October 25, 2011

re: The new National Institutes of Health (NIH) Medical Research Scholars Program: An Opportunity for Medical, Dental, and Veterinary Students at the NIH

Dear Leadership and Faculty of U.S. Veterinary Medical Colleges,

The NIH has initiated a new research training program for medical dental, and veterinary students called the NIH Medical Research Scholars Program. This is a comprehensive year-long research enrichment program designed to provide a broad scope of skills and training experiences appropriate for future research leaders in academic, private-sector, and government institutions. It will also help address the urgent need for a pipeline of qualified physician-, dentist-, and veterinarian-scientists who can conduct the full range of biomedical research and whose numbers are diminishing. The NIH has a long history of dedication and commitment to training and preparing future clinician-scientists and researchers for leadership roles in biomedical research, and this program combines the elements of two distinct but overlapping and highly successful NIH-based programs— the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI)-NIH Research Scholars Program and the NIH Clinical Research Training (CRTP) Program. The HHMI-NIH Research Scholars Program has focused on research in the basic sciences for 27 years and has accepted veterinary students over the past four years. CRTP participants (medical and dental students) engage in clinical and translational research. The full spectrum of basic, clinical, and translational research will be elements of the Medical Research Scholars Program.

The NIH Medical Research Scholars Program will provide the opportunity for a talented and diverse pool of future physicians, dentists, and veterinarians to carry out research across the full spectrum of laboratory, translational, and clinical opportunities in the interests of the public health. The program will be rigorous and hands-on, offering exposure to and involvement with the full continuum of biomedical research— from basic to translational to clinical, including computational biology, medical informatics, and other emerging areas of contemporary science.

- Each Scholar will have a well-articulated career development plan and a dedicated advisor/mentor.
- The proposed curriculum, still under development, will offer several options: 1) clinical protocol development and the conduct of human subjects research; 2) seminal basic, translational and clinical research topics highlighting the continuum of discovery; 3) participation in clinical rounds focusing on the rich patient population in the NIH Clinical Center; and other content.
• There will be interactions with leaders at the NIH, including Institute Directors, Scientific and Clinical Directors, highly creative and productive principal investigators, and established investigators from academic medical centers and universities. A regular lecture series featuring these individuals will provide opportunities for the participants to learn more about the scientific discovery process as well as science policy, issues in bioethics, and emerging technologies.
• There will be additional meetings with research advisors, tutors, and NIH leadership.
• Scientific meetings and workshops at HHMI headquarters and Janelia Farm will be made available for some of the participants.
• Scholars will have the opportunity to present their own work and participate in journal clubs to discuss new developments in their research fields.
• All the educational and scientific resources, the intellectual excitement, and the spirit of inquiry at the NIH are available for the students to experience.
• Since this is a residential program, comfortable furnished apartments, either on the NIH campus or very proximal to the campus, will be available at fair market rates.

Program applications will be accepted October 1, 2011 through mid-January 2012. Our plan is to accept at least 40 participants during the first year of the NIH Medical Research Scholars Program. The goal is to ultimately have a participant capacity of approximately 70 medical, dental, and veterinary students who will work in the NIH Intramural Research.

This program is made possible through a partnership with the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health supported by a grant from Pfizer Inc and contributions from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. Other potential partners are being identified. The NIH and its partners will fund the basic needs of the students (including stipend, health insurance, conference travel to scientific meetings, and other educational enrichment costs). For a select group of students, an additional year of support will be available to allow a continuation of ongoing studies where this is judged to be in the best interests of the student. The NIH will also provide support in the laboratories and clinics to conduct research; specifically, the NIH institutes and centers are responsible for providing mentors and preceptors for each participant, as well as research resources to carry out their research.

We invite your collaboration in identifying individuals who show potential and promise as future researchers. For more information on the NIH Medical Research Scholars Program, please visit the NIH Clinical Center’s Office of Clinical Research Training and Medical Education website at (http://www.cc.nih.gov/training/mrsp/index.html).

Sincerely yours,

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