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# COSSA Washington Update

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## PRESIDENT RELEASES FY 2009 BUDGET: WILL CONGRESS PAY ANY ATTENTION?

On February 4<sup>th</sup>, the President released his FY 2009 budget proposals, less than two months after the end of the regular FY 2008 congressional appropriations process. The Administration proposes to spend over \$3.1 trillion. Since they are projecting only \$2.7 trillion in receipts, the deficit would stay above \$400 billion for the second year in a row.

Reaction from the Democrats in Congress was not kind. House Appropriations Committee Chairman Rep. David Obey (D-WI) characterized the new budget as: "Missed opportunities, misplaced priorities, and fiscal fairytales." Exacerbating the hostile reaction is the Administration's annual attack on congressional earmarks. The President and his team, including Presidential Science Adviser John Marburger, railed against the congressional process of adding funds for special projects. As Marburger pointed out in a press conference at the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), many of the reductions in the budget from FY 2008 congressional appropriations for agencies and programs are the Administration's cutting out funds added by Congress for special projects. Yet, as many Congressional Appropriations Chairs and Robert Pear in the New York Times (Feb. 10, 2008) have pointed out, the Administration's budget contains special projects it wants.

Completing the budget and appropriations process by October 1 (the start of FY 2009) is never an easy task. In an election year, it is probably impossible. Early-in-the-year prognosticators are suggesting at best a post-election lame duck to finish or simply waiting for the new Administration and the new Congress next year. Of course, prognosticators have been known to be wrong, see Super Bowl XLII.

As has become practice, the Administration once again proposes to eliminate or reduce 151 programs, about one-third of them in the Department of Education. Congress has rejected most of these in the past, such as the Thurgood Marshall Legal Educational Opportunity program, and likely will do so again.

The budgets for Science and Technology continue to grow, a three percent boost for basic research as compared to an overall non-security discretionary spending increase of less than one percent. The Administration remains committed to its American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI), a proposal to boost funding to reverse what Marburger called the "continued erosion of the physical sciences." Thus, the National Science Foundation (NSF), Office of Science at the Department of Energy, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology research program are again slated for big increases. The ACI, which is the Administration's response to the National Academies' report *Rising Above the Gathering Storm*, tends to ignore that report's admonition not to provide increases for the physical sciences, while disinvesting "in such important fields as the life sciences and social sciences."

In what follows, COSSA takes a quick look at Administration's proposals for many of the key science agencies that support social and behavioral science research. **On March 10, COSSA will release its annual special issue of *COSSA Washington Update* that provides a detailed analysis of the president's budget for over 50 agencies and programs.**

### NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION GETS BIG OVERALL BOOST

As noted, the NSF remains a part of the ACI and the Administration has decided to keep moving toward its goal of doubling NSF's budget in ten years. Although NSF's reauthorization sped that up to seven years, Congress ignored both doubling paths and only boosted the agency's FY 2008 budget by 2.5 percent. For FY 2009, the Administration proposes a NSF budget of \$6.85 billion, up 13.6 percent over FY 2008.

For the Research and Related Activities account, which funds the research directorates including the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences directorate (SBE), the Administration recommends \$5.594 billion, an increase of 16 percent. In the increases proposed for the directorates, the influence of the ACI's emphasis on the physical sciences is most pronounced. SBE receives an 8.5 percent or \$18 million boost over FY 2008. The Math and Physical Sciences directorate is up 20.2 percent or \$235 million. When asked about this disparity at the NSF budget press conference, NSF director Arden Bement noted: "I want strong growth for all directorates. If we get the 8.9 percent increase, it would be the biggest one year increase ever in the history of the NSF budget. But remember, there also are internal considerations and priorities, and the physical sciences are central to America COMPETES."

The budget proposes \$790.4 million for the Education and Human Resources (EHR) directorate, an increase of almost nine percent over FY 2008.

The major initiatives at NSF for FY 2009 are: Cyber-enabled Discovery and Innovation (CDI), which involves research on complex systems, data generation and analysis, and virtual organizations; what is dubbed Adaptive Systems Technology, which capitalizes on brain research to produce new knowledge and the next generation of innovative technologies; and the Dynamics of Water Process in the Environment. The Human and Social Dynamics (HSD) priority is over, but the Science of Science and Innovation Policy lives on.

### NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH FLAT FUNDED AGAIN

For FY 2009, the President's budget request flat funds the National Institutes of Health (NIH) at \$29.23 billion, equal to the level appropriated by the Congress for FY 2008. The NIH budget, again, includes \$300 million for the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. It is the sixth consecutive year the Administration has proposed a funding level for the premier biomedical, behavioral and social science research agency that does not provide an inflationary increase. According to the NIH, the years after the completion of the doubling in 2003 leading to 2008, the agency estimates that it has lost nearly 11 percent in purchasing power due to inflation. The biomedical, behavioral, and social science community is advocating \$31.1 billion in funding for NIH in FY 2009, an increase of \$1.9 billion above the FY 2008 funding level.

