

# Report on Research Compliance Volume 16, Number 2. February 28, 2019

## Panel Urges NIH, Institutions to Review Award Demands Placed on Investigators

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By design, the NIH working group helping the agency find ways to support younger investigators reserved most of its recent recommendations for federal research officials. But the crucial role institutions play in either hampering or fostering the research workforce didn't escape their attention.

Central among their discussions was a sense that institutions should not rely on investigators having to win grants to support their salaries, and that it's time for NIH, at a minimum, to undertake a "detailed analysis of salary support derived from NIH grants."

The Next Generation Researchers Initiative (NGRI) Working Group presented the Advisory Committee to the Director a series of five themes with specific recommendations related to each of them when the ACD met in December. The ACD accepted the recommendations, the product of 18 months of work, and passed them on to NIH Director Francis Collins for consideration.

At the same meeting, the ACD adopted recommendations from a different working group aimed at combating foreign influences in research (*RRC 1/19, p. 1*). The panel also signed off on NIH's plan to combat sexual harassment within the agency and among awardee institutions (*RRC 1/19, p. 4*).

The working group was impaneled to help NIH develop solutions to provide better support to early and mid-career investigators who are getting especially squeezed by the agency's low rate of successful funding applications. According to data for fiscal year 2018 NIH posted in January, the overall rate is 22.7%. More pointedly, the working group was a response to NIH's disastrous rollout of a concept called the grant support index (*RRC 6/17, p. 1*).

Working group co-chair Jose Florez, chief of the diabetes unit at Massachusetts General Hospital, an investigator at its Center for Genomic Medicine and professor at Harvard Medical School, said the working group engaged in a "lot of passionate discussion [amid] great concern on the part of all the members [regarding] the extent to which at specific institutions, in particular, people are dependent on soft money for salary support."

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