Having trouble viewing this email?www.cossa.org

COSSA Washington UPDATE

February 10, 2014 Volume 33, Issue 3

Subscribe to Update

In This Issue

CONGRESSIONAL ACTIVITIES & NEWS

House and Senate Education Committees Hold Hearings on Early Childhood Education

FEDERAL AGENCY & ADMINISTRATION ACTIVITIES & NEWS

President's FY 2015 Budget Request Delayed until March

National Science Board Releases 2014 *Science & Engineering Indicators*

Institute for Education Science's Oversight Board Meets

NIH's First Chief Officer for Scientific Workforce Diversity Announced

NIH Director Discusses Budgets, Scientific Breakthroughs and Reproducibility with Council of Councils

Renewal of Science of Behavior Change Common Fund Initiative Discussed at NIH Council of Councils Meeting

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Requests Nominations for Academic Research Council

NOTABLE PUBLICATIONS & COMMUNITY EVENTS

NRC Panel Discusses Implications of New Common Rule Consensus Study

Friends of AHRQ Celebrates the Agency's 15th Anniversary

Science and Human Rights Coalition Focuses on Disability Rights

[Brookings Forum Evaluates the Safety Net during the Recession]

[COSSA MEMBER ACTIVITIES]

[Senator Warren Named Fellow of the American Academy of Political and Social Science]

[COSSA ACTION & OUTREACH]

[COSSA Thanks Appropriators for BEA Funding]

CONGRESSIONAL ACTIVITIES & NEWS

House and Senate Education Committees Hold Hearings on Early Childhood Education

On February 5 and 6, the House Education and the Workforce Committee and the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee respectively held hearings to discuss early childhood education (ECE) in light of the President's proposal for a universal pre-K program as outlined in his recent State of the Union Address.

House Education and the Workforce Committee: Too Many Existing ECE Programs

Rep. John Kline (R-MN), the chairman of the committee, agreed with the President's assertion that ECE is one of the best investments the country can make in its future. However, he said, according to a 2012 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, there already exist 45 federal programs for ECE and 40 state-level programs. Additionally, the U.S. government already spends $13.3 billion annually (Head Start accounts for about $8 billion) to support education for children five and under-- an amount that has grown after the recently passed omnibus. Kline cited studies that show little-to-no difference in the education outcomes a few years after completion of pre-K education compared to those who do not participate in pre-K education. "Many federal early-care and education programs are in need of serious review," Kline said. "This should be our first priority, not rubber-stamping a 46th federal program."

Rep. George Miller (D-CA), the ranking member on the committee, who is retiring this year, has introduced the President's $30 billion proposal as legislation and noted that 75 percent of the 45 programs mentioned in the GAO report do not primarily fund ECE. The smaller programs, Miller continued, are largely targeted to specific populations, such as children on Native American reservations or those with learning disabilities. The two largest programs - Head Start and the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) - do not meet the demand that currently exists for early education opportunities, Miller finished.

Witness Russ Whitehurst of the Brookings Institution echoed Kline's comments, stating "we are not getting our money's worth on current child care expenditures." Another witness, Harriet Dichter, the executive director of the Delaware Office of Early Learning, agreed with Miller's argument, noting that the current level of funding for these programs is not meeting demand and that the federal government is "leaving too much up to the states to do."

In other important news from this hearing, Kline noted that he is eager to begin the reauthorization process of the CCDBG, which is likely to get more bipartisan support than Rep. Miller's effort to enact the President's proposal. A bill reauthorizing CCDBG has already made it through the Senate HELP committee. Kline also signaled that he would be interested in reauthorizing the Head Start Act, last reauthorized in 2007.

Senate HELP Committee: Quality Pre-K Education Costs Money

Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA), chairman of the HELP committee, also retiring this year, said that existing federal early education programs do not enough to meet the demand at the state level. Harkin is also a sponsor of the $30 billion bill based on the President's proposal mentioned in the last two State of the Union addresses. Unlike Kline in the previous day's House hearing, Harkin is confident that existing programs (the 45 mentioned in the GAO report), are insufficient in supporting ECE in the US. "If you want quality, you have to pay for it," Harkin said.

Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN), ranking member on the committee, agreed that investing in ECE is unarguably important for the economic health of the nation. However, Alexander said that the Harkin-Miller bill, which would provide matching funds to states as an incentive for them to expand the pre-K programs, would create a massive burden on state spending similar to Medicaid. "We should not...fall back into the similar pattern of noble intentions, a grand promise, lots of federal mandates, and sending the bill to the states with disappointing results," Alexander said.

Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), a co-sponsor of the Harkin-Miller bill, expressed her skepticism about the need for a new program in the pre-K arena. Similar to Kline's view, she suggested that it is worth examining existing programs and emphasizing teacher pay at the pre-K level which would have crosscutting results.

Witness Danielle Ewen, the director of the office of early childhood education for the District of Columbia, extolled the virtues of universal pre-K based on her experience in D.C. She said that the problem isn't too much choice or too many programs, but that funding does not exist for enough quality programs. Witness Charlotte Brantley, president and CEO of the Clayton Early Learning Program in Denver, echoed Ewen's call for more investment. Another witness, John White, the Louisiana state Superintendent for the Department of Education, largely agreed with the message of the previous day's House hearing: the degree of fragmentation in the current programs is the largest barrier to making them work at the state level.

FEDERAL AGENCY & ADMINISTRATION ACTIVITIES & NEWS

President's FY 2015 Budget Request Delayed until March

President Obama is expected to deliver his fiscal year (FY) 2015 budget request to Congress in early March, one month after its statutory due date, which is the first Monday in February. Reports indicate that top-line budget numbers for federal departments and agencies will be delivered on March 4, with full details delivered a week later on March 11.

The delay of the budget request is said to be a result of the delay in finishing the FY 2014 appropriations bills last month, according to the White House. Last year, the FY 2014 budget request was delivered more than two months late. Watch for COSSA's analysis of the President's budget request in a future edition of the *COSSA Washington UPDATE*.

National Science Board Releases 2014 *Science & Engineering Indicators*

On February 6, the National Science Board (NSB), the policymaking body of the National Science Foundation (NSF), delivered to the President and Congress the 2014 edition of *Science and Engineering Indicators*. This biennial report, mandated by the *National Science Foundation Act*, is prepared by the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) within NSF's Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economics Sciences under guidance by the NSB. It serves as a "factual and policy-neutral source of high-quality U.S. and international data;" it does not include policy recommendations or conclusions.

The report includes the following seven chapters as well as a section on "state indicators" to allow for state comparisons:

- Elementary and Secondary Mathematics and Science Education

- Higher Education in Science and Engineering
- Science and Engineering Labor Force
- Research and Development: National Trends and International Comparisons
- Academic Research and Development
- Industry, Technology, and the Global Marketplace
- Science and Technology: Public Attitudes and Understanding

The indicators suggest that American scientific predominance continues its decline over the last decade as Asian nations continue to increase their investments in research and development (R&D). According to the NSF press release, "the major Asian economies, taken together, now perform a larger share of global R&D than the U.S., and China performs nearly as much of the world's high-tech manufacturing as the U.S."

With respect to social science (which for the purpose of the report includes economics, political science, sociology and other social sciences not elsewhere classified; psychology is captured in its own line), the report finds that higher education R&D expenditures in FY 2012 totaled $2.056 billion ($921 million of which from federal sources). While that number indicates an upward trajectory over the last eight fiscal years, it is down from the high-water-mark of $2.081 billion in FY 2009 (Appendix Table 5-1).

With respect to science and engineering students, the report finds that the number of foreign undergraduate students entering the U.S increased 18 percent between 2011 and 2012, with the largest increase occurring in the social sciences and engineering. That increase was three percent for foreign graduate students, with more students studying mathematics, social science and psychology, and fewer in the fields of computer science, biological science, and engineering.

As for degree production, the indicators find major increases in science and engineering degrees at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. Further, as the number of bachelor's degrees has increased, so too has the proportion of degrees to women and racial and ethnic minorities, with the highest percentage of degrees awarded to women occurring in social science, psychology, biological and agricultural sciences.

Institute for Education Science's Oversight Board Meets

The National Board for Education Sciences (NBES) met on January 31. NBES serves as the advisory body to the Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences (IES).

The board discussed how the FY 2014 omnibus appropriations bills passed last month affected IES funding. The overall sentiment was that the appropriation was disappointing but not surprising. Special education research was particularly hard hit in the budget, and in 2013 only 43 percent of grants were funded compared to 100 percent in past years. The disappointing levels of funding led to a discussion on how to better disseminate IES research to ensure policymakers understand its importance and continue to fund it in future budgets. Board members discussed issuing syntheses of previous work completed through IES grants meant for wider audiences and, in general, making the research more publicly available.

The National Center for Education Statistics announced a handful of new projects which should receive some publicity. The Post-Secondary Institute Rating System - a tool which provides objective metrics in rating institutions of higher education - will be used as part of the President's new higher education proposals. Additionally, a new School Climate Survey will collect data about school safety across the country to be used in future research. Finally, a new National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) assessment in technology, energy, and learning is currently in the field and will allow measurements on brand new metrics relating to technology and engineering for future NAEP reports.

