

NIH NEEDS MORE PUBLIC INPUT IN PRIORITY SETTING

According to a new Institute of Medicine report, *Scientific Opportunities and Public Needs: Improving Priority Setting and Public Input at the National Institutes of Health*, the NIH should seek broader public input on decisions about how to spend its budget. The report was released July 8th by a 19 member Institute of Medicine Committee on the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Research Priority-Setting Process established by the FY 1998 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill (See *UPDATE*, April 20).

The Committee was convened in response to criticism by a number of patient advocacy groups that the NIH is not responsive to their concerns. Responding to this criticism, Congress specifically asked the IOM Committee to examine the factors or criteria used by NIH to determine its funding allocations for disease research, the existing mechanisms of input from the public into the priority-setting process, as well as the impact of congressional directives.

The Committee resolved that "NIH must revamp its approach to public input and outreach at every level, and without delay. . . It will enhance the public's understanding of the complexities of decision-making at NIH. And it will give Congress additional confidence that it can delegate priority setting to NIH leadership, knowing that a broader range of views will be sought and welcomed before decisions are made." This was echoed by Senator Bill Frist (R-TN) who attended the unveiling of the report and who noted, "These recommendations will be extremely valuable as we debate the NIH reauthorization bill as well as this year's appropriations."

"[W]e strongly urge that NIH create new public liaison offices in all of its 21 research institutes to allow more interested people to have a voice," said committee chair Leon Rosenberg, professor,

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CENSUS DRESS REHEARSAL DISCUSSED AT TWO RECENT EVENTS

July 8th was a busy day for Census 2000. First, Secretary of Commerce William Daley and Acting Director of the Census Bureau James Holmes held a press conference to discuss the preliminary results of the on-going dress rehearsals for the upcoming census. Holmes then made his way to the Census Bureau's headquarters in Suitland, Maryland to appear before the Census Monitoring Board to discuss the dress rehearsal.

Secretary Daley noted that the dress rehearsals in Columbia, South Carolina; Menominee County, Wisconsin; and Sacramento, California have, thus far, been a "genuine success." He added that the Census Bureau has performed the three dress rehearsals "on schedule, on budget, and met a lot of challenges."

Asked about a House Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations Subcommittee action to provide the Census Bureau with only six-months funding in an effort to block the Bureau's plans to use sampling, Daley warned that an interruption in funding could "put the entire census at risk, regardless of sampling." In addition, Daley said that a traditional census would incur costs "substantially higher" than a census using sampling. Daley, responding to a question about the status of Ken Prewitt's nomination (see *UPDATE*, June 29) as the new director of the Census Bureau, said that a hearing date has not yet been set.

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Census Monitoring Board

Speaking before the second meeting of the Census Monitoring Board, Holmes echoed Daley's optimistic comments. He declared that non-response follow-up [NRFU] and the preceding steps of the dress rehearsal have been a "smashing success." The NRFU, according to Holmes, was completed on-time in Sacramento and Menominee, Wisconsin, and one week before the scheduled completion date in Columbia. Holmes also noted that the mail response rates were generally higher than expected.

In addition, Holmes pointed to the unexpectedly high acceptance rates for temporary census workers in the three sites, as well as lower than expected job turnover rates. Temporary job acceptance rates in the three sites were: 90 percent in Columbia, 78 percent in Sacramento, and 71 percent in Menominee. The job turnover rates, according to Holmes, are: 38 percent in Menominee and less than 25 percent in the remaining two sites. Holmes said the Bureau expected a 100 percent job turnover rate. He noted that these positive indicators bode well for the upcoming census.

Holmes did note that there have been some problems with the dress rehearsals, including an incomplete address list, inaccurate maps, and difficulty in identifying and tracking the pages of the long-form questionnaire when they are entered into the computer system.

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Like Daley, however, Holmes warned that an interruption in Census Bureau funding could jeopardize, if not ruin, the upcoming census. In response to a question by Kenneth Blackwell, co-chair of the Board, Holmes said that the Bureau would be capable of conducting a traditional census if sampling is found unconstitutional.

Census Funding

The Senate Appropriations Committee provided the Bureau of the Census \$1.14 billion for FY 1999, \$451.2 million above the FY 1998 level and \$43.6 million below the President's request. The account provides \$141.8 million for salaries and expenses, \$4.5 million above the FY 1998 appropriation and \$18.3 million below the President's request. The Committee recommended \$1 billion for periodic census and programs — \$848.5 million for the upcoming decennial census. The amount recommended for Census 2000 is equal to that requested by the President.

The Committee report contains language that questions the success of the upcoming census. The report states that the "Committee continues to have grave concerns about plans for the decennial census. If significant improvements are not made within the next 9 months, the Committee believes the 2000 census may be at a risk of failure." The report states that the "Committee is concerned that the basic components for a successful census are not in place."

The report also notes that the "early reports about the dress rehearsal are not reassuring," contradicting Daley's and Holmes' optimistic version. Specifically, the Committee reports that the Census Bureau "received two times the estimated number of undeliverable as addressed forms from the Postal Service." Also, the report notes that "[s]oftware to detect duplicate or fraudulent responses is not yet operational and not able to be tested in the dress rehearsal Accurate mailing lists and the ability to detect duplicate or fraudulent census forms are key components in a successful census."

