



**HOUSE BEGINS NSF
AUTHORIZATION PROCESS
ANEW**

The National Science Foundation's (NSF) leadership appeared before the Basic Research Subcommittee of the House Science Committee on March 5. Although competing for attention with the full committee's hearing on cloning, a number of members attended the NSF hearing to focus on their particular interests in basic science research. Thus began the process that could culminate in the enactment of a new NSF authorization. In both 1995 and 1996 the House passed bills containing a provision to downsize the number of Directorates, but the Senate did not respond. It seems unlikely that any bill the House or Senate adopts in this Congress will attempt to alter NSF's structure.

In the absence of Basic Research Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Steve Schiff (R-NM), Rep. Vern Ehlers (R-MI) chaired the hearing. Ehlers has been named Vice-Chairman of the full Science Committee and will lead the Committee's two-year study of U.S. Science and Technology Policy. In his prepared opening remarks, Ehlers commented that the President's requested three percent increase for NSF's FY 1998 budget is "a realistic proposal from which we on the Science Committee can work." This was subsequently confirmed by Science Committee Chairman Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-WI), when he presented the panel's recommendations to the House Budget Committee for the preparation of the FY 1998 budget resolution. Rep. George Brown (D-CA), the Science Committee's Ranking Democrat, has produced an "investment budget" proposal that balances the budget by 2002, while calling for increases in science and technology spending by five percent per year.

Ehlers also noted that "not only must the science community justify the importance of these expenditures to Congress, but they must also articulate the utility of their work to their neighbors and fellow scientists, in order to maintain broad social support for basic research." This echoes a concern expressed on numerous occasions by NSF Director Neal Lane.

Research Linked to Economic Growth

Lane's testimony focused on NSF's contributions to the growth and opportunity in the U.S. economy provided by investments in science and technology. He linked innovations in the American economy to "deep roots in the support for fundamental research and education provided by the NSF and other federal agencies." As examples, he cited virtual design of aircraft such as the Boeing 777, the use of real-time inventory by business, and the creation of the Global Positioning System that has "applications for the military, recreation, transportation and even for reducing the time and cost of commercial airline flights."

Members of Congress expressed interest in the revision of the merit review process (see *Update*, December 16, 1996), the recompetition in the Advanced Super Computing program, the Next Generation Internet, the role of the private sector in research support, and the implications of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) for NSF. Rep. Lynn Rivers (D-MI) asked Lane about research that might be "sensitive" for political or social reasons and whether these projects received "higher scrutiny." Lane responded that "from time to time controversy will arise" over some NSF supported projects. However, the merit review process provides the best method for insuring the conduct of the best science, he said.

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CENSUS UPDATE: NEW PLANS, NEW CRITICISM

In recent weeks there have been several major developments affecting the 2000 decennial census: the Census Bureau has revised its proposed use of sampling, a key senator warned the Commerce Department of a "train wreck," and the General Accounting Office placed the 2000 survey on its "high-risk" list of federal programs. Looming down the road are setting funding levels for Bureau activities in FY 1998 and a possible battle over the future of the "long-form," a key source of data for social scientists.

In an appearance before the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, Commerce Secretary William Daley and other department officials announced revisions to its proposed methodology for 2000. In what is known as "direct sampling," the Bureau, after the mailback phase is completed, would draw a sample in each census tract to conduct personal interviews to bring the response rate in that tract to 90 percent. Statistical sampling would then be used to draw a picture of non-respondents to reach a 100 percent count. A census tract is a relatively homogenous area of approximately 4,000 people.

In his first public comments on the census, Sen. Fred Thompson (R-TN), chair of the panel, was angered that key congressional panels were unaware of the change until just days before the announcement, despite Census Bureau Director Martha Farnsworth

Riche saying her agency had been considering it for nearly a year. "Congress is not a passive bystander" in the process, he said, adding that believes the Bureau's cooperation with Congress has "left something to be desired." Noting congressional sentiment against the proposed use of sampling, he said, "we are heading for a train wreck" if all parties cannot come together. He noted that Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH), the chair of the Senate panel that funds the Census Bureau, is working to broker a consensus.

