

Consortium of Social Science Associations



Volume 20, Number 11

Celebrating 20 Years of Advocacy

June 18, 2001

SENATE PANEL EXPRESSES CONCERN WITH NSF'S PROPOSED BUDGET

On June 6, the day after the Democrats gained control of the Senate, the VA, HUD, Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee reviewed the FY 2002 proposed budget for the National Science Foundation (NSF) and found it wanting. Newly-installed Chair Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) told Foundation officials testifying at the hearing that she "supports wholeheartedly increasing your budget." These sentiments were echoed by now-former Chairman Senator Christopher Bond (R-MO), who reiterated his and Mikulski's commitment to doubling NSF's budget by 2005. Reflecting this bipartisan approach to NSF funding, Mikulski noted that "science is about ideas, not ideology."

For NSF Director Rita Colwell this was music to her ears. However, she still was faced with trying to defend the Administration's proposed 1.3 percent increase in the NSF budget for FY 2002. As she did in the House, Colwell focused on the \$200 million Math and Science Partnership program. Mikulski expressed skepticism. She noted that only \$90 million of those funds was "new money," with the rest coming from the elimination of other education and human resource dollars. She also wanted to know whether this was just another "in a long line of new programs" leading nowhere. Colwell also discussed, as she had on the House side, the increase in stipends for graduate students and the study NSF has been asked to carry out concerning grant size and duration.

Mikulski further declared that NSF presents a "cornucopia of opportunity," but warned that resources for FY 2002 may be "spartan." She also indicated her deep disappointment that the Administration cut funding for the Research and Related Activities account.

Bond asked Colwell to discuss her vision and goals for NSF should the doubling actually occur. The Senator expressed further apprehension about (see *NSF*, page 5)

SENATE PASSES EDUCATION BILL; SCHOOL RESEARCH STILL THREATENED

The Senate passed its version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization bill on June 14 on a 91-8 vote, about three weeks after the House passed its bill. Declarations of bipartisanship and credit-taking from both parties simultaneously filled the air.

The bill mandates testing for children in grades 3-8, holds states accountable for students' progress, and boosts funding next year by at least \$13 billion over FY 2001. It also includes mandatory spending on a program for students with disabilities, full funding to educate poor and disadvantaged children, and the expansion of bilingual education provisions favored by Democrats.

School-Based Research

Although the bill did not mandate prior written consent for school-based research as the House version did (see *Update*, June 4, 2001), a potentially harmful compromise did pass.

Senator Tim Hutchinson (R-AR) submitted an amendment (S.A. 582) directing state and local education agencies that receive funds under ESEA to develop guidelines to protect student privacy in dealings with public and private entities that are not schools. (The amendment does not contain the language restricting in-school services found in the House's Tiahrt amendment.)

Inside *UPDATE* . . .

- **NIJ to Study Death Penalty Disparities**
- **Panel Discusses Oversight of the American Community Survey**
- **"Special Privilege" at NSF?**
- **New Path for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Research**
- **Satcher Addresses Children's Mental Health**
- **Announcements**

Hutchinson's amendment does not address existing law concerning human subjects in research. Presumably, hundreds of different kinds of policies could be adopted by the tens of thousands of state and local education agencies, presenting potential problems to the conduct of research.

For example, could multi-site studies be made comparable across sites? Must ongoing studies change their consent procedures mid-stream? How would this affect the cost of doing research? The ramifications of this amendment are unclear, but the final law concerning school-based research will be determined in conference, when House and Senate Members resolve the differences in their education bills.

Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA), who regained chairmanship of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee in the recent power shift, indicated that the conference could begin as soon as this week. The Coalition to Save School-Based Research, with which COSSA is involved, will work to educate the conferees on the potential ramifications of Tiahart's and Hutchinson's amendments for research.

CONSORTIUM OF SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

Executive Director:	Howard J. Silver
Government Affairs:	Angela L. Sharpe
Public Affairs:	Chris F. Ryan
Govt. Affairs Ass't:	John A. Wertman
President:	Janet L. Norwood

The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), an advocacy organization for federal support for the social and behavioral sciences, was founded in 1981 and stands alone in Washington in representing the full range of social and behavioral sciences.

