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January 12, 2012

To: Office of Science and Technology Policy
Executive Office of the President
725 17th Street Room 5228
Washington, DC 2050

From: Robert Tjian
President, Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI)

Re: HHMI response to the White House RFI on OA publications

Via: Email, publicaccess@ostp.gov

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about how best to leverage the nation's investment in research and technology.

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute, the nation's largest non-profit funder of basic biomedical research, has long believed that society benefits when the fruits of discovery are made broadly available to the public through the published literature. That commitment has been manifested through the policies that govern publishing by Institute scientists, as well as our more recent partnership with the Wellcome Trust and the Max Planck Society to create a top tier open access journal in the biomedical and life sciences.

HHMI's policy, announced in 2007, requires our more than 400 scientists to publish in only those journals that make the contents freely available within six months of publication. It extends other policies that require HHMI scientists to share published research materials, databases, and software in a timely and useful fashion.

HHMI has designated PubMed Central (PMC), the digital archive of biomedical and life sciences literature maintained by the National Institutes of Health, as the repository for journals in the biological sciences. Articles published in journals that are outside the biological sciences are expected to be deposited in comparable repositories and made publicly available within six months.

The new open access journal – which will be called *eLife* and is slated to launch later in 2012 – takes this commitment one step further. The founders have agreed that the journal will utilize the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 license (known as CC BY 3.0) so that the contents can be shared without restriction.

We fully appreciate the impact that the NIH policy has had on the sharing of scientific information and believe that it provides a useful starting point for other federal science and technology agencies seeking to enhance the public's access to scholarly information – including published articles and relevant data. PMC is a particularly valuable resource to the scientific community in this nation and around the world.

Both the research community and the wider society benefit when information is widely shared. That is the goal of publication in the first place – experiments are incomplete until the knowledge is shared – and currently available technology enables us to take that a step further by disseminating research results through publicly accessible repositories. There's also increasing evidence that sharing information also makes good economic sense because it fuels innovation and further discovery – outcomes that the American taxpayer has a right to expect.