In February the General Accounting Office (GAO) placed the decennial census on its "High-Risk" list because of the lack of agreement between the Bureau and Congress on a design for 2000. It faulted the Bureau for not adequately explaining its intentions to Congress and for not planning for the possibility that sampling could be rejected and/or significantly underfunded. "The longer the delay in securing agreement over design and funding, the more difficult it will be to execute an effective census, and the more likely it will be that we will have spent billions of dollars and still have demonstrably inaccurate results," the GAO warned.

Observers expect legislation to be introduced soon in the House that would jeopardize the long-form questionnaire in the decennial census. The long form, sent to one in six households, obtains a wide range of demographic information about the American population. It is the basis for much social and behavioral science research, as well as public and private sector decision-making. Should a legislative battle occur over the long form, COSSA and its allies in the data user community will educate policy makers on the importance of this key source of data.

SEMINAR LOOKS AT FUTURE OF BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH

At a recent seminar, The Future of Biomedical Research, leading figures from research and public policy arenas explored a broad set of issues relating to the support and performance of biomedical research in an environment of resource constraints and changes in the health care system. Social scientists made a number of contributions to the debate over future funding options.

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The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), an advocacy organization for federal support for the social and behavioral sciences, was founded in 1981 and stands alone in Washington in representing the full range of social and behavioral sciences. *Update* is published 22 times per year. Individual subscriptions are available from COSSA for \$65; institutional subscriptions, \$130, overseas mail, \$130. ISSN 0749-4394. Address all inquiries to COSSA, 1522 K Street, NW, Suite 836, Washington, D.C. 20005. Phone: (202) 842-3525, Fax: (202) 842-2788.

National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Harold Varmus enumerated nine long-term issues regarding funding for the agency. The first four, said Varmus, require something different than annualized appropriations. The remaining items, he continued, pertain to the scope of science. They are:

- Stabilizing Funding
- Adapting to the Change in Health Care Reimbursement
- Ensuring the Vitality of the Research Infrastructure
- Promoting the Frayed Intersection of Academia, Government and Industry
- Guaranteeing that Science Is Perceived to Have Integrity and Is Equitable
- Resolving the Dispute over Patents and Technology Transfer
- Improving the Return on the Dollar
- Recognizing that Biomedical Research Is Dependent on the Other Sciences
- Recognizing That There Are Other Benefits to the Competitive Funding of Research

Porter on the Importance of Biomedical Research

Rep. John Porter (R-IL), chairman of the House panel that funds NIH, declared that people have to understand that basic research will not be done by industry, and emphasized that such research "will only be done if it is organized and funded through the government." There are three issues that are most important that affect this country, he said -- education, research and technology. Basic research is the foundation for applied research done in biotechnology and pharmaceuticals, he continued. In concluding his remarks, he emphasized that "every year in appropriations is a new year" and that he believes that all concerned will have work harder than ever to support NIH.

According to UCLA sociologist Lynne G. Zucker and UCLA economist Michael R. Darby, "the U.S. scientific infrastructure has performed very well in producing both the revolution and in commercializing the new technology." Zucker and Darby note that "because biotechnology, like many other areas of science, involves much tacit knowledge it is not easy for other countries to catch up simply by reading publications reporting these scientists' research." They also noted that "the effects of the research breakthroughs have an important

geographically localized effect on economic growth and development."

Glenn Hubbard, Professor of Economics, Columbia University, explained that "expenditures for research, clinical, graduate medical education or anything else, should be decided on an ongoing basis in the political process." Otherwise, said Hubbard, "we may not get incentives for cost containment and reorganization in medical schools." Noting the trends in discretionary spending, the sticky wicket is "for the deficit (overall) to continue to fall after 1998, something close to freezing discretionary spending in nominal terms will be required." Hubbard said that means "that holding discretionary outlays to their 1997 levels, would lead to a loss of 26 percent of purchasing power by the end of the budget window." It is not obvious that health research and public health would emerge unscathed, he concluded.

Discretionary Budget a Zero-Sum Game

"No one knows what the future holds," said June O'Neill, Director of the Congressional Budget Office. If recent history is the guide, a squeeze on discretionary spending will be linked to balancing the budget. She noted that presently the deficit appears "relatively tame." But what will happen after 2010 when the baby boomers retire, to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, if there is no action to change the current policy -- the debt/deficit will grow faster than the GDP. Meanwhile, O'Neill noted that research and development (R&D) has maintained a slightly increasing share of a decreasing pie. "The discretionary budget will be a zero-sum game," she said. Emphasizing that "if the NIH is to continue on its recent nominal growth, other agencies, including other science agencies will have to shrink," O'Neill noted that the "sharp slide in the Department of Defense (DOD) spending may be coming to an end."

