



THE RIGHT TO RESEARCH COALITION  
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[www.righttoresearch.org](http://www.righttoresearch.org) | Access to research is a student **right**

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Dr. Francis Collins  
Director, National Institutes of Health  
1 Center Drive, MSC 0148 (Room 126)  
Bethesda, MD 20892-0148  
Via email: [francis.collins@nih.gov](mailto:francis.collins@nih.gov)

April 14, 2011

Dear Dr. Collins,

On behalf of the nearly seven million students represented by the Right to Research Coalition, an alliance of 34 undergraduate and graduate student organizations from all academic disciplines that promote open, free access to academic research, I'm writing to extend our congratulations on the success of the NIH public access policy over the past three years and our sincere appreciation for your continued leadership on this issue of such importance to students in the United States and around the world.

Academic research is crucial to the education of students in the health sciences and related fields. Journal articles are the raw materials of our education. They are the building blocks we use to form our understanding of a given field from its core to the cutting edge. When access to these resources is restricted, students' educations suffer, reflecting only that information which is available rather than what is necessary for a complete, up-to-date education.

Unfortunately, students' access to the results of research is more threatened now than ever. With journal prices continuing to rise and many libraries facing continuing budget cuts, students are forced to base their education on an ever-narrowing fraction of the scholarly record, even at universities among the most well funded in the world. Furthermore, students' professors only have access to the same subset of material and cannot teach what they cannot read, meaning inaccessible articles never find their way into the classes in which they should be taught.

The NIH public access policy has been a resounding success in closing the access gap that students face – ensuring that both students and those who teach them have access to the vital research that the NIH funds. The more than two million full-text articles now available through PubMed Central – thanks in large part to the NIH public access policy – are an incredible resource helping enable students in the health sciences and related fields to get a complete education.



To build on the success of the NIH policy's first three years, we ask that you consider shortening its embargo period from one year to no longer than six months. Such a reduction would bring the NIH in line with other leading biomedical funders, such as the Wellcome Trust and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, and significantly enhance students' ability to get an up-to-date education. With the fast and accelerating pace of biomedical research, students stand to benefit greatly from earlier access to NIH-funded research, which would help equip them with the knowledge they need to hit the ground running after graduation rather than relying on potentially outdated information.

Again, we sincerely appreciate your leadership on this issue of vital importance to students in the United States and around the world and hope you will consider enhancing this already successful policy by shortening its embargo period to no longer than six months. If we can provide you with any additional details, please don't hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,

Nick Shockey  
Director, Right to Research Coalition



### **About the Right to Research Coalition:**

Founded by students in the summer of 2009, the Right to Research Coalition is an international alliance of 34 undergraduate and graduate student organizations, representing nearly 7 million students, that promotes a more open scholarly publishing system. The Right to Research Coalition believes that no student should be denied access to the scholarly articles they need, because they or their institution cannot afford access. The coalition works to educate the next generation of scholars and researchers about Open Access and to advocate for policies at the campus, national, and international levels that expand access to the results of research. The members of the Right to Research Coalition include:

- The American Medical Student Association
- The American University Washington College of Law Student Bar Association
- California Institute of Technology Graduate Student Council
- The Canadian Federation of Students
- Columbia University Graduate Student Advisory Council
- Cornell University Graduate and Professional Student Assembly
- Dartmouth College Graduate Student Council
- The European Pharmaceutical Students' Association
- The Indian Medical Student Association
- The International Association for Political Science Students
- The International Federation of Medical Students' Associations
- Library and Information Science Student Association, Simmons College
- The Macedonian Medical Student's Association
- The Malta Medical Students' Association
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology Graduate Student Council
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology Undergraduate Association
- National Association of Graduate-Professional Students
- National Graduate Caucus of the Canadian Federation of Students
- Oberlin College Student Senate
- Oklahoma State University Graduate and Professional Student Government Association
- St. Olaf College Student Government Association
- Student Advocates for Graduate Education
- The Student Public Interest Research Groups
- Students for Free Culture
- Trinity University Association of Student Representatives
- Tufts Graduate Student Council
- Tufts University Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy Student Council
- The United States Student Association
- Universities Allied for Essential Medicines
- University of Calgary Students' Academic Assembly
- University of California, San Diego Graduate Student Association
- University of Minnesota Graduate and Professional Student Assembly
- University of Nebraska - Lincoln Graduate Student Association
- University of Tennessee - Knoxville Student Government Association