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NSF LOOKS TO INVESTING IN AMERICA'S FUTURE: A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR FY 2006-2011

The National Science Foundation (NSF) recently released its new five year strategic plan *Investing in America's Future*. Acknowledging the changing landscape for science where "scientific discoveries are emerging at an accelerating pace in virtually every field," the plan gives a nod to President Bush's American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI) for providing "new vision for sustaining our nation's competitive edge through innovation, exploration, and ingenuity." The ACI also proposes doubling NSF's budget over a ten year period.

The changing landscape, according to the plan, also includes "creating models of increasingly complex systems across multiple disciplines and scales." This requires "globally-engaged investigators working collaboratively across agencies and international organizations." New modes of investigation such as networked cyberinfrastructure, sensor systems, massive, accessible databases, digital libraries, unique visualization environments, and complex computational modeling "enable observations of unprecedented quality, detail, and scope."

The report emphasizes the "convergence of disciplines" and "cross-fertilization" as characteristics of contemporary science and engineering. It notes that the complexity of many of today's scientific challenges needs the expertise of individuals with different perspectives, including multinational teams. Yet, it admits at the same time that research and innovation are powerful forces for economic growth and social prosperity feeding national aspirations of nations heretofore not powerful players in the science and engineering enterprise. Thus, the need to maintain the U.S. position at the forefront of discovery and innovation, a goal of the

ACI, often comes up against the increasing globalization of science. NSF, it appears, has roles to play in both.

Another ongoing concern for the NSF strategic planners is improving science education and workforce development. They endorse discovery-based learning as a key to transforming science education, although the report admits the ways this is happening “are not well understood.” On the workforce issue, replacing the “aging” current scientists and engineers and the integration of that workforce with underrepresented groups remain important goals. The report also notes that the U.S. has “long benefited from an open-door policy” for science and engineering talent from abroad. Without mentioning immigration policy, it indicates that there is now more competition from other nations for this talent and urges building “greater capacity for productive international collaboration.”

In accomplishing its vision of “advancing discovery, innovation, and education beyond the frontiers of current knowledge, and empowering future generations in science and engineering,” NSF offers four interrelated goals: discovery, learning, research infrastructure, and stewardship. These replace the previous goals of ideas, people, tools, and organizational excellence.

In meeting the discovery goal, NSF will: 1) promote transformational, multidisciplinary research; 2) investigate the human and social dimensions of new knowledge and technology; 3) further U.S. economic competitiveness; 4) foster research that improves our ability to live sustainably on Earth; and 5) advance fundamental research in computational science and engineering, and in fundamental, applied, and interdisciplinary mathematics and statistics.

The key to advancing learning is to: 1) build strong foundations and foster innovation to improve K-12 teaching, learning, and evaluation in science and mathematics; 2) advance the fundamental knowledge base on learning, spanning a broad spectrum from animals and humans to machines; 3) prepare a diverse science and engineering workforce; 4) integrate research with education, and build capacity utilizing advanced cyberinfrastructure to transform learning; 4) develop methods to effectively bridge critical education junctures, such as linking K-12 and undergraduate scientific and technical learning; and 5) explicitly encompass informal science education to develop a scientifically literate citizenry.

On infrastructure: 1) develop a comprehensive, integrated cyberinfrastructure to drive discovery in all fields; 2) fund mid-sized instrumentation needs to fill gaps in enabling research; 3) develop unique networks and innovative partnerships, including with industry; and 4) identify and support the next generation of large research facilities.

The stewardship goal refers to NSF’s internal practices including maintaining merit review and improving its transparency, selecting high-quality peer reviewers, recruiting excellent staff, implementing a human capital management plan, enhancing training for program officers, maintaining high ethical standards, improving large facility management (of utmost interest to Congress), expanding outreach and communication, and promoting the appropriate balance among proposal success rates, award size, and award duration.

The report highlights numerous examples of key NSF investments such as Science of Science Policy, Science of Learning Centers, Climate Modeling, Complexity and Emergence, which includes the dynamics of economic phenomena as well as forecasting, preparing for, and responding to natural and human disasters, and the International Polar Year.

