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*****WELCOME BACK! COSSA WASHINGTON UPDATE RESUMES ITS BIWEEKLY PUBLICATION SCHEDULE!*****

CONGRESS RETURNS: SPENDING VETOES LOOM

The 110th Congress resumed its activity on September 4 following its August recess. As it awaits the formal testimony of General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker relating to the war in Iraq, the September routine of trying to finish spending bills for the next fiscal year - in this case FY 2008 which begins on October 1, 2007 - remains another major focus for the legislative branch.

The House finished consideration of the 12 FY 2008 spending bills before the recess. Unfortunately, the Senate only passed one - Homeland Security. Since returning, the Senate has completed the Military Construction, Veterans' Affairs bill and the State, Foreign Operations bill.

The White House insists that the Democratic Congress has been fiscally irresponsible since the total discretionary spending limit in the House-passed appropriations bills exceeds the President's requested level of FY 2008 spending by \$23 billion. The White House has issued veto threat statements for almost all the House-passed bills.

This has left the Democratic leadership in a strategic quandary on how to get the spending bills enacted into law. Congress will not pass them by October 1 and, once again, the government will function on a Continuing Resolution (CR), which usually funds agencies at last year's level or the House- or Senate-passed number, whichever is lower. This does not make agencies happy.

There are a few spending bills without a presidential veto threat. Will the Democrats attach the veto-threatened bills to those the President would sign such as Military Construction, Veterans' Affairs, and Defense, thus shifting the quandary to the White House? Would the Administration veto legislation that includes spending for veterans and the military because it thinks the increases for science, education, health, homeland security, and transportation are excessive?

Almost immediately upon its return, the Senate confirmed former Iowa Congressman James Nussle as the new director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Nussle, who chaired the House Budget Committee and was a partisan leader of the "cut-spending" crowd, gives the White House a seasoned negotiator in the upcoming budget end-game with Congress.

In addition to its continuing debates on the war and spending, Congress also faces other left-over legislation including the Farm Bill, the reauthorization of the non-student loan parts of the Higher Education Act, as well as confirmations of presidential nominees to lead the Census Bureau and the Justice Department.

NSF EXAMINES PROPOSAL AND AWARD MANAGEMENT SITUATION

Concerned by the increased competition for its funds, the National Science Foundation (NSF) examined its proposal and award management system. The report, *The Impact of Proposal and Award Management Mechanisms*, was released in early August.

The report was produced by a Working Group led by Joanne Tornow of NSF. It focused on the last six years, FY 2000 to FY 2006, when the NSF budget increased by 44 percent to \$5.65 billion. The data indicated that during those six years proposal activity (awards and declinations) increased by 47 percent, from 21,442 to 31,518, and the overall funding rate for research proposals decreased from 30 to 21 percent.

These trends varied somewhat by directorate. The Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE) received about 2,000 proposals in FY 2000. It then leveled off at over 3,000 in FY 2006, after a big jump to almost 3,800 from FY 2003 to FY 2004, with the advent of the Human and Social Dynamics (HSD) priority area. The SBE research funding rate sits at around 23 percent in FY 2006 after bottoming out at 16 percent (also as a result of the first HSD competition) in FY 2004 and peaking at around 28 percent in FY 2000.

The group found that the overall funding rates for the Foundation declined due to a surge in proposal submissions at the same time NSF made a concerted effort to increase the average award size. This became a priority for NSF during Rita Colwell's tenure as director (1998-2004), as concern grew that scientists with large funding needs were abandoning NSF for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which was in the midst of having its budget doubled by the Congress. Thus, the recent increases in the overall NSF budget were almost totally absorbed by the increases in grant size. The median award size grew from \$74,991 in FY 2000 to \$101,698 in FY 2006, which is down slightly from the FY 2005 peak of \$103,800.

The increased proposal submissions, the report noted, resulted from enhanced applicant pools and a jump in the number of proposals per applicant. The expansion of the research community and the growing number of targeted solicitations in new areas may explain the former. External institutional pressures combined with the decreased funding rate led to the latter.

