

## Collins Responds to ASCB Concerns

Last November, the ASCB and three other groups wrote to U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Francis Collins with some concerns about the implementation of the Cures Acceleration Network (CAN), a newly created program at the NIH. CAN was developed to overcome barriers to the successful translation of basic research to clinical applications.

The letter, signed by the ASCB, the American Association of Immunologists, the Coalition for the Life Sciences, and the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, raised concerns about the CAN Review Board and the process by which CAN-funded projects would be selected.

In his recently received reply, Collins assured the ASCB that, “we depend on peer review for everything that we do. Peer review is absolutely essential to the achievements of CAN’s goals,



Francis Collins

and applications for CAN projects will be subject to the same rigorous standards of merit review as other grant applications.”

The NIH Director also asked the ASCB to help him select strong candidates to serve on the CAN Review Board. Collins said, “Thus, the law provides flexibility to ensure that the Board has sufficient expertise in the basic sciences.”

Under a plan by the NIH to establish a National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) and abolish the National Center for Research Resources, CAN would be moved from the Office of the Director to NCATS. President Obama’s FY12 budget proposal includes \$100 million in funding for CAN.

To read the ASCB letter, go to <http://tinyurl.com/ASCB-CAN-letter>. You can read Collins’ reply at <http://tinyurl.com/Collins-reply-to-ASCB>. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson

## Everything You Ever Wanted to Know

Have you ever wondered how many publications resulted from U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded research in Alaska in 2003?

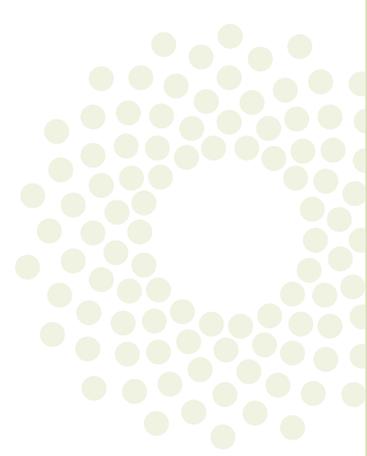
This, along with a wide range of other details about the impact of NIH- and National Science Foundation (NSF)-funded research, is now available on the R&D Dashboard, a website recently developed by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP).

The website, <http://rd-dashboard.nitrd.gov>, is still in beta form, and OSTP welcomes comments on how to improve the site. Despite still being under development, the site has

a treasure trove of information about the economic impact of NIH and NSF funding. It includes data on NIH- and NSF-funded grants to institutions and connects those grants with publications, patent applications, and patents that result from the grants. The information is searchable by state, congressional district, and institution and can even be sorted by topic areas.

This information will be helpful in explaining the economic benefit of scientific research. It will also help institutions and states determine how they stack up against others. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson



## Great Title, Tough Job

The job of Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives sounds like a great job. Most importantly, the position is second in the U.S. presidential line of succession, after the Vice President of the United States. The job comes with a great suite of offices in the U.S. Capitol and even a government airplane, car, and driver. The Speaker also sets the legislative agenda for the House. This year, however, that is proving to be the hard part of the job for the current occupant, Representative John Boehner (R-OH).

As of presstime, Congress had still not passed a FY11 federal budget. Boehner's House of Representatives is standing by a proposal that would cut \$100 billion from President Obama's FY11 budget proposal. That bill would cut the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) budget by \$1.6 billion, or 5.2%. It would also cut the National Science Foundation (NSF) budget by \$539 million, or 5.1%. After passing the Republican House, the bill was rejected by the Democrat-led U.S. Senate. A Senate alternative that contained more modest budget cuts would have frozen NIH and NSF funding at FY10 levels. It was not considered by the House.

With a strong Tea Party presence among members of the House Republican caucus, Boehner is being pulled between the Tea Party members who want to make huge cuts in federal

spending and the more seasoned members who would be happy with more modest cuts.

If the Speaker sides with those in his party who want to make large cuts in federal spending, including some cuts that are ideologically motivated, any bill that passes the House stands an almost certain chance of defeat in the Senate. However, if he sides with those who support more modest—and less ideologically driven—cuts he would need to rely on Democrats to pass a budget bill in the House. The latter would run Boehner the risk of losing long-term support from the conservative members of his party.

With negotiations going poorly, during the week of March 14 Congress approved another Continuing Resolution (CR); this one funded the federal government for three weeks until April 8. Like the CR that expired on March 18, the new CR cut the budget by \$2 billion per week. There are no cuts to the NIH or NSF budgets included in the CR.

In a sign of what Boehner's future might hold, 20% of House Republicans voted against the newest CR. And the Speaker needed the support of 85 Democrats to pass the CR and keep the government running. The Senate approved the three-week extension overwhelmingly. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson

## Show Me the Money

Are you a victim of plummeting paylines at the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH)? If so, the National Health Council (NHC) has a new website for you.

The website, [www.HealthResearchFunding.org](http://www.HealthResearchFunding.org), was created by the NHC in collaboration with the NIH. It is intended to bring researchers with high quality but unfunded research together with patient advocacy organizations and other funding sources interested in funding biological research.

The database allows researchers with

unfunded research proposals to post abstracts and contact information. In addition, funders are able to alert the research community about the areas of research they are interested in funding and to post requests for applications.

When the NHC first launched the database in February 2011, it included information from 42 U.S. patient advocacy organizations. Ultimately, the NHC hopes to include other funding sources, including corporations and private investors. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson