

COSSA WASHINGTON UPDATE

Volume X, Number 2

January 28, 1991

NSF TASK FORCE DISCUSSES UPCOMING REPORT, AGREES TO SUPPORT SEPS DIRECTORATE

As it prepares to write its interim report, the National Science Foundation task force on "Looking to the Twenty First Century" met January 13-14 in an effort to nail down the recommendations of its five working groups. The panel affirmed its earlier decision to support creation of a separate NSF directorate for the social and behavioral sciences.

Appointed by Assistant NSF Director Mary Clutter, the task force is charged with reviewing the structure and future of NSF's Biological, Behavioral and Social Sciences Directorate (BBS). Clutter heads BBS. (For earlier stories about the task force, see UPDATE, December 7, 1990 and September 21, 1990).

The task force working group on the structure of the social and behavioral sciences, chaired by Risa Palm, associate vice chancellor and dean of the graduate school at the University of Colorado, agreed that the group's recommendations should focus on a persuasive and coherent argument for separation from the biological sciences. They also agreed that their section of the report should include illustrations reflecting the importance and diversity of the social and behavioral sciences.

If eventually created, the separate directorate would be called Social, Economic and Psychological Sciences (SEPS). It would encompass the academic disciplines of economics, geography, law, linguistics, political science, psychology, sociology, and related disciplines. The new directorate would also comprise interdisciplinary fields such as cognitive science and decision, risk, and management sciences.

Anthropology Still Undecided

The placement of anthropology remains undetermined. The working group on the structure of the biological sciences directorate agreed that anthropology would be welcome there, and anthropology's witness at the task force hearings in late November seemed to prefer such an arrangement. Other anthropologists, however, want to be housed

in the SEPS directorate, according to Eugene Sterud, executive director of the American Anthropological Association. The task force agreed to let anthropologists determine their eventual home.

Other unresolved issues include the overlapping behavioral science areas. According to the task force discussions, most of neuroscience would stay in the biological directorate but some aspects of physiological psychology and models of behavior (both animal and human) will move to the SEPS directorate. Task force members Nancy Cantor, a psychologist at the Institute of Social Research at the University of Michigan, and Jeanne Altmann, a biobehavioralist at the Allee Lab at the University of Chicago, will help define the distinctions.

Members of the working group on social and behavioral science voiced hope that some of the programs supporting research on information, robotics, and intelligent systems - now housed in the Computer and Information Science and Engineering Directorate (CISE) - could be moved to the SEPS directorate. (Some of these programs were transferred from BBS to CISE when the latter was formed in the mid-1980s.)

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Richard Berk, a sociology professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, argued strongly that applied statistics belongs within the SEPS directorate. The panel reached a consensus that measurement and methodological research, as well as infrastructure issues, should be included within the new directorate.

The working group also agreed to avoid developing a divisional or programmatic structure for SEPS. Joan Huber, dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Ohio State University, argued that a new group with broader representation, including NSF program officers, should tackle those issues. (There are no political scientists or anthropologists on the current task force.)

The other working groups focused on the structure of the biological directorate, the infrastructure, education and human resource needs, NSF's response to scientific change, and the unique role of the Foundation.

Education Working Group

The education and human resources group is prepared to recommend more graduate fellowships, more post-doctoral fellowships, more support for beginning investigators, and increased support for scientists at teaching-intensive undergraduate institutions that produce future Ph.D.s. The panel also will seek increased support for basic research in teaching and learning.

Among the proposed recommendations from the working group studying NSF's response to scientific change are: (1) institutionalizing contact with scientific societies (similar to the sort of interaction

occasioned by the task force hearings in late November); (2) developing better ways to recruit rotators, panelists, and reviewers; (3) increasing the use of sabbaticals for NSF program officers; and (4) encouraging NSF to take more risks, especially with cross-disciplinary research.

The working group on the unique role of NSF focused on a controversial decision to try to limit duplication of grant submissions (the practice of submitting the same grant proposal to two or more federal funding agencies simultaneously). NSF is worried about the overload on reviewers and is concerned that biologists use NSF as a "safety net" for research not funded by the National Institutes of Health.

More Meetings in March

The task force's interim report should be complete by the middle of February. Clutter encouraged the panel to meet again for discussion of long-range issues. "What will your disciplines look like in 2015?" she asked the task force. Separate meetings for the biologists and the SEPS folks will occur in mid-March. The final report is slated for April 1.

Clutter noted that implementing the recommendation for a separate SEPS directorate would not occur until FY 1993 (planning for that budget begins in April 1991). She cautioned that given constraints on the federal budget generally, and on NSF's management budget particularly, establishing a new structure will be difficult. Much work still needs to be done!