The impact of the reduced funding rates and increased submission rates, the working group concluded, has boosted the workload for all involved - the scientific community, the reviewer community, and the NSF staff. One effect of this has been for NSF to develop strategies limiting proposal submissions by increasing requirements for pre-proposals, interdisciplinary cooperation, education components, and/or societal impacts before NSF will look at them.

In examining NSF's peer review system, the group concluded the system is "overstressed." This is because reviewer workload has increased leading to reviews that are "diminishing in quality." The latter comes from the results of an on-line survey, conducted for NSF by Booz Allen Hamilton, of scientists who submitted a research proposal in the past three years. The survey heard from 24,378 scientists (a 56 percent response rate). It also turned out that more than half of these respondents were also reviewers.

The report's recommendations focused on providing the Foundation and its Directorates flexibility to establish appropriate balances between funding rates and award sizes. Further oversight of the peer review system is also merited, the group concluded. Of course, as Director Arden Bement told SCIENCE magazine, significantly increasing the NSF budget would go a long way to helping meet many of these problems.

For a copy of the report go to: http://www.nsf.gov/od/ipamm/ipamm_jtornow_finalreportnsb_070808.pdf.

NATIONAL SCIENCE BOARD ISSUES SCIENCE EDUCATION PLAN

On August 13, the National Science Board (NSB), the policy oversight body for the National Science Foundation (NSF), issued a draft report *A National Action Plan for Addressing the Critical Needs of the U.S. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Education System*. The plan seeks to implement the recommendation of the Board's Commission on 21st Century Education in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), co-chaired by Leon Lederman, Resident Scholar at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy and Shirley Malcom, Head of the AAAS Directorate for Education and Human Resources Programs and a member of the COSSA Board of Directors.

The action plan, discussed at the NSB meeting on August 8, provides the Board's views on how to improve the United States' failure "to ensure that all American students receive the skills and knowledge required for success in the 21st Century Workforce."

The NSF asked for public comment by August 30, a rather short time frame in the middle of a vacation month for many people. In putting together the commission report and the action plan, the NSB held a series of hearings beginning in December 2005, consulting with school superintendents, college presidents and deans of education, school board members, state legislators, scientists and science teachers, and corporate leaders.

The keys for the NSB to enhance U.S. progress are: 1) ensuring coherence in learning; and 2) producing an adequate supply of well-prepared and highly effective teachers. To accomplish the first, the Board proposes new levels of bureaucratic machinery: an independent, non-Federal National Council for STEM education; a STEM standing committee within the National Science and Technology Council of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy; and a new STEM Assistant Secretary at the U.S. Department of Education. All of these entities would coordinate and facilitate STEM education programs.

The NSF, the Board suggests, should create a national "roadmap" (a favorite NIH word), to "improve pre-kindergarten to college STEM education, drawing on its national standing in the science and engineering communities and its expertise in science and engineering research and education."

Although the notion of a nationalized curriculum remains verboten, the report encourages cooperation across states to provide "horizontal" coordination on content guidelines, student performance metrics, and No Child Left Behind assessments. The states should also share "best practices" information on STEM teaching and learning. The Board also calls for "vertical" alignment by improving the linkage between "high school and higher education and/or the workforce" and "creating or strengthening STEM education-focused P-16 councils in each state."

Finally, the plan focuses on teachers and their preparation, advocating enhanced resources and increased teacher mobility through national STEM teacher certification. In addition, states and localities should develop strategies to compensate them at market rates.

The NSB notes that the U.S. has risen to the challenge of developing scientific talent before, particularly in the wake of Sputnik in 1957, and should be able to do it again. The Board expects to release the final document on October 3.

For copies of the plan and the Commission report go to: http://www.nsf.gov/nsb/edu_com/report.pdf

WEISS NEW HEAD OF NSF'S BEHAVIORAL AND COGNITIVE SCIENCE DIVISION

Mark Weiss, who has been serving as Senior Science Advisor in NSF's Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE), has been named head of SBE's Division of Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences (BCS). He replaces Sandra Schneider, who is returning to the University of South Florida.

