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## A call to researchers to advocate for their work -- and funds



Journal photo / Mary Murphy

Barbara Alving, the director of the National Center for Research Resources, was a keynote speaker at the Rhode Island Research Alliance Symposium today at the Rhode Island Convention Center.

PROVIDENCE — The head of a federal center that supplies financing for medical research told a Rhode Island symposium today that her agency is placing a greater emphasis on “translating” advances in the laboratory into clinical applications.

Barbara Alving, director of the **National Center for Research Resources at the National Institutes of Health**, also told the audience of more than 200 that researchers need to be political advocates for the work they do.

“It’s going to be an ongoing battle to reinsert research into the national agenda,” Alving said. “You have a national mission in addition to a scientific mission.”

Researchers need to make sure that congressional budget makers realize the value of their research, she said. “It’s really up to you to show them the importance of the work you do.” Researchers also must push lawmakers for the money needed to conduct that research, she said.

In 2006, Rhode Island institutions received \$131 million from the National Institutes of Health, plus \$37 million from the National Science Foundation, according to a statement from the science and technology council. More than 20,000 people hold research and development jobs in Rhode Island, across all scientific disciplines, the statement said.

Alving also discussed a relatively new financing program at her center called Clinical and Translational Science Awards. The program provides money to help encourage science that takes research out of the laboratory and puts it to clinical use. The goal over the next few years is to have a total of 60 awards totaling \$500 million nationwide. In 2006-2007, 24 awards were made, with 14 more added this year. None of those, though, are in Rhode Island.

Alving was one of the keynote speakers at the one-day Rhode Island Research Alliance Symposium, which the Rhode Island Science and Technology Advisory Council and other agencies hosted at the Rhode Island Convention Center.