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COSSA Washington Update

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OBAMA ADMINISTRATION RELEASES FY 2010 BUDGET OVERVIEW; CONGRESS TRIES TO FINISH UP FY 2009; AGENCIES ANNOUNCE STIMULUS SPENDING PLANS

The past few weeks have been extremely busy here in Washington as the Administration, the Congress, the agencies, and those who watch them, have been caught up in multiple activities regarding spending on programs that we care about.

On February 26, the Obama Administration unveiled its FY 2010 budget overview. (The release of a fully detailed FY 2010 budget will probably occur in mid-to-late April.) At the same time the Congress attempted to complete action on the leftover FY 2009 appropriations. An Omnibus bill that includes funding for all Federal spending agencies except Defense, Homeland Security and Veterans' Affairs (which were enacted during the regular process in 2008), passed the House on February 25 and is expected to pass the Senate on March 10 (if it doesn't a full-year Continuing Resolution at FY 2008 levels has been threatened). While all of this action occurs, the Federal agencies have begun announcing plans to spend their portion of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (AARA or the Stimulus Package). You can follow agency spending of the AARA at www.recovery.gov.

More Increases for NSF; Stimulus Spending to Follow Regular Process

The National Science Foundation (NSF), which received \$3 billion in the ARRA, would also continue to grow in its regular funding in FY 2009. The Congress has allocated \$6.49 billion for the regular funding for that fiscal year, up from \$6.065 billion in FY 2008. The Research and Related Activities account, which funds all the research directorates, including the

one for the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE), will receive \$5.183 billion, up from \$4.821 billion in FY 2008. The Education and Human Resources directorate would climb to \$845.3 million, increased from \$725.6 million in FY 2008.

The Administration's FY 2010 budget overview proposes another boost for NSF to \$7.045 billion. Although there are no details for the individual accounts, the Administration indicates that increases would elevate support for graduate research fellowships, early-career researchers, education of technicians, and critical research priorities in global climate change. In addition, the proposed enhanced funding would, according to the budget release, "create a climate change education program and encourage more novel, high-risk, high-reward research proposals."

In spending its \$2 billion of ARRA money allocated for research grants, NSF announced it will focus on new awards (no supplements to already existing grants). Current plans are to make awards to proposals already reviewed in the fall panels that were highly-rated but have not been acted upon because of a lack of funds. It will focus on the Faculty Early CAREER awards and first-time investigators. The goal is to increase proposal success rates to 32 percent from the current rate in the low 20s. There will be no mixing of ARRA funds and FY 2009 appropriation money. Awards will be the standard NSF grants with multiple durations ranging from 12 to 60 months. The regular spring panels will also consider proposals for awards with ARRA funds. In essence, NSF will use its regular proposal funding process albeit with enhanced funds to award.

National Institutes of Health Breaks \$30 Billion Barrier

The regular FY 2009 appropriation for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) goes to \$30.317 billion, an increase of \$937.5 million over FY 2008. With regard to NIH, the Administration's FY 2010 overview release mentions only the National Cancer Institute. The explanation is that the President has a "sustained, multi-year plan to double cancer research." The initiative will "build upon the unprecedented \$10 billion provided in the Recovery Act."

NIH has announced a series of Challenge Grants that will partially spend the ARRA funds. For details see the story below.

Education Research Cited in FY 2010 Proposal; International Programs get boost in FY 2009

In its FY 2010 overview of the Department of Education the Administration announced: "The budget funds education research to ensure that teachers and school leaders have the tools and information they need to prepare students for the global economy." The FY 2010 budget will include "funds to carefully study, improve, and scale-up promising educational innovations that focus on improving student learning and achievement. The additional funds will also be used to rigorously evaluate Federal education programs so that Federal investments are preparing students for success in college and the workforce."

For FY 2009, the Congress provided \$617.2 million for the Institute of Education Sciences, a boost of \$71 million over FY 2008. Funds for Research, development and dissemination went up by \$7.5 million to \$167.2 million; statistics by \$10.1 million to \$98.5 million; and Statewide Data Systems to \$65 million. The latter also receives ARRA funds as well.

The International education and foreign language programs under Title VI of the Higher Education Act also received increases for FY 2009 from \$110 million to \$118.9 million. Both the Javits Fellowship program and the Thurgood Marshall Legal Education Opportunity program had some of the recent across-the-board cuts restored. Javits was appropriated \$9.7 million and Thurgood Marshall \$3 million. The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education remains laden with earmarks in its FY 2009 funding of \$133.7 million.

The Omnibus bill also includes increases for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). NIJ's base funding is \$48 million, up from \$37 million in FY 2008. It also will receive \$5 million from the Byrne Justice Assistance Grants and \$1.9 million from the Violence Against Women appropriation. The language in the House Appropriations Committee report, which COSSA helped write, about the importance of the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), remains in the Conference Committee report. BJS's FY 2009 funding includes \$26 million for the NCVS (see Update [June 30, 2008](#)). The report language also includes admonitions to the Office of Justice Programs regarding the "fairness and objectivity in the award of competitive grants," "transparency in research decisions," and "NIJ sole-source contracts." Under each of these headings the Justice Department and OJP are told to inform the Congress how they are going to do better and "ensure that NIJ awards for studies, seminars, and other activities are conducted in a fair, objective, and ethical manner."

Census Gets the Funding it Needs for 2010

With the 2010 Census just around the corner and the frustration over the lack of an appointed director growing (see other story), the Administration has made a commitment to give the Census Bureau the funds it needs to complete the count. The President's FY 2010 budget, according to the overview, "ensures the Census Bureau will have the resources it needs to complete the 2010 Decennial Census effectively, efficiently, and on time by providing over \$4 billion of additional funding." These funds are in addition to the \$1 billion recently provided by the ARRA.

