OBAMA ADMINISTRATION ISSUES DETAILS OF FY 2010 BUDGET PROPOSAL

After releasing an overview of his proposed FY 2010 budget on February 26, the new Administration promised the details later (see Update, March 9, 2009). Later has finally arrived. The details emerged from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the agencies starting on May 7 and continuing during the week of May 10. Since late February the agencies have also received their final FY 2009 appropriations and those that obtained funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) completed plans to spend their allocations.

The following presents more than was revealed in February. The next issue of Update will be COSSA’s annual special issue that examines in depth the budgetary situation for over 50 federal agencies that provide funding for the social and behavioral sciences. Look for it in early to mid-June.

As noted in February, the President’s budget proposes $7.045 billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF) in FY 2010. The 8.5 percent increase over FY 2009 appropriated funds keeps NSF on the path to doubling its budget in FY 2016. The funding for Research and Related Activities, which includes the research directorates such as the one for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE), jumps to $5.773 billion, an increase of 10.6 percent. (This does not include the $2.5 million in ARRA funds.) The Education and Human Resources directorate receives a small 1.5 percent increase over FY 2009 to $857.8 billion. (This does not include $100 million in ARRA funds.) As noted by Science Adviser John Holdren (see other story), the Administration plans to triple the number of NSF Graduate Fellowships by FY 2013.
The proposed FY 2010 budget includes $257 million for the SBE directorate, a 6.9 percent increase over the FY 2009 regular funding level. In addition, SBE received $85 million from ARRA funds. Some of the increase is accounted for by the movement of funding for the Science of Learning Centers from the Office of Integrative Activities into the research directorates. The Geosciences and Biological Sciences directorates received the largest increases in the proposed budgets, 12.3 percent and 11.8 percent, respectively.

The President’s budget proposes $30.317 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in FY 2010. This is only 0.4 percent above the FY 2009 appropriation and does not include the $10.4 billion given to NIH under ARRA. The FY 2010 President’s budget request “strategic priorities” include: more than $6 billion for cancer research across NIH, reflecting the first year of an 8-year strategy to double cancer research by FY 2017 (This is an increase of $268 million or 5 percent above the estimated FY 2009 level in this area.); $141 million of the $211 million DHHS-wide initiative that also encompasses the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) for research into the causes of and treatments for autism spectrum disorders (For NIH, this represents an increase of $19 million, or 16 percent above the FY 2009 level); and a $9 million increase to the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences for a new initiative to support nanotechnology health and safety research.

For the NIH Common Fund (CF) the President’s budget provides $549 million, an increase of $8 million or 1.5 percent above the FY 2009 funding level. A trans-NIH incubator for new ideas and initiatives designed to accelerate the pace of discovery; CF initiatives are focused on efforts that no single or small group of institutes and centers (ICs) could conduct on their own, and have potential to transform biomedical and behavioral research. The CF remains at 1.8 percent of the total NIH budget. Within the CF, some of the original Roadmap five-year projects are expected to end the incubator phase in FY 2009. In addition, in FY 2010 the budget request notes that there will be major decreases in several projects as they transition to the ICs as planned.

The FY 2010 budget also includes $5 million in funding via the Office of the Director that will be used to launch a new effort in bioethics, which will be funded in coordination with the ICs. The President’s budget emphasizes that a “renewed commitment to bioethics research and training is necessary to maintain and enhance public trust and confidence as we explore new frontiers in science, bioinformatics, and biomedical and behavioral medicine.”

As a result of receipt of the Recovery Act funds in FY 2009, NIH plans to temporarily suspend the NIH Director’s Bridge Award program in FY 2010; the vast majority of these funds will be redistributed to the ICs. The FY 2010 budget will continue to support the Pathway to Independence program.

For the National Children’s Study, the President’s budget provides a total of $194 million. The previous administration zeroed out the study for two years in a row with Congress overriding the decision.

The Census Bureau, as earlier promised, receives $7.375 billion in the proposed FY 2010 budget. Of that total $7.115 billion is for Periodic Censuses, mostly for the 2010 decennial. The Salaries and Expenses account receives $259 million, up $25 million from FY 2009. The President proposes to fund the Bureau of Economic Analysis at $101.2 million in FY 2010, more than an $11 million boost.

At the Department of Agriculture, the Research, Education and Economics area continues to implement the provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill. The FY 2010 budget for this area includes a focus on improving rural education and quality of life, strengthening childhood obesity prevention research, and supporting global climate change and environmental services markets research. The National Institute of Food and Agriculture proposed budget includes: Hatch Act funding of $207 million in FY 2010, same as in FY 2009; and $202 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative, same as last year. Like previous Administrations, the new one proposes to eliminate earmarks from this budget, which amounted to $128 million in FY 2009. The Economic Research Service has a small $2 million increase to $82 million in the proposed FY 2010 budget. The National Agricultural Statistics Service would increase by $10 million to $162 million as the five year cycle for the Census of Agriculture begins again.

At the Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs, the Administration is proposing for FY 2010 a major increase of $15 million to initiate implementation of a redesigned methodology for the National Crime Victimization Survey. This would increase the budget of the Bureau of Justice Statistics to $60 million. The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) base budget would remain the same at $48 million. NIJ would continue to receive funding from the Office of Violence Against Women and from the Justice Assistance Grants program under the President’s proposals. The budget also seeks to eliminate $178 million in earmarks in the Byrne Discretionary Grant program. The Community Oriented Policing Program includes $100 million to implement the Second Chance Act. This is an increase of $75 million and includes funding for research to increase knowledge of effective prisoner re-entry strategies. In addition the Administration proposes: “with respect to funds appropriated for ‘Justice Assistance,’ ‘State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance,’ ‘Weed and Seed,’ ‘Community Oriented Policing Services,’ ‘Violence Against Women
Prevention and Prosecution Programs,’ and ‘Juvenile Justice Programs,’ up to one percent of funds made available to OJP for formula grants under such headings may be used for research or statistical purposes by the National Institute of Justice or the Bureau of Justice Statistics.”

