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June 9, 1981

Dr. Donald S. Fredrickson
Director
National Institutes of Health
Building 1, Room 124
Bethesda, Maryland 20014

Dear Doctor Fredrickson,

I am writing on behalf of the Steering Committee of the Association for Advanced Technology in Biomedical Sciences, which I am currently chairing, to bring to your attention the growing concern in the scientific community over the administrative management of instrumentation funding at the National Institutes of Health.

The Association, whose membership comprises the Directors of publicly supported shared instrumentation facilities was established to further the applications of advanced technologies to medical science and the delivery of health care. As you may recall, an ad hoc committee on instrumentation, which in the spring of 1979 met with you, the Directors of other agencies and the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, called attention to the growing gap between our domestic and foreign capabilities in advanced research instrumentation. The seriousness of this problem has been repeatedly brought out in published reports and in congressional testimony - the latest given by the Hoagland delegation before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on May 6, 1981.

The ad hoc committee at the time also pointed to the Biotechnology Resources Program of the NIH as an outstanding example of the type of program needed to overcome our deficiencies, and urged more adequate support of this program as well as the establishment of similar programs by other agencies. On the advice of many members of the scientific community, and in recognition of the inadequate administrative support given the BRP over the past decade, the OSTP recommended to Congress a partial restitution of the program's funding lost through neglect and inflation, in the form of a \$5,000,000 increase of the BRP budget for FY 1981.

It was with considerable disbelief that we received the news a few weeks ago that of the total \$8,623,000 rescission proposed for the Division of Research Resources, \$3,866,000 or nearly 45% was to come from the Biotechnology Resources Program, although the Program's budget comprises no more than 12.4% of the total budget for the DRR. Our Committee, and indeed all members of the Association as well as many other of our

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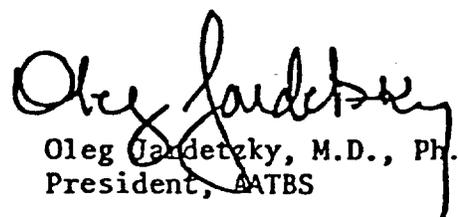
colleagues felt that the official justification given for the clearly inequitable distribution of the rescission - i.e. that these were "new" program funds and therefore should be the first to be rescinded - was extraordinarily ill-advised and reflected a deplorable misunderstanding of the purposes of the OSTP in recommending the \$5,000,000 increase. To those of us familiar with the history of this recommendation this was clearly a restitution and not an additional mandate. Our Committee has ascertained that the inequity in the rescission with regard to the BRP was not specifically mandated by the OMB and hence represented a very unfortunate interpretation of the OMB guidelines on the part of the NIH administrative staff.

These concerns of the scientific community have been brought to the attention of members of both Houses of Congress, whom we found to be very sensitive to the issues involved, and the request was made that the inequity be corrected by a Congressional mandate. As you are undoubtedly already aware, amendment 211 to the Appropriations Bill now enacted by both Houses and signed by the President into law carries the mandate for an equitable distribution of the \$8,623,000 rescission for the DRR between its programs. There is not much question in the minds of the framers of this amendment that equitable means proportional and that a rescission of more than \$1,180,000 of the \$22,774,000 which constituted only 12.4% of the total DRR budget (or 13.75% not counting Minority Biomedical Support) would have to be considered inequitable.

We trust that the NIH will find appropriate administrative mechanisms to implement for FY 1981 the spirit of the law on this matter and that it will in the future give the management of the BRP the attention and support that the program so richly deserves and so urgently needs. In this light it would seem appropriate that the newly mandated figure for the BRP FY 1981 budget, which should be closer to \$21,594,000 rather than to the \$18,908,000 calculated on the basis of the inequitable rescission, be used as a basis for determining the BRP budget for FY 1982. On this basis the BRP budget for FY 1982 should be closer to \$24,185,000, rather than the \$21,145,000 as currently proposed. It is our intent to give testimony in Congress concerning the desirability of a corresponding increase for FY 1982. We hope that your office will also support such a measure.

Should our Committee or any of its individual members be of any assistance to you in dealing with this very important issue, please do not hesitate to call on us.

Yours Sincerely,


Oleg Jardetzky, M.D., Ph.D.
President, AATBS

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Attachment