In the FY 2009 Omnibus, Congress provided \$3.14 billion for the Bureau; the requested amount. Of this, \$2.91 billion is for Periodic Censuses and Programs that fully funds the request "to return the Census to a more reliable, paper-based operation, with the expectation that the new Administration will focus the requisite oversight to ensure a successful Decennial." The report emphasizes the importance of the Bureau's communications, partnership, and language assistance efforts, and the need for accurate information on small population groups.

The FY 2009 allocation for Salaries and Expenses is \$233.6 million, the same as the budget request. This amount includes \$45.7 million for the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) to fund a full sample of 45,000 households in September 2008 "and will allow for improvements, including security enhancements, to the current SIPP system by fiscal year 2012."

Congress appropriated \$597.2 million (including trust funds) to the Bureau of Labor Statistics in FY 2009, an increase of \$65.7 million over FY 2008. The funds provided will allow BLS to "maintain the American Time Use Survey," which the Bureau wanted to eliminate.

Agricultural Research and Extension Programs Get Slight Increases

Although the Farm bill raised expectations for new and enhanced funding for agricultural research, the Department still continues its transformation of those programs. There was some disappointment when funding for the National Institute on Food and Agriculture (NIFA) did not make into the final version of the ARRA. Yet, the Congress provided some boosts for the research programs for FY 2009.

The Agricultural and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), the new name for the National Research Initiative Competitive Grants program (NRI), will receive \$201.5 million. Congress appropriated \$190.9 million for the NRI in FY 2008. Hatch Act formula funding increases from \$195.8 million in FY 2008 to \$207.1 million in FY 2009. Special Research Grants, mostly earmarks, go up from \$92.2 million in FY 2008 to \$100.4 million in FY 2009.

The Economic Research Service will receive \$79.5 million in FY 2009, \$2.5 million more than the FY 2008 appropriation. The National Agricultural Statistics Service gets \$151.6 million in FY 2009, a decrease from the \$162.2 million in FY 2008. The decrease reflects the completion of the Census of Agriculture.

Congress allocated \$58 million for FY 2009 for the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Policy Development and Research, a \$3.3 million boost from FY 2008. From the FY 2009 allotment, \$23 million would fund grants to academic institutions.

CONGRESS RECEIVES PROGRESS REPORT ON DECENNIAL CENSUS OPERATIONS: COST, ACCURACY and PRIVACY MATTERS AMONG TOP CONCERNS

On March 5th the House Information Policy, Census and National Archives Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. William 'Lacy' Clay (D-MO), convened to hear the current status of 2010 census operations. David A. Powner of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) testified that "although the Bureau has made progress in testing key decennial systems, critical testing activities remain to be performed before systems will be ready to support the 2010 census."

"The Dress Rehearsal, which serves as a comprehensive end-to-end test of key operations and systems, was curtailed due to significant problems identified during testing," continued Powner. "As a result, several key operations were removed from the Dress Rehearsal and did not undergo end-to-end testing. The Bureau has neither developed testing plans for these key operations, nor has it determined when such plans will be completed."

Acting census director Thomas Mesenbourg agreed that a comprehensive testing program is required. "Since the initial re-plan in April 2008, we have focused on the things we have not done before to demonstrate to our own satisfaction that the new software and systems will work in production. We worked over the summer to develop a testing inventory and conduct a gap analysis."

Rep. Edolphus Towns (D-NY), Chairman of the Full House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, emphasized that a fair and accurate census is the only way to ensure fair apportionment of members of the House and distribution of vital services to those who need them most. "Past censuses left some people out while over-counting others; we won't accept that this time," Towns argued.

"A complete and accurate address list is the cornerstone of a successful census," Mesenbourg remarked. During Address Canvassing, the first major operation in the 2010 Census, 140,000 Census Bureau employees will walk almost every street in America, checking 145 million addresses and updating the 2010 Census address list. The Address Canvassing operation runs from March 30 through July 17, 2009. In late September, Census employees will validate the listings for Group Quarters, which include dormitories, group homes, prisons, and the like.

Rep. Patrick McHenry (R-NC) reminded everyone that the "Census is constitutionally-mandated to count all people residing in the U.S., not just citizens." McHenry questioned what steps were in place to reassure participants that their privacy would be protected. Prior to his resignation, former Census Bureau Director Steve Murdock also expressed concerns to the Rural Sociology Society (RSS) about the impact of immigrants' fears on the 2010 count (see Update, [August 11, 2008](#)). Murdock declared that post 9/11 "there is unprecedented fear in the U.S. immigrant community." Mesenbourg is confident that strategic advertising campaigns and the census partnership programs will play a key role in encouraging participation in the decennial with all groups (see Update [June 26, 2008](#)).

The Subcommittee also revisited the rising cost of the decennial over the years. The Bureau recently received one billion dollars in the Recovery Act, and another \$2.7 billion has been set aside specifically for the 2010 census in the FY 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act (see story above). Current estimates suggest that it will cost \$100 to count each household in 2010, compared to \$56 in 2000 and \$13 in 1970. "We are at a critical stage of preparations for next year's decennial census," said Subcommittee Chairman Clay. "This will be the Bureau's largest and most expensive census operation, costing taxpayers over \$14 billion dollars."

Mesenbourg assured the Subcommittee that the Bureau is taking important steps to address concerns raised by GAO about the cost estimates. "We will capture actual costs for all FY 2010 Census operations on an ongoing basis, and provide better analysis and documentation of the assumptions and cost factors that impact our estimates," said Mesenbourg. We appreciate GAO's recommendations concerning our cost estimation procedures, and we will work with them to implement action plans to address them."