Weiss, who has been at NSF for many years, served as program officer for physical anthropology before becoming the Assistant Director for the Social, Behavioral, and Education Sciences at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy in 2005. He returned to NSF in 2006.

He recently chaired a Federal Interagency Task Force that developed a policy for the admission of scientific samples such as blood, DNA, and archaeological specimens into the United States.

For 28 years, Weiss was a professor of anthropology at Wayne State University and in the 1980s spent six years as a visiting research scholar in the Department of Genetics at the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom. He is an AAAS Fellow and has won the NSF award for Management Excellence. He earned his B.A. from Harpur College (now Binghamton University), and a M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley.

Besides physical anthropology, the BCS Division includes programs in archaeology and archaeometry, cognitive neuroscience, cultural anthropology, developmental and learning sciences, geography and regional sciences, perception, action, and cognition, linguistics, and social psychology.

NIH MAKES FIRST AWARDS IN GENES, ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH INITIATIVE; DATA SHARING POLICY ANNOUNCED

On September 4, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced that it has selected the first projects for funding under the Genes, Environment and Health Initiative (GEI), hailed as a unique collaboration between geneticists and environmental scientists.

"Researchers have long known that our genes, our environmental exposures and our own behavioral choices all have an influence on our health. This new initiative will use innovative genomic tools as well new instruments for measuring environmental factors - from diet and physical activity to stress and substance addiction - in order to begin sorting out how these different factors affect a person's risk for a number of health conditions," said Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Michael Leavitt.

The GEI is part of a broader HHS effort to build on advances in genomic science and medicine, including the Secretary's Initiative on Personalized Health Care, launched in February 2006. NIH received \$40 million in new funding as part of its FY 2007 budget to support GEI.

NIH Director Elias Zerhouni emphasized that "Genome-wide association studies have proven themselves to be powerful tools for discovering the genetic contributions to common diseases." The agency released its policy for sharing the data obtained in NH supported or conducted genome-wide association studies (GWAS) on August 28 (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-07-088.html>).

The studies will be led by the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI). Francis Collins, NHGRI director and co-chair of the NIH coordinating committee for GEI, noted that "these tools will enhance how we predict, diagnose and ultimately design personalized prevention and treatments for our patients."

The data from the genome-wide association studies will be deposited in the database of Genotypes and Phenotypes (dbGap) <http://view.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/dbgap> at the Center for Biotechnology Information, a part of the National Library of Medicine at NIH. To encourage rapid research advances, and in keeping with the principles pioneered by the Human Genome Project all data generated through these initiatives will be made

available to researchers, consistent with NIH's data-sharing policy for NIH-supported, genome-wide association studies. The policy is available on the NIH's Office of Extramural Research Genome-Wide Association Studies web page at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/gwas/>.

There are two levels of access for researchers who want to view genome-wide association data produced by GEI. The first is open-access, which means the information will be available without restriction on the Internet, and the second is controlled-access, which requires preauthorization for the individual researcher seeking to view it. The open-access will allow users to view study documents, such as protocols, questionnaires and summaries of genotype and phenotype data. Controlled-access will allow approved researchers to download individual-level genotype and phenotype data from which the study participants' personal identifiers have been removed.

Additional information on GWAS can be found at www.genome.gov/17516714.

MAYOR BLOOMBERG SHEDS LIGHT ON NEW POVERTY DATA

On August 28, the Brookings Institution held a briefing at the National Press Club to discuss the U.S. Census Bureau's 2006 data on poverty and income.

The star of the event was New York City (NYC) Mayor and potential Independent Presidential candidate, Michael Bloomberg, who clearly overshadowed the reason for the event, the release of the numbers. Speaking before a capacity crowd and doing his best imitation of a stump speech, Bloomberg outlined his plan to overhaul America's, "I mean New York City's," war on poverty.

