COSSA WASHINGTON UPDATE

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In This Issue

Election 2010: Republicans Sweep to Power in House; Narrow Democrats Margin in Senate

With the third wave election in a row, the Republicans retook the majority in the House of Representatives. Needing 39 seats to reclaim power, they won over 60 seats to give them a margin of 239 to 187 (Nine races are still too close to call). On the Senate side, they picked up six seats to narrow the Democratic margin from 59-41 to 53-47 (assuming independents Joe Lieberman (CT) and Bernard Sanders (VT) continue to caucus with the Democrats).

The shift in the House will bring new leaders to the chamber and new chairman to the committees and subcommittees. Rep. John Boehner (R-OH) ascends to the Speakership. Rep. Eric Cantor (R-VA) will be the Majority Leader, with fellow self-anointed "young gun" Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) expected to win election as Republican Whip. Forced to reduce its top leaders from three to two, Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) announced that she will remain as the party's leader in the House; this session as Minority Leader. This squeezes Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD) and Rep. James Clyburn (D-SC) into a contest for Minority Whip.

New Committee Leadership

At the Committee level, Rep. Ralph Hall (R-TX), who has served as Ranking Member as both a Democrat and Republican, should get his chance to finally Chair the Science and Technology (S&T) Committee. In announcing his desire to run the panel, Hall said: "We must also conduct strong oversight over this Administration in key areas including climate change, scientific integrity, energy research and development (R&D), cybersecurity, and science education." Although the S&T Committee is a panel members leave when opportunities arise for service on committees like Ways and Means, Energy and Commerce, and Appropriations, and the Republican members should have those options as the Committee ratios will flip-flop, some may remain. Rep. Paul Broun (R-GA) is in line to take over the Investigations and Oversight Subcommittee and could make life miserable for White House Science Adviser John Holdren with whom Broun has already clashed over issues of scientific integrity. The Research and Science Education Subcommittee, led in the 111th Congress by Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-IL), a political scientist, has no obvious successor since current Ranking Republican Vern Ehlers (R-MI) will retire.

On the Appropriations Committee, current chairman Rep. David Obey (D-WI) will retire. Republicans may bypass seniority in selecting the panel's new leader. Rep. Jerry Lewis (R-CA), who chaired the Committee in the 108th and 109th Congress would like to do it again, but would need a waiver from the GOP Caucus. Rep. Harold Rogers (R-KY), currently Ranking Member on the Homeland Security Subcommittee is next in line and wants the position. The leadership, however, may have other people in mind. Rep. Norm Dicks (D-WA) will probably be the Ranking Member.

At the Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee, which has jurisdiction over funding for the National Science Foundation, Census Bureau, Bureau of Economic Analysis, National Institute of Justice, and Bureau of Justice Statistics, Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA), currently the Ranking Member, is likely to take the reins.

At the Labor, Health and Human Services Subcommittee, which has jurisdiction over NIH, CDC, the Department of Education, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, with current Ranking Republican Todd Tiahrt (R-KS) leaving the Congress, the identity of the new chairman is uncertain. Maneuvering for other Subcommittee leadership positions will continue as the new majority figures out where to put people.

Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI), who has issued a manifesto, "Roadmap for America's Future," on how to reduce the federal budget, will lead the House Budget Committee. Rep. Jon Kline (R-MN) will take over the Education and Labor Committee. The last time the Republicans controlled the House, they took Labor out of the panel's name and replaced it with "workforce." Kline will now have the lead in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA) will replace Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA) as chairman of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee. This panel has jurisdiction over the Census Bureau as well as the ability to investigate the Obama Administration, which Issa has vowed to do.

Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX), one of the GOP's point people on immigration policy, will be the new head of the House Judiciary Committee. Rep. Dave Camp (R-MI) will lead the Ways and Means Committee, which aside from tax and trade policy, also looks at poverty policy. The Energy and Commerce Committee chairman is expected to be Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI). This Committee aside from energy policy, also has jurisdiction over the NIH and other health agencies. Rep. Frank Lucas (R-OK) will likely head the Agriculture Committee as it prepares the next farm bill.

On the Senate side, there will be considerably fewer changes. The leadership is expected to remain the same in both parties with Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV), fresh from his reelection victory, and Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL) will lead the majority Democrats and Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Sen. Jon Kyl (R-AZ) will lead the enlarged GOP faction.

With Sen. Blanche Lincoln's (D-AR) defeat, there will be a new head of the Agriculture Committee. With Sen. Arlen Specter's (D-PA) departure, there will be a new head of the Crime Subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary panel. The margins on Committees will probably shrink.

New Members

Among the new members of the House are two who have Ph.D.s in Political Science. Rep.-elect Chris Gibson (R-NY) earned his doctorate at Cornell and has spent most of his life in the armed forces. Rep.-elect Tim Huelskamp (R-KS) has a Ph.D. from American University, but has spent most of his life as a farmer. These replace two members with political science doctorates who lost their races - Rep. Chris Carney (D-PA) and Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV).

What does it all mean? The new majority in the House believes that the election provided a mandate to change the course of policy from extending the Bush tax cuts, repealing health care reform, and cutting federal spending. One campaign idea was to roll back non-defense, non-homeland security, spending to FY 2008 levels. The American Association for the Advancement of Science has calculated that this would cost NSF $1 billion or 19 percent of its budget and the NIH $2.9 billion or nine percent of its budget. A small agency like the Bureau of Justice Statistics, which has been provided increases in its funding the past two years to redesign the National Crime Victimization Survey, would lost about 45 percent of its funds.

Another concern is the capacity of the new majority to attack science it doesn't like from climate change to social and behavioral research. For example, Sen-elect Pat Toomey (R-PA) has previously gone after research on sexual behavior supported by the NIH (see Update, July 14, 2003).

The 111th Congress will return on November 15th to see if it can finish up the FY 2011 appropriations process. The government is currently running under a Continuing Resolution (CR) that expires on December 3. Either an Omnibus spending bill will get enacted, including all 12 spending bills, or the CR will get extended into the new Congress. The lame duck session starting next week will also have to figure out what to do with the Bush tax cuts, which also expire at the end of this year. Also lingering is the reauthorization of the America COMPETES bill, which includes NSF's reauthorization.

In addition, the President's Fiscal Commission charged with proposing ways to reduce the deficit is scheduled to release its report on December 1. It should be an interesting two months.

COSSA Holds Annual Meeting

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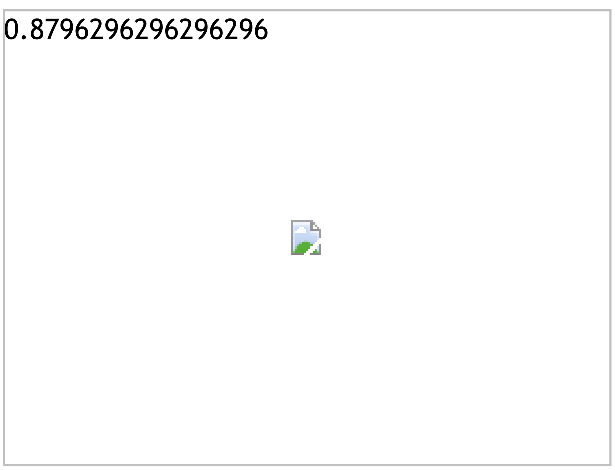

On November 1, COSSA held its invitation-only annual meeting with closed to 75 attendees. This year's meeting focused on "Social Sciences and America's Future." Speakers from NSF and NIH addressed the future of the social and behavioral sciences at those two agencies. The head of the Bureau of Economic Analysis spoke on the role of statistics in America's economic future. COSSA President Aletha Huston examined Children and America's Future. A panel discussed the future of American Higher Education. The following summarizes the talks in more detail.

Huston, Gutmann, and Karen Cook of Stanford and a member of the COSSA Board at the Annual Meeting.

Myron Gutmann on SBE and NSF's Future

Myron Gutmann, Assistant Director for the Social, Behavioral and Economic Science directorate (SBE) at the National Science Foundation (NSF), led off the meeting. He began by discussing the diversity of SBE's role at NSF and with other agencies across the government.

SBE, he told the crowd, has important connections with all the other sciences at NSF as the other directorate leaders see SBE research as "critical." This has allowed SBE to participate in a whole host of NSF initiatives, particularly in the areas of energy and the environment, and technology and innovation. In the energy and environment area, SBE has been part of the Science Engineering and Education for Sustainability program, the Long Term Ecological Networks, including the urban area centers, climate modeling, and the U.S. Global Change Research Program.

In technology and innovation, the SBE-led Science of Science and Innovation Policy (SciSIP) program, the focus on ethical, legal, social, environmental and health in the multi-agency nanotechnology program, and the Cyber-enabled Discovery and Innovation program, are all fostering the participation of SBE researchers in cross-directorate activities.

Gutmann, who prior to coming to NSF led the Interuniversity Consortium on Political and Social Research (ICPSR), indicated a significant interest in instituting explorations on how to archive social media interactions. This is connected to the implementation of a new NSF policy on Data Policy that will require researchers to document data management plans part of their NSF proposals beginning in January 2011.

Finally, Gutmann described the response to the call for the SBE community to prepare white papers suggesting ideas for research and infrastructure proposals "to frame the next generation of SBE research" (see Update, September 13, 2010). The idea, he noted, was to move beyond "near-term funding cycles." The response was significant, with 244 of these papers received by the October 30 deadline. The directorate has begun to synthesize these. Input will also come from the SBE Advisory Committee and SBE program staff as well as regional meetings across the country. The goal, Gumann concluded, is to get SBE and its constituents to begin what will become "a continuous process for thinking about the future" that will also, he hopes, bring increased resources to SBE.

Deborah Olster on Behavioral and Social Research Opportunities at NIH

Deborah Olster, Acting Director of the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), spoke about the role of those sciences in NIH's portfolio.

She noted that funding for behavioral and social sciences research at NIH amounted to $3.47 billion in FY 2009. This does not include spending from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The funding is from the all the Institutes and Centers at NIH.

New director Francis Collins has outlined five major opportunities for NIH. Of these, three encompass behavioral and social science research: putting science to work for the betterment of health care reform; encouraging a greater emphasis on global health; and reinvigorating the biomedical research community.

Olster noted how Comparative Effectiveness Research (CER) is a major part of the implementation of health care reform. NIH supported studies, such as the Diabetes Prevention Program, is one example of this research. There are a number of solicitations using ARRA funds involving decision making, behavioral economics, and workforce development as part of CER.

Continuing to examine the causes and solutions to health disparities, particularly as it relates to AIDS, is another focus of behavioral and social research at NIH. To this end, Olster announced that OBSSR has contracted with the University of Michigan's School of Public Health to establish the Network on Inequality, Complexity, and Health. In addition, NIH continues to fund ten Centers for Population Health and Health Disparities.

As part of research on healthcare cost containment, Olster noted that NIH will support research on the "Economics of Prevention." The Common Fund in the Office of the Director will supply the money. In addition, NIH is interested in the efficient delivery of effective healthcare and will support science on organizational structure and practice design.

Olster also discussed the initiatives on Science of Behavior Change (see Update, February 8, 2010). The categories for support for this program include: behavioral and social processes; biopsychosocial research; and methodology and measurement. She also mentioned the Basic

Behavioral and Social Science Opportunity Network (OppNet). There was a conference examining OppNet on October 28-29 (see other story). For more information on OppNet funding solicitations, see Update, May 17, August 9, September 13, and September 27, 2010.

She concluded by indicating that OBSSR would be supporting a host of training activities.

For Olster's slides from her talk go to: www.cossa.org. For more information about OBSSR go to: http://obssr.od.nih.gov.

Steve Landefeld on Statistics and the Economic Future

Steve Landefeld, director of the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), began his talk by thanking COSSA for all its efforts on behalf of BEA, particularly its FY 2011 budget. He noted that among the key issues confronting the nation in late 2010 are: the widening distribution of income; the financial and housing crisis; sustaining and stimulating growth through innovation and R&D; and the increasing cost of health care.

BEA plays a significant role in examining these issues through its data collection activities, according to Landefeld. Within the key measure of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) BEA can measure economic progress and sustainability, he declared. He noted that some have argued for expanding GDP to include measures of "well-being" and even "happiness," but so far that has not happened (see story on basic research at NIH later in this issue).

What you can do, Landefeld explained, is look at alternative estimates of the current GDP using already available BEA data. For example, if you examine personal income, personal income per capita, or disposable personal income, you get a much clearer picture of the economic difficulties of recent times. Adjusting for regional price differences also helps present more meaningful data on household income, he remarked. Another clarifying factor, Landefeld suggested, would measure retirement income in the state where the person now resides, rather than the state where he worked.

With regard to sustainability, the stock market bubble of the 1990s and the housing market bubble of 2007 passem, are closely tied to the relationship of personal income to savings rates and housing assets. The closer the relationship, the less likely for bubbles to develop, he asserted.

A goal for BEA, Landerfeld indicated, is to get more complete data on institutions that played a large role in the crisis such as hedge funds, private equity funds, and structured investment vehicles. We also need more detailed data by type of instrument and more data on leverage by institution and by instrument.

Looking at the contribution of research and development (R&D), Landefeld noted that BEA's Satellite Account demonstrated that between 1959-2004, R&D accounted for five percent of growth in real GDP. Between 1995-2004, R&D's contribution rose to seven percent; in comparison, business investment in commercial and all other types of buildings accounted for just over two percent of real GDP growth. R&D's stepped-up contribution is almost as large as the contribution of computers in the existing GDP measure, he concluded.

For Landefeld's presentation slides go to: www.cossa.org.

Aletha Huston on Children's Future

Continuing a new tradition, Aletha Huston, Priscilla Pond Flawn Regents Professor of Child Development at the University of Texas at Austin and COSSA President for 2009-10, gave the luncheon address. She discussed "Children and America's Future."

She concluded that:

1) Current U.S. anti-poverty policies have limited effectiveness for families and children.

2) A theory of change based primarily on individual skills and attributes as the basis of poverty is incomplete without incorporating social and institutional causes.

3) Defining poverty by income alone assumes that primary issue is material deprivation.

4) Defining poverty as social exclusion assumes that social norms for standard of living and social participation are important.

5) Resulting policies could be more integrated and coherent, with more emphasis on improving child well-being for its own sake.

Child poverty continues to persist in the United States, she demonstrated. The latest figures indicate almost 21 percent of those under 18 years of age were poor in 2009. Poverty, for Huston, includes economic hardship and deprivation and social exclusion. Expand the definition to the OECD notion of child well-being and the U.S. ranks near the bottom of 21 OECD nations. Poverty can be absolute, the U.S. definition demarks a certain amount of income, or relative as in material deprivation related to the rest of society. Social exclusion as defined by the European Union suggests: "the poor are those whose resources (material, cultural, and social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the Member States in which they live."

Two different explanations for poverty, according to Huston, are individual deficiencies of the poor and the economic, political and social structures of the society. Both are true, she asserted. U.S. policies are more geared toward changing individuals and they have not been effective.

For adults U.S. policies have included: job training; sanctions and time limits under the Welfare Reform Act; work-contingent income programs such as the Earned Income Tax Credit; marriage promotion programs; and child support enforcement. For children, the policies are home visiting programs, early childhood education programs, and parent training programs. To cure the social causation of poverty, the government has tried: job creation; minimum wages; wage supplements; anti-discrimination policies; publicly supported job training centers, quality education, and parks and safety measures.

Early intervention programs have examined and concluded: brain research demonstrates that the neurological architecture of the brain is established in the first few years of life and is built by complex interactions of experience with genes; the affect of income differences in cognitive development appear early in life; family income in the early years is important for intellectual development and academic achievement; and quality early intervention programs can improve children's life chances.

Social behavior problems are affected by a low income childhood leading to poor social skills, behavior problems in middle childhood, psychological distress, arrests, and non-marital child bearing, she said.

Evidence-based early interventions have posited that improving skills and "readiness" of the child will increase the child's ability to master demands of school and to succeed in adulthood. Thus, home visiting, Early Head Start, Head Start, and other programs have targeted poor children and their parents. Their success has been mixed. New random assignment experiments suggest that earnings supplements and enhanced child care assistance have a positive effect on the child's experiences, although there are anomalies for adolescents.

Project New Hope, for which Huston is the Principal Investigator, starts with the premise that if you work, you should not be poor. Contingent on employment, it will provide individuals and families with earnings supplements, child care subsidies, and health care subsidies. These, in turn, produce improved school performance, reduced social behavior problems, and increased positive social behavior.

With regard to social exclusion factors, New Hope parents who are given help to meet basic needs for food, housing, and utilities also can ponder "Extras" such as new clothes, and birthday presents for their kids and even such big ticket items as a home purchase, appliances, or a car. Their children have peer acceptance and status and the "extras" predict better social behavior. Therefore, Huston argues that policies need to go beyond reducing material hardship to increasing child well-being, social participation, bringing the poor into the mainstream. She recommends framing policy research around social inclusion programs.

For Huston's presentation slides go to: www.cossa.org.

Panel on Higher Education's Future

The meeting concluded with a panel on Higher Education's Future. Participants were Peter Henderson, Study Director for the National Academies' Board on Higher Education and the Workforce; Gary Sandefur, Dean of Letters and Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a member of the COSSA Board of Directors; and Jack Crowley, consultant to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Henderson described the Committee's origin, charge, and membership. The Committee held its first meeting on September 21 and 22 (see Update, September 27, 2010). The panel, chaired by former Dupont CEO Charles Holliday, grew out of a request from Senators and Members of the House who had requested the study that became the report *Rising Above the Gathering Storm*.

The Committee has 22 people, which is rather large for an Academy study, Henderson suggested. It includes current and former university presidents and a number of folks from business and industry. The goal is to look down the road 10-20 years and figure out what the role of the research university will be in the American landscape. Specifically, the charge asks the panel: "What are the top ten actions that Congress, the federal government, state governments, research universities, and others could take to assure the ability of the American research university to maintain the excellence in research and doctoral education needed to help the United States compete, prosper, and achieve national goals for health, energy, the environment, and security in the global community of the 21st century."

The panel will hold a convocation on November 22, 2010 prior to its next meeting on the following two days. The full report is scheduled for release in the summer of 2011.

Sandefur responded to COSSA Executive Director Howard Silver's questions sent in advance (Silver moderated the panel). He exclaimed that American's universities were still the "best in the world," citing world rankings, enrollment from overseas, and the Chinese emulating our research university model.

The challenge, he argued, is how to maintain the health and growth of public universities in light of state funding difficulties. Therefore, what the federal government does with regard to these universities is important, Sandefur said. More advocacy for federal support for research is one strategy. He took the opportunity to praise COSSA's efforts. Another is to seek greater support from Foundations that have traditionally supported higher education activities such as Ford, Mellon, and Rockefeller.

With State support dwindling, some flagship public universities are seeking more autonomy from state control, he noted. This only leads to having state universities joining the privates in seeking private philanthropy, acknowledging that as Dean he spends almost 30 percent of his time fund-raising. Another consequence of reduced support, Sandefur indicated, is that institutions are losing faculty, many to international universities who entice with fabulous offers of salary, research support, and other amenities.

Sandefur also dismissed the competition from community colleges and on-line colleges to the major public universities. Although these institutions have their place, they are not a threat to the four-year, on-campus experience that most students still seek, Sandefur argued.

Finally, he suggested that keeping up with alumni is important and that the liberal arts experience remains significant, illustrating this with a story about a Wisconsin alumnus who became a physician but because of his undergraduate art history major could give an excellent lecture on the architecture of Florence.

Crowley, who spent many years serving in federal relations' roles for both MIT and the Association of American Universities, disagreed with Sandefur. He quoted Charles Vest, former MIT President and now head of the National Academy of Engineering, who told Thomas Friedman in a New York Times op-ed that the U.S. was falling behind in a number of important indicators of competitiveness and research prowess. Vest said, "This is not a pretty picture, and it cannot be wished away."

Raising a number of provocative questions, Crowley wondered whether it was "time to rethink the model" so that "more productive collaborations across disciplines, schools, institutions and sectors - and all of them with industry and government be created?" Furthermore, "We seem unable to take a long-term view," he declared. Acknowledging that "Institutions simply do poorly in unstable financial environments," he argued against any strategy that advocated doubling budgets, since they are usually followed by flat or declining budgets.

Turning to the social and behavioral sciences, he noted that the American Academy of Arts and Sciences is continuing to lead a national effort to strengthen the humanities and social sciences. Last month, Crowley informed the audience, the Academy received a congressional request to do an assessment of "the state of humanistic and social scientific scholarship". The letter asks for the top 10 things all stakeholders should do, using "available resources" to "maintain", "sustain and strengthen" national excellence to humanistic and social scientific teaching and research. Planning has begun, he remarked.