Concluding that the Census Bureau is on solid ground, Mesenbourg noted: "We believe that our current plan has significantly reduced the risk to the 2010 Census, and we are poised to meet the enormous challenges in front of us."

Appointing a New Census Director the Top Priority

On the same day, the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee's Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services and International Security Subcommittee, chaired by Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE), heard from former census directors and experts within the statistical community who offered insight into lessons learned from past decennials.

Testifying before the subcommittee were: Barbara Everitt Bryant, former Director of the U.S. Census Bureau during the 1990 Census; John Thompson, President of the National Opinion Research Council; Robert Goldenkoff, director of strategic issues at the Government Accountability Office (GAO); David Powner, director of IT management issues at GAO; Lawrence Brown, a member of the National Academy of Sciences' Committee on National Statistics; and Robert Hill, a sociologist and former chair of the U.S. Census Bureau's Advisory Committee on the African American Population.

In his opening statement Chairman Carper declared: "It is my hope that their experiences can help the Census Bureau conduct an accurate and cost-effective census in 2010." The top priority for all the witnesses was the timely appointment of a new Census Director to run the 2010 count. Bryant, who was director from 1989 to 1993, admonished the Senators: "My first recommendation to this Subcommittee is that you do everything in your power and use your influence on the Administration to get a new Census Director nominated and confirmed as soon as possible... The hour, one year before the census, is already late and on this I speak from experience." Bryant became director very late in the process, at about the same point in the cycle we are in now. Last month, Brown sent a letter to President Obama urging him to nominate a new director as soon as possible. "We are at a critical juncture," said Brown. "Significant work still has to be done, and the Bureau does not have a director in place to assist them in making these critical decisions." COSSA has joined with other members of the Census Stakeholders Group, which has written a similar letter to Obama.

Thompson, who spent 27 years at the Census Bureau and was the Associate Director for the 2000 Census, recounted his experiences with that count. He noted the increase in the mail response rate, which he attributed to the paid

advertising and promotion campaign, the extensive partnership program directly involving local communities, and an effective communications strategy using key stakeholders to help generate support for census participation.

This led Hill to argue that the Bureau needs sufficient financial resources to work efficiently, to hire a racially diverse workforce, to devise effective advertisement campaigns to target minority and non-represented communities in the census, and to provide assistance with completing census forms.

Carper acknowledged the call for a confirmed Census Director and requested that each of the witnesses submit two names to the Subcommittee by close of business the following day of candidates they feel should be considered by the Obama administration to fill this void.

NIH RELEASES CHALLENGE GRANTS IN HEALTH AND SCIENCE RESEARCH; DEADLINE TO APPLY APRIL 27, 2009

On March 3, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) released the details of its Challenge Grant Program. As part of the American Recovery Act, NIH expects to provide at least \$200 million in FYs 2009-2010 for a new initiative called the **NIH Challenge Grants in Health and Science Research**. The initiative is designed to fund 200 or more grants, contingent upon the submission of a sufficient number of scientifically meritorious applications. This new program will support research on **Challenge Topics** which address specific scientific and health research challenges in biomedical and behavioral research that will benefit from significant two-year jumpstart funds.

The NIH has defined the Challenge Areas as those areas of research that focus on specific knowledge gaps, scientific opportunities, new technologies, data generation, or research methods that would benefit from an influx of funds to quickly advance the area in significant ways. The research in these areas should have a high impact in biomedical or behavioral science and/or public health.

In addition, Recovery Act funds allocated to NIH specifically for comparative effectiveness research (CER) may be available to support additional grants. Projects receiving these funds will need to meet the following definition of CER: *a rigorous evaluation of the impact of different options that are available for treating a given medical condition for a particular set of patients. Such a study may compare similar treatments, such as competing drugs, or it may analyze very different approaches, such as surgery and drug therapy.* This research may include the development and use of clinical registries, clinical data networks, and other forms of electronic health data that can be used to generate or obtain outcomes data as they apply to CER.

The Challenge Grants will be funded for up to two years with budgets up to \$500,000 total costs per year for a maximum of one million dollars in total costs over a two-year project period. Research plans will be limited to a 12 page application. The NIH encourages new principal investigators (PIs) and Early Stage Investigators (ESIs) to apply for the Challenge Grants. The agency emphasizes that because the awards made under this program are substantial competing NIH research grants, recipients will not be considered New PIs or ESIs when they apply for NIH research grants in the future. Additionally, applicants may submit more than one application, provided each application is scientifically distinct. Resubmissions, however, will not be permitted given that this is a one-time-only solicitation. Likewise, renewals will not be permitted.

While the \$200 million designated for the Challenge Grants is just a small portion of the \$10 billion the agency received through the Recovery Act, the NIH believes that these grants have significant potential to move the science forward in the 15 challenge topic areas. Of the \$10 billion allocated to NIH, \$7.2 billion will be transferred to the NIH Institutes and Centers (ICs) and the Common Fund, based on their proportions in the most recent appropriations bill.

Opportunity for the Social and Behavioral Science

Within the Challenge Grants the NIH Institutes, Centers, and Offices have specified particular Challenge Topics (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-OD-09-003.html>) that address their missions. Multiple institutes, centers, and offices (ICOs) may be interested in a topic area, thus several contact people are noted for that topic. In addition, each of the ICOs have or are in the process of creating web pages (http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/challenge_award/IC_ChallengeWebPage.htm) listing the specific topics related to its mission.

