

MRS. CLINTON: CONNECT RESEARCH TO PEOPLE'S ORDINARY LIVES

Speaking to the biennial convention of the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD), First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, a longtime children's advocate, stressed the need to translate research into "readily available and usable" knowledge to help parents. "Make the connection between research, public policy and people's ordinary lives," she urged the scientists assembled in Washington on April 3.

Introduced by SRCD President Glen Elder of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Mrs. Clinton expressed her belief on how research can help shape better public policies. "Science and research need social policy, and social policy needs science and research," she proclaimed. Research has helped strengthen programs such as Head Start and has provided new tools for providing children's services, she added.

The First Lady gave one of the administration's strongest endorsements for continuing the "federal government's historic support for basic research," calling that support "essential to progress." She said that the federal government supports 90 percent of the research on children's issues. She noted a soon-to-be released National Institute of Child Health and Human Development funded long term study on the effects of child care programs. The report, according to Mrs. Clinton, will reassure parents with children in day care programs that a "nurturing, stimulating environment" whether provided by parents or child care suppliers will produce healthy children. She did admit, however, that a huge chasm exists in the quality of child care across this country.

Citing the work at the Yale Child Study Center she observed during her law school days, and research conducted at Hebrew University demonstrating the importance of parents as first teachers, Mrs. Clinton applauded SRCD scientists for the "profound contribution" child development research is making to the country. She noted the upcoming White House

Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning on April 17. At that session she and the President will meet with researchers, parents, child care providers, and others to focus on how new research on the brain and its relation to child development can be translated into everyday language to help children.

Acknowledging the complexity of the research conducted by SRCD scientists, Mrs. Clinton urged vigilance about how that information is used. She warned against the "simplification and manipulation" of research results on children that sometimes create problems and stresses for parents.

Mrs. Clinton also admonished the crowd that "the early years should not be seen as the only time of importance," in research about children. We cannot only care about cognitive development up to the age of three, she said. Referring to the Carnegie Council reports on adolescence, she urged the exploration of the "dynamics at each stage of a child's life." "We must invest in young people every step of the way," she said.

Concluding, the First Lady reiterated the need to translate the research, to disseminate it widely, to challenge decision makers, and to "apply what we know," to help children. "We must intensify our commitment to understanding child development and to using that knowledge," and "to take what works and spread it as far as possible," she said.

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SCIENCE BOARD APPROVES NEW NSF MERIT REVIEW PROCESS

On March 28 the National Science Board approved a new merit review process for proposed grants submitted for National Science Foundation (NSF) funding. Proposed by a Task Force of the Board in November (see Update, December 16, 1996), NSF took comments from the community for three months and made some changes for their final recommendations.

The new process tries to simplify and clarify rules for those who evaluate proposals. Under the old system reviewers were asked to consider four general criteria. The new system asks for assessments of proposals based on the answers to two broad questions: **What is the intellectual merit of the proposed activity? And 2) What are the broader impacts of the proposed activity?** For each of these, there are a series of more specific questions that should be considered, including how the proposal broadens participation of women and minorities, enhances the infrastructure of sciences, and benefits society.

The Board received 325 comments from the community, most by E-mail. Eighty percent of the respondents came from academia, and 60 percent had review experience. NSF determined that slightly more than 60 percent of the commentators "expressed a

clear opinion." Of these, a majority (56 percent) approved the changes, but raised a number of issues regarding criteria weighting, ratings, proposer competence, diversity, and societal need.

After sifting through these comments, the Task Force proposed and the Board accepted one major change from the earlier draft recommendations. The NSF will now attach a cover sheet to the proposal review form. This sheet will present the context for using the general criteria and most importantly will indicate "that the two criteria need not be weighted equally." It goes on to say: "Emphasis should depend upon either (1) additional guidance you have received from NSF and/or (2) your own judgment of the relative importance of the criteria of the proposed work."

The new process also includes a single composite rating, separate comments for each criterion, and a summary recommendation that addresses both criteria. The new system will go into effect for all proposals received beginning October 1, 1997.

NSF TO CONDUCT NEW COMPETITION FOR CENTERS

The National Science Board, after reviewing a number of assessments, authorized at its February meeting the continuation of the National Science Foundation's Science and Technology Centers (STC) program. NSF established the STC program in 1987 and made awards in 1989 and 1991 to 25 centers, spending about \$62 million, or about 3 percent of the Research and Related Activities budget. One center did not survive the review process and was discontinued. The remaining 24 centers will phase out after 11 years. NSF expects to conduct a competition in the summer of 1998 to make awards for about eight new STCs.