The Mayor, who has overhauled the city's school system, stressed that education remains the best long term strategy for fighting poverty. He recently unveiled *Opportunity NYC*, a newly created initiative that will make cash payments, raised from private sources, to young adults to reward them for doing things that could lead them out of poverty. One of the more controversial aspects of the program would allow high school students to earn money for such things as passing state standardized tests and graduating high school. In response to critics of this new initiative Bloomberg stated "Every other anti-poverty program that's been tried has failed to get the national poverty rate below 11 percent...[we can't be] afraid of thinking outside the box."

Another new Bloomberg initiative is the Center for Economic Opportunity with a budget of \$150 million. Its mission is to test and evaluate innovative new strategies with an initial focus on finding methods to reduce poverty among young adults, the working poor, and families with small children. Those three groups alone account for close to half of the approximately 1.5 million New Yorkers living in poverty.

Demonstrating that his interests go beyond NYC's boundaries, Bloomberg also outlined his ideas to reform the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Noting that "a full time job remains the best anti-poverty program," Bloomberg declared that we the need to give incentives and increase rewards for those who are employed doing full time work. His EITC reform plan would include: lowering the qualifying age from 25 to 21; raising the qualifying income from \$12,000 to \$18,000; allowing individuals who work at least 26 weeks a year to qualify; and ensuring that fathers behind on their child support would not be eligible. Bloomberg admitted that his proposed reforms would not come cheap. They would cover 19.7 million Americans, 10.5 million of whom would be newly eligible under these reforms, at a cost of \$8.5 billion a year. However, he believes the benefits - more working Americans, lifting more people out of poverty, and more fathers paying child support - would benefit the economy and our society. Bloomberg pronounced that "Progress is not inevitable. It's up to us to create it."

Analyzing the Poverty Data

Aside from listening to a speech by a possible Presidential contender, the audience was also present to hear analyses of the Census Bureau's 2006 poverty numbers. The data showed that although median household income adjusted-for-inflation rose for the second straight year, it still had not reached its pre-recession high of 1999. But the good news is that the poverty rate continues to fall, albeit slowly. The 2006 poverty rate is 12.3 percent. Unfortunately, that number is significantly higher for blacks and Hispanics. Twenty-four percent of blacks live in poverty, along with 20.6 percent of Hispanics, compared with only 10.3 percent of Asians and 8.2 of whites.

Wade Horn, former Assistant Secretary for the Administration on Children and Families and currently with Deloitte Consulting, pointed out two reasons why people fall into poverty: lack of full time work and marital status. The poverty rate among those over 21 years of age with a full time job is only 2.7 percent, while that rate more than quadruples for those over 21 who are only employed part-time, with 12.6 percent living in poverty, and for those who are unemployed the poverty rate soars to 21.1 percent. Marital status also plays an important role in the poverty rate, with only 4.9 percent of married couples living in poverty, compared with 28.3 percent for female-headed households. Several of the panelists noted that if we are to achieve substantial gains on par with those achieved after welfare reform, more efforts are necessary to connect fathers to full-time employment and to their families.

The Census Bureau data, according to Rebecca Blank of Brookings and the University of Michigan, indicated that the numbers are moving in the right direction, but not enough to have a significant impact on the poverty level. Blank said there were four things that could be taken away from this latest report. First, the poverty level is becoming less responsive to periods of economic growth. The economic expansion America has been undergoing in the last few years is trickling down less to those at the bottom. Secondly, the elderly poverty rate is at an all time low of 9.4 percent, mostly due to federal government programs like Medicare and Social Security. Third, although most Americans have seen their incomes rise, they are experiencing a decline in real earnings. Americans are working longer and harder in order to maintain their economic status. And finally, income is higher and poverty is lower on the both coasts compared to Middle America.