Update is published 22 times per year. Individual subscriptions are available from COSSA for \$80; institutional subscriptions - \$160; overseas mail - \$160. ISSN 0749-4394. Address all inquiries to COSSA: 1522 K Street, NW, Suite 836, Washington, D.C. 20005. Phone: (202) 842-3525, Fax: (202) 842-2788.

www.cossa.org

NIJ TO STUDY DEATH PENALTY DISPARITIES

Just two days after the federal government's first execution in nearly 40 years, and less than a week before another is scheduled, the Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing to discuss the need to study geographic and racial disparities in the federal death penalty system. Not surprisingly, the issue of the even application of capital punishment is quite controversial.

Central to the concerns of Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI), Chairman of the Senate Judiciary subcommittee that held the hearing, were the findings of a preliminary report released by the Justice Department last September suggesting racial and geographic disparities in the federal government's administration of the death penalty. Of the 19 individuals on federal death row, for example, 17 are racial or ethnic minorities.

Recognizing the limitations of that study, then-Attorney General Janet Reno asked the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) to solicit research proposals from outside experts "to study the reasons why, under existing standards, homicide cases are directed to the state or federal systems, and charged either as capital cases or non-capital cases, as well as the factors accounting for the present geographic pattern of submissions by the U.S. Attorney's Offices."

The June 13 hearing was called in part to press the Justice Department to proceed with the study. Despite a promise by Attorney General John Ashcroft in his confirmation hearing to do so, Chairman Feingold asserted that no apparent progress has been made.

The Justice Department did recently release a supplemental study, which concluded there is "no evidence of bias against racial or ethnic minorities," and suggested that white defendants are treated more harshly than minority defendants. Deputy Attorney General Larry Thompson focused on the statistics behind this statement, including, for example, that capital charges were brought and the cases were submitted for review for 81 percent of the white, 79 percent of the African-American, and 56 percent of the Hispanic defendants in potential capital cases.

A broad array of panelists, including the Chairman of the NAACP and a former U.S. attorney, had differing opinions on what the

statistics say about the federal death penalty system. From the research community, Samuel R. Gross of the Columbia University Law School criticized the Ashcroft Report, contending that it does not support any new conclusions about the administration of the federal death penalty. Gross pointed out the limitations of its conclusions and the statistics underlying them.

These limitations identified by Gross and others, and the disagreements between those at the hearing over what the available data indicate, seemed to imply that further study on the impartiality of the federal death penalty is needed.

Thompson stated that the Attorney General has directed NIJ to go forward with a study, the primary purpose of which "is the same as that which was contemplated by the Clinton Administration but which did not progress beyond the planning process. We expect the solicitation for independent research to be released in the near future."

PANEL DISCUSSES OVERSIGHT OF AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

The House Census Subcommittee asked Census Bureau Acting Director Bill Barron and a group of data users from across the country to testify on the American Community Survey (ACS). Asking questions similar to those found on the decennial census long form, the ACS would provide yearly social, demographic, economic, and housing data by polling samples of households (see *Update*, August 7, 2000). The June 13 hearing addressed oversight issues and the concerns of some of the panel's members.

Chairman Dan Miller's (R-FL) opening remarks revealed his general support for the ACS, highlighting its ease in implementation, its promise to eliminate the decennial long form, and its ability to provide frequent data to researchers, businesses, community leaders, and policy makers. The Chairman and some of the other Members voiced concerns about cost, survey length, whether "small" (rural) areas would be fairly served, and if it would be mandatory.

Census Bureau Acting Director Bill Barron called the ACS "one of the most important developments in the Federal statistical system."

Barron also described development of the ACS as one of three components of the Bureau's strategy for re-engineering the 2010 Census. The other two are improving the accuracy of their geographic database and Master Address File and beginning planning for 2010 early.

On the issue of cost, Barron estimated the ACS will cost \$131 million in FY 2003, the first year of full implementation. Over the long term, however, initial estimates reveal cost neutrality, or even savings, when accounting for a re-engineered 2010 census.

Barron also addressed concerns that the sample size and design of the ACS will be inadequate for providing data for small areas. Barron pointed out that the cost of providing current, high-quality data for small areas would be prohibitive, and that the ACS is a major improvement over the existing situation.