The Committee also recommended the requested levels for economic censuses (\$51.5 million), census of governments (\$2.9 million), intercensal

demographic estimates (\$5.3 million), and data processing systems (\$22.7 million).

NSF SET TO OFFER NEW PROGRAM IN CHILD LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The National Science Foundation's Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) Directorate is about to establish a new program in Child Learning and Development. The White House Office of Science and Technology report *Investing in Our Future: A National Research Initiative for America's Children in the 21st Century* became the impetus for SBE Assistant Director Bennett Bertenthal's decision that NSF should increase the size of its portfolio devoted to research on children. Another recent report from the President's Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology, *Report to the President on the Use of Technology to Strengthen K-12 Education in the United States*, reinforced this decision.

Bertenthal assured a workshop held at NSF on July 9 that the new program would not compete, but complement, the already existing research programs in the Directorate that examine aspects of child learning and development. He added that, instead, the new program would fill "numerous gaps" in NSF support in this research area. Dianne Scott-Jones, Professor of Psychology at Temple University, will be the program's first director.

So far, the goals and objectives of the program are: to increase the understanding of how children and adolescents learn in formal and informal settings; to integrate the knowledge of cognitive, social and biological processes in children's and adolescents' learning and development in a variety of contexts; to enhance the integration of technology into those learning experiences; to facilitate children's and adolescents' successful transitions into productive roles in the workplace and as citizens; to integrate scientific knowledge in the above areas into educational policy and practice; to encourage interdisciplinary collaborations; and to facilitate training of researchers in multidisciplinary, longitudinal approaches to these areas.

At the workshop a large number of issues were discussed including gaps in the research, training needs, infrastructure needs, partnerships with other federal agencies and private foundations, and how to relate the research to practice. However, late in the day, Diana Slaughter-Dafoe from the University of Pennsylvania, urged her workshop colleagues and the SBE leadership to move away from conventional thinking and to develop a research agenda based on the notion that schools (at least as we perceive them today) will disappear within the next fifty years. She suggested that learning, pedagogy and preparing children for the workforce will continue, but in very different contexts and places. She urged NSF to take a futuristic look, "unencumbered by things related to current 'school' problems," in moving this new program forward.

Funds Available Soon

Although the new program will not have an official budget until FY 1999, SBE has managed to secure \$2.5 million in the current fiscal year from the NSF Director's opportunity fund. These funds will support cross-disciplinary planning meetings, workshops and conferences. They will be supplements to already existing grants. For more information about these grants go to the NSF Web Site at www.nsf.gov click on the Cross Cutting Programs box and click on Transitions from Childhood to the Workforce. SBE expects a very short turnaround for grant applications and funding.

NIH PRIORITY SETTING (cont.)

department of molecular biology and Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University." The Committee also called for the creation of a new Office of Public Liaison in the NIH director's office that would be charged with evaluating and coordinating the work that each Institute is doing to reach out to the public, and with conducting an active program of outreach to, and interaction with constituents.

Noting that most priority setting at NIH is decentralized, "with each Institute given responsibility for identifying key research

opportunities in its areas," the Committee further recommended strengthening the role of the NIH director to improve planning and accountability. Congress, the report said, should exercise its authority and responsibility to intervene in NIH's priority-setting process "only when other priority-setting approaches have proved inadequate."

The Committee cited five major criteria currently used by NIH to set its overall priorities: "public health needs; scientific quality of the research; potential for scientific progress; portfolio diversification along the broad range and expanding frontiers of scientific knowledge; and support of the people, equipment, instrumentation and facilities needed for research." The agency, concluded the Committee, should continue to use these criteria in a balanced way and at the same time increase public awareness of how they are implemented.

MORE APPROPRIATIONS NEWS

The Senate Appropriations Committee has provided the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) \$46.1 million for FY 1999, a \$3.6 million increase over the FY 1998 appropriation, but \$11 million below the request. NIJ also receives set-aside funds from the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant, Violence Against Women programs, and counterterrorism technology funds, that provide it with more than double its appropriation. Most of the increase over the FY 1998 appropriation is directed by the Senate for specific purposes including a Forensics Imaging Response Center in Indianapolis, forensic DNA technology, the study and development of perfluorocarbon technology, and the utilization of telemedicine in prisons, with a pilot program established at the Medical University of South Carolina and the federal prison in Estill, SC.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) received \$25.2 million from the Senate panel, an increase of \$4 million over the current year appropriation. The Committee allocated a total of \$284.6 million for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), an increase of \$45.9 million over last year, but \$6.6 million below the President's request. The Committee report praises the research

CORRECTION

COSSA has been informed by Economic Research Service Administrator Susan Offutt that our report in the June 29 *UPDATE* concerning the FY 1999 allocation to the agency by the House was in error. Instead of reducing core support as COSSA reported, ERS will receive close to a \$2 million increase for FY 1999. COSSA regrets the error.

conducted at the Center for Study and Prevention of Juvenile Crime at Prairie View A&M University and urges continued support for the center.

