinician researchers supported through the CTSA at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (PI: Drezner).

With respect to the Straw Model, we have the following comments:

1. It is not clear where these important research training opportunities for veterinary students and graduate veterinarians (T32, T35, R13) will reside in a restructured NCCR.

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2. Programs supported by the Division of Comparative Medicine have been tremendously successful due to the thoughtful leadership and effective management of the scientific staff and program officers in the Division. They understand our needs and know how to make these programs a success. It seems logical that this group of programs would be combined with the CTSA's in the new NCATS.

We therefore strongly 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 should be carefully deliberated with input from NCRR staff and stakeholders.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we may provide additional information regarding our recommendations on the Straw Model.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Behan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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