In his testimony, Paul Voss, Professor of Rural Sociology at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and former COSSA seminar speaker, agreed that the ACS has the potential to meet rural area needs better than the long form. Voss qualified, however, that he believes the Bureau's ability to base rural ACS data upon a sufficiently large sample to ensure adequate precision is currently fragile. This, he said, is due to the Bureau's desire to contain costs and demonstrate to Congress that the ACS will be cost-neutral.

Another concern of some on the panel, particularly Chairman Miller and Rep. Bob Barr (R-GA), concerned how and whether the length of the ACS would be controlled, as more items lead to higher costs and lower response rates. Barron's response that the length would be continually re-examined with the Office of Management and Budget did not seem to satisfy the Congressmen.

Asked whether filling out the ACS should be mandatory and who would decide this issue, Barron expressed his sentiment that it should be mandatory as the Census is Constitutionally mandated and that this would also help to maintain response rates and contain costs.

Testifying on behalf of the Population Association of America, Donald J. Hernandez expressed support for the ACS, but also made some recommendations. Hernandez urged that the ACS

be fully funded each year of this decade, and that, to provide timely, high-quality data for local areas, the Bureau should develop a sampling plan that takes population growth into account, and a budget that supports sampling needs.

The Census Subcommittee, part of the House Government Reform Committee, will probably be terminated later this year, due to budget concerns and the completion of Census 2000 enumeration.

For more information on the ACS, see www.census.gov/acs/www/index_main.htm.

“SPECIAL PRIVILEGE” AT NSF?

At the most recent meeting on May 31 and June 1 of the National Science Foundation’s (NSF) Social Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) Directorate’s Advisory Committee, no topic took up more of the conversation than the Children’s Research Initiative and the appropriations language that appears to privilege certain competitors for grants from that program. The Committee directed its chairman, Penn State Professor Irwin Feller, to express its concerns to NSF Director Rita Colwell and to the president of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC).

The National Science Foundation had been providing support for research on children through SBE’s program in Child Learning and Development (later renamed Learning and Development Sciences) and through other programs in both SBE and the Education and Human Resources Directorates. In 1997 the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) produced a report “Investing in Our Future: A National Research Initiative for America’s Children in the 21st Century,” that called for enhancing funding for research on children. Except for some Clinton administration support for the section on children and environmental hazards, the report’s major recommendations remained unacted upon in a systematic way. There were some attempts by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy to coordinate an inter-agency working group to implement the recommendations, but little happened.

Enter NASULGC’s Board of Human Sciences. Part of the NASULGC structure, the Board is made

up of Deans of Schools of Human Ecology and Human Development at Land Grant Institutions. Trying to enter the NSF grant game and feeling that the merit review process was stacked against them, they hired a former appropriations staffer to lobby for them. They decided to go after \$50 million over five years for a Children’s Research Initiative, using the 1997 NSTC report as a springboard. Given the increasing propensity of congressional appropriators to earmark funds in many agencies’ budgets, such as transportation, EPA, agriculture, education and others, the Board of Human Sciences thought this was the way to play the game.

As a result, in the report accompanying the FY 2001 NSF appropriations bill, SBE was directed to spend \$5 million of its funds to establish a separate competition for a Children’s Research Initiative (CRI). The peer review process would be employed to determine grants for the CRI, but SBE was told to make “no less than three center awards with this first-year funding.” This seemed to mirror past report language where NSF was told to award funds in a certain research area, such as violence or plant genomics.

What created the problem for members of the Advisory Committee and others in the science community was the next paragraph in the appropriations report:

Highest funding priority should be given to proposals from distinct human sciences units in institutions of higher education that have an interdisciplinary academic program in human and family development, nutrition, and related areas. Proposals should also be evaluated for their effectiveness in utilizing existing delivery systems for program outreach and evaluation to assess how the implementation of research findings can benefit the majority of all children in a given state or region. A strong emphasis should also be placed on pursuing theory-driven, applied policy-related research on children, learning, and the influence of families and communities on child development. The conferees expect the Foundation to work with the human sciences community in the development of the proposed program guidelines for the CRI and to have awards made by June, 2001.

Although this does not approach the blatant earmarking of funds to a specific school found in the

agriculture, education, and transportation bills, it does carve out and privilege certain applicants for a merit-reviewed research competition. For those at the SBE Advisory Committee, this struck them, as one participant put it, as having the appearance of a “wired competition.” There was strong concern expressed that the integrity of NSF’s open competition for research grants was at stake.