The seminar was sponsored by the Brookings Institution and the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, in collaboration with the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology.

CNSTAT CELEBRATES 25TH ANNIVERSARY

The National Academy of Science's Committee on National Statistics recently celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. Joining the committee in its celebration was Office of Management and Budget Director Franklin Raines, who stressed the importance of having an accurate federal statistical system to guide the direction of public policy. He encouraged the Committee to continue its work on how such a system could be implemented and used effectively by policy makers. Raines noted that he had asked Katherine Wallman, Chief Statistician of the U.S., for a budget review that assumed a virtual, unified federal statistical agency, in which all statistical activities were viewed as a whole. He hoped this approach would provide funds for some issues that cut across the federal statistical system and help define priorities across agencies.

Raines also emphasized the need to identify problems and policy implications in terms that lay people can understand. We need help in explaining statistical debates to Congress, the media, and the public, he said. He expressed the need to have ways to assess information and to question studies that are brought to advance a particular point of view. Finally, Raines remarked about the confusion over the consumer price index (CPI). Noting that there was not another issue more important for social science and public policy, he called upon the Committee to help in clarifying this issue.

CNSTAT serves to contribute to a better understanding of important national issues by working to improve the statistical methods and information on which public policy decisions are based. The Committee reviews the statistical programs of federal agencies and suggests improvements. It studies what data and methodology are needed to improve our understanding of the economy, the environment, public health, crime, education, immigration, poverty, welfare, and other timely issues for which public policy decisions are made.

The Committee recently released six reports: sampling in the 2000 census, statistics for U.S. immigration research, the local fiscal impacts of illegal immigration, two reports on retirement income modeling, and a draft interim report on performance

measures for public health programs. The Committee is convening a study on the research program of the Economic Research Service and, together with the Institute of Medicine, has convened a panel to review the Social Security Administration's research program for a revised disability determination process.

CNSTAT has established a home page on the Internet (<http://www2.nas.edu/cnstat>), which provides information on Committee and panel members, publications, and current studies. Links provide access to academic and government statistics sites. The home page includes summaries of major Committee reports and the text of some. Many committee reports are available through the National Academy Press, telephone 1-800-624-6242. Further information can be obtained from the Committee on National Statistics, 2101 Constitution Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20418, telephone 202-334-3096.

*CNSTAT Executive Director Miron Straf
prepared this report*

DISABILITY DECLINE SHOWS IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH, STUDY SAYS

According to three Duke University researchers "chronic disability among older people in the United States continues to decline, which could have major policy implications for the federal government's health programs." The study conducted by Kenneth G. Manton, Larry Corder and Eric Stallard at Duke University's Center for Demographic Studies and sponsored by the National Institute on Aging, is based on National Long Term Care Surveys from 1982, 1984, 1989, and 1994. The proceedings were published in the March 18 issue of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. The study was released jointly by Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA), the Alliance for Aging Research, and the Task Force on Science, Health Care and the Economy.

The results of the study reveal that from 1982 to 1994, the chronic disability rates among older Americans declined nearly 15 percent. It tracked the health of 35,000+ Medicare recipients. A 1.3 percent average annual decline was observed. Manton et. al concluded that at least 1.2 million fewer people were chronically disabled in 1995 than would have been

projected in 1992. The study defined chronic disability as either being in a long-term care facility or as a person's inability to perform at least one activity of daily living (ADL), such as bathing or dressing. The study showed a large decline in the percentage of older Americans who are institutional residents. Declines in the disability rate were seen in all age groups from 60 to 95 years. Potential factors contributing to the declining rate include the adopting of healthier lifestyles and medical treatment innovations.