Since "Our country's challenges, and intense political debates that flow from them, are driven now primarily by economic, scientific and technological challenges and needs,", he challenged the COSSA disciplines to "think more systemically, combine their expertise in the new ways increasingly seen in the physical and life sciences and engineering, and tackle these deeper shaping forces?"

He closed by referencing Vannevar Bush, who in *Science: The Endless Frontier* established the base-line principles of competition and merit as the foundation of a national system. Yet, now "that unifying vision is being replaced steadily by another, one rooted primarily in local needs, local aspirations and local self interest." Crowley concluded by asking: "How is this shift affecting the vitality and integrity of our government institutions and their processes as well as those of our university enterprise as a whole? Do these systemic changes promise future gains or losses?"

New NSF Director Meets with EHR Advisory Committee

Two weeks into the job, new National Science Foundation (NSF) director Subra Suresh met with the Education and Human Resources (EHR) Advisory Committee on November 3. The Committee is chaired by Lee Todd, President of the University of Kentucky.

Calling himself "the new kid on the block," Suresh told the panel that he owed his scientific career as a materials scientist and engineer to grants he received from NSF. This gave him a "from the trenches" view of how NSF operates. (For more on Suresh's background see Update, June 14, 2010).

Accompanied by Deputy Director-designate Cora Marrett, Suresh acknowledged the difficult budgetary times ahead and noted that choosing priorities will become even more important. The senior NSF staff, he announced, is about to go on retreat to determine what "low hanging fruit," NSF can pick off in the coming year, particularly in STEM education and pipeline diversity. In addition, NSF must plan for the mid-term and long-term by "sowing seeds" for future activities, Suresh indicated.

While NSF will continue to fund all science, a question policy makers are asking, Suresh said, is how to "add value" to the science. He suggested "adding increments" to the science to foster innovation activities, perhaps in partnership with the Department of Commerce, something with which Chairman Todd concurred. He also noted the work of the Engineering Research Centers and the Science and Technology Centers as ways NSF tries to make those innovation connections.

Another concern, according to Suresh, is getting NSF better known. He was disappointed that the participants from around the country at the recent White House Science Fair were unaware of NSF's contributions. He noted that researchers, academics, and "PBS watchers" knew the Foundation, but not many other people beyond that small group.

Advisory Committee members expressed some concern with the configuration of NSF's components. Marrett responded that EHR was in a different situation since it was not considered a "research directorate" like the other six at NSF, and decision-making was in the hands of programs rather than divisions, as in the others. In addition, Marrett suggested that NSF's goal of broadening participation in science needs a research-driven approach.

Suresh informed the Committee that he had spent considerable time with NSF's EHR staff as part of his tour of the directorates to understand how each part of the Foundation works. He is doing this with all the directorates and next time around, Suresh expects to have more information to impart to the advisory committee.

OppNet: Expanding Opportunities in Basic Behaviorial and Social Science Research

On October 28 -29, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) OppNet, (NIH Basic Behavioral and Social Science Research Opportunity Network) held a two day meeting, "OppNet: Expanding Opportunities in Basic Behavioral and Social Science Research," to continue to chart future directions for the NIH initiative. Meeting participants provided NIH with opinions on directions in the basic social and behavioral sciences. There was also an exploration of longer-range issues in the field. Welcoming participants, OppNet's Facilitator Bill Ellwood (Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research) informed them that the input garnered from the meeting would inform OppNet's strategic process over the next few years.

OppNet's mission "is to pursue opportunities for strengthening basic behavioral and social science research (b-BSSR) at the NIH while innovating beyond existing investments." The goals of the initiative include: (1) advancing basic behavioral and social science research through activities and initiatives that build a body of knowledge about the nature of behavior and social systems; and (2) prioritizing activities and initiatives that focus on basic mechanisms of behavior and social processes that are relevant to the missions and public health challenges of multiple NIH Institutes, Centers and Offices (ICOs) and that build upon existing NIH investments without replicating them.

NIH Deputy Director Lawrence Tabak thanked OppNet Steering Committee co-chairs: Jeremy Berg (Director, National Institute of General Medical Sciences) and Richard Hodes (Director, National Institute on Aging), and OppNet Coordinating Committee co-chairs: Deborah Olster (Acting

Director, Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research) and Paige McDonald (Chief, Basic and Biobehavioral Research Branch, National Cancer Institute) for their efforts in moving the initiative forward "at a rapid pace since its announcement in 2009. Their efforts, said Tabak, "underscores the enthusiasm of the whole field." Tabak recognized the $10 million in funding provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the subsequent release of the 10 funding opportunity announcements (FOA). He indicated that he anticipated the release of a "few more" FOAs before the end of the calendar year.

According to Tabak, the NIH Office of the Director views the first year of OppNet "as being very successful." "More of the NIH community recognizes the contribution of basic behavioral and social sciences research," said Tabak. "It aligns with the agency's overall mission, particular the five themes outlined" by NIH director Francis Collins. He noted that the initiative fits well with the translational research objective as Collins looks at ways NIH can benefit health care reform, particularly how people understand risk, make decisions, and how they interpret messages. Tabak also highlighted the areas of health screening and adherence. Concluding his remarks, he encouraged participants to "maintain the pace and optimism." Citing the Neuroscience Blueprint and the Obesity Task Force as examples, Tabak concluded that the "NIH can make progress when we feed off of each other's synergy."

Olster delivered a brief report on the progress and future of OppNet. She pointed out that President Obama gets the idea of basic science. Olster shared that it has been a "remarkable" year since the announcement and launching of OppNet. Berg concurred with Olster, noting that it had been a "very exciting first year" for OppNet. He shared that a leadership meeting of NIH and the Food and Drug Administration the previous day, behavior issues were repeatedly raised. He also noted that NIGMS is slowly incorporating behavioral support.

Responding to a participant concern regarding what happens when OppNet expires, McDonald emphasized that what is important is that b-bssr has a home for the long haul so that the NIH can sustain investigator-initiated applications. She encouraged participants not to use OppNet as a time-limited opportunity, but an opportunity to change the culture of NIH to one where basic behavioral science research is valued and senior scientists begin to see NIH as a funding source. If the NIH does not have the applications, it is not seen as a priority, McDonald insisted. She acknowledged, however, that it will require a lot of work to grow b-bssr.

Providing concluding remarks, Hodes recounted the importance of the meeting and declared the first year of OppNet a "great success... We have come a long way in social science research at NIH." He stressed that he considers it an opportunity and privilege to continue lead OppNet given its potential for coordination and the common good.