Congressional appropriators long ago won the argument over their prerogative to decide where and how public funds would be spent. There was hope that NSF, as a basic research agency, would be left alone to continue its merit review process for research grants that would continue to produce excellent science. Now it is unclear whether NSF still retains that special place. As NSF’s budget increases, the opportunities for privileging other groups could abound. Could NSF become the next Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, a once \$17 million agency, whose budget is now over \$147 million, almost all of it earmarked?

The first year competition for the CRI is now in the peer review phase. The announcement of the awards is expected in July.

(NSF, from page 1)

the geographic distribution of grants, suggesting that there was too much concentration in certain states, and the need for metrics to measure scientific progress. Responding to Bond’s first point, the NSF Director focused on the major initiatives in the proposed NSF budget: faster computing, biotechnology and plant genomics (a Bond favorite), a better understanding of the environment, and nanotechnology.

National Science Board Chairman Eamon Kelly, as he did in the House hearing, made a strong argument in favor of increased funding for basic science, claiming small increases are “eating our seedcorn” (the next generation of scientists needed to conduct important inquiries). The Committee also heard from Inspector General Christine Boesz about NSF’s capacity for managing an increased budget.

On June 9, the Senate and the House released the 302(b) allocations. These are the amount of

funds each of the 13 appropriations subcommittees has to divide among the programs under its jurisdiction. Both the Labor, HHS, Education and the VA, HUD, Independent Agencies panels received additional funds above the Administration’s request. The former has about \$4 billion above the President’s level, which is good news for NIH and education programs. The latter has about \$600-700 million above the President’s level, which could provide a better budget for NSF.

NEW PATH FOR CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

“The gap between research and practice continues to widen; part of closing the gap entails investigating the best methods for deploying evidence-based approaches in real-world settings,” observes a recent National Advisory Mental Health Council (NAMHC) report. The report, *NAMHC Workgroup on Child Adolescent Mental Health Intervention Development and Deployment*, requested by National Institute of Mental Health Director Steven Hyman, further highlights that “findings from research in neurobiology, genetics, behavioral science, and social science have led to an increased understanding of the complex interactions among genetic and socioenvironmental factors and their contribution to child and adolescent mental disorders.”

Workgroup Chair Mary Jane England stressed that despite the promising number of scientifically proven preventive interventions and treatments now available, children, adolescents, and their families continue to suffer enormous burden associated with mental illness, burdens that are often intergenerational. England also noted that “interventions often fail to take into account the diverse sociocultural context and settings in which they will be implemented are consequently not sustainable.”

The report underlines key findings that will help guide future research:

- The impact of genes on behavior is complex.
- A child’s environment, both in and out of the womb, plays a large role in shaping brain development and subsequent behavior. Studies of the caregiving environment suggest that

extreme environments (such as abuse and neglect) may affect brain cell survival, neuron density, . . . as well as behavioral reactivity to stress in childhood and adulthood.

- Research has now documented that psychosocial interventions and services may also enhance the impact of pharmacological treatment.
- Research has also identified treatments that are potentially ineffective or, worse yet, harmful. Some forms of institutional care do not lead to lasting improvements after the child is returned to the community. Some services provided to delinquent juveniles are also ineffective (e.g., boot camps and residential programs); peer group-based interventions have been found to actually increase behavior problems among high-risk adolescents.

Challenges

The workgroup's report also emphasizes that in a field as complex as children's mental health, developing effective solutions requires coordinated efforts within and across multiple disciplines. Several issues, however, complicate such efforts, including that of social context. The report stresses that few of the "evidence-based interventions have taken into account the child's social context . . . The majority of studies on child and adolescent mental health have not attended to differences in race, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, community/neighborhood context, and wider systemic issues."

Another challenge, the report reveals, is the insularity of the many disciplines involved in clinical and research training. As a result of the rigors and traditions of the many disciplines (e.g., psychiatry, developmental and behavioral pediatrics, adolescent medicine, cognitive and behavioral neuroscience, social work, clinical psychology, developmental psychology, and developmental psychopathology) and fields (e.g., anthropology, public health, and economics), it can be extremely difficult to create training programs that cross these boundaries. Insularity of disciplines can also affect the adoption of research findings in practice settings states the report.

