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CRG Raises New Questions About Berkeley's Genetic Testing Program Applauds Announcement of Hearing in California State Legislature

The Council for Responsible Genetics, a public interest organization, is raising serious new concerns regarding UC Berkeley's incoming freshman genetic testing program, "Bring Your Genes to Cal." The program, designed for incoming freshman in the College of Letters and Sciences, consists of sending students a swab with which to send in a DNA sample which will be tested for three genes that help regulate the ability to metabolize alcohol, lactose and folates as part of an introductory educational experience.

In response to concerns regarding the program, estimated to cost around \$50,000, it was reported in multiple publications that the program would be covered by an anonymous, private donor. A request by CRG for 700-U forms for the "Bring Your Genes to Cal" program, which must be disclosed under California law, was denied by the university with the written explanation that no private donor had yet been secured. This constitutes a clear reversal from statements previously describing funding for the program. If no private funding is secured, it becomes likely that taxpayer funds will have to be used to pay for the program.

Berkeley also later announced that it would perform the actual testing at its School of Public Health. Inquiries by CRG with the California Department of Health have revealed that the School of Public Health is not licensed to perform this kind of clinical laboratory testing under California law. Furthermore, according to the California Department of Health, Professor Jasper Rine is not a medical doctor licensed to order and perform clinical laboratory tests as required by the Department. Therefore, as currently described, the program may be in violation of California's public health laws and regulations.

Finally, CRG has discovered that Jasper Rine received a four year grant for \$1 million from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute in 2006 to revamp undergraduate biology curriculum. As part of this initiative, he developed three new modules for introductory biology, including a laboratory experiment whereby students would analyze their own mitochondrial DNA and compare it to the National Geographic Project – an experiment strikingly similar to "Bring

Your Genes to Cal.” No details of this research and its possible relationship to the “Bring Your Genes to Cal” program have been released to students or the taxpaying public.

The Council for Responsible Genetics applauds the Higher Education Committee of the California State Assembly for holding a hearing on August 10th on the “Bring Your Genes to Cal” program at Berkeley. “The students and taxpayers deserve to have their questions about this controversial program answered by University of California, Berkeley officials,” said CRG President Jeremy Gruber.

Since 1983, the Council for Responsible Genetics has represented the public interest and fostered public debate about the social, ethical and environmental implications of genetic technologies. CRG is a leader in the movement to steer biotechnology toward the advancement of public health, environmental protection, equal justice, and respect for human rights.