IES Board Approves Research Priorities

The National Board for Education Sciences (NBES), meeting in Washington on November 1, unanimously approved a statement of priorities for federal education research programs for the coming year. Following its legislative mandate, the draft priorities had been published in the *Federal Register* and subjected to a period of public comment prior to consideration by the NBES. The draft was revised following public comment and discussion by the NBES members in October (see Update, October 11, 2010)

Responding to IES Director John Easton, the NBES has developed a statement of priorities that seek to achieve both research rigor and relevance. A statement of the continuing emphasis on rigor, found in the first paragraph, states that: "The Institute seeks to understand causal linkages to the greatest extent possible by conducting or sponsoring rigorous studies that support such inferences." A statement pointing to aspirations for increased relevance appears in the second paragraph: "The work of the Institute is also grounded in the principle that effective education research must address the interest and needs of education practitioners and policymakers, as well as students, parents and community members."

There are two new research approaches reflected in the priorities: (1) the considerable attention given to encouraging researchers to develop partnerships with stakeholder groups such as education practitioners and policy makers, and (2) responsibility for increasing capacity of education policy makers and practitioners to use knowledge generated from high quality research through a wide variety of agency outreach activities.

Also at the meeting, the NBES elected as its new chair Jon Baron, head of the Coalition for Evidenced Based Policy. Meeting dates and agendas for the public meetings of NBES are posted in the *Federal Register*; the next meeting will be in January, 2011.

Gerald Sroufe of the American Educational Research Association contributed this story.

NAS Board Gets Update from NIH and NSF on Basic Research

Basic behavioral researchat the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the role of basic behavioral sciences in subjective well-being research supported by the National Institute on Aging (NIA) were among the topics discussed at the October 21 meeting of the National Academies' Board on Behavioral, Cognitive, & Sensory Sciences (BBCSS). Myron Gutmann, Assistant Director for the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE), also updated the BBCSS on the progress of the SBE's recent request from individuals and groups to contribute white papers outlining grand research challenges in these sciences (see related story).

BBCSS goals are to: engage academic and other research scientists working in the behavioral, cognitive, and sensory sciences in the consideration of major national policy issues; promote and advance cross-disciplinary inquiry into complex scientific and policy questions; provide a forum for objective, independent, and rigorous deliberation among researchers, the public, the media, Congress, professional associations, the NSF, and other federal agencies; draw attention to the significance of the behavioral, cognitive, and sensory sciences to national policy; and to link these sciences to the wider range of scientific and technological questions addressed by the National Academies. Philip Rubin, President of Haskins Laboratories and former director of NSF's Division on Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences, is the Board's chair.

'Basic Behavioral Research at the National Cancer Institute'

William Klein, Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences (DCCPS), NCI brought the Board up-to-date on the activities of the Behavioral Research Program (BRP) within DCCPS. The NCI's Behavioral Research Program initiates, supports and evaluates a comprehensive program in behavioral research aimed at addressing a wide range of cancer outcomes. The Program's primary foci includes: basic and biobehavioral research, health communication and informatics, health promotion (how health behavior leads to cancer outcomes), cancer screening, tobacco control, and scientific methods (measurement, team science).

Klein began by noting the relevancy of basic behavioral research to a number of policy-related issues currently under discussion. In the area of cancer screening, Klein explained that he is referring to behavior in the health care context. He informed the Board that the BRP has discussed broadening the scope of its cancer screening portfolio to focus on other behaviors such as individuals' decision to participate in a clinical trial, which in itself involve risks and benefits. He noted that in the area of tobacco control, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) will be rolling out a strategic plan. The Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) mandate to regulate tobacco has implications for behavioral research, Klein observed. He reported that BRP has a small group that is focused on the science of team science, i.e., how do you get people to work together. This approach includes bringing in investigators from a number of disciplines around a theory. BRP is also examining how people come up with constructs and if they use constructs of others. What are the measures? The division, said Klein, is attempting to provide the tools to allow people to do a better job.

Klein reported that BRP's recent priorities related to BBCSS include: numeracy and decision-making, theory testing and application, constructs and measures, and innovations in social/personality psychology. BRP has involved the psychology community that is not presently aligned with NIH, particularly in the area of social and personality psychology and has held a number of think tank meetings. According to Klein, the division wants to extend that model to other disciplines that are not traditionally thought of as NIH disciplines, such as decision science and behavioral economics, Klein explained. He drew the Board's attention to CASPHR (The Cognitive, Affective, and Social Processes in Health Research Workgroup) convened by BRP in Fall 2009 "to provide expert consultation on how theories of cognitive, affective and social processes, in particular, can enhance research and practice throughout the cancer continuum." CASPHR places heavy emphasis on taking theory-based approaches to behavior and message processing with explicit focus on the moderators and mediators of effective communication and behavior change.

He also called the BBCSS' attention to some emerging scientific areas that could benefit from the perspective of basic behavioral science: FDA regulation of tobacco, health care reform and personalized medicine, HITECH Act (Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health), technological advances, data clouds, clinical trial enrollment, and ambiguity in medical literature. Regarding the FDA regulation of tobacco, Klein noted that the agency is currently working to stand up a center and much of that is behavioral in nature. He pointed out that in 2012, cigarette packages will be required to have graphic warning labels about the risks associated with smoking. The questions that we can ask, Klein explained, include: What labels are most effective? How often should they be used? When should they be taken off the market?

There is an abundance of information that comes from search engines also known as data clouds, Klein explained. At the same time, there is a lack of expertise to utilize the data contained in these clouds. How do you measure this data, he asked Ambiguity in medical literature, he explained, occurs as a result of the many cancer screenings that are currently available and the lack of clarity in the literature to assist physicians in recommending the appropriate intervention to patients. How does a physician convey that lack of clarity to the patient?

To begin to address the issue of the various disciplines that do not talk to each other, BRP and NCI are sponsoring a meeting, *Multilevel Interventions in Health Care: Building the Foundation for Future Research*, March 4 -5, 2011, with the goal of expanding the scientific base of multilevel interventions in cancer care and other health conditions. For the purpose of the meeting, "multilevel intervention addresses the health outcomes for patients, as well as two additional levels of contextual influence." There are three main objectives for the meeting: (1) to understand the current state of the science of multilevel interventions across the cancer continuum, (2) to clarify issues in the conceptualization of multilevel effects across cancer scientific disciplines, and (3) to identify areas to build the foundation for multilevel intervention research in cancer care such as: research design, measurement, analytic approaches, research infrastructure, and multilevel interventions in an ear of healthcare reform.

Klein highlighted a second meeting, *The Science of Research on Discrimination and Health*, February 2-4, 2011, which is designed to "identify the 'state of the science' in the role of close relationships (peers, romantic partners) across the cancer continuum - from primary prevention through survivorship." The three-day meeting is sponsored by DCCPS' Applied Research Program and BRP. The meeting will examine the research and research methods for investigating the role of racial/ethnic discrimination in health. Specifically, the meeting's purposes are to: (1) promote the science/research on racial/ethnic discrimination and its contribution to racial/ethnic disparities in health, (2) identify gaps in the research literature and areas for future research and/or NCI/NIH funding initiatives; and (3) increase awareness of NCI's interest in funding research in this topic through the Program Announcement, *The Effect of Racial and Ethnic Discrimination/Bias on Health Care Delivery* (PA-080-083, PA-08-084, PA-08-085).