Another much talked about aspect of the data are those people without health insurance. In all 15.8 percent of Americans lacked health care coverage in 2005 up from 15.3 percent in 2005. For children under the age of 18, 11.7 percent were uninsured up from 10.9 percent the previous year. The new census data also showed that many of the newly uninsured are middle and high income families, indicating that the un-insurance crisis is not just affecting the poor and working poor. Of the 2.2 million people who became uninsured in 2006, 1.4 million had household incomes of \$75,000 or higher.

All the speakers also noted that how the Census collects its poverty data continues to generate controversy. It has been forty years since Census released its first data on poverty, and the measurement yardstick has not been changed since it was first introduced in 1964, despite many National Academy of Sciences' reports recommending various changes. Since 1964 the Federal government has implemented numerous programs to help poor Americans supplement their income: food stamps, Medicaid, subsidized housing, and the EITC. However, the federal poverty measurement does not take into account any of this supplemental income when determining who actually lives in poverty. It also doesn't reflect regional differences in cost of living; someone making \$15,000 in San Francisco is not the same as someone making \$15,000 in Des Moines.

But the fact remains that as it is currently measured one in eight Americans live in poverty. Making progress on pulling more Americans out of poverty will take bold initiatives. As Bloomberg said in his unofficial stump speech "That's leadership. You have to be willing to stick your neck out on policies where the results are unknown."

PRB RELEASES 2007 WORLD POPULATION DATA SHEET: FOCUS ON MALNUTRITION

On August 16, the Population Reference Bureau (PRB) released its *2007 World Population Data Sheet* at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. The theme of this year's report is Malnutrition and Child Deaths. Moderated by PRB president Bill Butz, the press conference included presentations addressing the theme by PRB staff Carl Haub, senior demographer, Richard Skolnik, director of international programs, and Linda Jacobsen, director of domestic programs.

PRB has published the data sheet since 1962. It provides up-to-date demographic, health, and environmental data for all the countries and major regions of the world. For the first time, a population bulletin accompanies the data sheet which explicates topics in population, fertility, migration, urbanization and the environment.

According to PRB's 2007 data sheet, we entered the 20th century with a world population of 1.6 billion people; we began the 21st century with 6.1 billion people; and in 2007 the world population is now 6.6 billion. PRB's

projections further indicate that world population will rise to 9.3 billion by 2050, with nearly all of that increase coming in developing countries.

Haub, who authored the data sheet, noted that "The world's rich and poor nations face very different population challenges. For example, "Nations such as Germany and the United States have large elderly populations to care for, while poorer nations such as Ethiopia need to harness the potential economic energy of a youthful population," he related.

Economic development, education, the environment, the status of women, epidemics and other health threats, as well as access to family planning information and services are among the factors identified as responsible for population change. With improvements in many of these areas, the data also reveal that life expectancy has increased most in less developed regions since the 1950's. Other somewhat-good news, according to the data sheet is that HIV prevalence is likely lower than earlier projected, but still a crisis. New results from national health surveys indicate reduced estimates (because of more nationally representative samples) in such countries as India and Kenya. At the same time, however, more than four million people were newly infected with the virus in 2006.

PRB also released a policy brief entitled *Malnutrition Is Still a Major Contributor to Child Deaths* that detailed information about the prevalence of malnutrition worldwide, and its causes and consequences. The brief written by F. James Levinson, director of the International Food and Nutrition Center at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, Tufts University, and Lucy Bassett, a research assistant at the International Food Policy Research Institute and a Ph.D. candidate, examined the causes and effects of malnutrition.

The brief highlighted that while low- and middle-income countries bear the brunt of the problem, malnutrition affects both rich and poor countries, particularly the poorest in each nation. Despite some important progress, about 30 percent of young children in low- and middle-income countries are underweight. The largest problems are in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. There are states in India, for example, in which almost half of all young children are underweight. In addition, nearly 50 percent of all young children in the developing world do not receive enough iron in their diets, endangering their mental and physical development.