Senator Kennedy, proposing to double the current level of federal support for research over the next five years, used the study to emphasize that "too little attention" has been paid to "a third alternative for saving Medicare -- improving the health of senior citizens." The study, said Kennedy, "compels us to rethink how we consider the health of Medicare. This study offers a surprising conclusion at odds with the current debate over the solvency of Medicare." He called on "the Department of Health and Human Services to convene a conference, this year, of medical associations, health providers, the NIH, the CDC, and others to develop a realistic strategy for improving the dissemination and adoption of effective treatments."

"Reductions in disability saves dollars," said, David M. Cutler, Associate Professor of Social Sciences at Harvard University and Faculty Research Fellow, National Bureau of Economic Research. The trend cited by Manton, he said, is extremely important and impressive. The rate that disability has declined in the last two decades and probably longer, has important implications for things such as: The retirement age, Social Security, Medicaid, long-term care. This research, said Cutler, "should be thought of as a beginning and not an end." It does not tell us where we should go but in the general direction the research should go, he concluded.

Robert Butler, founder and director of the International Longevity Center and the former director of the National Institute on Aging, said it is gratifying to see Manton's findings. He added that they come "just in the nick of time . . . the Baby Boomers are getting older, and this will have a profound effect on society."

The National Long-Term National Health Care Survey of trends among older Americans by Manton and his colleagues quantifies for the first time

the benefits of the evolution of medical research, the focus on preventive health care, and their impact on public health and on Medicare expenditures, said Herbert Pardes, Vice President for Health Sciences and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Columbia University. Pardes noted that there are "countless examples of areas in which research advances have led to treatments that forestall costly dysfunction and disability.

COSSA TESTIMONY HIGHLIGHTS ROLE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE IN HIV PREVENTION

"Strongly" endorsing behavioral intervention programs, an independent, non-government consensus panel convened by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) during the three-day *Consensus Development Conference on Interventions to Prevent HIV Risk Behaviors* made eight recommendations/conclusions on the role of behavioral interventions in reducing behavioral risk for HIV/AIDS. The recommendations were made following an extensive review of the scientific literature, presentations by 15 research experts, and public witnesses including, Felice J. Levine, Executive Officer of the American Sociological Association and Chair of the Executive Committee of COSSA, who testified on behalf of the Consortium. Those recommendations/conclusions include:

- Interventions are effective for reducing behavioral risk for HIV/AIDS. These interventions should be widely disseminated.
- The epidemic in the United States is shifting to young people, particularly those who are gay and who are members of ethnic minority groups. New research must focus on these emerging risk groups. Interventions focused on their special needs are essential.
- Regional monitoring of changes in behavioral risk should be established.
- Preventive programs are essential for individuals already infected with HIV. This national priority will become more pressing as new biological treatments prolong life.

- Legislative restriction on needle exchange programs must be lifted.
- Legislative barriers that discourage effective programs aimed at youth must be eliminated. Although sexual abstinence is a desirable objective, programs must include instruction in safe sex behavior, including condom use.
- The erosion of funding for drug abuse treatment programs must be halted. Drug abuse treatment is a central bulwark in the nation's defense against HIV/AIDS.
- The catastrophic breach between the behavioral science of HIV/AIDS prevention and the legislative process must be healed.

Social and Behavioral Science Testimony

Levine noted that "the central issues that animate[d] this consensus development conference are essentially social science questions: where has extant research been informative and where is future research most urgently needed?" She stressed that "there is a prevailing need for research -- prevention and intervention -- to address the social and behavioral variables that impact HIV at-risk populations." She related that "since the beginning of the AIDS pandemic, the social sciences have contributed to our understanding of AIDS by focusing on individuals in their social context, and as importantly, on their intimates, families, support systems, and communities." Emphasizing that there is still much we do not know about how norms, networks, communities and organizations operate, Levine maintained that there is a need and opportunities exist at NIH to advance the social and behavioral science in the NIH AIDS program.

"It is clear that individual level risk reduction programs can only have limited effect without fundamental changes in the social and economic conditions of vulnerable persons and populations," said Janet McGrath of Case Western Reserve University, presenting on behalf of the American Anthropological Association Commission on AIDS Research and Education. McGrath also underscored the fact that "significant gaps still exist in our understanding of personal perceptions of risk and how these are shaped by the context of people's lives." It is

important that we "develop evaluations on the impact of prevention and HIV care service on hard to reach populations or populations not served by current interventions," she emphasized.