At the Department of Education, the preliminary budget promised to include “funds to carefully study, improve, and scale-up promising educational innovations that focus on improving student learning and achievement. The additional funds will also be used to rigorously evaluate Federal education programs so that Federal investments are preparing students for success in college and the workforce.” This has translated into a proposed 34 percent increase to $224.2 million for the Institute for Education Sciences’ Research, Development and Dissemination program. For the National Center for Education Statistics, the proposed budget includes an increase of $10 million to $108.5 million. Support for building Statewide Data Systems would receive the same $65 million it got in the FY 2009 appropriations. (It also received $250 in ARRA funds.)

International Education and Foreign Language Studies programs are proposed for $118.9 million in FY 2010, the same as last year. The FY 2010 budget proposes $47.4 million for the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), close to a $5 million increase for non-earmarked programs. The Administration proposes to eliminate the $91.2 million in FY 2009 congressional earmarks for FIPSE. The Administration recommends $9.7 million for the Javits Fellowships program, same as FY 2009 and $3 million for the Thurgood Marshall Legal Education Opportunity program, again the same as FY 2009.

The Termination List

As in previous administrations, President Obama has issued a list of programs in the discretionary budget he would like to terminate or significantly reduce. Some of these are new, including many in the Defense budget, but others are old standbys from the Department of Education, such as the small amounts of funding for the Closeup Foundation, the Civic Education program, the National Institute of Literacy, Academies for American History and Civics, and the Javits Gifted and Talented program. One of the larger proposed terminations is the $465 million appropriated to states with large number of illegal immigrants in their prison populations. All of these programs usually have congressional sponsors that have resisted earlier attempts to abolish them. With a projected deficit of $1.8 trillion will Congress finally go along?

CENSUS NOMINEE GROVES FACES SMOOTH CONFIRMATION HEARING

Robert Groves, President Obama’s nominee to lead the Census Bureau, appeared before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on May 15. In the hearing, Groves satisfied the Senators present that he has, in the words of Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI) who introduced Groves, the “personal integrity and independence” to lead the Census. The Committee expects to report out the nomination the week of May 17 and the hope is to get Groves confirmed before Congress leaves for the Memorial Day recess on May 22. As a number of Senators pointed out at the hearing, with less than a year to go until Census Day 2010, it is imperative to have a director on board.

Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE), who chairs the subcommittee that has oversight responsibility for the Census Bureau and who chaired the hearing, suggested that Groves faces a daunting task in getting the 2010 Census done. According to Carper, the decennial “requires years of planning and preparation, followed by lightening execution in real time.” He also noted the escalating cost of the 2010 count, estimating that it will cost $100 to count each household for an total cost of more than $14 billion.

Groves, who directs the University of Michigan’s Survey Research Center, laid out four objectives for his tenure in his testimony. (For more on Groves’ background, see Update, April 6, 2009). First is his strong belief that “this country needs an objective, nonpartisan, professional Census Bureau.” Second, Groves argued is the “inherent scientific nature of government statistics” and that “the director of a federal statistical agency must be free to speak on scientific matters unfettered by political influences.” In response to questions from the Committee’s Ranking Member Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), Groves declared that he would resist political interference and if necessary, not only resign, but continue to speak out publicly against such partisan intrusions into a scientific agency.

Third, in managing a large organization like the Bureau, Groves pledged to “work with the executive team already assembled; ... to seek advice and counsel from the brightest minds in the country... and [to be] transparent in these activities with respect to the many stakeholders of the census.” Finally, he testified that he agrees “fully with Secretary Locke’s testimony that statistical adjustment of the census is eliminated as an option for reapportionment and further that statistical adjustment will not be used for redistricting.”
and got him to agree that there would be no sampling for federal funds’ allocations and no sampling in the 2020 Census.

Regarding Carper’s concerns with the decennial, Groves concurred with the Senator that raising awareness is the key to participation. This is done through partnerships with many entities, finding trusted spokespersons to carry tailored messages, and large amounts of activity at the grass roots. It was also important, Groves agreed, to get folks to want to be counted.

Groves also committed himself to reviving “the science-side of the job of the Census Bureau.” “My job must be to constantly search for improvements in the ways censuses and surveys are conducted,” he declared. Responding to Sen. Dan Akaka’s (D-HI) questions on this issue, Groves committed himself to supporting a strong research program within the Bureau. He noted that “innovation is needed” to promote efficiencies. He is all for trying new ideas and developing partnerships with, what Groves called “the vibrant sector inventing new measurement techniques.”

**HOLDREN TELLS SCIENCE COMMITTEE SBE SCIENCES ‘CRITICAL’ TO SOLVING SOCIETY’S PROBLEMS**

Responding to Rep. Brian Baird’s (D-WA) question about the role of the social sciences in the Administration’s science policy agenda, John Holdren, President Obama’s science adviser and the director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy noted that the social, behavioral, and economic sciences (SBE) are “critical to solving society’s problems.” Appearing before the House Science and Technology Committee on May 14, Holdren also said he agreed with Baird’s point that behavior change is as important as technological innovation in meeting the challenges of our times. He stated that his definition of science “is inclusive” of the SBE sciences. The President’s budget supports significant research in these important sciences supported by many agencies across the government, Holdren reported. This was the second time in a week Holdren had publicly touted the value of the SBE sciences (see other story).

On the other hand, as Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-IL) pointed out at the hearing, the SBE directorate at the National Science Foundation (NSF) is not treated as well as the other directorates in NSF’s FY 2010 budget (see other story).

In calling the annual hearing to review the President’s science and technology budget, committee chairman Rep. Bart Gordon (D-TN) also wanted to explore how the President’s FY 2010 budget treated the programs in the 2007 American COMPETES Act, which included NSF, science in the Department of Energy, and NIST. However, because the Committee has many members from Florida and Texas, much of the hearing focused on NASA (Even Rep. Donna Edwards (D-MD) got in on this act, since she has Godard Space Center in her district.)

In discussing the FY 2010 budget, Holdren asked the Members to include the funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) in their calculations. He repeatedly pointed out President Obama’s strong commitment to science and technology. Holdren also noted that what appears as a small increase in the overall S&T budget occurs because of a large proposed reduction in Department of Defense development funding. Basic research is treated very well, he exclaimed.

In response to concerns raised by Lipinski, the Science Adviser indicated that he also worries about “boom and bust cycles” that could recur when the ARRA funding expires after FY 2010. He suggested that agencies like NSF, which received an extra $3 billion from ARRA, have been encouraged to make grants that range from two to five years to avoid having all the money run out at the same time.

Rep. Vern Ehlers (R-MI) looked at the proposed FY 2010 NSF budget and saw only a 1.5 percent increase for the Education and Human Resources (EHR) directorate and became quite unhappy. Ehlers, who has championed science education throughout his House career, did not appear satisfied with Holdren’s explanation for the small increase. He told Ehlers not to judge NSF’s education support only through the EHR budget number because all of the research directorates also fund education activities. Holdren also pointed out the Administration’s commitment to triple the number of NSF graduate fellowships by FY 2013.
Picking up on one of the themes in the President’s remarks about S&T, specifically his support for “integrity in science,” Rep. Brad Miller (D-NC) inquired about the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) in the Office of Management and Budget. Miller blamed the Bush Administration’s OIRA for insisting on “perfect scientific information” before they could act, particularly in environmental areas. Holdren agreed with Miller that “perfect scientific information” is difficult and that often one must act on “imperfect information,” because not to act only favors the status quo. The Science Adviser agreed that he would consult regularly with the new Administration’s OIRA head (Harvard Law School Professor Cass Sunstein has been nominated for the position) on these matters.

PRAISE AND PRESCRIPTIONS FOR THE FEDERAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM

Peter Orszag, director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and John Holdren, President Obama’s Science Adviser and director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), offered praise and prescriptions for the social sciences and the federal statistical system as the bookend speakers at a daylong symposium at the National Academies on May 8.

The symposium “The Federal Statistical System - Recognizing Its Contributions, Moving It Forward,” was sponsored by the Committee on National Statistics and the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences (AAPSS). COSSA joined a number of organizations as co-sponsors. It also featured the presidents of the three academies - Ralph Cicerone of Science, Charles Vest of Engineering, and Harvey Feinberg of the Institute of Medicine - discussing sciences’ stake in the statistical system. Cicerone, in particular, touted research in the social sciences as important for the scientific agenda.

Orszag began the day with a discussion of “the role of statistics and data in a science driven administration.” He strongly declared that high quality, rigorous science along with data collection and its analysis should drive policy decisions. “Robust, unbiased data are the first step toward addressing our long-term economic needs and key policy priorities,” Orszag asserted.

As the person in charge of the federal budget, he also noted the small investment the U.S. makes in the federal statistical system. Orszag presented a chart illustrating that funding for the principal statistical agencies (excluding allocations for the decennial censuses) as a share of GDP has declined by about 20 percent since 1980. At the same time, he pointed out the data collected by these agencies drive monetary policy decisions, federal program allocations, and federal program administration.

Speaking during the week OMB released the details of the President’s FY 2010 budget proposal, Orszag was quite cognizant of the role data played in the development of that document. He also mentioned the “critical role” for data in the long-term projections for spending and revenue that accompanied the budget’s production. In addition, the use of “measurable outcomes” to determine what programs are working became an important part of the Administration’s budget decisions. At the same time, Orszag called for “the continuing need to innovate to refine data methods.” (A sentiment shared by Census Bureau nominee Robert Groves, see other story.)

Orszag: Pay More Attention to Psychology and Sociology

Focusing on the Administration’s plans for health care and education reform, Orszag indicated that it was important to pay more attention to psychology and sociology and less to rational economic models because the behavior of people and society will determine the success of those policies.

He reiterated Obama’s plan to rein in health care costs through comparative effectiveness research, increased use of technology, and a focus on prevention and wellness, all of which received considerable budgetary allotments in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

Focusing on education, Orszag noted the Administration’s investment in linking student achievement data to postsecondary and work information and the creation of state data systems. He also cited data that indicate the stalling in the increase of educational attainment by Americans, which has led to the decline, according to Claudia Goldin and Larry Katz, in its importance for productivity growth. Developing improved measurements of teacher effectiveness is another challenge for the statistical system, according to Orszag.
Holdren: ‘A Fierce Defender and Supporter of the Social Sciences’

To close the session, Ken Prewitt, former Census Director and now Carnegie Professor of Public Affairs at Columbia University, introduced John Holdren as “a fierce defender and supporter of the social sciences” going back to the Reagan Administration’s attacks on these sciences in the 1980s.

Holdren began his talk by noting some concern in the social and behavioral science community over President Obama’s speech to the National Academies (see Update, May 4, 2009). Not mentioning these sciences in the speech, Holdren asserted, should not imply the Administration’s lack of support or interest. The speech, he said, was geared toward “the comeback of the physical sciences and engineering” to the core in thinking and decision making in the White House. The social sciences were never absent, he suggested.

He then went on to enumerate the large number of people in President Obama’s cabinet and Holdren’s own OSTP staff who have advanced degrees in the social and behavioral sciences. In addition, he noted the important contributions of social science research to help policy makers including the results of large and longitudinal surveys, cost/benefit analyses, and risk and decision making studies.

Turning to the statistical system, Holdren asserted that without data public policy is subject to “hideous error.” However, numbers are “always something...never everything” in policy decisions. At the same time, he acknowledged that the Administration’s science agenda must rely on data on climate change, public health, and demography for its most important initiatives. He mentioned the National Science Foundation’s (NSF) Science and Engineering Indicators, a biannual data collection and analysis on the scientific enterprise, as a key document for any science adviser.

Holdren indicated the statistical system’s attempts to help researchers, noting the series of research data centers established across the country for examining microdata collected by that system. He also called for more investment in collecting better data to determine the effectiveness of research and development, a key element of NSF’s Science of Science and Innovation Policy initiative. Tracking expenditures from the ARRA will be another challenge for the statistical system, according to Holdren. Finally, like most other speakers at the symposium, he called for strengthening the research capacities within the statistical agencies of the U.S. government.

Statistics in Key Policy Arenas

In between these two key Administration representatives, the symposium featured a series of panels one of which described the federal statistical system including a history of the Census conducted by Margo Anderson of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the National Income and Product Accounts (NIPA) depicted by Dale Jorgenson of Harvard. Anderson called the Census “an old and venerable vital government function” required by Article 1 Section 2 of the Constitution. Jorgenson said the NIPA was one of “the great conceptual inventions of the 20th Century,” but that it was time to develop “a new architecture” that will include non-market accounts for education, health, and the environment. The Bureau of Economic Analysis will soon announce that “new architecture.”

Another session focused on knowledge gained from federal statistics in a series of key policy areas. Katharine Abraham, former Commissioner of Labor Statistics and now at the University of Maryland, discussed labor market outcomes. Robin O’Malley of the John Heinz Center for Science, Economics and the Environment, noted that in environmental statistics the reliance on state data collections was paramount and he suggested these entities were not very well connected to the federal statistical system. Stephanie Koontz of Evergreen State College focused on the data that paint a portrait of the changing American family and the major revolution in family formation that has occurred, with fewer marriages, more co-habitation including among same-sex couples, and the development of the notion of “emerging adulthood” for people in their twenties who have not yet settled.

Sam Preston of the University of Pennsylvania illustrated what he called “the best data on health in the world.” He noted the importance of health behaviors and the impact of smoking on the closing of the gap in life expectancy between men and women in the U.S. and around the world. Finally, Doug Massey of Princeton and the current President of AAPSS, examined immigration data, which he again called the “weakest link” in the statistical system (for an earlier talk by Massey on this topic see Update, November 10, 2008). Even though there is an Office of Immigration Statistics in the Department of Homeland Security, Massey believes vast improvements are necessary in this policy area.

Business and Government Perspectives

A panel on perspectives from business and government featured Maureen Haver, chair of the National Association for Business Economic Statistics, calling for improved measures of the service sector of the economy, completion of the modernization of the Consumer Price Index, and better data on international prices, health care, and financial
services. She praised the enactment of the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002 (CIPSE) that allowed for some data sharing among federal agencies. Paul Overberg, the Database Editor for USA Today, provided many examples of his newspaper’s use of data produced by the federal statistical system, not only for its ubiquitous front-page graphs, but as catalysts for more in-depth inside-the-paper stories.

Michael O’Grady, former Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at the Department of Health and Human Services during the Bush II Administration, presented the federal government user perspective indicating that government research and statistics agencies should be “analysts not advocates.” That analysis, he argued, must be relevant to the policy debate, timely, transparent without hidden agendas, and effectively communicated. Nancy Kingsbury of the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) described its role in producing reports for Congress, particularly in recent years on the preparations for the 2010 Census, with 40 reports in 2005-09. Joseph Salvo from the New York City Department of City Planning provided the urban planner’s point of view calling for an increase in the size of the American Community Survey so that local governments can make better use of this more timely data across their many different communities.

Future Challenges and Opportunities

Finally, former Bureau of Labor Statistics Commissioner and COSSA President Janet Norwood joined former U.S. Chief Statistician and Census Bureau Deputy Director Hermann Habermann in looking at the system’s future needs, challenges, and opportunities. The key for Norwood was that the system continue to produce high-quality data, relevant to user needs completely free from political interference. She called the present “a pretty decent system.” It was also important, Norwood said, to help the public understand the “probably” factor - the “science of uncertainty” in producing data. The statistical agencies, she said, need to expand and review their data collections, “find new ways to do things” and stay connected to their counterparts in academe. She is also quite concerned about the need to attract well-qualified people to work in the agencies.

Habermann credited the system with a great history of innovation, but called for the development of private non-profit Centers on Statistical and Informatics Research that would help provide the sorely needed new innovations. Among these would be figuring out how to achieve more integration among the various agencies without running afoul of privacy and confidentiality concerns. He too called for “a dialogue with the American people” on the data collection and uses by the government that would include more transparency and more informative and easier-to-use Web sites. In concluding, Habermann called attention to the cybersecurity issues that affect all data systems.

MORE ADMINISTRATION APPOINTMENTS: ROBINSON TO LEAD OJP AGAIN; O’TOOLE NEW HEAD OF S&T AT DHS

On May 6, President Obama announced his intention to nominate Laurie O. Robinson as the Assistant Attorney General for Office of Justice Programs (OJP) at the Department of Justice. Robinson previously served as Assistant Attorney General for OJP from 1993 to 2000. Since late January she has been serving as Acting Assistant Attorney General/Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General at OJP during which she has met with many stakeholder groups including COSSA, the American Society of Criminology, and the Justice Research and Statistics Association. Between her two stints at Justice, Robinson has served as a Distinguished Senior Scholar in the University of Pennsylvania’s Jerry Lee Center of Criminology, and as Executive Director of its Forum on Crime & Justice. In 2004 she launched a Criminology Master of Science Program at Penn, which she continued to direct until this year. Prior to her first post at OJP, Robinson was the director of the American Bar Association’s Section of Criminal Justice for 14 years, where she founded the ABA’s Juvenile Justice Center and had responsibility for policy development, work with Congress, and development of special projects in such areas as crime victims, prisons, and police procedures. She graduated magna cum laude from Brown University.

On the same day, Obama named Tara O’Toole as the nominee for Under Secretary for Science & Technology (S&T) at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). O’Toole is CEO and director of the Center for Biosecurity at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC), and professor of medicine and public health at the University of Pittsburgh. UPMC’s Center for Biosecurity is an independent organization dedicated to improving the country’s resilience to major biological threats. Prior to founding the center in 2003, O’Toole was one of the original members of the Johns Hopkins Center for Civilian Biodefense Strategies and served as its director from 2001 to 2003. During the first Clinton Administration, she served as assistant secretary for Environment Safety and Health at the Department of Energy. O’Toole is another veteran of the much-missed
CONGRESS ADDRESSES AMERICA'S FAILING HIGH SCHOOLS

On Tuesday, May 12, the House Education and Labor Committee held a hearing to examine how policies for addressing the high school dropout crisis and improving graduation rates can strengthen America’s economic competitiveness. Committee Chairman George Miller (D-CA) set the tone for the hearing by announcing “the truth is we aren’t just facing a crisis, the house is on fire.”

Nearly one in five men between the ages of 16 and 24, are high school dropouts. About 10 percent of our nation’s high schools are actually “dropout factories” rather than centers for education. These schools account for close to half of our student dropout population, and disproportionately affect minority students, producing 69 percent of all black and 63 percent of all Hispanic students who drop out. Overall minority students are less likely to graduate than their white peers, with only about 55 percent of black students and 52 percent of Hispanic students graduating on time, compared to 78 percent of white students. Chairman Miller declared it “a national tragedy that if you’re a minority student in this country, you have a one in three chance of attending a dropout factory.”

Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA) commented on how there is a very close correlation between high school dropouts and crime, and that blacks who drop out of high school have a 33 percent chance of going to jail. He asked Marguerite Kondracke, President and CEO of America’s Promise, if establishing good dropout prevention programs would help reduce crime, teen pregnancy, and other risky behaviors. She replied that to be effective dropout programs need to go beyond just what happens in school and address the whole child, by bringing various communities together. If students at risk realized they had a future and received the help they need to succeed, they would indeed be less likely to engage in risky behavior, she added.

Kondracke testified that high school is so important to a student’s future, because a high school diploma is a determining factor for future income. Nationally only one-third of high school dropouts have steady employment, and dropouts are more than twice as likely to live in poverty compared to those with a diploma. While high school dropouts account for 13 percent of the adult population, they earn less than six percent of all dollars. The median annual income for high school dropouts is $14,000, lower than the median income of $24,000 for high school graduates and $48,000 for college graduates.

Robert Balfanz of Johns Hopkins University testified that to address the issue of these dropout factories the federal government must increase accountability, increase resources, build capacity, and promote innovation. Balfanz stated that the high school graduation rate and student achievement levels need to have equal weight in a federal accountability system. A sampling of dropout factories found that only about 40 percent had made adequate yearly progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) guidelines. He advocates that these schools need more financial support, and that the federal government needs to insure that the most challenged secondary schools have the resources they need to succeed, by increasing investment in pre-k education and Title 1 funding.

Rep. Michael Castle (R-DE) was one of a group of Members who testified at the hearing on the first panel. He stated that “high school is no longer about simply moving students from ninth grade to graduation. We must ensure all students are leaving their secondary education with the knowledge and skills necessary to reach their goals.”

Castle testified he was not opposed to having national standards or national assessments as part of the conversation on school reform, but asked the second group of panelists what they thought was the most significant issue that should be addressed at the federal level to help bring about reform. Former West Virginia Governor and current President of the Alliance for Excellent Education Bob Wise responded that the federal government needs to help set the climate and direction for reform, and drive state reform efforts.

Everyday 7,000 students drop out of school, making for a total of 1.2 million every year. Sixty percent of all current jobs require some sort of education or training beyond high school, and ninety percent of fast-growing high-wage jobs will require some sort of postsecondary education, Wise noted. With only half of minority students set to graduate high school on time, the former Governor declared that the nation’s high schools are not meeting the needs of individuals or our economy. He said that by 2050 half of our population will be comprised of students from minority
populations, and “from a civil rights or economic perspective, we can’t afford to ignore the education needs of the fastest growing populations in this country.”

Dropouts don’t affect just their finances; they affect the whole U.S. economy. According to Chairman Miller, each class of high school dropouts cost the U.S. economy $309 billion in lost wages over the student’s lifetime. “It’s become increasingly clear that addressing this dropout crisis is one of the most important things we can do to turn our economy around for good,” he concluded.

NSF’S EHR ADVISORY COMMITTEE SEEKS WAYS TO FURTHER STEM EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

On May 6th, the National Science Foundation’s (NSF) Education and Human Resources (EHR) Directorate’s Advisory Committee, chaired by University of Kentucky President Lee Todd, met to discuss how to further advance Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education and research.