Albeit with an extremely constrained time to apply, there are a significant number of opportunities for social and behavioral sciences among the challenge grant topics. Below is a sampling of challenge grant topics including those identified by the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research:

(01) Behavior, Behavioral Change, and Prevention

01-OD (OBSSR)-101* Tools for studying cultural phenomena.

Development of new tools for: the measurement of culturally-shared mental phenomena (e.g., representations, scripts, prejudices); studying mechanisms by which these phenomena are transferred and adapted across individuals; and advancing research on the distribution and transmission of cultural phenomena within populations.

OBSSR Contact: Christine Bachrach, 301-402-1148, cbachrach@nih.gov

Participating Institutes and Centers: [NCI](#), [NHLBI](#), [NIA](#), [NIAAA](#), [NIAMS](#), [NIDCR](#), [NIDA](#), [NIMH](#), [NINR](#), [NCCAM](#), [FIC](#)

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01-OD (OBSSR)-102* Methods for studying the interactions among behaviors, environments, and genetic/epigenetic processes.

Research is needed to develop analytic methods, systems science approaches, or computational models designed to address the interactions among individual behaviors, social and physical environments and genetic/epigenetic processes during critical developmental periods and over time. This research is essential to incorporating the dynamic complexity of behavior and environments in the study of gene-environment interactions in health.

OBSSR Contact: Kay Wanke, 301-435-3718, wankek@od.nih.gov Participating Institutes and Centers: [NCI](#), [NEI](#),

[NHGRI](#), [NHLBI](#), [NIA](#), [NIAAA](#), [NIAID](#), [NIAMS](#), [NICHD](#), [NIDCR](#), [NIDDK](#), [NIDA](#), [NIEHS](#), [NIGMS](#), [NIMH](#), [NINR](#), [NCCAM](#)

(03) Biomarker Discovery and Validation

03-OD (OBSSR)-101* Developing high-throughput biomarker assays from finger-stick dried blood spots.

Develop, using finger-stick dried blood spots, novel high-throughput biomarker assays, to identify lipids, proteins, metabolites, and genetic information to expand the array of available biomarkers for use in large community-based biosocial surveys. OBSSR Contact: Kay Wanke, 301-435-3718, wankek@od.nih.gov

Participating Institutes and Centers: [NCI](#), [NHGRI](#), [NHLBI](#), [NIA](#), [NIAAA](#), [NIAID](#), [NIAMS](#), [NIBIB](#), [NICHD](#), [NIDDK](#), [NIDA](#), [NIEHS](#), [NIMH](#), [NINDS](#), [NINR](#), [NCCAM](#)

(06) Enabling Technologies

06-OD (OBSSR)-101* Using new technologies to improve or measure adherence. New and innovative technologies to improve and/or measure patient adherence to prescribed medical regimens and utilization of adherence-enhancing strategies in clinical practice would greatly enhance the health impact of efficacious treatments and preventive regimens. This challenge invites the development of new technologies to measure or improve patient adherence. OBSSR Contact: Lynn Bosco, 301-451-4286, boscol@od.nih.gov

Participating Institutes and Centers: [NCI](#), [NEI](#), [NHLBI](#), [NIA](#), [NIAAA](#), [NIAID](#), [NIAMS](#), [NIBIB](#), [NICHD](#), [NIDCR](#), [NIDDK](#), [NIDA](#), [NINDS](#), [NINR](#), [NCCAM](#), [FIC](#)

(07) Enhancing Clinical Trials

07-OD (OBSSR)-101* Improving and/or assessing external validity in randomized clinical trials (RCTs). The practice of conducting RCTs with volunteer samples recruited from patients in clinical or community settings limits the generalizability of results, a critical problem for comparative effectiveness research. Research is needed to develop scientific tools for improving and/or assessing the external validity of RCT results to known populations, including methods for applying probability sampling in the identification and recruitment of RCT participants, measuring biases in RCT participant pools, and accounting for such biases in the analysis of RCT results. OBSSR Contact: Dr. Ronald Abeles, 301-496-7859, abelesr@od.nih.gov

Participating Institutes and Centers: [NCI](#), [NEI](#), [NHLBI](#), [NIA](#), [NIAAA](#), [NIAID](#), [NIAMS](#), [NIDCR](#), [NIDDK](#), [NIDA](#), [NIMH](#), [NINDS](#), [NINR](#), [NCCAM](#)

The National Institute for General Medical Sciences has also noted an interest in funding social and behavioral research outside of that it is supporting in conjunction with OBSSR, including:

01-GM-101* Individual-based model of social behavior. Development of a robust and well-characterized individual-based model of social behavior that includes the dynamics of social interactions and that matches observed patterns of behavior. Contact: Dr. Irene Eckstrand, 301-594-0943, eckstrai@nigms.nih.gov

01-GM-102 Model organisms for social behavior studies. Identification and development of model organisms that allow for integrative analyses of the genetic, biochemical, physiological, and environmental components of social behavior. Contact: Dr. Irene Eckstrand, 301-594-0943, eckstrai@nigms.nih.gov

Under the topic of (12) Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education, NIGMS is seeking applications from social and behavioral scientists.

12-GM-101 Novel interventions to improve development of research scientists from underrepresented groups. Development and testing of novel interventions based on recent, theoretically grounded research from the behavioral and social sciences that will enhance the development of creative research scientists from underrepresented groups. Contact: Dr. Shiva Singh, 301-594-3900, singhs@nigms.nih.gov

Similarly, NIGMS has expressed an interest in supporting research on the Challenge Grant topic (09) Health Disparities.