The original centers were charged with pursuing university-based multidisciplinary research, encouraging knowledge transfer to non-academic sectors of society, and establishing innovative education activities. The centers have become a vital network of multifaceted research and education collaborations providing facilities, instruments, and venues for interactions. Education and research have become interwoven and a large cohort of students have

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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.

graduated with special capabilities gained through participation in centers' activities. There have also been collaborations with industrial scientists. The centers have successfully attacked complex, major research problems that require sustained high levels of support.

Although the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate currently supports a Consortium on Violence Research, the National Center for Geographic Information and Analysis, a National Center on Environmental Decision Making Research, and Research Centers on the Human Dimensions on the Human Dimensions of Global Change, none of these are part of the current NSF Science and Technology Centers program. The Institute for Research in Cognitive Science at the University of Pennsylvania is the only center currently in that program. New SBE Assistant Director Bennett Bertenthal hopes to encourage greater participation in the STC process from applicants in the social, behavioral and economic sciences.

The key for the new center competition will be the "exploitation of opportunities in science, engineering, and technology where the complexity of the research problems or the resources needed to solve these problems require the advantages of scope, scale, change, duration, equipment, facilities and students that can only be provided by a campus-based center." The center will be expected to conduct research at the frontiers of knowledge, at interfaces of disciplines, and/or examining fresh approaches at the core of disciplines. An emphasis will be placed on utilizing the full human diversity of intellectual talent. Centers would provide organizational linkages within and between campuses, schools, state, local and federal agencies, national labs, industry and international entities. The centers will prepare students for a diverse set of careers, and focus on integrative learning and discovery.

The centers will receive long-term stable funding. There will be reviews after the fourth year, and if successful, funding will then continue to a maximum of ten years. The Foundation expects to provide about \$25 million in FY 2000 for new awards. NSF expects that after two subsequent competitions, to occur in 2001 and 2004, a steady-state funding level of \$75 million will be reached by FY 2006.

It is expected that the actual solicitations for the new competition will be available in the summer of 1998 with preproposals due soon thereafter. Given the extensive planning and collaboration necessary to organize a center proposal, it is never too early to start thinking and planning this effort. Further information may be obtained from Fernanda Ferreira in the Social, Behavioral and Economics Directorate; Phone 703/306-1731, E-mail fferreir@nsf.gov.

CENSUS TO BE SHORTEST SINCE 1820

In the face of congressional pressure to reduce the size of the decennial survey, the Census Bureau on March 31 released its proposed questionnaire content for the 2000 census.

The short form, sent to every household, will ask seven questions, down from 12 in 1990, making it the shortest census since 1820. The proposed questionnaire would ask: name, age, sex, relationship to others in the household, race, whether one is of Hispanic origin, and whether one owns or rents a home. The Bureau estimates it will take less than 10 minutes to complete the form.

The long form, sent to one in six households, would ask 34 questions, down from 38 in 1990. The Bureau seeks to move five questions (four on housing, one on marital status) from the short to the long form for 2000. Questions deleted from the long form include the year last worked, the home's water and sewage sources, whether the dwelling is a condominium, and how many children the respondent has had.

As an outgrowth of last year's welfare reform law, the 2000 long form will ask about grandparents who care for children. Should the federal government change its definition of poverty, the Census Bureau will add questions about health coverage and other noncash benefits.

Acknowledging the calls to reduce the size of the form, the Bureau is asking only questions that are required by law or court decisions for which census data is the sole source of information. The Bureau was required by law to submit the proposal to Congress; by April 1998 it must submit the exact

wording of the questions. Most importantly, Congress has to approve the questionnaire content, and observers caution that legislators may act to further reduce it.

GUIDE SUMMARIZES RESEARCH ON DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) recently released *Preventing Drug Use Among Children and Adolescent: A Research-Based Guide*. The guide summarizes over 20 years of research and makes suggestions on how to apply the knowledge. It is the culmination of the 1996 NIDA-sponsored National Conference on Drug Abuse Prevention Research: Putting Research to Work for the Community (see *Update*, October 14).

According to the guide fourteen basic principles are needed for prevention programs to be effective:

- Prevention programs should be designed to enhance "protective factors" and move toward reversing or reducing known "risk factors."
- Prevention programs should target all forms of drug abuse, including the use of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and inhalants.
- Prevention programs should include skills to resist drugs when offered, strengthen personal commitments against drug use, and increase social competency, in conjunction with reinforcement of attitudes against drug use.
- Prevention programs for adolescents should include interactive method, such as peer discussion groups, rather than didactic teaching techniques alone.
- Prevention programs should include a parents' or caregivers' component that reinforces what the children are learning . . .
- Prevention programs should be long-term, over the school career with repeat interventions to reinforce the original prevention goals.
- Family focused prevention efforts have a greater impact than strategies that focus on parents only or children only.
- Community programs that include medical campaigns and policy changes . . . are more effective when they are accompanied by school and family interventions.

