January 17, 2017

Dear President Sterk and Provost Zola,

We represent Faculty throughout the School of Medicine as members of the Dean’s Faculty Advisory Committee (DFAC), where we provide our Dean with Chair-independent feedback on Faculty issues. We are well aware of issues surrounding research support for Faculty. This letter is written in reference to the report from the RAS task force, which was presented to us at a recent meeting of committee. We agree with the content and the spirit of the letter, and we hope that you will implement its recommendations in an efficient and timely manner.

Faculty throughout the SOM exemplify Emory’s mission, “to create, preserve, teach and apply knowledge in the service of humanity.” In pursuing that mission, the SOM faculty has created one of the most challenging and intellectually stimulating medical school environments in the United States. Critical to this endeavor is strong, reliable support for faculty research interests. Unfortunately, the perception of the faculty is that the newly instituted RAS structure has resulted in a diminished quality of support. In fact, we have heard from some faculty that the RAS task force report did not emphasize enough how dire the situation is and how urgently it needs to be fixed. We note that the SOM is served by pilot RAS units who have had ample time to get things right, yet whose service remains highly variable. The report outlines reasonable solutions that appear to provide sustainable oversight to begin to improve the situation. On behalf of the SOM faculty, we urge you to quickly and decisively address this issue of fundamental importance to an institution as research intensive as Emory.

Our FAC represents a wide variety of stakeholders, including clinician educators, clinical researchers, and basic scientists. In addition to the survey of faculty provided to you by the RAS task force, our members have also provided examples of poor service or inadequate responses from the RAS, and we are aware of the attrition that is occurring within the RAS currently. We believe that our inability to correct the current problems with RAS structure may result in the loss of extramural funding opportunities, which could have a crippling effect on research productivity and faculty retention.

We appreciate that the University Faculty Council responded to faculty concerns by creating the task force in January 2016. The task force created a report with 7 discrete recommendations for implementations, and that this was done in an objective and timely fashion. We are also aware that this report was presented to the Provost’s office in Fall of 2016 with a target of January implementation of its recommendations. The members of the DFAC ask that the task force recommendations be considered seriously as a top priority. We also hope that the task force recommendations can be implemented along this timeline.

Sincerely,

The Dean’s Faculty Advisory Committee