09-GM-101 Mathematical and computational models for health disparities studies. Development of mathematical and computational models of the causes of, and potential interventions related to, health disparities. Contact: Dr. Irene Eckstrand, 301-594-0943, eckstrai@nigms.nih.gov

There is also interest in supporting social and behavioral science via the NIH Common Fund. The Common Fund has received \$130 million to be spent in fiscal years 2009 and 2010. The [overarching goals](#) for these funds at the NIH are the same as for the recovery funds distributed to the NIH Institutes and Centers, however, the funds in the Common Fund will support scientific areas identified through the Common Fund strategic planning process.

01-OD-101* Test default options to promote healthier behaviors. Exploration by behavioral economists and clinicians to develop and test default options (e.g., placement of fresh fruit displays in stores, the location of parking spaces at the workplace) to promote healthier behaviors. Dr. Jonathan King (NIA) 301-402-4156 kingjo@mail.nih.gov

01-OD-102 Innovative Approaches to Improve Patient and Provider Adherence. Both poor patient adherence to prescribed medical regimens and poor utilization of adherence-enhancing strategies in clinical practice severely limit the public health impact of efficacious treatments and preventive regimens. The challenge is to integrate and improve existing technologies to improve patient self-monitoring, provide automatic reminders, and link service providers, patients, and pharmacies through electronic medical records. These technologies will allow the rapid identification of probable patient non-adherence and will help clinicians generate individualized treatment plans that could enhance patient outcomes. Dr. Lynn Bosco (OD/OBSSR) 301-451-4286 boscol@od.nih.gov

01-OD-103 Methodologies or technologies that facilitate understanding of the biological effects of behavioral interventions. The ability to modify behavior is critical for preventing, managing and treating many important health conditions. Approaches are needed that will identify, quantify, and document biological changes associated with initiation and maintenance of human behavior change. Dr. Lisa Onken (NIDA) 301-443-2235 lonken@mail.nih.gov

01-OD-104 Mechanisms of Behavior Change. The challenge is to identify mechanisms and controllable variables that underlie positive change in health behaviors. This will require use of models that incorporate and relate findings at different levels of analysis from the genomic through the physiologic to the psychological and social. Dr. Mark Willenbring (NIAAA) 301-443-1208 mlw@niaaa.nih.gov.

Other specific challenge topics include that may be of interest to the social and behavioral science community:

01-AG-101	Advanced Analyses for Social Network Health Data
01-AR-103	Education as a Global Challenge
01-CA-103	The Role of Health Behaviors in Cancer Prevention
01-DA-101	New Tools for Social Neuroscience and Neurofeedback
01-DE-102	Behavioral and Social Intervention Research
01-DK-102	Behavioral Research in NIDDK Diseases
01-HD-101	Behavioral Interventions
01-MH-101	Social Networks and Negative Health Behaviors Related To HIV/AIDS
01-NS-101	Limiting Neurological Disability through Behavior Change
01-TW-101	Novel Strategies to Improve Health Care Access for Stigma-Related Conditions
09-AG-101	Geographic Disparities in Medicare Usage and Cost

09-AG-103	Creating Transformational Approaches to Address Rural Health
09-CA-103	Communication, Bio-Behavior and the Physical Environment: Exploring Interactions to Address Health Disparities
09-CA-106	Designing a Systems Approach to Address Health Disparities.
09-DE-101	Behavioral and Social Sciences to Reduce Oral Health Disparities

For more information on the Challenge Grants see (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-OD-09-003.html>).

NIGMS ADVISORY COUNCIL APPROVES CONCEPT TO MODEL WORKFORCE DIVERSITY; CHALLENGE GRANT FOR RESEARCH ON NOVEL INTERVENTIONS RELEASED

At its open session in January, the National Advisory General Medical Sciences Council cleared a concept on Modeling Workforce Diversity. The concept is informed by two NIGMS working groups that have met to discuss the feasibility, merits, and approaches of developing models of the scientific workforce that would inform development of programs and policies. NIGMS director Jeremy Berg indicated that the Institute is interested in three particular issues: 1) understanding how to diversify the scientific workforce; 2) studying the impact of policies targeted at new investigators on development of the workforce; and 3) establishing appropriate models that ensure good data collection. Given that the working groups' reports indicate that modeling workforce diversity is feasible, Berg requested and the Council approved the issuance of a small funding solicitation in this area.

Those workshops included an October 3, 2007 meeting where a group of scientists were convened to evaluate the feasibility of creating a computer model of the scientific workforce as a guide for policy makers. A review of research findings on the participation of racial and ethnic minorities in science highlighted both lingering patterns of underrepresentation and change over time. There was also discussion by the group regarding how policy interventions and other social factors can have an impact on the degree of disparity. The group concluded that "current limitations in the state of knowledge about forces influencing science career decisions constrain efforts to build a comprehensive model of the factors shaping the scientific workforce." They also came to the conclusion that in the near term, it would be most useful to construct focused models to produce insight into career dynamics to "help refine research questions, and encourage the collection of relevant data." For more information and/or to read the Workgroup's report, see www.nigms.nih.gov/News/Reports/workforcediversity_100307.htm

NIH Challenge Grant: Research on Novel Interventions

NIGMS' efforts to enhance the diversity of the scientific workforce include a request for challenge grant applications focused on increasing underrepresented minorities participation in biomedical research. Among the topics it listed as part of the NIH Challenge Grants (see related story above), NIGMS is seeking applications from social and behavioral scientists for research in this area.