After two presentations on what the research says about English language learners (ELLs) in different contexts, the board discussed a proposal to set up a center within the National Center for Education Research that would address issues relating to ELLs during upcoming funding cycles. The board expressed a desire to focus on ELLs in upcoming research and proposal requests. They also noted that the focus on ELLs would demonstrate a high degree of practicality when discussing IES' importance to policy makers.

The meeting kicked off by electing David Chard of Southern Methodist University as the next chair of the board, and Susanna Loeb of Stanford University as the new vice chair.

NIH's First Chief Officer for Scientific Workforce Diversity Announced

On January 30, National Institutes of Health (NIH) director Francis Collins announced the appointment of Hannah Valantine to the position of Chief Officer for Scientific Workforce Diversity following a nationwide search. Valantine has been selected to lead the agency's effort to diversify the biomedical workforce via the development of "a vision and comprehensive strategy to expand the recruitment and retention, and promote inclusiveness and equity throughout the biomedical research enterprise."

Valantine's appointment results from the implementation of a recommendation by the Biomedical Research Workforce Diversity Group of the Advisory Committee to the Director (ACD) that called for a newly created position devoted to diversity. She is expected to work closely with the NIH institutes and centers, the NIH grantee community, and community stakeholders.

Valantine comes to NIH from Stanford University where she served as Senior Associate Dean for Diversity and Leadership at Stanford School of Medicine, and Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine at Stanford University Medical Center. She studied biochemistry at London University and attended St. George's Hospital Medical School. Her post graduate work was completed in the field of cardiology at two London hospitals, Brompton and Hammersmith. Valantine trained as a fellow with leading cardiologists and cardiac surgeons. She is a past recipient of the NIH Director's Pathfinder Award for Diversity in the Scientific Workforce.

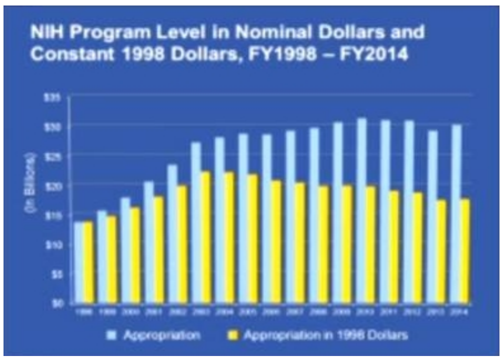
Announcing her appointment, Collins noted that she "possess the experience, dedication, and tenacity needed to move NIH forward on this critically important issue." He also extended his gratitude to Roderic Pettigrew who served as the Acting Chief Officer for Scientific Workforce Diversity during the search. Pettigrew is the director of the National Institute on Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering. He was also a participant in the Collaborative for Enhancing Diversity in Science (CEDS) recent Congressional briefing, *Innovative Strategies for Building a Diverse Scientific Workforce*.

NIH Director Discusses Budgets, Scientific Breakthroughs and Reproducibility with Council of Councils

National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Francis Collins provided an update during the January 31 meeting of the NIH Council of Councils. Collins discussed NIH's FY 2014 budget, and addressed the three challenges of identifying emergent fields of science, approaches to supporting science, and enhancing the NIH biosketch. He also discussed the issue of reproducibility and concluded his presentation with a discussion of recent breakthroughs in science.

Beginning with the budget, Collins reflected on FY 2013. He lamented the agency's "dismal" budget situation over the last three years, the damage compounded by sequestration resulting in a $1.5 billion cut to the agency's budget followed by a 16-day government shutdown, which, declared Collins, was "brutally demoralizing" for the 17,000 NIH scientists who had to be sent home, some in the middle of experiments.

Collins highlighted the fact that the FY 2014 appropriation is the first appropriation that the NIH has received in the last few years. In recent years the agency has been funded via continuing resolutions. He noted that the chairs of the Appropriations Committee had to work within the parameters set by the budget resolution, and shared his belief that it is an encouraging sign of turning the corner. He also acknowledged the efforts of Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Rep. Harold Rogers (R-KY) on behalf of the agency and noted that the NIH came out of the process "reasonably well" considering the entire federal government was part of the pool. He informed the Council that the agency has a total program level budget of $30.15 billion, a $1 billion increase above the FY 2013 funding level but still $71 million below the FY 2012 funding level. FY 2013 was the worst of all years because of the sequester, Collins maintained.



