

COSSA WASHINGTON UPDATE

SPECIAL EDITION

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NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION CREATES SEPARATE DIRECTORATE FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE

National Science Foundation (NSF) director Walter Massey has announced a major restructuring at NSF that includes the creation a separate directorate for the social, behavioral, and economic sciences (SBES). His announcement was made at the meeting of the National Science Board (NSB) on October 11.

The restructuring breaks up the Biological, Behavioral and Social Science Directorate (BBS) which had existed since 1976. Massey noted: "The scope of research supported by the existing directorate... has grown very broad ... and the reorganization will permit NSF to support more adequately the full range of research in these areas through two distinct research directorates." Massey's decision follows the recommendation of the BBS Task Force report "Advancing the Future." The director also consulted with a broad spectrum of scientists working in the affected research areas, as well as the NSB.

The new directorate will fund research in economics, cognitive science, linguistics, sociology, psychology, geography, political science, and anthropology. The directorate will also include such interdisciplinary fields as law and social science; decision, risk and management science; and science, technology and society.

Along with the creation of SBES, Massey announced his "disestablishment of the Scientific, Technical, International Affairs (STIA) directorate." The Science Resource Studies and International Program activities formerly in STIA will move to the new SBES. A number of other changes in the administrative structure at NSF were also announced.

Massey revealed that a national search will be undertaken for the Assistant Director for SBES. In the meantime, Frank Harris, Deputy Director of the BBS, will serve as Acting Director. Massey also named a committee, headed by Bill Harris, currently Assistant to the Director of NSF, to implement the changes.

The timetable for the putting in place of the restructuring was unclear. One NSF official suggested that the hope was to have the new Assistant Director for SBES on board by March 1. When asked whether the changes will affect the operating plan budget for FY 1992 or will take effect with the presentation of the FY 1993 budget, NSF officials said they would like the changes to happen ASAP.

Reacting to the creation of the SBES directorate, COSSA Executive Director Howard J. Silver noted: "Today's decision by Director Massey is a long overdue acknowledgement and a signal by the nation's foremost scientific research agency to the Congress and the American people that research in the social and behavioral sciences is vital and should be adequately supported at the federal level."

"Ever since proposals emerged in the early 1980s to eliminate NSF funding for social and behavioral science research, COSSA has fought for recognition of the strong contribution our nation's social scientists make to science and to public policy," Silver declared.

• SPECIAL EDITION •

This is a special edition of COSSA Washington Update. Update will remain on its regular biweekly schedule, with our next edition being published on October 21.