



FASEB

Federation of American Societies
for Experimental Biology

Representing Over 130,000 Researchers

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9650 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20814

November 13, 2018

Francis S. Collins, MD, PhD
Director
National Institutes of Health
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20892

Transmitted electronically via email: francis.collins@nih.gov

Dear Dr. Collins:

The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) appreciates the efforts of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to engage members of the extramural research community through the agency's multiple federal advisory committees and councils. These entities play critical roles in providing agency leadership with non-partisan and external perspectives on issues affecting NIH's programs, operations, and policies. We commend your willingness to actively engage these advisory resources – particularly the Advisory Committee to the Director (ACD) – as NIH tackles important issues pertaining to the research workforce and environment as well as the overall sustainability of the biomedical research enterprise. However, we are concerned that the composition of these critical committees is not representative of the diversity seen in the broader research community – an issue that you also raised during the June 2018 ACD meeting.

Since the June ACD meeting, plans for three new Working Groups have been announced. This brings the total of active groups to 11 Working Groups, one of which includes two active subcommittees. As of November 13, 2018, the [ACD roster](#) indicates a total of 12 members, four of whom are still ad hoc (non-voting). Even more disconcerting is that the roster includes only two women, with only one being able to vote on committee initiatives.

These issues are not limited to the ACD. Earlier this year, we examined the composition of several federal advisory committees from 2009 to 2018 (Table 1). Of the four NIH committees examined, white males comprised an average 46.1 percent of committee membership. Assuming that ideal committee composition includes equal representation of women with 30 percent representation of underrepresented minorities, representation of white males on a committee should not exceed 35 percent.

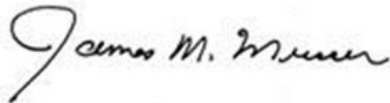
Per its [charter](#), the ACD may include up to 20 members, providing you with an opportunity to address the current lack of diversity with key appointments for the eight open seats. In fact, the membership of the Next Generation Research Initiative Working Group, appointed just last year, demonstrated your

commitment to integrating a broad range of perspectives into NIH discussions. This group integrates diversity beyond race/ethnicity and sex, but also career stage, geographical region, and institution type. We hope you will continue to build on this success as you develop an agency strategy when appointing additional members to the ACD and the new Working Groups on sexual harassment and artificial intelligence.

As a federation of 30 biological and biomedical societies representing over 130,000 individual scientists, FASEB understands the challenges of ensuring broad representation on our Board of Directors, standing committees, and task forces. We, too, have work to do in this area, and have dedicated resources via our Leadership Development Committee to ensure that FASEB leadership becomes more representative of the scientists we represent. To that end, we are committed to assisting NIH in the identification of potential members for the ACD and its working groups, and would be delighted to work with our member societies to recommend candidates for your consideration.

FASEB appreciates NIH's willingness to actively engage the scientific community in the development of policies and practices that affect the research environment. We look forward to working with you on strategies to help identify a pool of diverse and representative individuals to ensure that these processes are inclusive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James M. Musser". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James M. Musser, MD, PhD
FASEB President

Cc: Lawrence Tabak, DDS, PhD (NIH)
Hannah Valentine, MD, MRCP (NIH)
Jon Lorsch, PhD (NIH - NIGMS)
Noni Byrnes, PhD (NIH - CSR)
Norman E. Sharpless, MD (NIH - NCI)
Joanne S. Tornow, PhD (NSF - BIO)

Table 1:

	<u>NIH ACD</u>	<u>BIO (NSE)</u>	<u>CSR AC (NIH)</u>	<u>NIGMS AC (NIH)</u>	<u>NCI AC (NIH)</u>
	Percent of Committee Members that are White Males				
2009	42.9%	45.0%	33.3%	35.7%	47.1%
2010	42.1%	50.0%	33.3%	66.7%	50.0%
2011	50.0%	40.0%	37.5%	53.8%	50.0%
2012	44.4%	42.9%	45.5%	53.3%	52.9%
2013	41.2%	12.5%	38.5%	58.8%	50.0%
2014	50.0%	21.7%	46.7%	46.7%	41.2%
2015	43.8%	30.0%	40.0%	54.5%	56.3%
2016	46.2%	25.0%	40.0%	50.0%	60.0%
2017	50.0%	27.8%	44.4%	53.3%	43.8%
2018	37.5%	30.0%	22.2%	46.2%	44.4%