BUDGET DEAL SURVIVES DESPITE RECESSION

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) officially notified Congress January 23 that the U.S. economy is in recession. Under the terms of the new Gramm-Rudman agreement forged in last year's budget pact, Congress can cancel the deal's enforcement mechanisms during a recession.

Thus, Congress, if it wished, could void Gramm-Rudman's spending caps, its pay-as-you-go requirements for new spending initiatives, and its threat of sequesters. (For a full description of the new budget mechanisms see UPDATE, January 14, 1991.) On January 25, however, the Senate Budget Committee voted 21-0 against eliminating these provisions. Under the rules, the measure to cancel the agree-

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ment must still be brought to the Senate floor for a vote, but with Senate leaders of both parties – as well as Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan and CBO Director Robert Reischauer – all on record as opposing such a move, the cancellation seems unlikely. In the House, where voting on a similar measure is optional, there are no current plans for a floor vote.

Meanwhile, legislators are pondering the economic impact of the Persian Gulf hostilities and how the nation is going to pay for the war.

“CRISIS AT HOME” OCCUPIES SENATE LABOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

With the threat of war in the Persian Gulf looming, two Senate panels held hearings this month on the “Crisis at Home For American Families.” The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee and its Subcommittee on Children, Families, Drugs, and Alcoholism convened sessions on January 15 and 16, respectively, to help shape their legislative agendas for the 102nd Congress. (A third hearing scheduled for January 17 was cancelled after fighting broke out in the Persian Gulf.)

At the January 15 hearing, committee chairman Edward Kennedy (D-MA) delivered an impassioned opening statement about the ways in which the United States is failing its children and families. Two families with young children then testified about the difficulties they face as poor, young parents and the need for comprehensive social services to support their efforts. This testimony provided background for the committee’s major agenda item referred to as “one stop shopping” – essentially the development of single-location, coordinated delivery systems for social services.

For the state and local perspectives, the committee turned to Lawton Chiles, former senator and newly-elected governor of Florida, and Sharon Pratt Dixon, new mayor of the District of Columbia. Both witnesses attested to the need for better cooperation and rationalization among federal, state, and local governments in providing support services to families.

On the following day, the subcommittee, chaired by Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT), opened its hearing with testimony from TV star Valerie Harper, an advocate on children’s and hunger issues.

Harper was followed by a panel of social scientists, including: Paul Harrington, associate director of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University; Sara McLanahan, professor of sociology and public affairs at Princeton University; Nicholas Zill, executive director of Child Trends; Judith Wallerstein, executive director of the Center for the Family in Transition; and lawyer Sherry Deane, deputy executive director of the National Black Child Development Institute. These witnesses presented data on the general economic and familial status of children in America, including the effects of divorce and single-parenting on children’s well-being. The witnesses also described the particular experiences of African-American families.

Both hearings set the stage for a three-pronged Labor Committee strategy to produce legislation that: (1) focuses on investing in cost-effective programs that work; (2) coordinates social service delivery systems; and (3) develops programs that discourage early parenthood and high school drop-out among youth.

NATIONAL HEALTH POLICY FORUM FOCUSES ON FAMILY WELL-BEING

Changes in the well-being of American families with children were the focus of a January 11 session of the George Washington University (GWU) National Health Policy Forum. Participants examined the relationships among wages, family structure, and child poverty.

Peter Gottschalk, professor of economics at Boston University, presented data illustrating the complexity of factors contributing to the United States’ relatively high poverty rate. He argued that declining family size and higher education among women should counteract the increase in single-parent, female-headed households. The slowing of that trend, in turn, should put a brake on rising poverty rates.

Impact of Declining Wages

Gottschalk noted, however, that reality has not followed this pattern. Factors other than family size and education rate – such as declining wages – have operated to maintain higher levels of poverty.

Gary Burtless of the Brookings Institution picked up on Gottschalk’s observation. In research on trends in wage and salary earnings over the past two decades, Burtless has found that earnings inequality

has increased among men, primarily due to the increased value of a college education. The growing earnings inequality among men has also contributed to income inequality among families during the period, he said. Furthermore, women's earnings gains have not ameliorated these inequalities, in part because higher-earning women are marrying higher-earning men and thereby exacerbating family income inequality. As a result, poverty rates among single-parent families continue to increase, Burtless contended.

Margaret Simms of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies further explored the connection between family structure and income inequality. She reported on a Joint Center study that examined the extent to which the growth in single-parent families explains increased income inequality between different racial/ethnic families. First, Simms noted the importance of separating divorced from never-married single parents, whose family income histories are likely to be very different. Focusing on the never-married (as an increasing type), Simms' data indicated that poverty is not so directly linked to family structure as it is to economic opportunities, which are more limited for African-American women and men.