Regarding measurement issues, Klein called the Board's attention to GEM (Grid-Enabled Measures Database), a "dynamic web-based database built upon the caBIG® platform" and contains behavioral and social science measures organized by theoretical constructs. It is designed to enable researchers to use common measures with the goal of exchanging harmonized data. The hope is that the use of standardized measures and common statements will make prospective meta-analyses possible, he concluded.

Subjective Well-being Research: Enhancing Policy Relevance and Applications of Aging

Lis Nielsen, Division of Behavioral and Social Research at the NIA, updated BBCSS on the Institute's interest in supporting the integration of measurement, policy, and life-course themes in the science of well-being, based on the Institute's recent investments in both measurement development in well-being science, and its support of inclusion of well-being measures in a number of large population-based surveys, both nationally and internationally. Nielsen reviewed for the Board the motivations for measuring well-being at the individual and population level of analysis, potential applications to aging, updates on current research funded by NIH, a recently closed request-for-application on Subjective Well-being: Advances in Measurement and Applications, NIA's meeting exploring applications of well-being research to public policy, and discussion of plans to included experienced well-being measures linked to time used in large national surveys like the Health and Retirement Survey.

Nielsen explained that interest in research on broader social measures that provide information on well-being has grown rapidly as the limitations of metrics based solely on material standard of living and market-based economic concepts become apparent. Well-being measures have been adopted by a number of national governments and influential inter- and intra-national demographic surveys as a way to assess societal progress and measure quality of life. She explained the distinction between "experienced" and "evaluative" well-being. According to Nielsen, experienced well-being consists of: reports of momentary positive and rewarding, or negative and distressing states. Evaluative well-being: global cognitive judgments of overall life satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The guiding questions include: How do experienced and evaluative well-being relate to health, behavior, and life circumstances?

The science of well-being, said Nielsen, advances distinct but integrated goals in psychology and economics. The two approaches offer perspectives on the quality of people's lives, she explained. Historically, to inform individual decision making and public policy, economists have constructed metrics to measure societal well-being including utility or what people value and progress or improvements in life quality. Psychologists, on the other hand, Nielsen observed, seek to understand how people experience and evaluate their lives, and the interplay between experiences and evaluations as to understand the relation of these subjective experiences and evaluations to physical and psychological well-being.

Why Measure Well-being?

Nielsen observed that "just as well-being may serve as a psychological resource for individuals to support behavior change, coping with symptoms or recovery from illness, it may also serve as a source of human capital for societies to support coping with and recovery from disaster, economic downturns, or social and public health challenges, by engendering optimism, motivating self-reliance, cooperation and civic engagement." Consequently, she explained, enhancing societal progress needs timely and reliable data that allow policy makers and the public at large to understand and interpret the dynamics of social change. This task has traditionally relied on objective measures, but there is a growing consensus among economists, psychologists, and policy makers that underscores the potential offered by the use of subjective measures of people's attitudes, feelings, and experiences in informing about quality of life and its underlying determinants, Nielsen stated.

She pointed out, for example, that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) overstates the value of production and fails to assign value to goods and services not supplied through markets, a sentiment she noted, expressed by Robert Kennedy in 1968. Nielsen also highlighted the Commission on Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress created by French President Sarkozy in 2008, led by Nobel winning economist Joseph Stiglitz, with the goal of developing a new method of economic calculation of social progress that will include indicators of well-being, supplementing the GDP. "Extending these findings from the individual to the population level requires not only data on well-being, but also the development of a causal framework for how well-being is maximized and exerts its causal impact," she emphasized. Accordingly, Nielsen explained, this work will depend on collaborative efforts between economic, behavioral and health scientists, both in identifying these pathways, as well as in refining measures. Measures of well-being, however, are currently missing from national accounting. Causal predictions, said Nielsen, depend on a full conceptual model and require measures of both experienced and evaluative well-being, and measurement of context and time.

Application to Aging

Advances in behavioral and social science research to aging have demonstrated that aging is associated with a range of changing life circumstances and challenges, along with changes in psychological processes and social motivations that may impact well-being in later life. Nielsen pointed out; however, there is great variability in both cognitive and emotional function in aging, and much interest in understanding the factors that underlie individual differences. Measurement of well-being has not "focused deeply on how age, health status, employment status, or other aging-relevant life circumstances change the various components of subjective well-being." There is a need to understand issues related to adaptation. Different interventions and/or policies may be more appropriate in different circumstances. For example, research on advance care planning and social psychology converge when it comes to end of life issues, what we want/prefer/feel depends on when we are asked, she explained. The research shows that we are "poor at anticipating our future preferences." End-of-life research emphasizes the need to view advanced care planning as a process rather than a product.

Nielsen stressed that the lack of a standard toolkit for assessing well-being also limits our ability to evaluate and compare behavioral, biomedical or policy interventions in terms of their effectiveness at improving positive health and functioning. She noted that clinical trials typically assess the ability of treatments to reduce symptoms or ameliorate disease states, but not whether the treatments improve the overall qualities of people's lives by increasing levels of well-being, or whether associated increases might mediate other targeted outcomes. She cited as an example, the NIH Patient Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System (PROMIS) does not include momentary measures or measures of subjective well-being and instead focuses on positive affect, negative affect, stress and coping, and social relationship characteristics.

To advance understanding from both an individual and population perspective of how age, health status, employment status or other aging relevant-life circumstances or stages impact the various components of subjective well-being, NIA issued a funding opportunity announcement which just closed on November 3. The FOA was needed resolve measurement issues and the surveys move forward into future data collection ways. It is providing NIA the opportunity to bring in focus on aging efforts to collect well-being data and move ahead globally. It is also designed to allow for efficiency and harmonization of survey measures as data collection advances. As existing surveys are moving ahead with developing their own measures, NIA would like to influence the process so that measures are comparable.

Nielsen concluded by highlighting that the NIA's mission is "To improve the health and well-being of older Americans through research," which includes understanding the predictors of healthy aging and improving the lives of older people. Consequently, to do so requires indicators that signal when individuals and societies are doing well to guide interventions and policy. She emphasized the need for "good indicators of health, not just the absence of illness, but the presence of wellness. "If you don't measure it, you can't improve it," she insisted.

Health Disparities in Boys and Men: Innovative Research to Reduce Addiction, Trauma and Related Co-Morbidities

The Special Populations Office of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), National Institutes of Health (NIH), in collaboration with several Department of Health & Human Services agencies convened a two-d ay meeting to examine *Health Disparities in Boys and Men: Innovative Research to Reduce Addiction, Trauma and Related Co-Morbidities*, on November 1-2,2011.

