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October 29, 2004

Dear Conferee:

As representatives of two leading computing societies representing more than two hundred computing research institutions and over 85,000 computing professionals, we write to express our immense concern over the current funding level for the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Laboratory Program, and to urge you to support the program at the more appropriate level approved by the Senate in the Commerce, State, Justice and Judiciary Appropriations bill or higher.

The NIST Labs have played an important role in the continuing progress of computing research that has, in turn, enabled the "new" economy. Advances in information technology have driven significant improvements in product design, development, and distribution for American industry, provided instant communications for people worldwide, and led new scientific disciplines like bioinformatics and nanotechnology that show great promise in improving a wide range of health and communications technologies.

Within NIST's Labs, the Computer Security Division (CSD) has played a crucial role in computer security by conducting research on security issues concerning emerging technologies, by promoting security assessment techniques, by providing security management guidance, and by generating greater awareness of the need for security. In particular, the CSD has demonstrated its ability to meld science and technology with commerce by working with industry and the cryptographic community to develop an Advanced Encryption Standard (AES). The CSD's work on AES and its numerous other contributions have assisted the U.S. government, information technology industry, research enterprise, and the overall security of the Internet.

Current work underway at the NIST labs will have profound effects on the nation's cybersecurity, as many Federal agencies rely on NIST's expertise and recommendations. Other areas where NIST's work is crucial to the nation include electronic voting technologies and standards, as well as research into semiconductor manufacturing and nanotechnology that hold the promise for significant advancements in computing.

Unfortunately, this work and NIST's efforts to recruit talented researchers are in jeopardy as a result of the inadequate funding levels enacted as part of the FY 2004 appropriations process. To avoid jeopardizing NIST's ability to produce materials trusted by the community, impairing its ability to conduct research, and detracting from some of its vital standards-oriented work, we urge you to make this funding a priority for FY 2005.

As a neutral third party, NIST provides an invaluable setting for industry, academia, and government to work together on crucial technical issues. As a result, NIST and its work have tremendous credibility. The underfunding of NIST will adversely affect this credibility as well as NIST's ability to function, and will have serious long-term consequences.

The Computing Research Association (CRA) and the U.S. Public Policy Committee of the Association for Computing Machinery (USACM) stand ready to assist you as you address this important issue. We appreciate your continued support for research and development funding and would be pleased to answer any questions you or your staff might have.

Sincerely,

James D. Foley, *CRA President*

Eugene H. Spafford, *USACM Chair*