12-GM-101 Novel interventions to improve development of research scientists from underrepresented groups. Development and testing of novel interventions based on recent, theoretically grounded research from the behavioral and social sciences that will enhance the development of creative research scientists from underrepresented groups. Contact: Dr. Shiva Singh, 301-594-3900, singhs@nigms.nih.gov

PROCEEDINGS OF NIH "WOMEN IN BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH" WORKSHOPS AVAILABLE

In February, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) released the proceedings from its March 4, 2008 workshop, "Women in Biomedical Research: Best Practices for Sustaining Career Success." The workshop was sponsored by the NIH Working Group on Women in Biomedical Careers in cooperation with the National Center for Research Resources and the Office of Research on Women's Health. The workshop fulfilled a key recommendation of the working group, co-chaired by NIH Acting Director Raynard S. Kington and ORWH director Vivian Pinn.

The proceeding from the workshop follows the release of the report from the November 2007 "National Leadership Workshop on Mentoring Women in Biomedical Careers," in January. The Mentoring report includes recommendations and best practices. The Workgroup welcomes further suggestions and action items on mentoring and other activities to

promote the recruitment, retention, reentry, and advancement of women in biomedical research careers. Pinn notes that a subcommittee of the Working Group is actively considering the themes which emerged from discussions at the Workshop and will initiate new activities based upon recommendations.

A concurrent workshop included "Insights into Mentoring in Biomedical Careers from Social Science Research." Led by Molly Carnes (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Ruth Fassinger (University of Maryland- College Park), Cecilia Ford (University of Wisconsin-Madison) and Linda Pololi (Brandeis University), this workshop highlighted two core values: 1) that the advancement of women in biomedical sciences requires institutional and organizational change; and 2) that advancement of women requires ongoing and proactive attention to multiculturalism, gender stereotypes, and power differentials. Recommendations from the workshop included:

- Fund research on innovative and collaborative mentoring models
- Ensure that all research attend to cultural differences
- Fund mentoring components in all research and training grants.
- Build evaluation into all mentoring and career development grants
- Initiate a K07 award for the development of mentoring programs.
- Mandate and fund mentoring and mentor training, especially in training awards.

Workshop participants also suggested additional action items, including:

- The knowledge base from social science research should be used to develop mentoring programs.
- Synergies such as the National Science Foundation ADVANCE program, and existing NIH programs (e.g., the Office of Research Integrity at the National Institute of General Medical Sciences) should be used to collate and disseminate existing knowledge and resources.
- A cost/benefit analysis of inadequate mentoring should be conducted.

According to the report, Carnes concluded the session by likening "the process of institutional transformation to smoking cessation, in that the trans-theoretical model for readiness to change could be applied to both situations - pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation for action, action, and maintenance."

The concurrent workshop, "Mentoring Minority Women in Biomedical Research," led by Evelyn M. Hammonds (Harvard University) and Joan Y. Reede (Harvard School of Public Health), "using a systemic, evidence-based approach," examined the ways in which race/ethnicity and gender can shape mentoring relationships, with a special focus on the problems and opportunities for women of color." These included: challenges in cross race/gender mentoring, the needs and obstacles of varying career changes, and the role of institutional culture in inhibiting attention to women of color.

The group offered research, practice, and policy recommendations:

Research Recommendations

- Create an overarching, cross-agency initiative, including academic health centers that address issues surrounding women of color.
- Identify the different paradigms people are working under - perspectives, institutional culture, and values of mentors, mentees, and institution.
- Conduct qualitative research on the experiences of women of color and on their career progression.
- Research the psychosocial and environmental interactions related to factors that lead to success, slowdown, or attrition.
- Collect and analyze best practice examples of environments in which women of color are progressing.
- Examine the use of alternative models and other models for organizational change.
- Understand the impact of lack of research studies on these issues.

Practice Recommendations

- Implement mentor training and teaching regarding issues of women of color by developing models, guides, and curricula.
- Collect and document best practices, delineating the experiences of women of color.
- Introduce gender issues into programs targeting minorities and introduce minority issues into programs targeting women.
- Provide networking resources for ongoing dialogue and convening of individuals with a focus on women of color.

Policy Recommendations

- Collect and report disaggregated data on women of color (e.g., the NIH, the National Academies, and the Institute of Medicine).
- Recognize the efforts - often in the form of additional time commitment - of women of color who mentor.

- Incorporate “women of color” as an issue/theme to be address in future meetings and request for applications.

Reede challenged all of the meeting participants - whether or not they are women of color - to bring the issues of women of color to discussions.

Both reports are available online at:

Women in Biomedical Research: Best Practices for Sustaining Career Success
www.womeninscience.nih.gov/bestpractices/

National Leadership Workshop on Mentoring Women in Biomedical Careers
www.womeninscience.nih.gov/mentoring/

NIH, CDC, RWJF LAUNCH COLLABORATIVE ON CHILDHOOD OBESITY RESEARCH

In February, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) launched the new “National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research” (NCCOR). The initiative brings together the resources and expertise of the federal agencies and the Foundation. Through their collective effort, NCCOR’s goals are to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of research on childhood obesity. New and existing prevention approaches will be evaluated.

NCCOR will focus on efforts that have great potential to benefit children, teens and the families and the communities in which they live. The effort will put a special emphasis on the populations in which obesity rates are highest, including African Americans, Hispanic, Native American and Asian/Pacific Islander children, and children living in low-income communities.

A multiyear agenda began with a four-part webinar series on policy evaluation in February designed to enhance the skills of researchers in evaluating state and local policies aimed at reducing the prevalence of obesity. On April 3, the session will address the “Pitfalls to Research in Real World Settings.” On May 1, “Enhancing the Usefulness of Evidence to Inform Practice” is the subject and on June 12 the session will address “Communicating Results Effectively.”