At his press conference Marburger was asked a number of questions about the Administration's lack of commitment to increases for NIH. He told the crowd that he believed the "doubling was a mistake," especially since according to Marburger, there was no plan of how the money should be spent. He also criticized NIH for management inefficiencies clearly hinting that he believed that the number of Institutes, now 27, needed reduction.

According to the NIH, its strategic priorities for FY 2009 include: continued support for new investigators, continued support for meritorious investigators with little or no other significant support (NIH Director's Bridge Award) and continued support for the Common Fund, an "incubator" for new ideas and initiatives that will accelerate the pace of discovery that no single or small group of Institutes or Centers could conduct on their own.

The Administration once again does not request funds for the National Children's Study (NCS). The FY 2009 budget request notes that "to phase out this study, existing contracts for pilot studies and other activities will be allowed to expire when the FY 2008 funds provided for planning are exhausted and no additional contracts will be awarded. The NICHD [National Institute of Child Health and Human Development] will conduct no additional meetings of the National Children's Study Advisory Committee, and NCS program staff will be reassigned to other responsibilities." Congress has rejected previous calls for eliminating the study.

#### **CENSUS BUREAU FUNDING DOUBLED FOR MARCH TO 2010 COUNT**

As is the custom, with the 2010 Census count looming, the Administration has proposed to increase the budget for the Census Bureau to \$2.635 billion in FY 2009, more than doubling the FY 2008 appropriation of \$1.26 billion. Of those funds, \$2.143 billion will go for the 2010 count as well as the American Community Survey. The request includes funds to continue the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP).

The Economic and Statistical Administration, which includes the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) will also receive a significant increase from \$80 million to about \$91 million.

How the huge increase for the Census will play out in the appropriations process will be interesting. Such a large increase becomes a tempting target for amendments to shift funding to provide increases or restore cuts for other agencies in the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations bill. Yet, the Census count is constitutionally mandated and needs to get done. Not giving the Bureau what it needs could create problems in 2010.

#### **JUSTICE: RESEARCH DOWN, STATISTICS UP**

The Administration proposed funding for FY 2009 for programs at the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) of \$38 million and \$34.7 million for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). Both of these agencies are the subjects of assessments by panels at the National Academy of Sciences.

More significantly for the appropriations prospects for these agencies, the Administration has once again called for the consolidation of state and local law enforcement assistance programs with reduced funding in FY 2009 and the abolition of the COPS, community-oriented policing program. Congress has rejected these changes in the past, will likely do so again and restore the earmarks for projects they deem worthy in these programs.

#### **HOMELAND SECURITY: UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS DOWN**

The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Science and Technology directorate includes a Human Factors division and a University Programs account. The latter funds the Centers of Excellence, including the START center that emphasizes social and behavioral research as it relates to terrorism and responses to terrorism. University Programs also includes undergraduate scholarship and graduate fellowship programs. The budget proposal reduces University Programs from \$49.3 million in FY 2008 to \$43.8 million in FY 2009. The Human Factors division more than doubled from \$6.8 million in FY 2007 to FY 2008 to \$14.2 million, although about one-half of those funds go to RTI International for the Institute for Homeland Security Solutions. The President's FY 2009 budget reduces the division to \$12.5 million, slightly less than the Administration requested in FY 2008.

#### **AGRICULTURE: TRYING ONCE AGAIN TO MOVE MORE FUNDS TO COMPETITIVE GRANTS**

The Department of Agriculture's research budget has always been one of the most heavily earmarked in the Federal budget. It also relies heavily on formula grants for many of its research and extension programs. Over the years, Administrations have tried to convince the Congress to support moving toward more competitive grants and away from formula funding and special grants. The primary vehicle has been the National Research Initiative Competitive Grants program (NRI).

For FY 2009, the Bush Administration once again tries this strategy. The Administration recommendation for the NRI in FY 2009 is \$256.5 million, up \$65.6 million from FY 2008. At the same time, the Administration calls for a reduction from \$195.8 million to \$139.2 million for the Hatch Act formula programs. It also once again tries to move programs in the Integrated Activities account such as water quality and food safety research into the NRI. The proposed budget also eliminates \$90.2 million in Special Research Grants. Congress will likely reject most of these proposals as it has in the past and likely reduce the number for the NRI.

The Economic Research Service (ERS) is up slightly to \$82 million. The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is down slightly to \$153 million as the periodic costs for the Census of Agriculture are reduced from \$52 million in FY 2008 to \$39 million in FY 2009.

## EDUCATION

The proposed FY 2009 budget includes increases for the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). Research, Development and Dissemination would rise to \$167.2 million from its FY 2008 appropriated level of \$159.7 million. The National Center for Education Statistics would receive a \$16.2 million boost to help fund a new secondary school longitudinal survey begun in 2007. Funding for assessment would go up \$34.7 million to \$138.8 million to expand the 12<sup>th</sup> grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to all States by 2011 and to prepare for tests in geography, history, and writing. The budget again proposes a huge increase, from \$48.3 million to \$100 million, for the development of Statewide Data Systems to track individual student achievement.