The FY 2014 appropriation included several specific increases, including $100 million for Alzheimer's Disease, a shift of $45 million in selected Common Fund programs to the National Center for Advancing Translational Science (NCATS), $22 million for the Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative which is part of a new Presidential focus aimed at revolutionizing the understanding of the human brain, and $43 million to the Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSAs), a network of 61 centers across the country. For the individual NIH institutes and centers, the budget provides a general increase of approximately three percent above the FY 2013 funding level.

Collins expressed his hope that there is a recognition of the fact that investments in NIH are the best hope there is for improving the nation's health and reducing health care costs, adding that the agency is also a "wonderful investment in the economy." He shared that he thinks there is a broad recognition that NIH is one of the best things that the government does. The agency, hopefully, Collins continued, will begin to recover from "this gridlock." He also expressed hope that there is recognition that there are needs in the government, not to just make cuts, but to make investments. Accordingly, NIH and the scientific research support by other federal agencies will be seen as something everybody can agree to. His dream, says Collins, is that the NIH would find itself back on "stable trajectory and not a rollercoaster." At the very least, he hopes that the agency will be able to keep up with inflation, ideally, inflation plus an increase of few percentage points.

Challenges

Collins also discussed several challenges that came out of a recent NIH leadership forum. He noted that the challenges are complicated but at the same time present an opportunity for deeper discussions by the agency. One of those challenges is getting the best science from peer review. "The traditional thing to say about peer review is that it is the best in the world but it could probably be better," Collins said. He questioned the overall structure of NIH peer review study sections, noting that despite the rapid evolution of biomedical science, "study sections remain static." According to Collins, one question is how can the agency "more proactively identify emergent, or especially productive, fields of science? A second question is "how can NIH avoid 'entitlements' in areas of science with less productivity," he added.

Collins acknowledged that there are hurdles to getting the best science from peer review, including the few available "interim or surrogate markers of research value." A second obstacle is the fact that citations of "high impact" journals are over-emphasized. Lastly, it is difficult to evaluate characteristics of study section "behavior" or "performance."

He pointed out that the NIH is doing an analysis of study sections/IRGs for relatedness and performance behavior. This includes analysis of study section "inputs" and "outputs." A review group, Analysis of Review Group Outputs (ARGO), has been established will examine the bibliometric history of publications, or patents, that are attributed to funded applications. ARGO will also do retrospective "case studies" of important scientific discoveries, he informed the Council. To address the challenge of identifying emergent opportunities, Collins noted that the scientific community remains the agency's best tool. The question is should the NIH supplement this approach with analytics to detect rapidly emerging ideas, and enable earlier investment.

Identifying approaches to supporting science is the second challenge identified by Collins. He noted that at a time of budgetary constraints, how best can the NIH enhance support for extramural research, including: build on the success of the Pioneer Awards experience, define important attributes of such approaches, address concerns specific to certain groups of principle investigators, and identify needed changes to existing programs? The Pioneer Award is given to individuals whose research "reflects ideas substantially different from those already being pursued in the investigator's laboratory or elsewhere." The program is funded via the NIH Common Fund which has limited the number of awards that have been given by the NIH. DCPSI has reviewed the awards as compared to investigator initiated awards and found that Pioneer Awards are better. The question, according to Collins, is whether the agency should shift more resources to funding more of these types of awards. The funding, however, for the additional awards would have to come from the individual institutes and centers. Some of the ICs, he reported are considering supporting such awards. He noted that the agency will have to watch these efforts closely.

The third challenge Collins addressed was that of enhancing the NIH biosketch. He noted that past performance is an essential part of review. The goal of the biosketch is to "collect information that emphasizes actual contributions over academic and research pedigree," he explained. The NIH is considering replacing the requirement for "15 peer-reviewed publications" with narratives describing up to five most significant contributions.

NIH and Reproducibility

Collins concluded his presentation to the Council with a discussion of reproducibility. He highlighted the many commentaries, along with a congressional inquiry, on the subject including his and NIH Deputy Director Lawrence Tabak's commentary published in the January 27, 2014 issue of the journal *Nature*. The issue was also recently addressed by the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST). PCAST, which is comprised of the nation's leading scientists and engineers, advises the President and the Executive Office of the President.

Collins noted that the concern is being generated by industry, whose ability to reproduce research is "woefully limited." Preclinical research has generated the attention to the issue, but it is an issue that relevant to all scientific disciplines. He noted that 60 percent of preclinical research is not reproducible in the hands of another investigator. He cautioned that this does not mean that there is widespread fraud. In the *Nature* commentary, he and Tabak stated that: "with rare exceptions, we have no evidence to suggest that irreproducibility is caused by scientific misconduct." The problem arises from a number of factors including "poor training of researchers in experimental design; increased emphasis on making provocative statements rather than presenting technical details; and publications that do not report basic elements of experimental design."