Boys and men from racial/ethnic minority populations are at high risk for illness, trauma, and early death, Lula Beatty (director of the Special Populations Office, NIDA) observed in her welcoming remarks to meeting participants. She pointed to the research that shows that there are high rates of drug abuse and addiction, HIV/AIDS, violence, trauma, suicide and related co-morbidities that are prevalent in the lives of boys and men from racial/ethnic minority and other health disparity populations. "In recent years that risk seems to be increasing," Beatty stated. She emphasized "the need to develop effective interventions and services is great and urgent. The purpose of this conference was to bring together people who have a common interest in improving health in disadvantaged populations to explore ways to address the unique health needs of boys and men. We hope to continue to work together to support promising research and programs," said Beatty.

Brian Smedley, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, provided an overview in the meeting's opening plenary address: *Taking Action to Achieve Equity for Men and Boys of Color: How Can We Address Root Causes?* He cited examples of male racial and ethnic health inequalities:

- Many racial and ethnic minority groups - particularly American Indians, African Americans, Pacific Islanders, and some Asian Americans and Latinos - have higher rates of disease and disability than national averages;
- African Americans and American Indians have high rates of infant mortality, even when socioeconomic differences are taken into account;
- African Americans, American Indians, and other experience high rates of premature mortality.

Smedley pointed out that the economic burden of health inequalities in the United States has fiscal consequences. Data shows that "between 2003 and 2006, 30.6 percent of direct medical care expenditures for African Americans, Asians, and Hispanics were excess costs due to health inequalities." It also reveals that just eliminating health inequalities for minorities would have reduced direct medical care expenditures by $229.4 billion for the years 2003 -2006, he pointed out. Between 2003 and 2006 the combined costs of health inequalities and premature death were $1.24 trillion, maintained Smedley.

The factors contributing to the disparities among boys and men include: socioeconomic inequality, driven by differences in opportunity structures; residential segregation and environmental living conditions; occupational risks and exposures; health risk and health seeking behaviors; along with differences in access to health care and differences in health care quality, he explained. In addition, structural inequality, including historic and contemporary racism and discrimination, influences all of these factors, he contended.

Smedley also highlighted the racial and ethnic disparities in life opportunities for men, including: harmful impact of "zero tolerance" policies and high stakes testing, punitive and ineffective drug laws and high levels of incarceration, and steep decline in jobs and real wages for working-class men, cited in the 2006 Dellums Commission report "A Way Out: Creating Partners for our Nation's Prosperity by Expanding Life Paths of Young Men of Color." The report contains recommendations for public policy and includes specific actions that can improve life options for young men of color.

Smedley also discussed the role of segregation and its negative effects on health and human development:

- Racial segregation *concentrates poverty* and excludes and isolates communities of color from the mainstream resources needed for success. African Americans are more likely to reside in poorer neighborhoods regardless of income level.
- Segregation also *restricts socio-economic opportunity* by channeling non-whites into neighborhoods with poorer public schools, fewer employment opportunities, and smaller returns on real estate.
- African American are *five times less likely* than whites to live in census tracts with supermarkets, and are *more likely* to live in communities with a high percentage of fast-food outlets, liquor stores and convenience stores.
- Black and Latino neighborhoods also have *fewer parks and green spaces* than white neighborhoods, and *fewer safe places* to walk, jog, bike or play, including fewer gyms, recreational centers and swimming pools.
- Low -income communities and communities of color are *more likely to be exposed* to environmental hazards.
- The "Poverty Tax:" Residents of poor communities *pay more for the exact same consumer products* than those in higher income neighborhoods-more for auto loans, furniture, appliances, bank fees, and even groceries.

Smedley maintained that the evidence suggests that to translate the science to policy and practice would require: a focus on prevention, particularly on the conditions in which people live, work, play and study; multiple strategies across sectors; sustained investment and a long-term policy agenda; support of efforts to improve food and nutritional options through incentives for Farmer's Markets and grocery stores, ad regulation of fast food and liquor stores; support of land use and zoning policy to reduce the concentration of health risks; the encouragement of Health Impact Assessments to determine the public health consequences of any new housing, transportation, labor and education policies; encourage efforts to address air, water, and soil pollution and environmental degradation; support of efforts to expand the availability of open spaces; and the support of efforts to address housing, transportation, and education needs in disparity communities.

Addiction Research Requires a Systems Approach

Wilson Compton, director of the Division of Epidemiology, Services, and Prevention Research, NIDA, shared the progress that has been made in drug abuse and addiction research. According to Compton, half of State and Federal prisoners meet the criteria for alcohol or drug addiction. At the same time, approximately 14 percent of all HIV-infected people pass annually through the criminal justice system. HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases occur at higher rates among drug abusers in the criminal justice system than among the general population. With regards to health disparities, it has been observed that rates of drug abuse vary by race/ethnic status and age so that during youth, rates of drug abuse are often lower in African American youth than in Caucasian youth. Conversely, the consequences of abuse are much higher among African Americans, including rates of incarceration for drug-related crimes, HIV related to drug abuse, and drug treatment admissions are higher among African American men than Caucasian men and boys. Research is needed to address these concerns and is encouraged by NIDA, Compton insisted.

NIDA supports the full range of drug abuse discovery research, including basic science, clinical neuroscience, treatment development, epidemiology, prevention and services research. He emphasized that studying addiction requires a systems approach research that addresses the: social, behavior, neuronal circuits, protein expression, and the genome. The Institute's broad priorities include prevention, treatment and HIV. Within this broad framework, Compton explained that NIDA's current priorities include emphasis on: medication development, integration of addiction services into health care, and HIV research.

Black Men, STDs and HIV: Tip of the Iceberg or Tip of the Spear?

NIH Office of AIDS Research Victoria Cargill reviewed and explored "the disproportionate impact of HIV and STDs upon men of African descent through the lens of the additional social determinants of health that negatively impact black men: poverty, incarceration, unemployment, under-education, cultural stereotypes and deeply buried tensions/inequities in African American social networks." She presented several "sobering facts:" By their mid-30's, 30 percent of black men with no more than a high school education have served time in prison compared to 60 percent of dropouts who have served time; Black males ages 30 - 34 had the highest custody incarceration rate of any race, age, or gender group at midyear 2007; and over the past two decades while the economy soared, young black men fell farther behind.

Cargill then pointed to and discussed the need for multi-level interventions with policy implications including: Addressing the gaps in education and economic opportunity through collaborations across traditional silos including education and business sectors; Re-examination of sentencing guidelines and the incentives to incarcerate versus the long term cost; Multidisciplinary implementation research to evaluate interventions targeted to black men for true cost effectiveness; Development of mental health screening tools that are appropriate for this population; Examination of model programs for violence intervention and survivor reclamation for replication; Family level interventions in partnership with local community organizations.

'Behavioral Health Is Essential To Health, Prevention Works, Treatment Is Effective'

H. Westley Clark, director of the Center for Substance Abuse and Treatment (CSAT), Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), discussed "Understanding Substance Use Patterns to Address Treatment Needs of Boys and Men." Clark noted that key messages from SAMSHA are: behavioral health is essential to health, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people recover from mental and substance use disorders. He emphasized that behavioral health services improve health status and reduce health care and other costs to society. SAMHSA is charged with effectively targeting substance abuse and mental health services to the people most in need and to translate research in these areas more effectively and more rapidly in the general health care system. SAMHSA's strategic initiatives include: prevention of substance abuse and mental illness; trauma and justice; military families; health care reform; housing and homelessness; health information technology, electronic health records and behavioral health; data, outcomes, and quality: demonstrating results; and public awareness and support.

