


# MEMORANDUM

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE  
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

TO : Michael Timpane, Acting Director  
Gladys Keith Hardy, Deputy Director for Management

DATE: September 24, 1979

  
FROM : Iris Rotberg, Assistant Director  
Office of Planning & Program Development

SUBJECT: Lab and Center Policy

I have serious concerns about our planned Lab and Center policy which encourages considerable involvement on the part of NIE staff in decisions about management, governing and advisory boards, and staffing of the Labs and Centers. I believe this policy would be unwise for two reasons. First, as a matter of good research management, we should evaluate the Labs and Centers based on the quality of their product, not on their receptivity to our suggestions about management. This policy tends to relieve the Labs and Centers of responsibility for their work product and does not encourage NIE staff to evaluate the usefulness or quality of what the Labs and Centers actually produce. Accordingly, we have not developed objective criteria of program quality and usefulness which should be the basis for our funding decisions.

Second, our proposed policy of substantial involvement, although developed with good intention, can potentially involve NIE staff in apparent conflicts of interest. No research funding agency should be in a position of recommending staff for an institution which it funds. Our involvement in Lab and Center management has too great a potential for real or apparent conflicts of interest. I believe it is important therefore to reconsider this policy before it is implemented.

cc: Milton Goldberg