Collins stated that one area that the NIH can address is training. He also suggested that NIH ICs should reconsider supporting a large clinical trial without proof that the study can be replicated in the preclinical phase. He contended that journals need to pay attention to this issue along with universities and investigators. He also noted that the journals SCIENCE and Nature have made changes to their review practices.

Renewal of Science of Behavior Change Common Fund Initiative Discussed at NIH Council of Councils Meeting

During the January 31 National Institutes of Health (NIH) Council of Councils meeting, members received a report from the National Institute on Aging (NIA) director and co-chair of the Science of Behavior Change (SOBC) Working Group on the Science of Behavior Change Program, along with a presentation, "Emotions and Choice: Mechanisms of Behavior Change," by Elizabeth Phelps, New York University. The Science of Behavior Change Working Group is led by NIA director Richard Hodes; Patricia Grady, director, National Institute on Nursing (NINR); and Richard Suzman, NIA. Jonathan King, NIA, is the Working Group Coordinator.

Hodes reviewed the SOBC program, noting the importance of research from two studies in galvanizing the initiative. The first, by Steven Schroeder (2007, NEJM) which built on a 1993 study by Michael McGinnis (JAMA) that show "human behavior accounts for approximately 40 percent of the risk associated with preventable premature death in the U.S." These behaviors include smoking, drinking, and drug abuse along with inactivity and poor diet which are known to contribute to many common illnesses and adverse health conditions.

"Behavior change is powerful," Hodes declared and cited the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) as an example. The DPP is a landmark study that was supported by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) that showed that lifestyle changes to achieve modest weight loss can reduce the incidence of type 2 diabetes by over half over a three-year period. The intervention helps stave off diabetes for at least ten years and substantially improves quality of life for those who receive it (see Update, May 13, 2013, September 26, 2011).

Citing the "balkanization of behavior change," Hodes explained that the SOBC program's goal is to "enhance understanding of the basic mechanisms of behavior change across a broad range of health-related behaviors, and in so doing, unite often disparate research fields and bridge the gulf between basic and clinical research." He reported that in the process of developing SOBC between 2007 and 2009, the SOBC working group found that 17 NIH institutes, centers, and offices supported research in behavior change in a mission-specific way. But many of the NIH program staff and grantees working on similar problems had never met or were aware of the advances made by other researchers.

Ultimately, the working group believes that eliminating such barriers to producing the science will lead to more effective and efficient interventions. He informed the Council that "mechanisms of behavior change operate at multiple levels of analysis (e.g. social, contextual, behavioral, psychological, neurobiological and genetic) and at multiple timescales to drive the initiation and maintenance of behavior change." Likening the behavior change model to the medical model, Hodes explained further that designing effective behavioral interventions "is most difficult when one cannot identify intervening mechanistic processes or biomarkers in the disease process."

Hodes discussed the goals for SOBC and discussed three milestones associated with the program. Milestone one asks the NIH to support research in laboratory and field settings to delineate how mechanisms of behavior change respond in and outside the laboratory. Milestone two was to conduct a workshop on bridging laboratory and field work. Milestone three was to conduct a workshop on intervention targets and suggest new approaches. He emphasized that the SOBC meetings have been crucial in helping to "bring down disciplinary boundaries, starting collaborations, and expanding our perspectives on the mechanisms of behavior and behavior change."

Hodes reported that the next steps for the SOBC include two goals. Goal one is to implement the experimental medicine approach to behavior change. Deliverables includes: isolated key targets for interventions, assays to measure engagement of key targets, and targets validated in the laboratory and in clinical studies through use-inspired research. Goal two is to strengthen the dialogue between clinical and basic scientists and promote use-inspired research. This includes publications from meetings, training on the use of instruments, and findings from use-inspired research. The ultimate long-term goal, Hodes emphasized, is to "reshape NIH's approach to behavior change interventions by building a unified science."

Hodes also discussed the "tentative continuation budget" the SOBC Working Group was requesting to continue to support the SOBC initiative: $2.2 million (FY 2015), $5.2 million (FY 2016), $8.2 million (FY 2017), $9.4 million (FY 2018) and $6.4 million (FY 2019). The monies would support initiatives around training, target isolation, assay development, target validation, and use-inspired research. He concluded by stressing that the SBOC "is well-poised" to continue this work.