Are the Poor Really Poor?

The forum lived up to its name when Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation challenged the data on poverty. Rector claimed that the U.S. poor are not really poor. (The Heritage Foundation considered this same point in a recent briefing paper.) According to Rector's data, many so-called "poor" own homes, cars, televisions, and jacuzzis.

Rector distinguished between material poverty, which by his measures is lower than most people think, and "behavioral" poverty, which is greatly enhanced by the existence of social programs such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and Women, Infants, and Children. He argued for the elimination of welfare programs that "provide a perverse disincentive to marriage," such as AFDC. (The AFDC program does not allow most married couples to qualify as poor enough to receive benefits). Rector called instead for efforts to improve cultural attitudes about work, family responsibility, and government dependency.

The debate became rather lopsided when Rector's analysis was vociferously challenged by other attendees, some of whom collect the data on which Rector bases his position.

The GWU forum promotes education and interaction among researchers and policy-makers in the executive and legislative branches. Over the past few years, the forum has become one of the most highly respected series of its type, attracting accomplished scholars and policymakers. The next session of the forum, on February 25, will again focus on family well-being. For information, call (202) 872-1390.

BUSH NOMINATES OHIO CARDIOLOGIST TO BE NEW NIH DIRECTOR

President Bush has finally nominated Bernadine P. Healy, a Cleveland cardiologist, to be the next director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). If approved by the Senate, Healy will be the first woman to head NIH. Her nomination has been in the works for many months, but White House clearance procedures and political pressures slowed the process.

NIH has been without a director since August 1989, when James B. Wyngaarden resigned the position. William Raub, NIH's deputy director, has served as acting director in the interim. In recent months, Bush has received criticism for failing to fill the position promptly.

While the Senate is widely expected to confirm Healy, some observers are predicting a scuffle over her stance on fetal-tissue research. Healy was a member of a panel that in 1988 recommended that the Department of Health and Human Services lift its ban on federal support for such research. The White House has maintained its prohibition.

Since 1985, Healy has served as chairman of the Research Institute at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation in Cleveland, OH. Prior to her tenure there, she served as deputy director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy from 1984 to 1985. She has also held numerous positions at the Johns Hopkins Hospital and Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, both in Baltimore, MD. Healy is a 1965 graduate of Vassar College (A.M.) and a 1970 graduate of Harvard Medical School (M.D.).

NEWS BRIEFS

NIDA Hosts Drug Abuse Research and Practice Conference

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) hosted a three-day conference on drug abuse research and practice on January 12-15. Subtitled "An Alliance for the 21st Century," the conference was billed as the first national event sponsored by NIDA to link researchers, community practitioners, and program administrators dedicated to drug abuse work.

NIDA is the division of the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration charged with conducting and supporting scientific research on the biological, behavioral, social, and environmental influences that place people at risk for drug abuse and addiction. The conference was designed to present NIDA's work to date, but it also served to foster better communication between researchers and practitioners. Conference organizers said they hope to promote the application of scientific findings to treatment and prevention programs.

Plenary sessions centered on broad activities and goals related to prevention and treatment, while workshops considered a whole range of specific issues (including data collection and dissemination, research on special populations, treatment program approaches for pregnant, addicted women, and policies for a drug-free workplace).

For more information on the NIDA conference, contact: Conference Management Department, CSR Incorporated, Suite 600, 1400 Eye Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005; Tel: (202) 842-7600.

Peace Institute Releases Publication on Chemical Weapons Agreements

The international community will continue to encounter difficulties in limiting the spread of chemical and biological weapons, according to participants in a recent U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) workshop. "Beyond disagreements over questions of morality and acceptable conduct," the institute notes in a recent press release, "primary impediments are the lack of proven and effective methods for verification and enforcement of international agreements."

The workshop is summarized in a recent USIP publication entitled *Is It Feasible to Negotiate Chemical and Biological Weapons Control?* Among the possible remedies discussed in the publication is a proposal for the formation of an International Chemical Weapons Authority that would offer an "insurance policy" for nonchemical-weapons states against threats from states with such weapons. Among the agency's most provocative capabilities would be the option of supplying victims with military means of defense - including a supply of chemical weapons to deter further attack.

To request more information about the publication, contact: Public Affairs and Information, USIP, 1550 M Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20005; tel: (202) 457-1700.

Conference Planned on Decade of the Brain

The National Foundation for Brain Research (NFBR) will sponsor the second annual Decade of the Brain Symposium on May 28. Conducted in cooperation with the Institute of Medicine, the session will be held at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, DC.