This meeting was especially optimistic with a new Administration in place that appears dedicated to advancing and supporting research and education. Acting NSF Deputy Director Cora Marrett told the advisory committee that “this is the time for science and technology.” The President’s FY 2010 budget proposes to double the NSF budget over the next ten years. NSF also received $3 billion in stimulus money, $100 million of which will be directed toward EHR, she noted.

Marrett also remarked that the Obama administration is placing a greater emphasis on STEM education within the Department of Education than in the past. Therefore, NSF must work to create a greater connection with the Department to help steer research and define best practices.

Freeman Hrabowski, President of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and Chairman of the Committee on Underrepresented Groups, spoke to the committee about the upcoming report on these groups in STEM fields. Preliminary findings show that historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are still producing the highest number of minorities with Ph.D.s in the STEM fields. Hrabowski, who was also a featured speaker at the COSSA-organized Enhancing Diversity in the Sciences retreat (see Update, March 24, 2008), asserted that one in two U.S. citizens will be a person of color by 2050. Thus, he declared: “We need to define this issue as not just an investment in science, but also an investment in America’s future.” He also noted that more needs to be done to help identify “pockets of excellence,” programs at universities that are producing high numbers of doctorates among underrepresented groups, and try to expand their success to other mainstream institutions.

Eileen Lewis of the University of California, Berkeley, gave a presentation as part of the Investment Theme on “Advancing Career Development Opportunities on Technician Education and Community Colleges.” The presentation focused on the role community colleges and technician education play in higher education, competitiveness, and new careers. Lewis asserted that community colleges help to democratize higher education, by providing access to all sorts of students at different ages, levels and stages in their education and career paths. Community colleges represent the largest sector of higher education, with more than 1,200 accredited two year community colleges, and 6.5 million students enrolled annually in for-credit courses. Community colleges educate 46% of all current undergraduates, and award some 800,000 associate degrees and certificates a year.

The advisory committee agreed to continue to push the STEM agenda thorough it’s various subcommittees and by utilizing member’s contacts within the Obama administration to advance EHR’s mission.

SECRETARY DUNCAN AND SENATOR BENNET ADDRESS EDUCATION REFORM MEETINGS

Two former big city school administrators, one in the Administration and one in the Senate addressed two separate seminars on education reform held at the Brookings Institution. On May 11, the Brown Center for Education Policy hosted a discussion with Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, former head of the Chicago Public Schools. On May 14, the Future of Children program held a discussion on high school reform featuring Sen. Michael Bennet (D-CO), the former Superintendent of the Denver Public Schools who was appointed to his Senate seat when Ken Salazar became Obama’s Interior Secretary.
Secretary Duncan has billions of dollars at his disposal under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. He asserted that the Department and the Administration will not be investing in the status quo, but will spend the funds for real and lasting reform.

There are about 100,000 schools in the U.S. and Duncan believes that if we turn around just one percent of the bottom schools each year over the next five years that we would have a real chance at improving education. Duncan stated “we must stay focused reforming in our schools; our students only have one chance to get a quality education.”

Duncan claims that our students are at a disadvantage due to our antiquated agrarian-based school calendar. He advocated making the school day and year needs longer. He wants schools that are at the center of their communities where teachers, students and the community would have access to programs.

The theme of reform carried over to the second session on how college is the key to economic mobility, and how high schools are unprepared to help students achieve their goals of postsecondary education. American high schools are failing its students in both excellence and equity, with roughly a quarter of the nation’s high school students failing to graduate each year. Even those who graduate often leave high school with insufficient skills for success in college or our more competitive workforce.

Bennet announced that our high schools have become traps perpetuating mediocrity and poverty. “We have treated this like it is someone else’s problem for decades,” said Bennet. Even though the federal government accounts for only 9 percent of the total money spent on K-12 education, Bennet believes the federal role is incredibly important. Even as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) helped to reveal the incredible achievement gaps between some student populations, Bennet thinks federal government should do more to incentivize school districts to help create an atmosphere of reform and innovative thinking.

He agreed with many others including Secretary Duncan that we need to establish a set of common internationally benchmarked standards and develop improved assessments. We also need to expand our data systems and develop longitudinal data collections to help us know if we are reaching our goals. “We need accurate information about what is working to change the odds for our kids,” said Bennett.

Part of the discussion focused on what exactly should be the role of high schools today. Ron Haskins of the Brookings Institution asked: What is the responsibility of high schools in preparing students, especially low income students, for college? If the key goal of high schools is to make sure students are college ready, they must evolve to develop accurate assessments and data systems to help schools keep track of how students are actually doing, he suggested.

Russ Whitehurst, former head of the Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences and now with the Brookings Institution’s Brown Center for Education Policy, said that the huge disparities in high school and college completion is an embarrassment and imperils the future of the nation. However, Whitehurst questioned whether high school’s job is really to prepare all students for college. Whereas he affirmed that we need to do a much better job in making high schools better, Whitehurst doesn’t believe they should be the new middle school as some reformers are pushing. He said that while we need to educate all students, and college for all is a useful aspiration, it may divert attention from helping students who may not be able to or want to go on to college. He believes reform needs to ensure that high schools provide a wide range of options for students including college preparation, vocational training, on-the-job training skills, etc.

As both these briefings pointed out, improving the academic achievement for high school students is a national imperative. One of the things that needs correcting is suggested by the data that show student achievement as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress declines as students move from grade school to high school. We need to invest in innovative interventions, including developing common standards and minimum graduation requirements that would help schools focus on the skills students need to succeed after high school. But the discussions also show that we need to have a dialogue about what we want our high schools to be, and to reexamine what a high school diploma should mean.