NCCOR has identified ten projects for 2009 through a strategic planning process;

1. Create a Registry of Measures
2. Catalog of Childhood Obesity-Related Policy & Health Monitoring Systems
3. Catalog of Promising and Effective Interventions & Programs
4. Identify the Most Pressing Research Needs
5. Increase the Coordination & Funding of Opportunistic Policy Research
6. Create a Template for Evaluation of Naturalistic Experiments
7. Provide Tools to Enhance Researchers’ Policy Research Skills
8. Build Relationships with Research End-Users
9. Disseminate an E-Newsletter
10. Establish NCCOR Conference Series with the first occurring in 2010

Janet Collins, director of the CDC’s National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, asserted that “Today, 12 million children and adolescents in the United States are obese and another 11 million are over weight. We believe that more coordinated research will be able to have major impact in solving this critical health issue.”

“Childhood obesity increases the risk of many chronic diseases and other problems,” explained NIH Acting Director Raynard S. Kington. “By working together on key research challenges, and translating research into action at the individual, family, and community levels, we can accelerate progress in reversing this public health challenge.”

“We’re going to build our organizations’ complementary strengths. In five years, we hope to be able to say that NCCOR played key role in reversing childhood obesity rates,” said RWJF’s senior vice president and director of RWJF’s Health group James S. Marks. For more information on NCCOR see www.nccor.org

INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE REQUESTS INPUT INTO COMPARATIVE EFFECTIVENESS RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Congress requested in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 that the Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommend priorities for spending on comparative effectiveness research (CER) to the Secretary of Health and Human Services. The IOM's Committee on Comparative Effectiveness Research Priorities is gathering input from a broad spectrum of stakeholders to help determine priorities for CER that reflect the needs of patients, consumers, and the American health care community.

Please submit your priorities before March 27, 2009, for incorporation into our database and committee consideration for the final report. You can submit your priorities by copying and pasting the following link: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=AJSZORn1g3SfPpz9rtyv2Q_3d_3d. Your name and submission will be available in a public document; your contact information will remain confidential, or you are free to omit contact information.

NAS REPORT CALLS FOR MORE SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH ON CLIMATE CHANGE; WE'VE HEARD THIS BEFORE

The latest report from the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) focusing on the U.S. Global Climate Change Science Program (CCSP), *Restructuring Federal Climate Research to Meet the Challenges of Climate Change*, calls for expanded attention to and support for social science research and the integration of the social sciences with the physical and natural sciences to meet "one of the most important global environmental problems facing the world today." This is not the first report from the NAS calling for more social science in this area, and the International Panel on Climate Change has made similar exhortations.

The Committee on Strategic Advice on the U.S. Climate Change Science Program produced the report. The panel was chaired by Veerabhadran Ramanathan an Atmospheric Scientist at the University of California, San Diego. Christopher Justice of the Department of Geography at the University of Maryland was the vice-chair

"Robust and effective responses to climate change demand a vastly improved body of scientific knowledge, including observations and better understanding and prediction of the changing climate system, the human drivers of climate change, the response of the climate system to these drivers, and the response of society to climate changes," the report declares.

It is time, the report announces, for a "transformational change in how climate change research is organized and incorporated into public policy in the United States." Although organizing this research by scientific disciplines has led to significant advances, the report proclaims, "the paucity of social science research and the separation of natural and social science research within the CCSP...are hindering our ability to address the problems that face society."

Therefore, to meet these global environmental challenges "requires research on the end-to-end climate change problem, from understanding causes and processes to supporting actions needed to cope with the impending societal problems." The report provides seven examples of these problems: 1) extreme weather and climate events and disasters; 2) sea level rise and melting ice; 3) fresh water availability; 4) agriculture and food security; 5) managing ecosystems; 6) human health; and 7) impacts on the U.S. economy. To address these issues, the report says, "requires the integration of disciplinary and multidisciplinary research, natural and social science, and basic research and practical applications."

The committee recommends six top priorities for a restructured climate change research program. They are:

- 1) Reorganize the program around integrated scientific-societal issues to facilitate cross-cutting research focused on understanding the interactions among the climate, human, and environmental systems, and on supporting societal responses to climate change;
- 2) Establish a U.S. climate observing system, defined as including physical, biological, and social observations, to ensure that data needed to address climate change are collected or continued;
- 3) Develop the science base and infrastructure to support a new generation of coupled Earth system models to improve attribution and prediction of high impact regional weather and climate, to initialize seasonal to decadal

climate forecasting and to provide predictions of impacts affecting adaptive capacities and vulnerabilities of environmental and human systems;

- 4) Strengthen research on adaptation, mitigation, and vulnerability;
- 5) Initiate a national assessment process with broad stakeholder participation to determine the risks and costs of climate change impacts on the U.S. and to evaluate options for responding; and
- 6) Coordinate federal efforts to provide climate change services (scientific information, tools, and forecasts) routinely to decision makers.

This restructuring of the CCSP around scientific-societal issues, the report concludes, “is required to help the program become more cross-disciplinary, more fully embrace the human dimensions component, and encourage an end-to-end approach from basic science to decision support.”

In discussing budgetary implications of its recommendations, the committee notes that “a comprehensive research effort on adaptation, mitigation, and vulnerability would require a substantial increase in funding, but since current funding levels directed toward this research are low, the total amount in the initial implementation phase would be relatively small.”

The prepublication copy of the report is available at: <http://books.nap.edu/catalog/12595.html>

TEACHER QUALITY AND ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS FOCUS OF REPORT

On February 27, the Center for American Progress released its new report, *Realizing the Promise: How State Policy Can Support Alternative Certification Programs*.

The National Center for Education Information reports that more than half of all alternative certification programs have been established within the last 15 years. As of 2008, all 50 states and the District of Columbia had some sort of alternative pathway to classroom teaching. In 2006-2007, about 500 alternative certification programs prepared approximately 57,000 K-12 teachers.