At the same time, obesity is an intensifying problem in the United States and other industrialized nations, with levels rising in some developing nations, e.g. 21 percent of women are obese in Morocco, as are 34 percent of women in Mexico. Jacobsen provided a detailed look at obesity trends and fertility rates in the U.S. She disclosed that the share of adults and children who are overweight has risen sharply in the last 30 years, so that today 71 percent of men and 61 percent of women are overweight or obese. "Today about one in three adults in the U.S is obese," said Jacobsen. "If we consider adolescence or young school age children, we see the same trend repeating, resulting in about 17 percent of all children in the U.S currently being overweight."

Skolnik, whose comments focused exclusively on the malnutrition of young children, announced that about six million children die each year due to nutrition related causes. Skolnik argued that low cost, highly affective well-known interventions could avert a large share of these deaths.

The brief provides a set of short-term and long-term actions that could improve the nutritional status of the world over the next decade.

Short Term:

- Incorporate growth monitoring and promotion, nutrition-related behavior change communications, and micronutrient supplementation into existing health services.
- Expand and complete the task of universal salt iodization in all countries and ensure that these become permanent and self-sustaining measures.
- Provide appropriate nutrition counseling in emergencies and in areas with higher rates of HIV/and or malaria.

Medium Term (2-5 years):

- Mount community-based nutrition projects targeted to young children, pregnant women, and adolescent girls, combined where possible with early childhood education.
- Develop conditional cash transfers, food stamp programs, or other safety nets.
- Fortify commonly consumed, centrally processed foods such as cereal flours, cooking oils, and condiments with needed micronutrients.

Long Term (6-10 years):

- Expand female education.
- Promote the application of technologies to enhance the micronutrient content of staple food crops where appropriate.

For High-Income Countries and Nutrition Transition Countries

- Introduce diet and exercise-related motivational programs in schools, workplaces, and communities.
- Improve meal programs and monitor food purchase options in schools, and improve food labeling.
- Consider inter-city cholesterol-cutting competitions.

PRB informs people around the world about population, health, and the environment, and empowers them to use that information to advance the well-being of current and future generations. To view a webcast of the event in its entirety go to: <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Datasheets/2007/2007WorldPopulationDataSheet.aspx>

RONNIE SHERROD TO HEAD CHILD DEVELOPMENT RESEARCHERS

The Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) has selected Lonnie Sherrod, Professor of Psychology and Co-Director of the Center on Action, Responsibility, and Evaluation Studies at Fordham University, as its next Executive Director. Sherrod replaces John Hagen, who has retired after 18 years and returned to the faculty at the University of Michigan.

SRCD, a Governing Member of COSSA, with a membership of approximately 5,500 researchers, practitioners, and human development professionals, aims to promote multidisciplinary research in the field of human development.

Sherrod, who has been at Fordham since 2000, previously spent fourteen years at the William T. Grant Foundation, ending his career there as Executive Vice President. Before joining the Foundation, he was an Assistant Dean of the Graduate Faculty at the New School for Social Research and a Staff Associate at the Social Science Research Council.

Currently directing a research program on the development of citizenship in youth, Sherrod served on the American Political Science Association Task Force on Civics Education and the Social Science Research Council Working Group on Youth Development. He has edited a *Handbook of Research on Youth Civic Engagement* and published numerous articles on social cognition and political development, adolescence and the transition to adulthood, and evaluation and policy research.

SRCD's new Executive Director has chaired the American Psychological Association's (APA) Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, and has served as Vice President of the Federation of Behavioral, Psychological, and Cognitive Sciences and editor of SRCD's *Social Policy Report*. He is a Fellow of the APA and the American Psychological Society.

Sherrod has a B.A. from Duke University, an M.S. in Biology from the University of Rochester, and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Psychology from Yale.