Establishing Linkages

The NAMHC proposes the use of new models for integrating basic research with intervention development and service delivery. It also underscores the importance of using a developmental framework to guide research in child and adolescent intervention development and deployment. There are three priorities for NIMH-supported research highlighted in the report:

1. **Basic Science and the Development of New Interventions** – The linkages among neuroscience, genetics, epidemiology, behavioral science, and social sciences provide opportunities for increasing our understanding of etiology, attributable risk, and protective processes.
2. **Intervention Development, Moving From Efficacy to Effectiveness** – A different model of intervention development should be followed. This new model requires two strands of research activity: a) a closer linkage between basic science and clinical realities; b) a focus on the endpoint and its context (the final resting place for treatment or service delivery), which should be folded into the design, development, refinement, and implementation of the intervention *from the beginning*.
3. **Intervention Deployment, Moving From Effectiveness to Dissemination** – For evidence-based interventions to be used in clinical practice, knowledge about effective dissemination strategies is needed.

The workgroup developed a 10-year plan for advancing research on child and adolescent health interventions. Recommendations are included for program development in specific research areas: behavioral science, prevention, psychosocial interventions, neuroscience, psychopharmacology, combined interventions and services, and dissemination research and system improvement. Below is a sampling of these recommendations.

- Develop measurements of functioning that are both culturally sensitive and multidimensional.
- Develop measures and interventions through ethnography.
- Undertake new behavioral research to identify how providers and families manage children's disorders and why they do not engage in the most effective practices.

- Support research on relapse prevention, desistance, and naturally occurring prevention.
- Support treatment outcome studies that assess outcomes beyond child symptom reduction to include functioning across various domains (e.g., school functioning, social interactions, family interactions, adaptive cognitions) to provide a more comprehensive picture of the benefits of psychosocial interventions.
- Target critical research gaps in psychosocial treatment programs: comorbidity (e.g., substance abuse and depression, anxiety and depression, medical and psychiatric disorders), potentially life-threatening conditions (e.g., eating disorders, suicide), gateway conditions of disorders (e.g., oppositional defiant disorder [ODD] as a gateway to conduct disorders), and parental mental illness and its influence on the prevention and treatment of child and adolescent mental disorders.

NAMHC member Anne Peterson of the Kellogg Foundation commended NIMH for taking an important lead on behalf of adolescents. She also commended the workgroup for considering the context of interventions. The adequate consideration of context, she said, will allow for sustainable interventions. This is a great opportunity, Peterson concluded.

SATCHER ADDRESSES CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

On June 6, United States Surgeon General David Satcher discussed the mental health status of children at a school health event sponsored by the Bi-Partisan Congressional School Health and Safety Caucus and the Friends of School Health, a consortium of leading national health and education associations. The event, which also featured remarks by Kevin Dwyer of the National Mental Health Association and Mark Weist of the University of Maryland-Baltimore, was held in the Rayburn House Office Building.

Satcher's remarks focused on the report on mental health released by his office earlier this year (see *Update*, March 23, 2001). He opened his comments by stating that since the report was made public, experts worldwide have focused much

attention on the issue of mental health. Satcher backed this assertion by discussing the appearances he has been asked to make at numerous mental health conferences around the globe this year. He then turned to the specifics of his report, noting that it includes the following conclusions:

- Public stigma concerning mental health is damaging to those suffering from mental illnesses, and it must be overcome.
- Public awareness of children's mental health problems needs to be increased.
- Experts in the mental health field must have proper, up to date training.
- A balanced research approach focusing on both prevention and treatment must be carried out.

Satcher also stated that "experts know more about how to treat mental illness than how to promote mental health." Based on this fact, he stressed that more research on prevention, including behavioral and psychosocial methods, needs to be funded. In addition, he briefly discussed existing disparities among the races regarding treatment for mental illness and methods of limiting these differences. He concluded by saying that we currently have a golden opportunity to enhance public mental health levels that must be seized.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

COSSA welcomes the University of Kansas as our newest contributor. We look forward to working with the university on issues of mutual concern to its social and behavioral scientists.

Transcripts Available

Edited transcripts of COSSA's March 16 Congressional Briefing, *The Mechanics of Election Reform: From Registration to Results* are now available. To request copies, please email coffa@coffa.org.