Full Complement of Topics and Issues Addressed

Other topics and issues addressed at the meeting included: a discussion of the National Drug Control Strategy and its application to health disparities; drug and alcohol abuse and additions, comorbid psychiatric disorders and related outcomes; holistic and integrated trauma informed care, integrated substance abuse and mental health treatment and concrete social support; intimate partner violence and HIV among drug-involved men; implications of historical trauma among American Indian/Alaska Native boys and men; provider role strain; masculinity and suicide; masculinity, racism-related stress, and depressive symptoms among African American men; the consequences for children of parental involvement with the criminal justice system; and the need for systematic data collection on the impact of children's chronic exposure to community violence on their emotional, behavioral, substance use and academic functioning as well as the risk and protective factors that can be targeted in preventive and intervention programs.

For more information or to view the slide presentations of presenters see the meeting's website at http://www.acclaroresearch.com/spo/healthdisparities/index.php.

Fragile Families Explored in Brookings Seminar Journal

On October 27, The Future of Children, a joint project between the Brookings Institution and Princeton University, held an event for the release of their latest journal an edition on Fragile Families.

Fragile families are defined as families where the parents have a child outside of marriage. The proportion of all children born to unmarried parents grew from about 4 percent in 1940 to nearly 40 percent in 2007. Today 70 percent of black children, 50 percent of Hispanic children and nearly 30 percent of white children are born outside of marriage.

Despite these sobering numbers little was known about the affect of these fragile families on the parents, children or society until recently. In 1998 Columbia University and Princeton University began the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study which followed over the course of five years 5,000 children born between 1998 and 2000, including approximately 3,700 children born to unmarried parents.

A little more than half of the unmarried couples in the study were still living together at the time of their child's birth, and an additional 32 percent of couples were dating. No matter the relationship status at the time of birth, 94 percent of mothers reported they wanted the father to be involved and 95 percent of fathers wanted to be involved in the life of the child. Unfortunately, this expressed desire for commitment and involvement did not last. At the end of the study 65 percent of couples were no longer together, 25 percent of the mothers lived with a new partner and 20 percent had a child with another partner. By the fifth and final year of the study about 50 percent of the fathers saw their child less than once a month.

Ron Haskins, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution commented that "what really affects children is the lack of stability." These fragile families demonstrate that through numerous partner changes, he lamented. Nearly 60 percent of the mothers who were single at the birth of their child experienced three or more relationship transitions over the course of the study.

Research shows that children who grow up in single mother headed households and cohabiting families fare worse than those born to married couples. Generally single mothers are younger, have less education and less earning potential than women who are married. Unmarried mothers in the study were generally around 24 years old compared to married mothers who were approximately 29 years old, and unmarried fathers averaged around 27 years of age while married fathers were an average age of 32. Twenty-five percent of the unmarried mothers in the study were teenagers.

Unmarried parents are also at a disadvantage when it comes to education. Almost 45 percent of unmarried mothers and slightly over 41 percent of unmarried fathers had less than a high school education. Whereas almost 60 percent of married mothers and married fathers had some college or higher level of education.

Since most unmarried women and men in the survey had lower levels of educational attainment their earning potential was severely limited. Married mothers earned on average more than twice as much as unwed mothers making $25,600 compared to only $11,100 for unmarried mothers, and married fathers earned $38,570 while unmarried fathers earned only $18,801.

Further diminishing the levels of involvement by unwed fathers was the high incarceration rate. More than 36 percent of the unmarried fathers had a prison record, five times the number of married fathers with only seven percent.

The authors of the Fragile Families journal have several recommendations to improve the outcomes for children and couples from these families. Some of the recommendations would help children as well as their parents, such as redesigning the tax and transfer programs so children whose parents marry or live together can continue to have access to high quality early education and health care without their benefits cut or reduced. Another recommendation would increase the number and quality of marriage education and fatherhood programs. These programs often provide not only relationship and parenting skills training, but also education courses, job training, and job placement or link up to other community/government offices that provide these programs. Other recommendations would encourage the prevention of these fragile families with mass media campaigns that would encourage men to use condoms and the creation of teen pregnancy prevention programs that would discourage sexual activity and also educate teens about proper contraceptive use.

To read the Future of Children journal on Fragile Families go to http://futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/journals/journal_details/index.xml?journalid=73

Kenneth Prewitt Elected Next COSSA President; Board Members Reappointed

At its meeting on October 31, the COSSA Board of Directors elected Kenneth Prewitt as the Consortium's next President for a two-year term commencing January 1, 2011.

Prewitt was "present at the creation" of COSSA as an advocacy group in 1981, playing an important organizing role as President of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC). The head of SSRC's Washington office at the time, Roberta Balstad Miller, became COSSA's first Executive Director. As COSSA will celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2011, the Board felt Prewitt was an excellent choice to lead the organization.

Prewitt is the Carnegie Professor of Public Affairs and Vice President for Global Centers at Columbia University. He served as director of the U.S. Census Bureau leading the country through the 2000 count. He has also been the director of the National Opinion Research Center, President of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), and senior vice president of the Rockefeller Foundation. He has also taught at the University of Chicago, Stanford University, and at overseas universities.

He is a lifetime National Associate of the National Research Council/National Academy of Sciences, a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Center for the Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, and the Russell Sage Foundation. He is also founding President of the State of the USA - the institutional venue for establishing a Key National Indicator program for the U.S.

His recent publicans include: *The Hard Count: The Political and Social Challenges of Census Mobilization; Politics and Science in Census Taking*, and *The Legitimacy of Foundations*. He is currently leading a panel at the National Academies that is examining "Evidence in the Social Sciences," a topic he addressed at the 2008 COSSA Annual Meeting. In 2005, he spoke at the COSSA Congressional briefing on *Protecting Privacy: How Much Are We Willing to Give Up?*

Prewitt has a B.A. from Southern Methodist University, a M.A. from Washington University in St. Louis, was a Danforth Fellow at the Harvard Divinity School, and has a Ph.D. in Political Science from Stanford.

At-Large Board Members Reappointed

The current at-large members of the COSSA Board of Directors were all reappointed for a second two-year term. They are: Karen Cook, Professor of Sociology and Director, Institute for Research in the Social Sciences at Stanford University: Sandra Graham, Professor of Psychological Studies in Education at of UCLA; J, Mark Hansen, Dean of Social Sciences at the University of Chicago; M. Duane Nellis, President of the University of Idaho; and Gary Sandefur, Dean of Letters and Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In addition, outgoing COSSA President Aletha Huston of the

University of Texas, Austin, will remain on the Board as Immediate Past President.

Sally Hillsman, Executive Officer of the American Sociological Association, was re-elected by her peers for another two-year term as Chair of the COSSA Executive Committee.

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