The Administration proposes to reverse the long-term decline in the number of Javits Fellowships by boosting its funding from \$9.5 million to \$9.8 million. As noted above, the Administration eliminates funding for the Thurgood Marshall program. International education and foreign language programs get a \$1 million raise to \$110 million to develop better assessment tools to measure foreign language proficiency. The Administration has asked for funding of \$24 million for a new foreign language partnership program authorized in the America COMPETES Act. Congress has not provided previously requested funds for the President's National Security Language Initiative program, also \$24 million, for a similar purpose.

For the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), whose FY 2008 budget included \$98.9 million in congressional earmarks in a total appropriation of \$120.3 million, the Administration has proposed \$37.4 million. It has asked for an \$8.6 million boost to \$23.4 million for the competitive, comprehensive program.

## HOUSE PASSES EXTENSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION ACT

After many years and through two Congresses, the Republican-controlled 109<sup>th</sup> and the Democratic-controlled 110<sup>th</sup>, the House of Representatives has finally passed its version of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA), H.R. 4137. The Senate enacted its version, S. 1642, in July, 2007 (see Update, [June 25, 2007](#) for key provisions). The bills now go to a conference committee with the goal of gaining final passage before the expiration of the latest of a series of temporary extensions that runs out on March 31.

The House bill reauthorizes the HEA for five years and mostly deals with the many student aid programs. Like the Senate bill, it includes a new provision granting loan forgiveness to law school students who work for three years as state or local criminal prosecutors or as public defenders in criminal or juvenile delinquency cases.

The bill reauthorizes the Javits Graduate Fellowship program, which provides support for graduate students in the social sciences, arts, and humanities. The House also extended the Thurgood Marshall Legal Educational Opportunity program, which helps prepare underrepresented minorities "for study at accredited law schools and assists them with the development of analytical skills and study methods to enhance their success and promote completion of law school." The program, which has often been proposed for elimination in the President's budget and saved in the appropriations process, is expanded to include middle and high school students as eligible for its summer programs.

The House has also created a new fellowship program named after the late Patsy Mink (D-HI), that will award fellowships to assist highly qualified minorities and women to acquire the terminal master's degree or the doctorate degree in academic areas in which such individuals are underrepresented for the purpose of entering the higher education professoriate.

The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), whose appropriation in recent years has been riddled with earmarks, has also been renewed. One of its new purposes, according to the House, is to support efforts "to establish pilot programs and initiatives to help college campuses reduce illegal downloading of copyrighted content, in order to improve the security and integrity of campus computer networks and save bandwidth costs." FIPSE also would have a new grant program that would provide support for programs designed for at-risk students. The program would seek to improve high school graduation rates, college attendance, and college graduation rates. The Act calls for the grant to go to Project GRAD, a nonprofit educational organization begun by the Tenneco Corporation in 1988 and now in 12 sites across the country.

## No Oversight Board for Title VI Programs

H.R. 4137 also renews the provisions relating to the Title VI programs in international education and foreign languages, which had been controversial in earlier House versions that included an oversight monitoring board (see Update, [Sept. 12, 2005](#)). The new House bill does not include such a Board. The Senate legislation, however, includes language requiring applicants for Title VI grants to explain “how the activities funded by the grant will reflect diverse perspectives and a wide range of views and generate debate on world regions and international affairs. Each application must describe how the applicant will address disputes regarding whether activities funded under the application reflect diverse perspectives and a wide range of views. Each application must also include a description of how the applicant will encourage government service in areas of national need, as identified by the Secretary, as well as in needs in the education, business and nonprofit sectors.”

The House bill also has a provision sponsored by Rep. Rush Holt (D-NJ) to create an Assistant Secretary for International and Foreign Language Education in the Department of Education. This was a recommendation of the National Academies' report on Title VI (see Update, [April 2, 2007](#)). The Administration objects to this “unnecessary and intrusive requirement” for the Department of Education.

The legislation also establishes a National Center for Learning Science and Technology Trust Fund to support basic and applied research, development, and demonstrations of innovative learning and assessment systems as well as the components and tools needed to create them; the testing and evaluation of these systems; and ways to encourage the widespread adoption and use of effective approaches to learning.

The bill prohibits the Secretary of Education, but not the States or institutions of higher education, from collecting information and developing a database on individual students that tracks them over time.

Other provisions in the House bill include: rural development grants for rural colleges and universities; a new Education Department database on scholarships, fellowships, and other programs of financial assistance available from public and private sources for the study of science, technology, engineering, or mathematics at the postsecondary and post baccalaureate levels; and prison education grants to states.

## NSF SEEKS NEW LEADER FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SCIENCES DIVISION

Ed Hackett, who for the past two years has been the director of the Social and Economic Science (SES) division of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) directorate, will return to Arizona State University this summer.

SBE is seeking a replacement. The SES division includes programs in: Decision, Risk and Management Sciences; Economics; Innovation and Organizational Science; Law and Social Sciences; Methodology, Measurement and Statistics; Political Science; Science and Society; and Sociology. It also houses SBE's activities in NSF Cross-Directorate programs. The head of SES also works with the leadership of the directorate, including his/her counterparts in the other divisions: Behavioral and Cognitive Science, led by Mark Weiss, and Science, Resources, Statistics, led by Lynda Carlson.