Alternative certification programs have the potential to increase the supply of highly qualified teachers, particularly in high need schools and for subjects experiencing a shortage, such as mathematics and science. A recent study of people who are changing careers found that over 40 percent of college graduates age 24 to 60 would consider becoming a teacher. However, most states do not have policies in place that would support these career changers or alternative certification programs. According to the report, for the realization of the full benefits of these programs policymakers need to create policies that ensure that alternative certification programs are able to attract and retain talented participants and provide them with the high quality training needed for success in the classroom.

The report recommends several policies states could enact to help alternative certification programs: ensure that alternative programs are affordable; require new teachers to show competency in their field rather than just demonstrating they have completed a required number of courses or credit hours; get states and colleges to set higher standards for potential candidates, in both traditional and non-traditional programs, by raising the minimum grade point average needed to apply and also raising the minimum score needed on licensing exams.

Educational research has demonstrated that the most important factor in a student’s success is his/her teacher. To obtain more high quality teachers in the classroom, especially in low performing schools, alternative certification programs, the report suggests, are a promising strategy for addressing this need.

To read the full report, please go to www.americanprogress.org.

WITH UNEMPLOYMENT CLIMBING, BROOKINGS SESSION FOCUSES ON JOBS FOR THOSE WITH MIDDLE LEVEL SKILLS

With the economic recession contributing to significant job loss and President Obama promising education beyond high school for all, on February 26, the Center on Children and Families at the Brookings Institution held a briefing on "The Future of Middle Skill Jobs." A brief prepared by economists Harry Holzer of Georgetown University and Robert Lerman of American University served as the basis for the discussion.

Middle skill jobs currently make up roughly one half of all U.S. employment. These jobs, such as healthcare workers, legal assistants, and police officers, are those that generally require more education and training beyond high school but require less than a bachelor's degree. This postsecondary education can include an associate's degree, on the job training, or vocational certificate programs.

Twenty five percent of all ninth graders drop out of high school. For these at-risk youth it is crucial, the brief suggested, to expand opportunities for high quality career and technical education. Career academies have shown promise to help keep students engaged in school and give them practical skills they can use to get jobs after high school, enter a postsecondary training program, or college.

The brief also mentions that for adults who are no longer engaged in the school system, supplemental education or career training can be effective approaches. Expanding apprenticeship programs is also an option for upgrading the careers of both young and experienced workers. There are currently about one million workers in some sort of apprenticeship program in the U.S.

Gerri Fiala, Staff Director for the Senate Subcommittee on Employment and Work Place Safety chaired by Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), also suggested that her panel is interested in producing legislation that will focus on making education work better for young people in high school, providing them with a very broad range of opportunities to make transitions from high school into postsecondary education, including registered apprenticeship programs and others.

Speaking at the session former Michigan Governor John Engler, currently president of the National Association of Manufacturers, recommended that high schools create individualized education plans for at-risk students like the ones created for special education students. He summed up the session by concluding that: "Skills training does not lock you into any one profession, but it can open many doors."

For more information and to read the "The Future of Middle Skill Jobs" brief go to http://www.brookings.edu/events/2009/0226_middle_skill.aspx.

NSF SEEKS PROPOSALS ON ENVIRONMENT, SOCIETY AND THE ECONOMY

The National Science Foundation's (NSF) Directorates for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) and Geosciences (GEO) have announced that they will enhance collaboration among their sciences by augmenting funding for interdisciplinary research related to Environment, Society, and the Economy (ESE).

Prospective topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Decision making strategies related to ongoing or predicted, global, regional and local environmental changes;
- Environmental change and its impact on the evolution of human behavior;
- Economic and geosciences evaluation of technology and practices linked to climate change;
- Impacts and adaptation of economic systems;
- Development and implementation of mitigation strategies within political and economic constraints;
- Interplay of environmental change and inequality of income and access to resources;
- Role of incentives in human behavior;
- Politics and economics of resource agreements;
- Pathways to successful application of geoscience research findings; and
- Capacity building.

Proposals should be submitted to existing regular relevant programs in SBE or GEO. Investigators should include ESE in the title of the proposal.

For more information contact: Robert O'Connor at roconnor@nsf.gov, 703-292-7263 in SBE, or C. Susan Weiler at cweiler@nsf.gov, 703-292-8523 in GEO.

The full description of the new collaboration can be found at: www.nsf.gov/pubs/2009/nsf09031.jsp.

NSF ASKS FOR PUBLIC COMMENT RELATING TO RESEARCH CONDUCT FOR STUDENTS AND POSTDOCS

The America COMPETES Act enacted in 2007 requires that "each institution that applies for financial assistance from [the National Science Foundation (NSF)] for science and engineering research and education describe in its grant proposal a plan to provide appropriate training and oversight in the responsible and ethical conduct of research to undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers participating in the proposed research project."

NSF is now soliciting public comments on the agency's proposed implementation of this requirement. Comments are due by March 31, 2009.

The Foundation's implementation plan would require that a proposal submission to NSF must include certification from the proposing institution's "Authorized Organizational Representative" that such institution has a plan to provide appropriate training and oversight on ethical responsibilities in the conduct of research to students and post-docs. The proposal would not have to include the actual plan, but institutions would be subject to review on request. This certification requirement would begin on October 1, 2009.

In addition, NSF would support the development of an online digital library containing research findings, pedagogical materials, and promising practices regarding ethical and responsible conduct of science.

For further information contact Jean Feldman at jfeldman@nsf.gov or 703.292-8243.

The full announcement can be found in the Federal Register of February 26, 2009 at pages 8818-8819; <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/E9-4100.htm>.

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