

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCTOBER 5, 2021

THE ASBMB RESPONDS TO NIH DIRECTOR'S RETIREMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

Rockville, Md. — Benjamin Corb, director of public affairs for the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB), a scientific society representing nearly 12,000 mostly academic researchers, released the following statement today in response to the announcement that National Institutes of Health Director Francis S. Collins will retire later this year:

“Francis Collins has served admirably through some of the most challenging times in the NIH’s history. Through sequestration and budget cuts, numerous government shutdowns, the politicization of science, and an ongoing global pandemic that has cost the lives of more than 700,000 Americans and tested the abilities of the biomedical research community, Collins has been a steadfast leader showing grace, tenacity and — on a lighter note — a skill with a guitar unmatched by any other agency leader.”

An accomplished and brilliant scientist in his own right, Collins led the effort to map the human genome in the 1990s – a scientific breakthrough that has revolutionized biomedical research. His tenure as NIH director saw a continuation of grand-scale efforts to reimagine how research can benefit humanity. Under Collins, the NIH formed the National Center for Advancing Translational Science and launched the Precision Medicine Initiative, Cancer Moonshot Program and the All of Us research program, aimed at developing better health for all Americans.

Collins leaves the NIH in a position of strength and as the global leader for biomedical research and innovation. The nation is better thanks to his stewardship.

That is not to say, however, that systemic problems do not remain. The agency must still deal with disparities in representation and funding of underrepresented scientists, and it has been slower than other federal funding agencies in responding to sexual harassment in science. Collins put the NIH on a better track, but more work remains.

We look forward to new goals and perspectives that will come with a changing of leadership in Bethesda. We hope that President Joe Biden considers the changing face of the scientific workforce as he vets candidates for the director position.

We know science is diverse, international and collaborative. We hope the next leader of the NIH represents this reality.”