For more information about SES position, go to:

<http://jobsearch.usajobs.opm.gov/getjob.asp?JobId=67822323&AVSDM=2008%2D01%2D28+00%3A03%3A04>

## THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION RESEARCH

The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) held a discussion on the topic “What 2008 Holds for Research in Education?” on February 7. The discussants included Frederick Hess of AEI, Grover ‘Russ’ Whitehurst, head of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Gerald Sroufe, of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and James Kohlmoos, of Knowledge Alliance.

“There are unrealistic expectations for what questions research can answer,” Hess declared. In the just released book, *When Research Matters*, published by AEI and edited by Hess, he argued that the desire to identify interventions quickly and have them take effect almost immediately generates reluctance on the part of researchers and policy makers to invest in slow-moving, long-term research. This enthusiasm for the quick fix can lead to over-promising on the part of research and unrealistic expectations for solutions in a short time frame. Hess noted that “this short-term perspective is at odds with the scientific process.” By focusing attention and resources on what is perceived as important and relevant right now, policy makers and other influential groups have the ability to distort research agendas and weaken support for long-term research projects.

Thirty years ago it was unusual for academics to release their work directly to a policy audience. Today the Internet has fundamentally altered how research is disseminated, allowing researchers, think tanks, and other intermediaries to directly distribute their research to various publics. While this new process of distribution has greatly opened discourse, it also has raised new questions about how research quality can be ensured. Hess stated that although the “democratization of dissemination has been enormously beneficial in certain ways however; it becomes more complex to sort out what research is credible and what is dubious.”

The cluttered informational environment, Hess suggested, requires that someone distill, explain, promote, and convey research to the public and government officials. This job often falls to intermediary organizations. Intermediaries generally fall into one of three categories: 1) expert, nonpartisan groups, such as Education Commission of the States, or regional education research and development laboratories; 2) membership groups, such as the National Education Association, or the National School Boards Association; and 3) mission-driven or ideological organizations like the Education Trust or the Heritage Foundation.

Whitehurst stated there is a need to determine how research can better focus the direction, policies, and budget allocations of the Department of Education. He argued that policy makers will always be important to education research, suggesting the relationship between policy makers and researchers is a symbiotic one; policy makers construct research questions and researchers in turn create policy questions. He gave the example of NCLB, which was in part formed based on previous education research, and has led to more education research and additional research questions.

However, Whitehurst contended that this does not mean Congress should be making decisions as to what research measures are effective or ineffective. He added that it would be a mistake for Congress to mandate what type of experiments researchers can do, as they have done with the Upward Bound Program. Preventing effective evaluations of programs prevents possible improvements to those programs, Whitehurst declared. Sroufe agreed, saying that Congress should set research priorities, but should not establish into law what research methods should be used by researchers.

Most importantly, according to Sroufe, researchers need more resources devoted to education research. Using the \$37.38 in his pocket, Sroufe demonstrated the paltry amount of resources allocated by the Department of Education to research, 38 cents. By comparison, the National Institutes of Health receives \$30 and the National Science Foundation gets \$7. He pointed out that there is mandate by Congress to use scientifically-based research, but neither Congress nor various Administrations have appropriated enough money to adequately fund research endeavors. Whitehurst agreed that there needs to be a larger investment in research enterprises that could be applied in the field.

Kohlmoos noted that there have been major advances in the quality of education research in the last six years, since NCLB. However, he said more of a balance between the pursuit of rigor and the need for relevance is necessary. Education researchers need to be responsive and provide timely research without sacrificing rigor. He also noted that there is currently “a knowledge market” and that researchers should not only fuel demand for more research, but also supply the needed research. Yet, Kohlmoos suggested that right now the supply is meager. Hess credits this partly to the fact researchers tend to study questions for which data is already readily available. He said it is therefore critical to “have a broader set of data for researchers to work with,” and to generate new data by investing in the research of comprehensive long-term data.

Currently, there is not a good system in place to create useful and productive interaction between education researchers and practitioners, stated Kohlmoos. Hess attributed this lack of collaboration to the fact that school leaders usually don’t use scholarly research, because much of it is either ambiguous or irrelevant to them, and partly because they do not know how to implement the research findings.

Hess maintained that research has a vital role to play in the education policy debate. Research can highlight the impact of reforms, and it can challenge conventional wisdom and assumptions. According to Hess, the role of research is not to dictate outcomes, but to ensure that the public decision-making process is informed by facts, insights, and analyses. “Scholarship’s greatest value is not the ability to end policy disputes, but to encourage more thoughtful disciplined and tempered debate,” Hess concluded.

## COMMISSION ON NCLB PUSHES REAUTHORIZATION

On January 31, the Commission on No Child Left Behind, sponsored by the Aspen Institute and chaired by former governors, Roy Barnes of Georgia and Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin, held a discussion on the future of the law entitled, “Improving No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Now: The Cost of Waiting.”

According to the Alliance for Excellent Education, every day 7,000 students drop out of school, which adds up to approximately 1.2 million students leaving before they graduate each year. As adults, these dropouts face barriers to job entry and economic hardships. Each year’s dropout class costs their community, state, and the nation more than \$300 billion over their lifetime. According to Caramel Martin, who staffs Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Chairman of the

Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP), the Senator believes addressing the dropout crisis should be a top priority for NCLB reauthorization.