DAVID ELLWOOD WINNER OF SECOND MOYNIHAN PRIZE

David Ellwood, Dean of the Kennedy School of Government and Professor of Political Economy at Harvard, is the winner of the 2009 Daniel Patrick Moynihan Prize given by the American Academy of Political and Social Science (AAPSS). The prize is named for the late Senator from New York “to recognize public officials and social scientists who champion the use of informed judgment to advance the public good.” Ellwood received his prize at a dinner on
May 7 in Washington, DC. Alice Rivlin of the Brookings Institution was the initial Moynihan prize recipient (see Update, May 19, 2008).

Ellwood, who spoke at the COSSA Annual Meeting in 2003, while he was Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at the Department of Health and Human Services, is a labor economist who is a foremost scholar on poverty and welfare. With Mary Jo Bane, he wrote books and articles that shaped the welfare reform debate of the 1990s and the introduction and expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to help the working poor. Ellwood left his position in the Clinton Administration because of his disagreement with the eventual welfare reform legislation.

More recently, he has conducted research on the changing nature of the American families, the forces reshaping fertility and marriage patterns and the implications of these changes on society and the economy.

The AAPSS also names fellows and awards medals for distinguished research in a variety of social science fields. This year’s recipients included: Mahzarin Banaji of Harvard, named the Herbert Simon Fellow for her work on the Implicit Association Test, which has revolutionized the study of intergroup relations especially stereotyping and prejudice; Alan Blinder of Princeton, named the John Kenneth Galbraith Fellow for his work on macroeconomic policies, central banking, and free trade; Morris Fiorina of Stanford, named the Harold Lasswell Fellow for his research on legislative and electoral processes; Joseph Nye Jr. of Harvard, named the Theodore Roosevelt Fellow for his development of the ideas “Soft Power” and “Smart Power” in analyzing international relations; and Lawrence Sherman of the University of Pennsylvania, named the Thorsten Sellin Fellow for his work in experimental criminology.

The AAPSS, located in Philadelphia, was founded in 1889 to promote the progress of the social sciences. It publishes The Annals, a bimonthly journal examining contemporary political, economic and social issues. Its current Executive Director is Phyllis Kaniss. Douglas Massey, Professor of Sociology and Public Affairs at Princeton University, serves as the AAPSS’ current President.

NIH RESUMES SEARCH FOR OBSSR DIRECTOR

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has reopened its search for a Director for the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR). The Director serves as NIH’s focal point for establishing agency-wide policies and goals in behavioral and social sciences research, coordinates the activities undertaken in the performance of this research, and provides advice and staff support to the NIH Director, Deputy Director, and Division of Program Coordination, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives within the Office of the Director. The OBSSR has 14 full time positions and has an FY 2009 estimated budget of more than $27 million. A detailed vacancy announcement that includes mandatory qualifications requirements and application procedures may be obtained at NIH’s Executive Jobs Site: http://www.jobs.nih.gov/vacancies/executive.htm or by contacting Regina Reiter at (301) 402-1130. CV, bibliography, and a statement addressing the qualification requirements must be received by close of business AUGUST 31, 2009.

MODELING THE SCIENTIFIC WORKFORCE: APPLICATIONS WANTED

The National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) is seeking grant applications that propose to develop computational models of the dynamics of the scientific workforce in the United States. In its commitment to employ data-driven, scientifically rigorous tools to develop a diverse and stable scientific workforce, the institute recognizes there is a need to look beyond individual programs in isolation and pursue a systems-based approach to the study of scientific workforce dynamics. According to the announcement, advances in computational methods and system sciences suggest that it is possible to build models of the scientific workforce that will inform the understanding of workforce dynamics, support development and management of interventions and training programs, and guide the collection and analysis of data necessary for program design and management. At the same time, the Institute acknowledges that it understands that computational models are one tool among many used to guide policy and process.

Data collected over the past two decades document and suggest several trends that may have serious long-term consequences to the diversity and size of the workforce, including:

- Disparities in educational and career attainment continue to persist among racial and ethnic groups. Despite a considerable body of data on outcomes, policy makers still lack a solid body of research to guide decisions on intervention strategies.
Women make up about half of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows trained by NIH; however, only about 25 percent of awards and 21 percent of awarded dollars go to female Principal Investigator (PIs).

Baccalaureate degree recipients from groups underrepresented in biomedical and behavioral sciences enroll in and attain graduate degrees in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) disciplines at a proportionately lower rate (5 percent vs. 10 percent) than students from non-underrepresented groups.

The age distribution of NIH grantees has changed significantly over the past 30 years, with the average age of the PI of an investigator-initiated grant rising from 39 to nearly 50. The funding success rate for new investigators has declined, and currently the average new investigator is 42 years old. Conversely, in 1980, the average age of a new investigator was 37.

At the same time, the dynamics underlying these patterns are not well understood and it is not clear what interventions may be successful in promoting the diversity, health, and stability of the workforce. Accordingly, NIGMS’ Modeling the Scientific Workforce (RFA-GM-10-003) is expected to be a concerted effort focused on understanding the underlying dynamics that produce successful scientists, examining strategies for increasing the diversity of the scientific workforce, identifying questions in need of research, and guiding the collection and analysis of data. In addition to considering the academic job market, it will also focus on the larger system of workforce dynamics. Possible topics include, but are not limited to activities to:

- Develop a layered set of models that address the short and long term implications of specific policies and programs
- Reproduce historical dynamics and trends as represented by current data, including aggregated life histories of subgroups of scientists
- Reproduce the current (baseline) structure of workforce demographics, variation, and dynamics
- Identify and test key assumptions that contribute to policy and program development
- Identify external factors that have major effects on scientific workforce dynamics, with economic incentives and disincentives being of particular interest
- Identify factors that have differential effects in various subgroups such as young investigators, minorities, and women
- Identify major effects on outcomes. For example, one could ask if transformative events are rooted in personal relationships (e.g., mentoring), institutions (e.g., student and faculty recruitment), or programs (e.g., pre-doctoral training programs, postdoctoral fellowships)
- Take account of economic, cultural, and social influences, including diversity among subgroups and existing research on how people make career decisions
- Consider the implications of how programs, decisions, and policies are implemented in a heterogeneous environment
- Examine the implications of lifting interventions. How long should programs be kept in place?
- Provide a framework for additional research on workforce development

Applications are due October 8, 2009. For more information contact Shiva Singh [singhs@mail.nih.gov or 301/594-3900] and/or see http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-GM-10-003.html

NSF ANNOUNCES MAJOR RESEARCH INSTRUMENTATION COMPETITION UNDER ARRA

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has announced a special competition in its Major Research Instrumentation (MRI) program using the $300 million allocated to it from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The deadline for proposals is August 10, 2009. NSF expects to make 400 awards.

