



Association of Biomolecular Resource Facilities

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ABRF Response to the National Academy of Sciences letter on the “Next Generation of Researchers Initiative”

As the landscape of biomedical research is rapidly changing, so is the composition of the research workforce. It is becoming increasingly clear that the performance of research demands complex, expensive instrumentation that requires the expertise of dedicated, skilled scientific personnel. Scientists working in shared and core facilities, hereinafter referred to as core scientists, are the driving force behind core technologies and responsible for implementations, improvements, innovations, and breakthroughs in these technologies. Research institutions—universities, academic medical centers, and independent research institutes—are increasingly realizing the important role that core scientists play in their: 1) ability to conduct cutting-edge research; 2) competitiveness for recruiting and retaining strong faculty members; and 3) competitiveness for external research funding. Moreover, cores are a central repository for best practices, quality control and data standards with regard to a given technology. Biological hypotheses continually drive the development and adoption of new technologies. As such, the cores are dynamic and continue to push innovation. Consequently, core scientists are key contributors and accelerators of scientific discoveries in both clinical and basic sciences. They exemplify team-based scientific endeavors.

The Association for Biomolecular Resource Facilities (ABRF) is an international society dedicated to promoting the education and career advancement of core scientists and core administrators. The association does this through a complement of activities, including but not limited to:

- A Mentoring Program in partnership with the National Research Mentoring Network
- Leadership and networking opportunities on Executive Board, Chapters and Committees
- A unique and essential forum for multi-center ABRF Research Group studies designed to improve technologies and methodology, partnered with the association-sponsored journal which promotes the central role of biotechnology in contemporary research
- Annual conference with scientific sessions devoted to core technologies and administration
- Educational workshops and webinars
- Travel awards
- Job postings

The ABRF requests that the National Academy of Sciences recognize and encourage the professionalization of core scientists at research universities and institutes. In particular, we recommend support of the following initiatives for PhD and MSc scientists:

- 1) Creation of core-specific job families with clear career paths for the advancement and retention of core scientists, including revised academic promotion criteria to encompass team-based endeavors
- 2) Creation of faculty positions in team science that would include scientists leading core facilities
- 3) Offer training and development grants for core scientists to promote excellence in this career path
- 4) Enhance funding programs specifically targeting implementations, improvements, innovations, and breakthroughs in core technologies
- 5) Track core scientist effort on grants to capture team science contributions.

The ABRF not only puts these topics forth for the National Academy of Science's consideration, but is also fully committed to action with the Academy and other organizations so they can be realized.

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