Martin also indicated that Kennedy views reauthorization as an opportunity to build upon the progress NCLB has made over the last six years. The Chairman also believes that reauthorization is an opportunity to allow legislators to fix NCLB's obvious problems. The top three changes Kennedy would like to see made to NCLB, Martin declared, are to: 1) ensure NCLB provides incentives for states to have higher standards; 2) develop more accurate and fair measures of students' and schools' progress; and 3) move away from one size fits all accountability.

Alice Johnson-Cain, who staffs Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor, noted her chairman agrees with Kennedy in advocating for getting states to have higher standards in the NCLB reauthorization. She stated that it is misleading and unfair that states with higher standards find themselves with more failing students, while states with lower standards have higher pass rates. She also indicated that House Committee's Ranking Republican, Rep. Howard McKeon (R-CA), also agrees that states need higher standards and that NCLB should provide incentives to align their assessments towards a goal of getting students ready for college or for today's competitive work environment. Johnson-Cain also suggested that others in both Houses believe that NCLB should give states and local districts more flexibility, although Sen. John Ensign (R-NV) thinks that along with increased flexibility comes the need for clear definitions of what is expected.

Co-chairman Barnes asserts that NCLB needs to develop and utilize more growth models to determine student progress by tracking the achievements of individual students from year-to-year rather than looking at cohorts of students. He also suggested the need to get more data on what teachers are successful and why. He said these data would not be used in a punitive manner, but would help design professional development tools and mentor teachers to become more effective. McKeon has strongly supported pay-for-performance incentives for teachers, as a way to reward and retain those who are effective.

Doug Mesecar from the U.S. Department of Education agreed with many of the points made by the other panelists. He thinks NCLB's core minimum should ensure all kids are on grade level, should provide a more nuanced accountability system, and should address the problem of high school graduation rates. Mesecar also called for more data, and the ability to translate and start using that data more effectively in the classroom. "We need data to figure out what makes an effective teacher and how to replicate those characteristics and teach them to other teachers so we can put an effective teacher in every classroom," he stated.

The Commission's report states that reauthorizing and improving NCLB is critical to our Nation's future and to assuring that all students have access to a quality education, regardless of their race or economic status. Barnes stated that "If NCLB is not reauthorized this year there will be no help for the 1.2 million students who will fail to graduate from high school, more than half of whom are students of color." Johnson-Cain said if we are serious about being competitive we must prepare our kids for the jobs that haven't even been imagined yet. We need to alter how we think of schools, we need to start thinking of schools as a process not just a place, she concluded.

## NIAAA ADVISORY COUNCIL HEARS UPDATE ON COLLEGE DRINKING RESEARCH

On February 7<sup>th</sup>, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) held the 117<sup>th</sup> meeting of its National Advisory Council. The Council indicated that college drinking research remains among the agency's top priority.

In April 2002, a special Federal Task Force of the NIAAA Advisory Council issued a report *A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges* (see Update, [April 15, 2002](#)). Composed of college presidents, alcohol researchers, and students, the report was the culmination of a three-year, extensive analysis of the research literature about alcohol use on college campuses, including the scope of the college drinking problem; the effectiveness of intervention programs currently used by colleges and communities; and recommendations for college presidents and researchers on how to improve interventions and prevention efforts.

According to a new report released in November 2007, *What Colleges Need to Know Now: An Update on College Drinking Research*, new data on mandated populations showed that interventions such as skills-based and motivational interviewing can be effective in reducing alcohol-related problems. As an example, students mandated to a substance use prevention program were provided either: 1) an in-person brief motivational intervention, or 2) an alcohol education session. Both groups of students showed a reduction in high-risk drinking. Students who received the brief motivational interview reported fewer alcohol-related problems than did those who received only the alcohol education session.

The report shows that successful interventions occur at three distinct levels or a 3-in-1 approach. In this concept interventions must operate simultaneously to reach individual students, the student body as a whole, and the greater college community. The Task Force offers the 3-in-1 framework as a starting point to develop effective and science-based prevention efforts. Current findings strongly support both the 3-in-1 approach and the grouping of intervention strategies into four tiers:

- Tier 1 represents the most effective strategies to prevent and reduce college drinking;
- Tier 2 represents strategies that have been successful with the general population and which could be applied to college environments;
- Tier 3 represents strategies that show logical and theoretical promise but require more comprehensive evaluation;
- Tier 4 focuses on the need to evaluate these approaches, in particular to identify those that are not proving useful;

The inconsistency that exists in the research methodology was reported as one of the biggest obstacles in evaluating the effectiveness of social norms campaigns. For example, what constitutes a social norms program or campaign is not always clearly defined, and the components of the campaign often are not thoroughly evaluated. When combined with other interventions the social norms approaches work best, but they are considered less effective in schools where very high levels of drinking are found and those that are located in communities with a high density of alcohol outlets.

