

16 Top Scientists and Educators Announce Collaboration to Rescue U.S. Biomedical Research ^[1]

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Rescuing Biomedical Research seeks to preserve the biomedical science enterprise (Photo Credit: Rescuing Biomedical Research)

NEW YORK, NEW YORK, August 17, 2015 – A diverse team of 16 prominent scientists and educators today announced the launch of a high-profile collaboration that seeks to leverage knowledge from the scientific community to confront the dangers to the U.S. biomedical science enterprise. Named Rescuing Biomedical Research, the effort tackles the problems identified in several public statements that the team and the scientific community have made, and aims to take the next steps towards making substantive, concerted changes in the way U.S. biomedical research is conducted and in the way careers are developed.

The newly announced project emerged from an informal collaboration of four members of the group who had become increasingly alarmed by the dire circumstances faced by US biomedical researchers. After publishing a much-discussed article last year in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)*, titled “Rescuing US biomedical research from its systemic flaws [3],” the four authors then recruited a team of 16 prominent individuals to help build a growing national movement that aims to improve the ailing US biomedical research ecosystem.

“At the heart of the problem is a longstanding assumption that resources to support the biomedical enterprise would continuously grow at rates well above that of inflation—an assumption that no longer holds, and because it creates a Malthusian dilemma, cannot sustain a healthy system capable of producing great science,” said Shirley Tilghman, one of the co-authors and President of the American Society for Cell Biologists (ASCB), in a recent President’s Column in the ASCB Newsletter [4].

“Science has contributed so much to society in the last century, from the discovery of antibiotics to the sequencing of the human genome.” commented Daniel Colón-Ramos, Associate Professor of Cell Biology and Neuroscience at the Yale School of Medicine. “What science will contribute in the next century depends on the health of the scientific enterprise. The enterprise suffers now from systemic problems, but where scientists see problems, we see solutions. It’s part of our training. This group seeks to find the solutions needed to enable the biomedical research system to continue making critically important contributions to the health and well being of this country and the world.”

As an initial step to help coordinate individual responses and the outcomes of meetings being held on a variety of university campuses, the group has launched a new website, online at <http://www.rescuingbiomedicalresearch.org> [2]. The site is designed to collect and guide the development of effective solutions to the major problems by providing a high-profile space for the community and stakeholders to discuss and prioritize the many actions that have been proposed.

The group includes the four authors of the article in the *PNAS* — Nobel laureate Harold Varmus, National Medal of Science winner Bruce Alberts, the first woman president of Princeton University Shirley Tilghman, and the chair of Systems Biology at Harvard Medical School Marc Kirschner — as well as President of Johns Hopkins University Ron Daniels, former NIGMS Director Jeremy Berg and former U.S. Representative Rush Holt, who is now the head of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

“The challenge now” says Howard Hughes Medical Investigator and team member Judith Kimble “is identifying practical ways to implement solutions without doing more harm than good. This web site will serve as a community hub to collect and prioritize ideas. And it will have a direct line of communication to those in a position to facilitate real change.”

Visitors to the site are invited to submit their proposed solutions for any of 20 different major problem areas. For example, in the section for [Graduate Education](#) [5], visitors are asked to respond to: “How can we improve graduate education so as to produce a more effective scientific workforce, while also reducing the ever-expanding Ph.D. workforce in search of biomedical research careers?” Responses are collected on the website in an [Actions Proposed](#) [6] section.

The 16-member Rescuing Biomedical Research Steering Committee is tasked with continually reviewing the incoming ideas, along with other outcomes of the ongoing national conversation. They present a small subset of the most promising solutions, either proposed or enacted, in [Progress on Solutions](#) [7].

“We created Rescuing Biomedical Research to both encourage and build on the results of many other efforts, including those of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), scientific societies and organizations of postdoctoral fellows” said Alberts, former Editor-in-Chief of *Science* magazine and former President of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. “We hope to both amplify and channel the many conversations now happening about these issues into specific, effective solutions.”

Members of the Rescuing Biomedical Research Steering Committee:

- Bruce Alberts: Former President, U.S. National Academy of Sciences
- Nancy C. Andrews: Dean of the School of Medicine and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Duke University
- Mary Beckerle: CEO and Director, Huntsman Cancer Institute, University of Utah
- Jeremy Berg: Former Director, National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS)
- Daniel Colón-Ramos: Associate Professor of Cell Biology and Neuroscience, Yale School of Medicine
- Ron Daniels: President, Johns Hopkins University
- Rush Holt: CEO of AAAS and Executive Publisher of Science family of journals
- Freeman Hrabowski: President, University of Maryland Baltimore County
- Tony Hyman: Director, Max Planck Institute for Cell Biology and Genetics Dresden Germany
- Judith Kimble: HHMI and Vilas Professor of Biochemistry, University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Marc Kirschner: Chair of Systems Biology, Harvard Medical School
- Jessica Polka: Jane Coffin Childs Fellow at the Department of Systems Biology, Harvard Medical School
- Joan Reede: Dean for Diversity and Community Partnerships and Associate Professor, Harvard Medical School
- Shirley M. Tilghman: Former President of Princeton University
- Ron Vale: Professor of Cellular and Molecular Pharmacology at the University of California, San Francisco
- Harold Varmus: Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/rescuingbiomedicalresearch> [8]

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/resbiom> [9]

Public Statements by Members of the Team

- April 2014 *PNAS* Perspective by B. Alberts, M. Kirschner, S. Tilghman and H. Varmus, Rescuing US biomedical research from its systemic flaws [3]
- February 2015 *PNAS* Opinion by B. Alberts, M. Kirschner, S. Tilghman and H. Varmus, Opinion: Addressing systemic problems in the biomedical research enterprise [10]
- January 2015 *PNAS* Perspective by Ronald Daniels, A generation at risk: Young investigators and the future of the biomedical workforce [11]

Public Statements from Members of the Scientific Community

- July 2015 ASBMB's Christopher L. Pickett et al in *PNAS*, Toward a sustainable biomedical research enterprise: Finding consensus and implementing recommendations [12]
- May 2015 *Molecular Biology of the Cell* perspective by NIGMS Director Jon Lorsch, Maximizing the return on taxpayers' investments in fundamental biomedical research [13]
- 2014 Study by the National Research Council, The Postdoctoral Experience Revisited [14]
- June 2012 Report by the NIH Biomedical Research Workforce Working Group, NIH Biomedical Research Workforce Working Group Report [15]

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