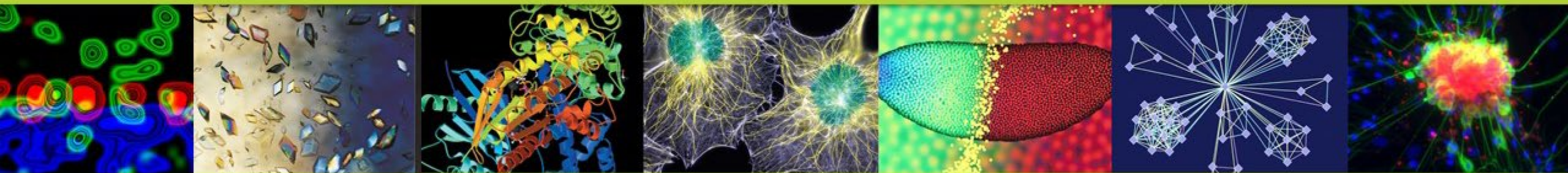**Jon R. Lorsch, Ph.D.**
Director
NIGMS

Evaluation of the NIH Native American Research Centers for Health (NARCH) Program

NIGMS intends to continue funding for the NARCH program at or above current levels

The purpose of the evaluation is to improve the efficacy of the program in meeting the health research needs of AI/AN communities

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Evaluation Timeline

- **CY 2020:** NIGMS performed a comprehensive analysis of the NARCH program.

- **February 17, 2021**: Dear Tribal Leader Letter sent to all federally-recognized tribes.

- **March 16, 2021**: Orientation meeting for the NARCH evaluation working group.

- **April 23, 2021**: Full-day meeting of the working group to discuss NARCH program analysis/data and to develop draft suggestions.

- **May 18, 2021**: Presentation of meeting results to the NIH Tribal Advisory Committee.

- **June 14, 2021**: Tribal consultation regarding draft suggestions.

- **August 16, 2021**: Written feedback received from Tribal Leaders.

- **September 9, 2021**: Presentation to NIGMS Council by panel committee chairs.

- **September 15, 2021**: Written response to Tribal Leaders posted.

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Summary of What We Heard from the NIH Tribal Advisory Committee

1. Shift the focus away from academic institutions doing the research to the Tribes doing the research

2. Increase opportunities for/emphasis on capacity building, including helping AI/AN students develop into researchers

3. Provide more support for Tribes and Tribal Organizations in applying for and managing grants

4. Reduce the complexity of NARCH grant applications and awards

5. Better align peer review with the goals of the NARCH program

   a) Ensure that reviewers follow guidelines in "American Indian and Alaska Native Research in the Health Sciences: Critical Considerations for the Review of Research Applications"

6. Put reviewers on NARCH study sections from AI/AN communities

7. Ensure we are looking beyond traditional academic indicators (papers, citations, etc.) in evaluating success and progress

8. Shift away from a reliance on traditional western academic values and norms

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Summary of What We Heard from Formal Tribal Consultation*

1. Ensure that both research projects and research infrastructure/capacity building are primarily conducted by Tribal Nations and communities rather than by academic partner institutions.

2. Remove barriers to application by reducing complexity of submission requirements, particularly for Tribal Nations or Organizations that do not already hold NIH grants.

3. Ensure that reviewers understand the importance of culture and language as research elements for examining health disparities, resilience, and dealing with trauma in Indian Country.

   a. Ensure that NIH utilizes the [American Indian and Alaska Native Research in the Health Sciences: Critical Considerations for the Review of Research Applications](#) as part of the application review process.

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Summary of What We Heard from Formal Tribal Consultation*

4. Support AI/AN trainees earlier in the training pathway (starting in high school) and provide greater support to AI/AN institutions of higher learning (i.e., TCUs).

5. Provide stable Administrative Core funding and increase overall program funding to support new grantees alongside existing ones.

6. Make funding announcements continuous rather than on the current skipped year cycle.

7. Create opportunities for new applicants to learn from existing grantees through mentorship or collaboration on proposals.

8. Conduct regular Tribal Consultations, including consultations related to programmatic changes and future program evaluations.

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Possible New Programs (in Addition to NARCH)

Tribal Technical Assistance and Resource Center(s)

- ○ Provide support for Tribes in applying for and administering NIH grants

- ○ Training and consulting to help Tribes establish their own Sponsored Programs Offices

- ○ Training and consulting to help Tribes develop capacity for financial administration of NIH (or HHS?) grants

- ○ Similar to concept for SuRE Resource Center (PAR-21-227)

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Possible New Programs (in Addition to NARCH)

Grants to Tribes to help them build or enhance their own Sponsored Programs Offices

- Develop tribal capacity to apply for and administer grants

- Could support, e.g., staff training, systems purchases/upgrades, consulting services

- Similar to NIH Sponsored Programs Administration Development (SPAD) program: RFA-RM-19-004

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Possible New Programs (in Addition to NARCH)

Grants to Support the Establishment or Enhancement of Tribal Institutional Review Boards (IRBs)

○ Could support staff time, consultation, training, systems procurement or development, etc.

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Possible New Programs (in Addition to NARCH)

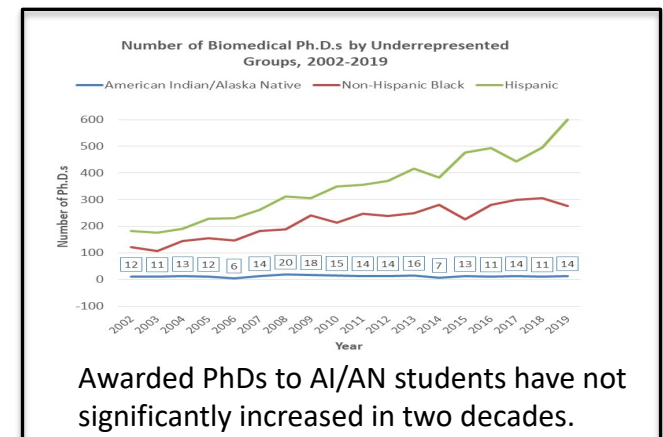**Planning Grants for Tribes without NARCH Awards**

○ Provide time and resources to allow Tribes to develop their own applications

- Time and support for Tribes to define research questions and plan how to answer them

- Capacity-building and training needs could be assessed

- Time to build administrative capacity for application support and grants management

- Time to identify any needed consultants, contractors or collaborators

○ Could support meetings, travel, staff time, consultation needed for writing NARCH applications

○ Goal would be to increase number of competitive NARCH applications to support Tribally-driven and conducted research

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Training Grants for Tribes/Tribal Organizations

- Provide support for students selected by Tribes/Tribal Organizations to obtain degrees in biomedically-related fields

  - Undergraduate training grants (T34) – tuition remission and stipends for studies towards a BA/BS degree (including at 2-year colleges); research experiences; mentoring

  - Graduate training grants (T32) – tuition remission and stipends for studies towards a PhD; research experiences; mentoring; career development

- Goal would be to develop future AI/AN researchers

- Each grant would need to support students from multiple Tribes

  - How best to equitably select students to support?

Number of Biomedical Ph.D.s by Underrepresented Groups, 2002-2019

Awarded PhDs to AI/AN students have not significantly increased in two decades.

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Questions or Comments?

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