- Schools offer opportunities to reach all populations and serve as important settings for specific subpopulations at risk for drug abuse . . .
- Prevention programming should be adapted to address the specific nature of the drug abuse problem in the local community.
- The higher the level of risk of the target population, the more intensive the prevention effort must be and the earlier it must begin.
- Prevention programs should be age-specific, developmentally appropriate, and culturally sensitive.
- Effective prevention programs are cost-effective. For every dollar spent on drug use prevention, communities can save four to five dollars in costs for drug abuse treatment and counseling.

The guide also includes ten examples of programs that have been scientifically studied and found to be effective in preventing drug use among children and adolescents, along with an extensive list of resources to get supporting information on drug abuse prevention.

Copies of the prevention guide can be obtained from the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at (800) 729-6686.

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION TO FUND NEW RESEARCH

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has announced the availability of new research grants.

The new research awards are intended to add to existing knowledge about components of economic security and about the changing economic status of the aged or disabled, with emphasis on Social Security beneficiaries. Policy makers and social scientists are the intended users of the results.

The SSA will fund projects of 12 to 24 months in duration, in two main areas.

The first uses the New Beneficiary Data System, a data base developed by SSA over the past decade to study the changing circumstances of aged and disabled beneficiaries. Based initially on a survey of new beneficiaries and spouses in 1982, the data set was

expanded through follow-up interviews in 1991 with those included in the original survey, and with information from administrative records on benefits, covered earnings, Supplemental Security Income and Medicare. With the exception of the Medicare records, all administrative data have been obtained for both primary respondents and spouses. The SSA expects to fund one award for up to \$300,000 for this area.

The second priority research area is the integration of Social Security and private pension benefits. A 1986 law limited the maximum Social Security offset to 50 percent of the pension amount specified by defined benefit plans. This change should have increased retirement benefits for lower paid workers covered by these kinds of plans. Research is sought to evaluate the effect of the new integration rules on the distribution of retirement income. The SSA seeks to learn how retirees at different income levels might have been differentially affected by these changes. Specifically, how much have retirement incomes changed as a result of this legislation, and which family income deciles have benefitted from this change? The research is expected to explore the economics of and rationale for the existence of private pension plan integration and current trends in this area. The SSA expects to fund one award for up to \$100,000 for this area.

For more information, contact the Office of Research, Evaluation and Statistics at (410) 966-9824.

The COSSA seminar, *Aging Well: Health, Wealth and Retirement*, brought the findings of similar research to the attention of policy makers. For more details, see *Update*, June 29.

COSSA SEMINAR BRINGS CRIME RESEARCH TO CAPITOL HILL

The March 21 COSSA breakfast seminar, *Juvenile Crime: A Research Perspective*, brought the findings of criminal justice research to an audience of over 90 congressional and federal agency officials. The event, planned in close collaboration with the American Society of Criminology, was attended by National Institute of Justice Director Jeremy Travis,

Bureau of Justice Statistics Director Jan Chaiken, and staff members of both the House and Senate Judiciary Committees.

Causes and Trends in Youth Violence

Richard Rosenfeld, professor of sociology at the University of St. Louis-Missouri, gave an overview of youth violence, its causes, and prevention. Rosenfeld told the audience that around 1985 rates of violent offending and victimization soared, concentrated disproportionately among young urban African-American males. He said it is important to note that in the years immediately preceding crime rates in this demographic group had experienced declines. The magnitude of the increase, which was uncoupled from trends among adults, led to the get-tough on kids policies of the last decade, he said. Rosenfeld cited criminologist Al Blumstein's hypothesis that this increase -- and subsequent decrease -- can be linked to the rise and decline of drug markets, particularly crack cocaine. An escalating arm race ensued, as those in the crack trade armed themselves for protection. Noting that non-gun homicide and serious assault rates have remained flat, Rosenfeld urged policy makers to link youth crime and firearms policies.

Rosenfeld said that research has shown the effects of incarceration on the rates of youth violence to be small. He said that the great majority of young offenders sent to prison are back on the streets when they are still in the active phase of their criminal careers. The research on the impact of this growing population of ex-inmates in already distressed communities shows a "prisonization of the streets" effect. The attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics of prison are replicated in the neighborhoods. Rosenfeld said that while the recent economic expansion can explain some of the decline in violent crime, this is a cyclical rather than structural societal change. He said more aggressive policing strategies, such as those in New York City, have been shown to be most effective when the crime rates were already beginning to subside and when the community is open to a more aggressive enforcement strategy. Rosenfeld cited an NIJ-supported study that found this policing method most effective when it is highly targeted. He concluded by saying that the role of the federal government is in research and evaluation, coordinating local initiatives, and transplanting successful practices from one community to another.