As with all strategic plans, translating them into action requires resources. This new strategic plan acknowledges that NSF needs to “balance investments with funding levels.” If the ACI, or as some have proposed, an even faster budget doubling occurs, implementation becomes much easier. However, funding constraints force choices and the plan notes that one key

consideration for future investment would be the “potential for impact and transformation.” This would include: transforming a scientific or engineering field; impacting a broad segment of the community; positioning the U.S. at the forefront of an emerging field; promoting teaching, learning, mentoring, training, and outreach; contributing to national research and development priorities; sustaining economic competitiveness; or enabling socially important outcomes.

Copies of the full report are available at: <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2006/nsf0648/nsf0648.jsp>

NSF's HUMAN AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS PRIORITY INVITES NEW PROPOSALS

With the solicitation for the new initiative on Science of Science and Innovation Policy due shortly, the National Science Foundation's (NSF) ongoing priority on Human and Social Dynamics (HSD) has just announced its FY 2007 solicitation. The anticipated HSD funding amount is \$55 million with an expectation of awarding 75 to 100 grants.

HSD has supported research in “understanding the dynamics of human action and development, as well as knowledge about organizational, cultural, and societal adaptation and change.” Although housed in NSF's Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE), support for the program comes from all NSF directorates as well as the Office of International Science and Engineering and the Office of Polar Programs.

This fourth solicitation continues the emphasis on three areas: agents of change, dynamics of human behavior, and decision making, risk, and uncertainty. The first of these includes research that “focuses on the dynamics that underlie, are part of, or result from large-scale transformation changes.” Examples are: globalization, population migration, infectious disease transmission, democratization, economic transformations, scientific and technological advancements, and the development of human societies over time.

The Dynamics of Behavior emphasis examines how individuals and organizations create, grow, learn, change, and act under the impetus of internal and external stimuli. It looks at the influence organizations, community, and environmental structures and processes have on these dynamics. It also includes “the interplay of evolutionary forces and human behavioral change and individual cognitive, computational, linguistic, developmental, social, biological, and other processes as dynamic evolving systems.”

Human and societal attempts to identify, characterize, evaluate, and manage situations “that call for choices and decisions” reflect the topics for study under the Decision Making, Risk and Uncertainty theme. Changing perceptions of uncertainty and risk as well as the mental and organizational processes that underlie evaluation in the face of uncertainty are also part of this area.

Reflecting the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration for HSD, all proposals must include three or more senior personnel from at least two different fields. An individual may appear as a Principal Investigator (PI), co-PI, other senior personnel or investigator on only one HSD proposal submission.

NSF expects to make four types of HSD awards:

1) Full Research Projects Type 1: Maximum total award \$750,000. Anticipated spending: \$43 million. Proposals due: **February 21, 2007**

2) Full Research Projects Type 2: Maximum total award \$1,250,000. Anticipated spending: \$10 million. Proposals due: **February 7, 2007**.

3) Exploratory Research Projects: Maximum total award \$125,000. Anticipated spending: \$2 million (for both this category and category 4 below). These awards will enable teams to perform preliminary activities on new and innovative ideas that could form the basis for future research work. Proposals due: **January 23, 2007**.

4) Research Community Development Projects: Support for interdisciplinary educational activities, including research workshops and training activities. Maximum total award \$125,000. Proposals due: **January 23, 2007**.

For more information contact: Mark Weiss 703/292-8700 or mweiss@nsf.gov . For the full solicitation go to: http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=11678&org=SBE

STUDY OF DOCTORAL EDUCATION IN THE 20th CENTURY RELEASED

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has released a report, *U.S. Doctorates in the 20th Century* that examines trends in Ph.D. acquisition during the period 1920-1999. The report focuses on how many, in what subjects, where, and who, the recipients of doctorates were.

The study has fascinating data that indicate the changing nature of doctoral education in the U.S. To begin with, in the eighty year period examined American colleges and universities awarded 1,354,873 Ph.D.s. Of these, 1,206,369 (89 percent) occurred between 1960 and 1999 when an explosion in doctoral education took place. Of these, 62 percent were in what NSF defines as science and engineering (S&E) fields (which includes the social and behavioral sciences), and 38 percent in non-S&E fields (which includes history and education).