"Preventing risky behaviors is still our only effective means of slowing the spread of HIV infection, said Patricia D. Hawkins, Chair of the Committee on Psychology and AIDS for the American Psychological Association. "That means we must apply what we have learned to enhance prevention efforts, but at the same time," she continued, "we must strive to seek more knowledge to better our prevention strategy." Urging increased support for a prevention science research agenda, Hawkins noted that "beyond the AIDS crisis, research targeting behavior, social change and prevention will provide us the foundation for reducing premature death rates and improving the future health of our nation and all its citizens."

The conference was sponsored by the NIH Office of Medical Applications of Research and the National Institute of Mental Health. It was cosponsored by all of NIH, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Health Resources and Services Administration. The full *NIH Consensus Statement on Interventions to Prevent HIV Risk Behaviors* is available by calling 1-888-644-2667 or by visiting the NIH Consensus Program web site at <http://consensus.nih.gov>.

NEW BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH BRANCH AT NICHD

A new behavioral research branch, the *Learning Disabilities, Cognitive and Social Development Branch*, has been created by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). Having an initial budget of \$38 million, it will support research on humans, addressing the normative and atypical development of cognitive, affective and social domains, the effects of early child care on development, and language, learning and attention disorders.

G. Reid Lyon is the new branch's acting chief and is located in the Executive Building, Room 4B05G, 6100 Executive Boulevard, MSC 7510, Bethesda, MD 20892. Telephone: 301/496-9849; Fax: 301/480-7773.

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT: NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

COSSA provides this information as a service and encourages readers to contact the agency for further information or application materials. Additional application guidelines and restrictions may apply.

Minority Dissertation Research Grants in Aging

Small grants to support doctoral dissertation research will be available for minority doctoral candidates. Grant support is designed to aid the research of new minority investigators and to encourage minority individuals from a variety of academic disciplines and programs to study topics relevant to aging.

Mechanism of Support: Grants may be made for up to two years. Grants to support dissertation research will provide no more than \$30,000 in total direct costs, and no more than \$25,000 in direct costs in any one year.

Budget: The National Institute on Aging (NIA) anticipates funding between 10 and 12 grants with a total cost of up to \$300,000. These grants are not eligible for competitive renewal.

Research Objectives: This research initiative is to provide minority students assistance to complete their dissertation research on aging-related topic and thereby increase the pool of minority researchers in aging. The Behavioral and Social Research Program supports research on social and psychological aging processes and the place of older people in society and its social institutions. The emphasis is on promoting health, effective functioning, productivity, and independence throughout the middle and later years. Areas of special interest include health and behavior; cognitive functioning; health care and long term care; work, retirement and productivity; family and intergenerational relationships; the demography of population aging; biodemography; aging among minorities, women, oldest old and rural populations; and the aging of adults who are retarded.

Deadline: Complete applications must be received by **April 18, 1997**.

Contact: For additional information and full application packet contact: Dr. Robin A. Barr, National Institute on Aging, (301) 496-9322; Fax: (301) 402-2945; E-mail: rb42h@nih.gov.

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT: NATIONAL HUMAN GENOME RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Individual Postdoctoral and Senior Fellowships in Genomic Analysis and Technology and the Ethical, Legal and Social Implications of Human Genetics Research

Scientists and scholars who are well-trained in one or more of a variety of disciplines will be needed to accomplish the goals of the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) research program and to use, for further research, the resources that the program will develop. Therefore, the NHGRI is offering both individual postdoctoral fellowships and senior fellowships to highly qualified individuals who are seeking training that will enable them to engage in research relevant to the genome project. Broad areas of research that relevant include genomic analysis and the ethical, legal, and social implication of human genetics research. The NHGRI will support fellowship training in both broad areas.

Mechanism of Support: The stipend levels the individual postdoctoral fellowships range from \$20,292 to \$32,300.

Deadline: Receipt dates for applications are **April 5, August 5, and December 5** annually.

Contact: For more information on Individual and Senior Fellowships in Genomic Analysis and Technology may contact: Bettie J. Graham, Ph.D., National Human Genome Research Institute, (301) 496-7531; E-mail Bettie_Graham@nih.gov.

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Southern Sociological Society
Southwestern Social Science Association
Speech Communication Association

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