NICHD SEEKS PARTICIPANTS FOR INTERAGENCY SCHOOL READINESS CONSORTIUM

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) is seeking applications from investigators interested in participating under a cooperative agreement in a multi-site research consortium designed to perform experimental or quasi-experimental efficacy trials on integrative early childhood programmatic approaches that promote school readiness for children ages three-five who are English Language Learners (ELL) and at-risk for later school difficulties. The solicitation is designed to increase the understanding of the types of integrative programmatic approaches that promote ELL child learning and development across multiple domains of early childhood competence, as well as those that address teacher and parent behaviors that promote ELL children's development in these areas. The projects should identify causal connections between specific programmatic approaches and specific ELL child competencies. The research studies and programs simulated by this consortium will contribute scientific data that bear directly on a number of public policy issues and instructional practices as well as more broadly informing developmental science.

A key objective for the Consortium is to design, develop, and conduct multiple simultaneous efficacy trials that implement and evaluate evidence-based integrative early childhood programmatic approaches that are based on current research knowledge of early second-language acquisition and the promotion of school readiness skills in at-risk populations. The Consortium is also intended to strengthen and expand the infrastructure for ELL school readiness research.

For more information or to apply see: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-HD-07-008.html>

BASIC AND TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SOCIAL NEUROSCIENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and the National Institute on Aging (NIA) seek applications to examine the neurobiological bases of social behavior, including its genetic, developmental, cognitive and affective components. The Institutes are interested in these research topics at both the basic and translational level of analysis.

The announcement acknowledges that a "simple, commonly agreed upon definition of social neuroscience remains elusive but a unifying theme is the interaction between brain and various behaviors with an integral social component." These components include individual/person perception, affect recognition, various kinds of affiliative or aggressive behaviors, social motivation, decision making, empathy, attachment, attitude evaluation and self processes as well as many others. Because the nature of the social neuroscience field, there is the expectation that new proposals will utilize a strong interdisciplinary approach. Social neuroscience research proposals that combine cognitive neuroscience, affective neuroscience and social psychological approaches with clinical research issues are seen as particularly powerful attempts to make rapid advances in the scientific understanding of mental disorders. An additional expectation by the Institutes is that proposals will form bridges between these different scientific disciplines. NIMH supported research seeks to better understand and treat psychiatric disorders. It is noted that social pathology in psychiatric disorders can be understood only in comparison to normative social behavior.

Recent work in social and personality psychology of aging suggests that socioemotional abilities, including interpersonal problem solving, and the ability to experience emotion and process emotionally salient information in both social and nonsocial contexts is largely preserved in older age. According to NIA, to date, there has been little application of social neuroscience approaches to the study of these age-related phenomena. Of particular relevance to aging, there is the need to understand: (1) how social behaviors and social motives and their neurobiological underpinnings develop and change over the lifespan; (2) how changes in social networks at different life phases (marriage, parenting, care giving, widowhood, retirement, reductions in network size due to functional limitations or death of network members) influence neurobiological systems for social and emotional; and (3) how these developmental changes in social context and social behaviors impact mental health and psychological well-being at different stages of life. In addition, individual differences in these relations can

shed light on risk and resilience profiles or on protective factors in the social environment, including how social factors modify genetic expression over the life course.

For more information see <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-MH-08-070.html>.

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The Consortium of Social Science Associations (**COSSA**) is an advocacy organization promoting attention to and federal support for the social and behavioral sciences.

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Southern Political Science Association
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Northwestern University
Ohio State University
University of Oklahoma
University of Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania State University
Princeton University
Purdue University
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
University of South Carolina
Stanford University
University of Tennessee
State University of New York, Stony Brook
University of Texas, Austin
Texas A & M University
Tulane University
Vanderbilt University
University of Virginia
University of Washington
Washington University in St. Louis
West Virginia University
University of Wisconsin, Madison
University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
Yale University

CENTERS AND INSTITUTES

American Academy of Political and Social Sciences
American Council of Learned Societies
American Institutes for Research
Brookings Institution
Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences
Cornell Institute for Social and Economic Research
Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan

Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research
Institute for Women's Policy Research
National Bureau of Economic Research
National Opinion Research Center
Population Reference Bureau
Social Science Research Council