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Requests Nominations for Academic Research Council

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which is charged with regulating "the offering and provision of consumer financial products or services under the Federal consumer financial laws," seeks nominations for its Academic Research Council. The Academic Research Council was established as an "advisory body comprised of scholars to provide the Office of Research methodological and technical advice and feedback." The announcement goes on to say that the Office of Research "seeks to recruit tenured academics, with a world class research and publishing background, and a record of public or academic service."

For more information and to complete the application, please click here.

NOTABLE PUBLICATIONS & COMMUNITY EVENTS

NRC Panel Discusses Implications of New Common Rule Consensus Study

The National Research Council held a public forum on January 30 to discuss its recently released consensus study, *Proposed Revisions to the Common Rule for the Protection of Human Subjects in the Behavioral and Social Sciences*. Representatives from the report's sponsoring organizations, Ed Dieterle, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Daniel Goroff, Alfred P. Sloan Foundation; and Greg White, National Academy of Education, expressed their support for the study. Study Committee Chair Susan Fiske, Princeton University, gave a brief overview of the report's recommendations (for a detailed discussion of the report, see Update, January 13, 2014).

Felice Levine, American Educational Research Association and COSSA Board member, explained the implications of the study's recommendations to research using large-scale datasets (in disciplines including education research, sociology, and demography). She explained that most publically available data (e.g., real estate records, court decisions, birth and death records, and analogous digital information) would not qualify as "human subjects research," and would not be subject to the accompanying regulations. She emphasized, however, that regulations should never be considered a replacement for sound research ethics; research that uses these types of data must still conform to the ethical code of the discipline in which it is conducted. For private information or data available via restricted access, investigators should register the study under the excused category and provide a data protection plan. Levine explained that most research relying on large-scale, cross sectional, or longitudinal surveys primarily present informational risk to participants, and would thus qualify as "excused." She closed by noting that the social and behavioral sciences have a long history of developing procedures for data protection, which the broader human-subjects research community can learn from.

Fiske discussed the report in the context of small-scale datasets, often used in experimental psychology and behavioral economics research. She explained that most of this type of research involves benign interactions or interviews, such as asking someone to fill out a survey, make strategic choices, or participate in a game. In most cases, this kind of research presents no more discomfort than what is encountered in the daily life of the general public, so it would qualify as minimal risk and be counted as "excused."

Yonette Thomas, Association of American Geographers and At-Large COSSA Board Member, focused on the impact on Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) and IRB administrators. She noted that, overall, IRB professionals have been innovative in developing ways to make IRBs work better. However, they should still be encouraged to maximize IRBs' flexibility, efficiency, and timeliness and to develop and share best practices. The report suggests that IRBs try not to over-focus on risk and suggests that the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) develop guidance to clarify the informed consent process. The report also recommends that investigators have the option to designate a single IRB of record for multi-site studies and that IRBs develop an appeals process to give researchers a little more comfort (although the Committee expects that such a process would be rarely used).

Friends of AHRQ Celebrates the Agency's 15th Anniversary

Fifteen years ago, Congress authorized a name change for the Agency for Health Care Research and Policy, and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) was born. To commemorate this anniversary, the Friends of AHRQ (of which COSSA is a member) issued a report, *AHRQ: 15 Years of Transforming Care and Improving Health*. The report explains the importance of health services research and demonstrates how AHRQ produces the evidence to "make health care safer; higher quality; more accessible, equitable, and affordable; and to ensure that the evidence is understood and used." The report also features accounts from producers and users of AHRQ's research that detail how AHRQ is helping to improve the U.S. healthcare system. COSSA was a sponsor of the report, which was released at a Congressional briefing that featured Karen Minyard, Georgia Health Policy Center; Stephen Parente, University of Minnesota; Lucy Savitz, Intermountain Healthcare; and Reed Tuckson, Tuckson Health Connections.

Science and Human Rights Coalition Focuses on Disability Rights

On January 27 and 28, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Science and Human Rights Coalition held its biannual meeting, the theme of which was "Disability Rights and Accessing the Benefits of Scientific Progress and Its Applications." The Coalition, made up of over 50 member and affiliated organizations, including COSSA, focuses on integrating human rights into the practice of science and vice versa.