Some studies have found that the more intense the social norms campaign in terms of the percentage of students exposed to its messages, the greater the effect on students' alcohol consumption. The largest reductions were found in the number of drinks consumed per week and the number of drinks consumed when students "party," indicating the impact of two messages featured prominently in social norms campaigns. Student perceptions of what is normal drinking behavior also influence success, confirming that social norms campaigns work by changing the way students view alcohol use. To find out more about the drinking research report visit [www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov](http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov).

#### Friends of NIAAA Formed

Supporters of the Alcohol Institute have formed a new coalition, the Friends of NIAAA. The American Psychological Association's Public Policy staff hosted the inaugural meeting following the first public Friends of NIAAA event, a Capitol Hill briefing on underage drinking research. For more information about the Friends of NIAAA contact Anne Bettsworth at [abettesworth@apa.org](mailto:abettesworth@apa.org).

## STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING INNOVATIVE RESEARCH DISCUSSED AT NIDA ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

At its latest Advisory Council meeting on February 6, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) heard from Alan M. Krensky from the Office of Portfolio Analysis and Strategic Initiatives (OPASI) concerning strategies to identify and increase innovative research. OPASI provides NIH and its constituent Institutes and Centers (ICs) with the methods and information necessary to manage their large and complex scientific portfolios; identifies, in concert with multiple other inputs, important areas of emerging scientific opportunities or rising public health challenges; and assists in the acceleration of investments in these areas, focusing on those involving multiple ICs.

In his report to the Council, Krensky reported the outcome of the December 5, 2007 OPASI workshop on "Fostering Innovation." The workshop brought key professionals in the field together to help identify and increase innovative research. Out of the workshop came ten recommendations that Krensky outlined and discussed:

1. **Separate grant mechanism based upon track records:** A more retrospectively focused reward system would be more successful in funding innovative research since innovation is thought to be easier to recognize than to predict. Broadening a program like the NIH MERIT Award program could encourage creative principal investigators (PIs) by eliminating the burden of continually writing grants.
2. **Increase career awards:** This would allow more opportunities for discovery research. It would also decrease the direct link between salary support and the research award, which encourages investigators to write conservative proposals.
3. **Create a separate mechanism for transformative research:** The Pioneer Award and other initiatives are designed to fund transformative research. The panel envisioned a separate mechanism, with a shorter budget period, for investigator-initiated proposals that the PI sees as transformative.

4. **Foster new ideas outside of the mainstream by supporting PIs to explore underappreciated ideas:** Proposals for new discoveries would need to be potentially momentous but would require no preliminary data.
5. **Recruit generalists to review grant applications:** This would result in an emphasis on potential impact by selecting projects with broad appeal and to also reduce bias by removing competitors as reviewers.
6. **Separate salaries from research grants:** In addition to providing more career awards, provide additional support for new PIs, technicians, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows so the success of the research application does not determine the job security of the lab staff.
7. **Awards for career years three to nine:** Fund all newly independent investigators with substantial guaranteed institutional support for seven to ten years without a renewal application. Subsequent funding would be based upon past track record, rather than specific aims. This would allow new PIs to pursue research without the demands of writing grant applications.
8. **Reform Intramural NIH to focus on high risk research:** The NIH intramural program has many aspects that foster innovation, including a separation of salary from grant support, little emphasis on projected plans, freedom to explore discoveries, and time to think. Several of the panelists felt that NIH should leverage the potential of the intramural program by recruiting and retaining the most innovative investigators and culling others.
9. **Promote local environments that encourage risk taking:** The NIH and universities could work together to give new investigators stability through the tenure decision, allowing them the unfettered freedom to build their research programs and investigate more innovative, but potentially risky, ideas. Ensuring that tenure promotion criteria at all institutions recognize innovative and transformative work would create a culture that nurtured paradigm-shifting research. For more senior scientists, both the universities and the NIH could work to reduce the amount of time spent on committees, some of which are presently mandated by law.
10. **Fill the basic gap between basic discovery and commercialization:** This proposed new program would fill the gap between early stage innovations and their acceptance as good investment opportunities, facilitating the movement of good ideas into the marketplace. Although the NIH already sponsors small business proposals, some felt the need for a transition phase.

Krensky concluded that NIH-sponsored initiatives such as the Pioneer and New Innovator Awards program support exceptionally creative scientists who take highly innovative and often unconventional approaches to major challenges in biomedical or behavioral research. Pioneer Awards are open to scientists at any career stage, while New Innovator Awards are reserved for new investigators who have not received an NIH regular research (R01) or similar grant. More information on the programs is available at <http://nihroadmap.nih.gov/pioneer> and [http://grants.nih.gov/grants/new\\_investigators/innovator\\_award](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/new_investigators/innovator_award).

## NIH SEEKS RESEARCH PROPOSALS ON RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION/BIAS EFFECTS ON HEALTH CARE DELIVERY

The relationship of race and ethnicity to health disparities is complex. Racial and ethnic minorities suffer disproportionate morbidity and mortality from chronic diseases such as cancer, heart and lung diseases, blood and sleep disorders, diabetes, and stroke. While these differences can be partially explained by differences in lifestyle, health-seeking behavior, and financial access to care, these factors do not entirely explain differences in incidence, treatment, or outcomes. A 2002 report from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) on unequal treatment along with other research shows that racial and ethnic minorities also less frequently receive appropriate care which has an adverse impact on their health outcomes including higher recurrence rates, morbidity, and mortality.