Men received about 73 percent of all Ph.D.s during the 80 year period, but since 1960 women have increased their share so that in the last five years of the century they had reached 41 percent of all doctorates awarded. Minorities earning doctorates climbed to 14 percent of all S&E Ph.D.s and all non-S&E Ph.D.s awarded to U.S. citizens in the late nineties. The median age of Ph.D. recipients was 33.7 years in 1995-99, up from 31.8 years in 1960-64. Increasing numbers of Ph.D. earners are not entering academia. The percentage of doctoral recipients going into industry more than doubled from the early 1970s to the late 1990s, 12 to 27 percent.

A Look at Social Science Fields

During the 80 year period 136,698 Ph.D.s were awarded in the social sciences (which includes linguistics and statistics, but not history). Of these, 122,223 (89 percent) came from 1960-99. Comparable figures for disciplines such as Economics (including agricultural and econometrics) are 42,517 (1920-99), 36,550 (1960-99); Political Science (including public policy) 31,311 (1920-99), 27,487 (1960-99); Sociology (including demography) 22,480 (1920-99), 19,490 (1960-99); Geography 5,729 (1920-99), 4,922 (1960-99); and Linguistics 6,777 (1920-99), 6,484 (1960-99). In an area like Statistics, all 1,757 Ph.D.s have occurred since 1960. In Urban Affairs/Studies 2,324 of the 2,325 Ph.D.s have been granted since 1960. Of the 810 Criminology doctorates awarded, all have come since 1980.

Even within this forty year growth spurt there are differentiations. There are great leaps in the 1960s and 1970s, e.g. Political Science goes from 1,397 in the period 1960-64 to 2,438 from 1965-69 to 4,185 from 1970-74 to 4,247 from 1975-79. The 1980s saw declines for most

disciplines with the numbers returning to 1970s heights only in the last five years of the century.

These patterns also hold for Psychology, 103,463 of 112,623 and Education, 233,488 of 256,014 doctorates awarded in the last forty years of the century. For History, 18 percent of its Ph.D.s (6,482 of 36,533) were conferred before 1960. For a professional field like Social Work, most of the doctorates were earned from 1960-99 (6,485 of 6,559), but unlike the other fields, there has been steady growth during that period.

The study also includes where recipients earned their undergraduate degrees before moving on to the Ph.D. During the full 80 year period, the University of California at Berkeley tops that list, Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is second, and Michigan third. An interesting factoid is that Cornell, which was #3 on the list during the 1920-24 period, when Chicago was on top, was also #3 from 1995-99. In terms of where folks are getting their degrees, again the University of California at Berkeley is the leader during the last 80 years of the 20th Century, with the University of Wisconsin-Madison, second and Illinois third.

For the complete study authored by Lori Thurgood, Mary Golladay, and Susan Hill go to: <http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/nsf06319/>.

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENTISTS WANTED FOR DIABETES AND OBESITY RESEARCH

Approximately 20.8 million or 7 percent of Americans have diabetes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It was the sixth leading cause of death listed on death certificates in 2002. There are a number of complications associated with diabetes including: heart disease and stroke, high blood pressure, blindness, kidney disease, nervous system disease, dental disease, and amputations. It also can cause complications in pregnancy. Among women and the elderly, cardiovascular complications are the leading cause of diabetes-related morbidity and mortality. One third of people with type 2 diabetes are undiagnosed. The disease prevalence increases steadily with age. In terms of costs to the Nation, diabetes costs the U.S. \$132 billion annually, including \$20 billion a year in indirect costs (disability, work loss, premature mortality), according to a 2002 study.

Yet, research shows that the disease is both controllable and preventable. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) large-scale clinical trials of intensive lifestyle and medical interventions have shown dramatic results in preventing and controlling the disease and its associated complications. These clinical trials have established "gold standard" approaches for treating type 1 and type 2 diabetes and for preventing or delaying type 2 diabetes. Clinical trial data has established "unequivocal benefit" of rigorous control of glycemia and blood pressure in preventing the complications associated with diabetes. Smoking cessation, aspirin therapy and lipid control have also been shown to prevent morbidity. Translating the results into real-life strategies, however, has been a less successful effort. These therapies have not been widely incorporated into general health practice.