According to NSF, the MRI program serves to increase access to shared scientific and engineering instruments for research and research training in our Nation’s institutions of higher education, museums and science centers, and not-for-profit organizations. This program especially seeks to improve the quality and expand the scope of research and research training in science and engineering, by providing shared instrumentation that fosters the integration of research and education in research-intensive learning environments.

To accomplish these goals, the MRI program assists with the acquisition or development of shared research instrumentation that is, in general, too costly and/or not appropriate for support through other NSF programs. Instruments are expected to be operational for regular research use by the end of the award period. NSF notes that a key recommendation of a 2006 National Academies’ report on Advanced Research Instrumentation and Facilities was that the NSF should expand the MRI program so that it includes “mid-scale” instrumentation whose capital costs are
greater than $2 million, but with costs that are not appropriate for NSF’s Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction account.

NSF stresses that this is one time funding and will have different conditions than the regular MRI competition. These include:

- Eligible organizations may submit a maximum of three (3) proposals, independent of the number of proposals that may have been submitted under the regular MRI competition. However, proposals that wholly or substantially duplicate those that were accepted for review under will not be accepted for this competition. A maximum of two submissions can be for instrument acquisition. If three proposals are submitted, at least one submission must be for instrument development.

- An organization may be included as a funded subawardee/subcontractor in another organization’s development proposal, at a level of 20 percent or less of that proposal’s budget, without affecting the subawardee’s/subcontractor’s submission limit. Inclusion as a funded subawardee/subcontractor in a development proposal at a budgetary level in excess of 20%, or in any acquisition proposal, must be counted against proposal submission limits.

- Proposal budgets may include requests from NSF in the range $100,000 to $6 million from Ph.D.-granting institutions of higher education and non-degree granting organizations; up to $6 million (there is no minimum request) from non-Ph.D. granting institutions of higher education or the disciplines of mathematical sciences or social, behavioral, and economic sciences at any eligible organization (my emphasis).

In addition, cost-sharing is required in the new competition, with non-Ph.D.-granting academic institutions of higher education exempt from the cost-share requirement. Cost-sharing will be further waived for those institutions of higher education that are not ranked among the top 100 of those receiving Federal research and development funding (as documented by the statistical data published by the Foundation).

For more information contact: Randy L. Phelps, (703) 292-8040, or rphelps@nsf.gov.

The full solicitation notice can be found at: http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5260&org=NSF&sel_org=NSF&from=fund.
### GOVERNING MEMBERS
- American Association for Public Opinion Research
- American Economic Association
- American Educational Research Association
- American Historical Association
- American Political Science Association
- American Psychological Association
- American Society of Criminology
- American Sociological Association
- American Statistical Association
- Association of American Geographers
- Association of American Law Schools
- Law and Society Association
- Linguistic Society of America
- Midwest Political Science Association
- National Communication Association
- Rural Sociological Society
- Society for Research in Child Development

### MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS
- Agricultural and Applied Economics Association
- American Association for Agricultural Education
- Association for Asian Studies
- Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management
- Association of Research Libraries
- Council on Social Work Education
- Eastern Sociological Society
- International Communication Association
- Justice Research and Statistics Association
- Midwest Sociological Society
- National Association of Social Workers
- National Council on Family Relations
- North American Regional Science Council
- North Central Sociological Association
- Population Association of America
- Social Science History Association
- Society for Behavioral Medicine
- Society for Research on Adolescence
- Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues
- Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality
- Sociologists for Women in Society
- Southern Political Science Association
- Southern Sociological Society
- Southwestern Social Science Association

### COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
- Arizona State University
- Brown University
- University of California, Berkeley
- University of California, Davis
- University of California, Irvine
- University of California, Los Angeles
- University of California, San Diego
- University of California, Santa Barbara
- Carnegie-Mellon University
- University of Chicago
- Clark University
- Columbia University
- Cornell University
- Duke University
- Georgetown University
- George Mason University
- George Washington University
- Harvard University
- Howard University
- University of Illinois
- Indiana University
- University of Iowa
- Iowa State University
- Johns Hopkins University
- John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY
- Kansas State University
- University of Kentucky
- University of Maryland
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse
- University of Michigan
- Michigan State University
- University of Minnesota
- Mississippi State University
- University of Nebraska, Lincoln
- New York University
- University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
- North Carolina State University
- Northwestern University
- Ohio State University
- University of Oklahoma
- University of Pennsylvania
- Pennsylvania State University
- Princeton University
- Purdue 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
- Texas A & M University
- Tulane University
- Vanderbilt University
- University of Virginia
- University of Washington
- Washington University in St. Louis
- West Virginia University
- University of Wisconsin, Madison
- University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
- Yale University

### 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 the Advancement of Social Work Research
- Institute for Women’s Policy Research
- National Bureau of Economic Research
- National Opinion Research Center
- Population Reference Bureau
- Social Science Research Council