The IOM report concluded, in part, that:

1. "Racial and ethnic disparities in health care occur in context of broader historic and contemporary social and economic inequality and evidence of persistent racial and ethnic discrimination in many sectors of American life;
2. Health systems, health care providers, patients, and utilization managers may contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in health care; and
3. Health providers' bias, stereotyping, prejudice and clinical uncertainty may contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in health care."

The IOM committee recommended that additional research be conducted to provide insights into how and why racial and ethnic disparities occur, and to test interventions and strategies to eliminate them, including research that provides further insight on: (1) patient, provider, and institutional contributions to health care disparities; (2) the relative contributions of provider bias, stereotyping, prejudice, and uncertainty to racial and ethnic disparities in diagnosis, treatment, and outcomes of care; and (3) the role of non-physician health care professionals, pharmacists, allied health professional, and non-professional staff in contributing to health care disparities.

In addition, a 2004 report from a Trans-U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Disparities Progress Review Group also acknowledged the need to discuss the impact of racism as a fundamental cause of health disparities.

Racial and ethnic bias is hypothesized to contribute to disparities in health through five key pathways. These pathways include increased exposure and susceptibility to: 1) economic and social deprivation; 2) toxic substances and hazardous conditions; 3) social inflicted mental and physical trauma, either directly experienced or witnessed; 4) targeted marketing of potentially harmful commodities, such as tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs; and 5) inadequate or degrading medical care.

The National Institutes of Health (Cancer; Heart, Lung and Blood Institute; Drug Abuse; Mental Health; Digestive and Kidney Diseases; and Aging) are seeking research proposals that propose to:

- 1) Improve the measurement of racial and ethnic discrimination in health care delivery systems through improved instrumentation, data collection, and statistical/analytical techniques;
- 2) To enhance understanding of the influence of racial ethnic discrimination in health care delivery and its association with disparities in disease incidence, treatment, and outcomes among disadvantaged racial and ethnic minority groups; and
- 3) To reduce the prevalence of racial and ethnic health disparities through the development of intervention to reduce the influence of racial and ethnic discrimination on health care delivery systems in the U.S.

For more information see: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-08-083.html>

## APPLICATIONS INVITED FOR RESEARCH EDUCATION GRANTS FOR STATISTICAL TRAINING IN THE GENETICS OF ADDICTION

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) invites applications (PAR-08-081) focused on research education for development, testing, and the application of new statistical models to address genetics-based research problems in addiction. Genetics research has tremendously increased the understanding of biological processes and the mechanisms underlying disease. This sudden expansion of information has created a critical need for interdisciplinary research education in statistical genetics and computational methods. NIDA believes that the capacity of U.S. schools to conduct statistical and computational research and particularly to train statisticians to develop new, useful, and innovative statistical methods to analyze the vast and ever increasing body of genetic data is key to the future of research in public health.

NIDA is interested in genetic studies of addiction in humans and other organisms. Addiction, drug abuse and dependence are complex disorders with genetic components. Genetic epidemiologic studies support the hypothesis that substance use disorders are in part, heritable developmental disorders. The significantly increasing amounts and types of genetic data require more sophisticated statistical methods and computational models for data analyses. Currently, there is a paucity of individuals being adequately trained in statistical genetics and computational models of addiction. The goal of the call for research proposals is to help develop a scientific workforce adequate in numbers and ability to address the growing scientific needs for a well-trained cadre of researchers in this area. Effective advancements in science will require continued developments in technology, computational approaches, and analytic methods. New large databases and mathematical methods will be necessary to catalogue, organize and understand the vast amounts of information generated from the accumulated sequences of genes, proteins and associated phenotypes.

Applicants are expected to propose a well-integrated research education and training program in statistical genetics and computational methods for undergraduate, graduate, and/or postdoctoral level students. Participants may be supported for as long as five years, given that this is a novel program. Shorter durations of funding, however, are encouraged. Applicants should propose curriculum development and core didactic instruction appropriate to participant level. Instruction on developing new statistical methodologies and computational models will be critical to the success of the Program, NIDA notes. Development of infrastructure, capacity, and teambuilding should be clear objectives of proposed programs. Critical research infrastructure needs include recruiting, supporting and mentoring research investigators in

tenure-track positions; recruiting outstanding experienced scientists for tenure positions; retraining senior scientists as necessary; and providing a well-organized biomedical research environment that includes technical support personnel, appropriate equipment, supplies, shared resources, and inter- and intra- institutional linkages.