According to NIDDK's Sanford Garfield, NIDDK's Division of Diabetes, Endocrinology and Metabolic Diseases, it is this difficulty inherent in achieving good glucose control and preventing diabetes complications that makes prevention "a compelling strategy." "No where is this truer than for type 2 diabetes, says Garfield, which is clearly linked to modifiable risk factors -- overweight or obesity and a sedentary lifestyle. The Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP), one of the major clinical trial supported by NIDDK, demonstrated that intensified lifestyle or drug interventions in individuals with impaired glucose tolerate (IGT) prevented or delayed the onset of type 2 diabetes. In the DPP, lifestyle interventions, leading to moderate

weight loss and increased exercise, reduced diabetes incidence by 58 percent and the drug metformin by 31 percent compared with a placebo. DPP's striking results found that millions of people can use diet, exercise, and behavior modification to avoid developing type 2 diabetes. A study conducted in Finland produced similar effects with lifestyle interventions.

The full potential of the DPP, unfortunately, has yet to be realized. Cost effective strategies for promoting lifestyle modification leading to weight loss in high risk individuals, in real-world settings, are needed. The challenge for the Institute is how to translate the findings from NIDDK-supported clinical trials in clinical research environments to real world environments. Garfield et. al., address the "barriers hindering the adoption of new science into clinical care" in a 2003 commentary, [*Considerations for Diabetes Translation Research in Real-World Settings*](#). The barriers include behavioral impediments, cultural misunderstanding, poor diffusion of knowledge, under utilization of information technology, inefficient organization of care, financial disincentives, lack of insurance and ineffective public policies. Given these barriers, among others, translation of the clinical trials will require that they be adapted to individuals' specific circumstances. The effort will require the expertise of behavioral scientists, economists, sociologists, health services researchers, psychologists, political scientists, biostatisticians, and others to successfully address diabetes translational issues.

Accordingly, NIDDK is seeking to foster the development of cost effective and sustainable translational research studies to prevent and treat obesity and diabetes. The Institute, along with the National Institute on Nursing Research (NINR), and the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) has issued a program announcement, *Translational Research for the Prevention and Control of Diabetes and Obesity* (PAR-06-457), for proposals that examine interventions that have the potential for wide dissemination to clinical practice, individuals and communities at risk.

Successful proposals will focus on developing preliminary data demonstrating that the proposed approach is feasible and will improve weight control and glycemia. The announcement is specifically for the translation of interventions that have previously been shown to be efficacious in the research setting. Proposed studies must address issues of sustainability, cost effectiveness, and dissemination. Interventions should be as close to cost neutral as possible. NIDDK encourages studies addressing minority populations at disproportionate risk for obesity, diabetes and diabetes complications.

The general goal is to select a design that maximizes generalizability and minimizes bias. Relevant topics include, but are not limited to:

- Strategies to promote the adoption of healthy lifestyles which will reduce obesity and diabetes;
- Studies of interventions in work place settings or managed care organizations;
- Strategies to enhance glycemic control and reduce risk factors for the development of the complications of type 1 or type 2 diabetes such as blood pressure and lipids;
- Strategies for less burdensome and most cost effective methods to identify those with or at risk for pre-diabetes and/or type 2 diabetes;
- Studies that test interventions to enhance long-term maintenance of weight loss and prevention of weight regain after weight loss;
- Studies that test interventions to treat childhood and adolescent overweight in primary care community settings;
- Strategies to overcome health care system barriers that reduce the efficiency or effectiveness of patient/provider interaction and health outcomes.

The Institute is particularly interested in studies to improve self-management and enhance health care delivery to underserved and minority populations.

The announcement underscores that studies may use methodology from the biomedical sciences, social and behavioral sciences, epidemiology, health services, and dissemination research. Any intervention aimed at producing a behavioral change should be grounded in behavior change theory, and included in the intervention.

NIDDK indicates that most translational research will require a multidisciplinary research team. Accordingly, a variety of researchers may be required for the studies, including, but not limited to endocrinologists, public health physicians, primary care physicians, epidemiologists, statisticians, psychologists, health educators, sociologists, nutritionists, and other health-related professionals. Interaction between NIH-funded researchers and investigators at the Center for Diseases Control's Prevention Research Centers is also encouraged.

For more information see: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-06-532.html> or contact Sanford Garfield at (301) 594-8803 or via email at sg50o@nih.gov.

NIH SOLICITS INPUT FOR ROADMAP TRANS-NIH STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is seeking input from the scientific community, health professionals, patient advocates, and the general public for innovative and cross-cutting initiatives that will improve and accelerate biomedical research and its impact on the health of the nation. It is the first step in the NIH's process of identifying a new cohort of "Roadmap" trans-NIH strategic initiatives for Fiscal Year 2008.

