



*Integrating
the Life Sciences
from Molecule to
Organism*

PRESIDENT

Douglas C. Eaton
Emory University School of
Medicine

PAST PRESIDENT

D. Neil Granger
Louisiana State University
HSC

PRESIDENT-ELECT

Dale J. Benos
University of Alabama,
Birmingham

COUNCILLORS

Susan M. Barman
Michigan State University

Irving G. Joshua
University of Louisville

Carole M. Liedtke
Case Western Reserve
University

Thomas E. Lohmeier
University of Mississippi
Medical Center

Helen E. Raybould
University of California,
Davis

Jeff M. Sands
Emory University School of
Medicine

Gary C. Sieck
Mayo Clinic College of
Medicine

Irving H. Zucker
University of Nebraska
College of Medicine

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Martin Frank

PHONE

301-634-7164

FAX

301-634-7241

E-MAIL

info@the-aps.org

WEB

www.the-aps.org

The American Physiological Society

9650 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, Maryland 20814-3991 (USA)

December 2, 2005

Re: NRSA Tuition, Fees and Health Insurance Policies

To Whom it May Concern:

I write to you on behalf of the American Physiological Society (APS). The APS is a professional society with more than 11,000 members who are active participants in the research community. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments in response to NOT-OD-06-003, regarding the NIH Town Hall meeting on National Research Service Awards (NRSA) tuition, fees and health insurance policies. As a member of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), we also endorse their comments, submitted separately.

The future of biomedical research depends upon the success of the next generation of scientists, and the NRSA program provides critical educational support to trainees.

The APS appreciates the challenge of managing NIH programs in the face of dwindling funding levels. The NRSA program represents an important part of our nation's investment in biomedical research because it supports scientists in the first stages of their careers. It is unfortunate that the current economic situation has forced these difficult choices. The APS agrees that it is important to fund as many trainees as possible through the NRSA program. However, because the tuition category also funds trainee health insurance, we are concerned that limiting this category could result in a loss of benefits. Options such as placing a ceiling on the amount of tuition allowed, or giving a fixed tuition allowance might indirectly result in the elimination of health benefits for trainees. The APS strongly opposes any changes to the NRSA program that would result in a loss of these benefits, and instead favors alternatives such as separating funds for tuition and health insurance.

PhD scientists play a vital role in the scientific process, contributing valuable basic research discoveries that serve as a foundation for clinical and translational research. The lengthy time commitment required to earn a PhD and complete post-doctoral training, coupled with low compensation and benefits throughout training, already combine to make the PhD career track an unattractive option for talented young people. Any erosion of benefits may impair the recruitment and retention of new trainees, resulting in fewer well-trained researchers in the future.

Sincerely,

Douglas C. Eaton, Ph.D.

President

American Physiological Society