

Report on Research Compliance Volume 15, Number 5. May 31, 2018 Report Supports Capping Post-Doc Time, Other Options for 'Next Gen' Researchers

By Theresa Defino

A long-anticipated study on ways to help young investigators is recommending the creation of a Biomedical Research Enterprise Council (BREC) as the locus for ensuring institutions are engaged in problem-solving along with NIH. Report members also say that NIH should ensure that its basic research grants awarded to early-stage investigators are for at least five years. At the same time, they are suggesting NIH impose a three-year cap on salary support for postdoctoral researchers supported by those grants.

Required by Congress, “The Next Generation of Biomedical and Behavioral Sciences Researchers: Breaking Through” also contains a host of recommendations for institutions and investigators, including that they be required to “provide evidence to NIH of formal training of faculty mentors of postdoctoral trainees” and “provide a diversity and inclusion plan for their grant proposals and provide updates in progress reports.”

Issued April 12, the report from the National Academies of Sciences (NAS), Engineering, and Medicine was required by Congress as part of the 21st Century Cures Act. Ron Daniels, president of Johns Hopkins University, chaired the committee that authored the report. While acknowledging the report is “dense,” Daniels expressed hope that quick action could be taken to establish BREC. He also noted that Hopkins and others are already at work meeting the report’s recommendation that research institutions compile and report data on the “outcomes, demographics, and career aspirations of biomedical and behavioral science pre- and postdoctoral researchers.”

As NAS explained in a news release, the report “identifies steps Congress, federal agencies, and research institutions should take to strengthen the nation’s biomedical research system and ensure the successful launch of careers among the next generation of researchers. The report also examines some of the barriers that have impeded reform efforts so far and proposes remedies.”

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