Juvenile Justice Systems and Juvenile Crime

The rise in juvenile violence, suggested Simon Singer, professor of sociology at SUNY-Buffalo, is due in part to a decline in juvenile justice. It is wrong to describe juvenile justice as a system, he said; rather it is a set of loosely connected subsystems that place the concerns of the state and the juvenile secondary to bureaucracy and other interests. Singer asked the audience to consider juvenile justice as a football field, only in this game there are many teams aiming for a multitude of goal posts, plays and players constantly change, players are affected by the roar of the crowd, and no one is keeping score. In the juvenile justice system, success is not based on declining recidivism rates, but on an agency's ability to avoid crisis, Singer stated. Issues of confidentiality of juvenile records hinder accountability, he said.

Singer discussed his research on a New York state law that lowered the eligible age of criminal responsibility to 13 for murder and 14 for many other violent offenses. According to Singer, only one in four eligible offenders was convicted in adult criminal court, with the rest either transferred to juvenile court or having their charges dismissed. Such waiver legislation, he argued, only increases the variation in how offenders are treated; in many counties he found black juvenile offenders more likely to be held criminally responsible than whites. These new legal avenues for official discretion, disparities, and discrimination provide new sources for sensing injustice and new justification to commit more serious offenses, Singer contended. In concluding his remarks, Singer urged a more unified juvenile justice system that places treatment and punishment on the same continuum. He also called for a federal role in uniting the juvenile justice system behind shared goals and sponsoring objective research and evaluation of programs.

Evaluating Prevention Strategies

Denise Gottfredson discussed the effects of school environments on youth behavior, and highlighted the findings of a report to Congress on the effectiveness of crime violence prevention programs that she and her colleagues at the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology at the University of Maryland recently completed. Gottfredson cited four prevention strategies that work: build the school's capacity to

initiate and sustain innovation; clarify and communicate norms about behavior and improve the consistency of enforcement; focus on a wide range of social competency skills through comprehensive instructional programs; and teach self-management skills for high-risk youth.

Some prevention efforts that Gottfredson's research has found not to work include: counseling students in a care group context, as these groupings often amplify or reinforce norms for delinquent behavior; offering youths alternative activities, such as recreation, that are not part of larger, more potent prevention programs; and conducting instructional programs that focus on information dissemination, fear arousal, moral appeal, and affective education programs. Regarding after-school recreation programs, Gottfredson said that while the idea is appealing, research has shown that they may increase the risk for delinquency, as students most in need choose not to participate. Some programs have been found to increase risk-taking and impulsive behavior in those that do.

Gottfredson said she sought to leave the policy makers in attendance with five key points: schools have great potential for reducing crime both during the school day and beyond; prevention can work, particularly when it is targeted and sustained; schools generally adopt strategies that are either untested or unsuccessful; schools most in need of prevention and intervention are the ones least capable of providing those services; and Congress should appropriate more money for evaluation and only fund programs that have been proven successful.

In the lively discussion period that followed, many in the audience, particularly the congressional staff, shared questions and opinions on issues such as honor codes, boot camps, racial disparities, and accountability in juvenile justice. A transcript of the event will be published by COSSA later this Spring.

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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.

Field-Initiated Studies Program

The Field-Initiated Studies Program provides assistance for basic and applied research and development to improve American education.

Priorities include:

- Improving curriculum, instruction, assessment, and student learning;
- Ensuring effective teaching by expanding the supply of potential teachers and improving teacher preparation and career development;
- Strengthening schools as institutions capable of engaging young people as active and responsible learners;
- Supporting schools to effectively prepare diverse populations;
- Promoting learning in informal and formal settings;
- Improving early childhood learning and development; and
- Understanding the changing requirements for adult competence in civic, work, and social contexts.

Deadline: Complete applications must be received by **June 9, 1997**.

Contact: For more information, contact Paulette Lee at (202) 219-1519

Fund for the Improvement of Education Program -- Assessment Development Grants

The program seeks to fund projects that develop, evaluate, and field-test assessments aligned with challenging State content standards.

Absolute Priorities:

- Develop, field-test, and evaluate assessments that are aligned to State content standards.
- Modify, field-test, and evaluate assessments to address the needs of children and youth with disabilities or limited English proficiency.

Invitational Priorities:

- Focus on the assessment of reading and mathematics to meet federal assessment requirements.
- Involve consortia of states working together to develop or modify assessment instruments aligned with content standards

Deadline: Complete applications must be received by **May 30, 1997**.

Contact: For more information, contact (202) 219-2079.

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