Examples of research education topics include:

- Statistical methods for modeling and analyzing interactions and correlations among genetic, environmental, and developmental factors;
- Improved computational approaches to phenotyping, trajectory analyses, handling missing data, and the conditionality of drug abuse;
- Statistical methods for analyzing the genetic structure of populations and the application of this analysis to the genetics of addiction vulnerability;
- Statistical methods for analyzing data from linkage and whole genome wide association studies;
- Improved software for the genetic analysis of complex traits;
- Novel computational methods for identifying gene variants associated with addiction;
- Developing methods for large scale experimental and statistical analysis of SNPs and haplotypes associated with addiction phenotypes;
- Statistical methods for analyzing copy number variation associated with addiction phenotypes;
- Statistical methods for dealing with missing data in human genetic studies of addiction;
- Statistical methods for analyzing linkage disequilibrium;
- Statistical methods for correcting for population stratification in association designs;
- Statistical methods for identifying gene variants for addiction in admixed populations;
- Statistical methods for analyzing epistatic interactions among genes associated with vulnerability for addiction;
- Bayesian methods for analyzing false discovery of gene variants associated with addiction phenotypes;
- Improved statistical methods for meta-analysis of genetic studies of addiction (existing data sets for the genetics of addiction include those at the NIDA Center for Genetic Studies ([zork.wustl.edu/nida/](http://zork.wustl.edu/nida/)));
- Improved methods for analyzing QTLs, expression QTLs, and epigenetic QTLs in rodents and other model organisms;
- Augmenting nosological and dimensional approaches to genetic characterization of drug use disorders; and
- Improved computational methods for exploring the association rules between genes and DSM-IV diagnoses using data mining.

Applications are due: March 18, 2008, March 17, 2009, and March 17, 2010. For more information see: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-08-081.html>

## PROPOSALS WANTED FOR ALCOHOL RESEARCH EDUCATION PROJECT

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) supports research programs to advance understanding of the biological and behavioral processes involved in the development, expression, and consequences of alcoholism and other alcohol-related problems. NIAAA is seeking research applications focused on the alcohol education area of Health Professions Education, including projects designed to support the science of dissemination of new knowledge acquired through alcohol research to a wide array of health professionals, both individuals currently practicing their professions and those training health professions.

A broad definition of health professions is adopted, to include but is not limited to: social workers, occupational therapists, nurses, physicians, dentists, psychologists, pharmacists, counselors, and others involved in areas of physical, mental, and/or behavioral health services where target groups experience alcohol use disorders.

Appropriate activities may include, but are not limited to, the development of courses, programs, curricula, and related materials designed to educate scientists, educators, service providers, and others about scientific advances in our knowledge of alcoholism, alcohol abuse, and alcohol-related problems (e.g., health-related complications with individuals who have diabetes and consume alcohol), and improve science literacy in this area. Activities and projects should attempt to meet the following criteria:

- 1) Applicants are strongly encouraged to include members of the target health professions audience as consultants or in the planning process;
- 2) Educational intervention innovations and materials should be adoptable and adaptable by educators in health profession training settings other than those where they have been initially pilot tested;
- 3) Educational innovations should address relevance and relatedness to current and/or emerging standards for education in the target profession;
- 4) Evaluation components must address outcomes and be conducted using appropriate types of research designs, instrumentation, procedures, sampling strategies, and plans for analyses; and
- 5) Products developed under this mechanism may be shared with NIAAA for use and dissemination through its website, workshops, trainings, conferences, and presentations.

The announcement uses the NIH Research Education Grant (R25) award mechanism. Awards will be limited to a maximum of \$250,000 in total direct costs per year. Because the nature and scope of the proposed research education program will vary from application to application, it is anticipated that the size and duration of each award will also vary. For more information see: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-08-082.html>.

## **NIDA SEEKS TO SUPPORT COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH “CENTER OF EXCELLENCE” GRANT PROGRAM**

The National Institute on Drug Abuse provides support for research center grants to foster innovative, synergistic, and thematically coherent approach to drug abuse and addiction research and to enable research that would not occur without the climate, facilities, and research resources that a research center can uniquely provide. The Institute encourages the application of multiple scientific perspectives and approaches to the problem of addiction. Support is provided for three types of investigator initiated research centers: 1) core center grants (P30), research “center of excellence” grants (P50), and comprehensive “center of excellence” grants (P60).

A P60 provides support for broadly based, innovative, multidisciplinary research programs consisting of related research endeavors and associated core infrastructure to ensure their effective and synergistic function. The center presents opportunities for bi-directional transdisciplinary work and support translational drug abuse treatment research. The centers should include components of basic, clinical, prevention, epidemiology, health services, or other applied areas. While not all of the areas must be represented, there should be a comprehensive approach to the research them. NIDA emphasizes that it is important that the research support not be simply a collection of independent research projects that are only loosely related. Each individual research component must be systematically related both to some other components and to the core infrastructure. Training and mentoring to enhance junior researchers’ or other researchers’ skills should be conducted in the context of the research, but funds may not be used for training stipends or training not required to do the research.

Because the nature and scope of the proposed research will vary from application to application, it is anticipated that the size and duration of each award will also vary. The total amount awarded and the number of awards will depend upon the numbers, quality, duration, and costs of the applications received.

Letters of Intent are due: February 28, 2008, January 26, 2009, and January 26, 2010.

Applications are due: March 26, 2008; February 26, 2009; and February 26, 2010. For more information see: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-08-086.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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