SURVEY SHOWS FALTERING FEDERAL INVESTMENT IN SCIENCE THREATENS AMERICAN RESEARCH

ROCKVILLE, MD. - Today, the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology released its 2013 report on government-funded scientific research titled “Unlimited Potential, Vanishing Opportunity.” The report, detailing the findings of a survey of more than 3,700 frontline scientists from all fifty states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia, depicts clearly the broad impact of cuts to federal investments in science funding. The survey, conducted in June and July 2013 by sixteen scientific societies representing a variety of scientific disciplines, asked questions regarding cuts to nondefense discretionary spending by Congress since 2010. These cuts reached a historic low in March with sequestration.

“For the first time, we are able to definitively tell the story of the federally funded scientist,” said Benjamin Corb, public affairs director for ASBMB. “The data shows that deep cuts to federal investments in research are tearing at the fabric of the nation’s scientific enterprise and have a minimal impact on overcoming our national debt and deficit problems. I hope leaders from both parties in Washington review these findings and join with scientists to say ‘enough is enough.’”

Some critical statistics from the report include:

- Private investment in academic research has been feeble. Only 2 percent of survey respondents have been able to find private funds to make up for those lost from federal grants.
- More than two thirds of survey respondents do not have the funds to expand their research operations, postponing important scientific advances in all fields.
- Research jobs have been lost. Nearly half of survey respondents have laid off researchers and 55 percent have a colleague who has lost his/her job.
- An overwhelming majority of scientists in all fields believes the U.S. has lost its position as the global leader in scientific research.

However, in the face of such adversity, nearly 95 percent of respondents indicated they want to continue their careers as scientists so they can attempt to make the breakthroughs and discoveries that will shape our society for decades to come. “The men and women in laboratories across the country live with the specter of budget uncertainty daily and yet continue to exemplify the passion and curiosity that has characterized American science for the past 70 years,” Corb concluded. “Congress must act before the damage caused by sequestration is irreversible. This damage won’t be measured just in the number of scientists laid off from labs today, but in the wait for breakthroughs in alternative energy, technology development and cures for disease. Our report paints a clear picture of the importance of scientific research to American society, and why Congress should act now to overturn sequestration and return to a policy of a strong, sustained investment in science.”

Copies of the report are available electronically on ASBMB’s website or can be provided by contacting Benjamin Corb via email at bcorb@asbmb.org or via telephone at 240.283.6625.