The program began with a panel that introduced the disability rights framework. Moderator Maya Sabatello, Columbia University, explained that between 15 and 17 percent of the world's population has a disability, which equates to between 800 million and one billion people, 150 to 200 million of whom are children. Eighty percent of people with disabilities live in the developing world. Persons with disabilities face pervasive societal stigma and prejudice, segregation and discrimination, and a mentality that views their disability as an individualized medical issue to be "fixed." It is in this context that the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) was drafted in 2006. The CRPD currently has been ratified by 141 parties (the U.S. is not among them). Some of the principles enshrined in the CRPD include: respect for human dignity, non-discrimination and equal opportunity, respect for difference as part of human diversity, and inclusion as a human right. It represents a paradigm shift from viewing disability as disease to a social-relational approach and asserts that states have a positive obligation to promote the rights of their disabled citizens. Science has a role to play in disability rights, Sabatello explained, because it can improve accessibility, communication, and assistive technologies.

Charlotte McClain-Nhlapo, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), shared how the principles of disability rights shape policy and practice at USAID, which is working to integrate disability rights into its everyday activities. David Morrissey, U.S. International Council on Disabilities, discussed disability rights in America, beginning with the Americans with Disabilities Act, passed in 1990. Although the U.S. signed the CRPD in 2009, it failed a ratification vote in the Senate in 2012. Morrissey emphasized that U.S. ratification is important because it will bring America to the table and position it to share the benefit of its experience with other countries.

To read more about last month's Science and Human Rights Coalition meeting, see COSSA's summary.

Brookings Forum Evaluates the Safety Net during the Recession

On January 30, the Brookings Center on Children and Families held a forum on [The Great Recession and the Safety Net](), in conjunction with the American Academy of Political and Social Science (a COSSA member), Sage Publications, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The event highlighted a [recent volume]() of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, which focused on the effects of the Great Recession. Isabel Sawill, Co-Director of the Center for Children and Families, introduced the speakers, and Ron Haskins, also Co-Director of the Center for Children and Families, moderated the panel.

Sheldon Danziger, President of the Russell Sage Foundation and editor of the featured *Annals* volume, gave an overview of the volume. The 2007-2009 recession was the most severe economic downturn since the Great Depression, and the economy has still not fully recovered. It has widened the economic disparities that exist for less educated workers, African Americans and Hispanics, and young adults. The *Annals* volume features research from economics, political science, sociology, and psychology that explores how federal and state policy affected the Recession. Danziger pointed to four key conclusions:

1. Most workers, families, and children were negatively affected; the impact still lingers; and the most disadvantaged groups suffered in multiple domains
2. The initial financial panic was blunted by active government policy, although budget cuts diminished the positive effect.
3. Some of the few positive impacts were: increased higher education enrollment, positive health effects (e.g., fewer people driving to work led to fewer car accidents), and positive family and community support responses.
4. Some anticipated negative consequences have yet to manifest themselves, such as the impact on people who drained their retirement savings early or the effects on the children of the long-term unemployed.

Robert Moffitt, Johns Hopkins University, discussed how the safety net fared during the recession. He examined a variety of safety net programs, both means-tested (like the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, sometimes called food stamps)) and social insurance programs (like unemployment insurance and Medicare). Moffitt found that both types of programs saw increases during the recession. Overall, the means-tested programs increased most (particularly SNAP and Medicaid). Among social insurance programs, unemployment insurance saw the biggest increase, followed by Social Security Disability Insurance. Moffitt characterized the safety net's response as strong-especially when compared to previous recessions-with some programs (particularly unemployment, SNAP, and the EITC) being more responsive than others.

Betsey Stevenson, Council of Economic Advisers, shared some new ways to measure the response of the poverty rate to government programs. She explained that the official poverty rate tends to miss taxes and transfers, and the supplemental poverty measure is relative and only goes back to 2009. A group of researchers at Columbia developed an absolute measure of poverty that takes taxes and transfers into account and a "market" measure that is based purely on wages. Comparing the two allows one to see the impact of social programs on poverty. The market measure of poverty was 27 percent in 1967 and 29 percent in 2009 (increasing due to the declining value of the minimum wage). The absolute measure, however, was 26 percent in 1967 and only 16 percent in 2012. Using the measures, Stevenson explained, the researchers were able to determine that "market" poverty increased by 4.5 percent during the recession (2007-2010), but "absolute" poverty only increased by half a percent, meaning that social programs were able to keep poverty from rising by four percent. Stevenson pointed out the programs were bolstered significantly by the 2009 *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*, which provided additional funds. Without the Recovery Act, poverty would have increased by three percent, indicating that responsive legislative action during a recession is key to preventing a rise in poverty.