The conference planning committee is chaired by NFBR Vice-Chairman Dominick Pupura. The symposium will address brain research and the seven ages of humankind, including developmental problems, substance abuse, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, affective disorders, brain tumor, and dementia.

For more information, contact: Second Annual Decade of the Brain Symposium, c/o M3 Conference Management, 421 King Street, Suite 222, Alexandria, VA 22314.

COSSA Welcomes Two New Arrivals

COSSA is pleased to welcome two new arrivals. Tiffany Danitz has joined the staff as an intern. A graduate student in international affairs at American University, Ms. Danitz previously worked as an intern for the North Carolina Community College System in Raleigh, NC.

The Consortium is also delighted to announce the recent birth of Kwame Carrion, the new son of COSSA office manager Karen Carrion. Mother, father Kevin, and son are all doing fine.

SOURCES OF RESEARCH: DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

COSSA provides this information as a service and encourages readers to contact the agency for further information or application materials. Additional application guidelines and restrictions may apply.

National Institute of Justice

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) seeks to fund evaluations and assessments of various "innovative neighborhood-oriented policing" strategies designed to cope with U.S. crime and drug problems. Neighborhood-oriented policing is "an innovative public safety philosophy," according to NIJ, "that couples law enforcement resources more directly with community resources." Researchers are invited to propose process and impact evaluations of eight neighborhood-oriented policing demonstrations that were recently funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. Evaluations should include recommendations for policy and action and should also provide guidance on research needs. The eight demonstrations will be developed by Hayward, CA; Houston, TX; Louisville, KY; New York, NY; Norfolk, VA; Portland, OR; Prince Georges County, MD; and Tempe, AZ.

Budget: Up to \$400,000 will be available over an 18 month period.

Deadlines: March 1, 1991

Contact: George Shollenberger
National Institute of Justice
Public Safety and Security Program
633 Indiana Ave., NW, Room 864
Washington, DC 20531
Tel: (202) 307-2967

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT: ALCOHOL, DRUG ABUSE, AND MENTAL HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

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Office of Substance Abuse Prevention

The Office for Substance Abuse Prevention (OSAP) is seeking applications for grants to support regional and national conferences on the prevention of alcohol and drug abuse. (The agency is particularly interested in conferences relating to high-risk youth.) By funding such conferences, OSAP seeks to promote the dissemination of information to community service organizations and the general public. The agency also hopes to foster development of a national strategy for prevention.

Budget: About \$2 million will be available in FY 1991; awards will be limited to \$50,000 per conference.

Deadlines: April 24, 1991; October 1, 1991; and February 1, 1992

Contact: Joseph R. Leone
National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information
P.O. Box 2345
Rockville, MD 20852
Tel: (301) 468-2600

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT: NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

COSSA provides this information as a service and encourages readers to contact the agency for further information or application materials. Additional application guidelines and restrictions may apply.

Prevention of Low Birth Weight Research

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and the National Center for Nursing Research (NCNR) are offering grants to support clinical research on the prevention of low birth weight (LBW) infants.

LBW infants currently constitute 6.9 percent of all live births in the United States (250,000 LBW infants and 50,000 very low birth weight infants per year). LBW is the second leading cause of infant death, after birth defects.

The increased LBW rate in African-American populations is of particular concern; mortality and LBW rates in African American communities are roughly double that of white populations. Risk factors associated with LBW include: maternal age, poverty, race, low education levels, multiparity, and inadequate prenatal care. Maternal behaviors such as substance abuse, smoking, alcohol consumption, and excessive exercise or standing increase the incidence of premature labor and/or intrauterine growth retardation.

NICHD and NCNR have specifically targeted two broad research areas: (1) psychosocial and/or biobehavioral mechanisms of premature labor, and (2) intrauterine growth retardation and the effectiveness of interventions attempting to prevent LBW. The agencies are particularly interested in studies that will:

- increase the understanding of factors that help women adopt healthy rather than risky lifestyles;
- develop intervention models for reducing risk-taking behavior, including smoking cessation, reduced alcohol consumption, and improved nutrition;
- determine the effects of stress, anxiety, depression, fatigue, and adverse home and work environments on birth weight outcome;
- develop effective intervention models for reducing the impact of adverse psychological and environmental effects on LBW outcomes;
- assess both the efficacy of biological monitoring techniques in preventing pre-term delivery and the effects of self-monitoring on pregnant women; and
- assess the efficacy of new modes of delivery of prenatal care.

NICHD and NCNR encourage interdisciplinary, collaborative projects involving nurses, physicians, physiologists, and behavioral scientists.

Deadlines: February 1, 1991; June 1, 1991; and October 1, 1991.

Contact: Dr. Sharlene Weiss
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Tel: (301) 496-0523

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