



Extramural Biomedical Research Facilities

- Increase the amount appropriated for the NIH extramural research facilities account.

Background

Recognizing the national importance of biomedical research, Congress and the Executive Branch have dramatically increased support for the National Institutes of Health by doubling its budget over a five-year period, beginning with FY 1999. With broad, bi-partisan support, the final chapter on this historic commitment will be written this year if Congress passes the President's recommended FY 2003 overall budget request for NIH.

With this unprecedented increase in funding for research, significant challenges lie ahead for the biomedical research community. Advancement in research relies on modern research facilities and laboratory equipment. Mounting data indicate, however, that the nation's biomedical research infrastructure is fast becoming outdated or insufficient. In a 1998 National Science Foundation report on the status of biomedical research facilities, over 60 percent of research-performing institutions indicated that they had an inadequate amount of medical research space. Additionally, NSF reported that academic institutions have deferred nearly \$11 billion in renovation and construction projects because of a lack of funds. In June 2001, an NIH Working Group on Construction of Research Facilities convened by then-acting NIH Director Ruth Kirschstein and chaired by John Hopkins University President William Brody issued a report proclaiming that this country's biomedical research infrastructure was woefully inadequate to meet emerging needs and calling on the NIH to substantially increase support for construction and renovation of extramural research facilities.

Congress began to address the need for facilities modernization in 2000 when it passed the Twenty-First Century Research Laboratories Act which authorized a multi-year, robust expansion for the Extramural Research Facilities Improvement Program at the NIH National Center for Research Resources (NCR). Through this program, the NCR makes awards to public and nonprofit private entities to expand, remodel, renovate, or alter existing research facilities or construct new research facilities on a competitive basis at up to 50 percent of the cost of construction. Grants are capped at \$2 million each (or \$3 million each for institutions of emerging excellence) and institutions can apply for up to two grants per year.

In spite of an authorization allowing \$250 million for extramural facilities funding, this account has traditionally been funded at a much lower amount. Funding has increased significantly from late 1990's levels, due largely to the efforts of the university community and key supporters in Congress. The appropriation for FY 2002 of \$110 million is still well below authorized levels.

UC campuses have repeatedly indicated a need and specific potential uses for the funding available through the NCR for facilities. UC campuses regularly compete successfully for funds from the NCR program.

Current Status

The NIH originally requested \$400 million for NCRF extramural research facilities grants for its FY 2003 budget. The President ultimately sent Congress a request for \$77 million, a decrease of \$33 million from the current FY 2002 level.

Based on the continued need our medical schools and general campuses express for this type of funding, UC is leading a multi-institutional coalition effort advocating that Congress provide \$300 million in flexible, extramural facilities funding for NCRF in the FY 2003 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill. This would enable NIH to fund both small and large facilities grants, consistent with the NIH Working Group report. This appropriation is consistent with the authorization and will put the NIH on a path to reach an annual funding level of \$1 billion for extramural construction grant programs, the amount called for by the NIH Working Group as necessary for “society to get full value from its considerable investment in biomedical research.”

On July 12, the biomedical research community sent a letter to the chair and ranking member of the Senate Appropriations Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee, urging them to fund the NCRF extramural facilities program at \$300 million. The University of California’s campuses all signed on to the letter (attached).

The Senate Appropriations Committee passed its Labor-HHS bill on Thursday 18 July and included funding of \$125 million for the NCRF facilities account. While this is still short of our \$300 million request, it is \$48 million more than the President’s request and an increase of \$15 million over current year funding. As the House appropriators write their bill, the university and research community continues to urge them to persist in growing this account and, if possible, to go higher than the Senate’s mark.

Advocacy Message

UC urges Congressional support of increased funding for extramural health research facilities.

Biomedical research institutions across the country have an inadequate amount of medical research space and have deferred several billion dollars in renovation and construction projects because of a lack of funds.

In order to maintain and improve the quality of our country’s cutting-edge biomedical research efforts, we must invest in the infrastructure necessary to sustain and continue our research advances.

UC has identified several potential uses for such funding on all its campuses. UC campuses regularly apply for and are often successful in winning competitively awarded NCRF facilities funds.