Robert Greenstein, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, drawing on Stevenson's discussion of the new poverty measures, noted that the programs expanded by the Recovery Act kept 6.9 million people out of poverty. While there is a widespread perception that these programs discourage people from working, Greenstein observed that the documented effect is small, and there is not a lot of evidence on how this effect is impacted by recessions. He argued that safety net programs have the double benefit of keeping people out of poverty while stimulating the economy by putting money into the hands of low-income consumers (who spend it on necessities). Greenstein suggested that the safety net be altered so that it automatically expands during a recession, though he acknowledged that this is extremely unlikely in the current political climate.

Michael Tanner, Cato Institute, offered a different perspective on the safety net. He expressed concern that expanding government benefits has a ratcheting effect, where programs are expanded in times of crisis but do not return to their previous levels afterward. He noted that participation in a number of social safety net programs is higher now than in 2009. Tanner suggested that this can reduce economic mobility by making poverty "more comfortable."

COSSA MEMBER ACTIVITIES

Senator Warren Named Fellow of the American Academy of Political and Social Science

U.S. Senator and social science champion Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) was recently elected as a fellow of the American Academy of Policy and Social Science (AAPSS). AAPSS, a COSSA member, has elected a class of fellows each year since 2000. Warren, a former National Science Foundation-funded social scientist with expertise in consumer bankruptcy, has been a vocal champion for social and behavioral scientific research and the U.S. research enterprise more generally. She joins six other distinguished researchers in the 2014 class of AAPSS fellows.

COSSA ACTION & OUTREACH

COSSA Thanks Appropriators for BEA Funding

On January 30, COSSA joined with members and other sister organizations on a letter to the chairs and ranking members of the House and Senate Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Subcommittees thanking them for the final fiscal year (FY) 2014 appropriation for the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). The FY 2014 omnibus appropriations bill enacted last month included $95 million for BEA, which, according to the letter, "will help spur economic growth and job creation at the regional level since BEA data are used by federal, state and local governments to inform economic and fiscal policy and by the private sector to inform business and investment decisions."

Association of American Geographers
Association of American Law Schools
Law and Society Association
Linguistic Society of America
Midwest Political Science Association
National Communication Association
Population Association of America
Society for Research in Child Development

Membership Organizations

Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences
American Evaluation Association
American Finance Association
American Psychosomatic Society
Association for Asian Studies
Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management
Association of Academic Survey Research Organizations
Association of Research Libraries
Council on Social Work Education
Economic History Association
History of Science Society
Justice Research and Statistics Association
Midwest Sociological Society
National Association of Social Workers
North American Regional Science Council
North Central Sociological Association
Rural Sociological Society
Social Science History Association
Society for Anthropological Sciences
Society for Behavioral Medicine
Society for Empirical Legal Studies
Society for Research on Adolescence
Society for Social Work and Research
Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues
Southern Political Science Association
Southern Sociological Society
Southwestern Social Science Association

Centers and Institutes

American Academy of Political and Social Sciences
American Council of Learned Societies
American Institutes for Research
Brookings Institution
Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences
Cornell Institute for Social and Economic Research
Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan
Institute for Women's Policy Research
National Opinion Research Center
Population Reference Bureau
RTI International
RWJF Center for Health Policy at the University of New Mexico
Social Science Research Council
Vera Institute of Justice

Clark University
University of Colorado
Columbia University
University of Connecticut
Cornell University
University of Delaware
Duke University
Georgetown University
George Mason University
George Washington University
Harvard University
Howard University
University of Idaho
University of Illinois
Indiana University
University of Iowa
Johns Hopkins University
John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY
University of Maryland
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse
University of Michigan
Michigan State University
University of Missouri, St. Louis
University of Minnesota
University of Nebraska, Lincoln
New York University
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
North Dakota State University
Northwestern University
Ohio State University
University of Oklahoma
University of Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania State University
Princeton University
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
University of South Carolina
Stanford University
State University of New York, Stony Brook
University of Texas, Austin
University of Texas, San Antonio
Texas A & M University
Vanderbilt University
University of Virginia
University of Washington
Washington University in St. Louis
University of Wisconsin, Madison
University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
Yale University

COSSA

Executive Director: Wendy A. Naus
Deputy Director: Angela L. Sharpe
Assistant Director for Public Affairs: Julia Milton
Assistant Director for Government Relations: Josh McCrain

President: James S. Jackson

Address all inquiries to COSSA at newsletter@cossa.org Telephone: (202) 842-3525

The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) is an advocacy organization promoting attention to and federal support for the social and behavioral sciences.

UPDATE is published 22 times per year. ISSN 0749-4394.

Share COSSA Washington Update with your colleagues!

Consortium of Social Science Associations | 1701 K Street, NW | Suite 1150 | Washington | DC | 20006