This idea-gathering phase has also included obtaining input from scientist consultants and the NIH Institutes and Centers (IC). This request-for-information (RFI) provides an opportunity for respondents to submit their own ideas and to view ideas nominated to date. The NIH expects to spend \$30 - 50 million per year from within the currently projected Roadmap budget for approximately five to eight new five-year (or in exceptional cases up to 10-year) initiatives.

Specifically, the RFI invites input and ideas on ways to:

- Address specific barriers to basic, translational, or clinical research through development of novel tools, technologies, services, etc.
- Fill knowledge gaps that impede research across a broad spectrum of health science.

NIH invites individuals to submit ideas and/or to view the ideas that have been submitted to date. All ideas should meet the following criteria for new trans-NIH strategic initiatives:

- Is the proposed initiative truly transforming? Could it dramatically affect how biomedical and/or behavioral research is conducted over the next decade?
- Will the outcomes from the proposed initiatives synergistically promote and advance the individual missions of the Institutes and Centers to benefit health?
- Does the proposed initiative require participation from NIH as a whole and/or does it address an area(s) of science that does not clearly fall within the mission of any one IC or OD program office?
- Is the proposed initiative something that no other entity is likely or able to do, and is there a public health benefit to having the results of the research in the public domain?

In addition to these general criteria, selection of initiatives will be based on whether the proposed programs can either be achieved within a five-10 year time frame or can be expected to become integrated with IC-funded research within that time frame. Emphasizing that the intent of the Roadmap is to stimulate research in new or under-represented areas, the RFI

stipulates that the ideas should not be disease specific and should not address problems or opportunities that fall under the purview of one NIH Institute or Center.

Responses will be accepted through Friday, November 17, 2006. Persons, groups, and organizations interested in submitting ideas are invited to submit up to three ideas in which a health research problem is identified along with a proposal to resolve it. Nominations for new ideas and comments on previously submitted ideas can be entered at the following web site: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfi_files/NOT-OD-07-011_rfi_add.htm

All nominations submitted will be screened to ensure they meet the criteria for Roadmap trans-NIH strategic initiatives outlined above and will be examined in light of existing or planned research. The ideas will subsequently be reviewed and prioritized by NIH IC Directors and the NIH Director, who will consult with the Advisory Council to the Director (ACD) prior to selection of an FY 2008 cohort of new initiatives.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ALTERNATIVE IRB MODELS

On November 20 -21, 2006 the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP), the National Institutes of Health, the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), and the Department of Veterans Affairs will hold a conference designed to enhance the protection of human subjects of research by exploring the use, under appropriate circumstances, of innovative IRB [institutional review boards] models as alternatives to local IRBs. COSSA is co-sponsoring the conference.

The goals of the conference are to discuss how to: (1) optimize and facilitate institutions' access to appropriate ethical and scientific expertise for reviewing increasingly sophisticated projects, and (2) optimize institutional resources to review such projects.

The changing nature of research involving human subjects, particularly as it relates to investigations involving multi-institutional trials, has created the need for innovative ideas regarding IRB models. Using alternative IRB models to enhance the safety of research subjects and the efficiency of the research process is important for all types of research, including biomedical, social, behavioral science, and health services research.

There is no fee to attend the meeting. The conference brochure and agenda is available on OHRP's website <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/> under the "Special Issues" bullet. Register on line at <http://www.aamc.org/meetings/>

NCHS HEALTH POLICY FELLOWSHIPS

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) in conjunction with AcademyHealth are seeking applications for their 2007 Health Policy Fellowship. This program brings visiting scholars in health services research-related disciplines to the NCHS to collaborate on studies of interest to policymakers and the health services research community. A new solicitation of applications for the NCHS/Academy Fellowship will be made each year during the life of the program.

Applicants should submit proposals that demonstrate knowledge of the NCHS data systems selected for study and their appropriateness for the proposed investigation. Proposals should be sufficiently specific to show adequate understanding of the surveys in relation to the research question and the feasibility of completing the study within the proposed time frame. To learn more about the fellowship including [stipend](#) information and profiles of [past fellows](#) or how to apply, visit www.academyhealth.org/nchs.

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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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