The Committee also inserted language into its report noting that the current structure of the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), home to NIJ and BJS, "cannot be as responsive to State and local needs as required to ensure that appropriated funds are used in a planned, comprehensive, and well-coordinated way." Therefore, it directs OJP to develop "a new OJP structure with consolidated authorities" and report back to the Committee by February 1, 1999. In the meantime, OJP's Assistant Attorney General shall have the final authority to make all OJP grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements. However, NIJ, BJS, and research at OJJDP are exempt, because "independence is desirable to help ensure the scientific integrity of these functions."

The Senate committee provided \$205 million for the Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs of the United States Information Agency, a \$7.3 million increase over last year, and \$6 million above the request. The panel funded the Fulbright program at \$96.5 million for students, scholars, and teachers, and \$5 million for the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship program. The Senate committee has provided continued funding for the East-West Center at the FY 1998 level of \$12 million, and the North-South Center at \$3 million, two times last year's funding. The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and State has zeroed out these last two programs for FY 1999.

The Economics and Statistics Administration received \$49.2 million, a \$1.7 million increase over FY 1998, but \$4.5 million less than the administration's request. This will fund the Bureau

of Economic Analysis' "ambitious and necessary effort to update and improve statistical measurements of the U.S. economy and its measurement of international transactions."

The House Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee provided an unexpected large increase for **International Education and Foreign Language Studies**. The total appropriated for these programs was \$67.5 million, \$7.2 million over FY 1998, and \$6.4 million above the President's request. Of the total allocation, \$60 million is for Title VI Domestic programs, \$6.5 million for the Fulbright-Hays overseas program, and \$1 million for the Institute for International Public Policy. Unfortunately, the same subcommittee provided no funding for **Graduate Education Support** programs under Title IX. We await the Committee report for the explanations for these decisions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR ADOLESCENT HEALTH

A multidisciplinary group of behavioral, social scientists and public health professionals concluded that public health practitioners should establish the foundation for health lifestyles across the lifespan including preparing adolescents to be effective health care consumers. The group, which came together as one of the innovative dialogue sessions of the May 7-9 conference *Public Health in the 21st Century* (see *UPDATE*, May 18), focused their discussion on three primary questions: What should our public health goals be for adolescents? What interventions appear most promising? What are the highest research questions for adolescent health? Janet Collins, Division of Nutrition and Physical Activities, CDC, and Julia Gräber, Columbia University Teachers College, led the session.

According to the dialogue participants, strategies to accomplish this goal need to recognize the developmental processes and tasks of adolescence. The group believes that marketing the concept that "health = fun" may be an effective developmental strategy.

Intervention approaches that are worth greater consideration include those that focus on positive youth development, asset building and volunteerism. These interventions are not linked to categorical health issues (e.g., tobacco use, violence prevention), but rather have the potential for positive influence across the multiple health domains. In addition interventions that focus on environmental, legal, and social determinants (such as bike paths, tobacco access, and seatbelt laws), media influences, parental influence, and mental health interventions were all considered important. Finally, school based programs were highlighted particularly due to the important linkages between academic/career success and health outcomes. One example of a promising school-based strategy involved the identification of elementary school children with low academic performance to receive social and academic support.

Longitudinal Studies Needed

The highest priority research on adolescent health includes conducting longitudinal studies to better understand the processes of experimentation that lead to sustained health risks as well as the contextual and familial influences on risk. Research on measurement issues is needed to develop valid yet cost and time efficient measures of adolescent social skills and behaviors. Dialogue participants decided that research should examine the effectiveness of promising interventions, particularly cross-cutting strategies (across multiple health domains) such as youth development, parental influence, academic support, and media influences. Finally, there should be more studies investigating how to promote adoption and maintenance of effective interventions.

Julia Gräber contributed to this story.

COSSA SEMINAR FOCUSES ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

On June 19, COSSA held its second congressional breakfast seminar, entitled "Information Technology and Social Change: The Effects on Families, Communities, Workplaces and Civil Society." Three scientists offered their views

on information technology and its effects on society before a crowd of approximately 60 people, including Representative David Skaggs (D-CO).

After a brief welcome by COSSA Executive Director Howard Silver, David Hakken discussed the nexus between information technology and the worksite. Hakken, Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Policy Center at the State University of New York Institute of Technology, noted that "understanding the relationship between technology and social change is important for several reasons." He said the key reason is the idea of the "Cyberspace Revolution" — or the "notion that we are currently in the midst of a profound transformation to a new way of life brought about by computer technology." Hakken said that computing at work is a key to broader social change. In fact, he said that computers or "Advanced Information Technology (AIT)" have "complicated American workspaces." Today, according to Hakken, "representations of any work process that can be computerized can now be communicated anywhere there are computers."

He proceeded to discuss some of the common misconceptions about the impact of computers on the workspace. He noted that many believed that computers would replace humans. This, according to Hakken, has not been the case. The overall growth in the number of jobs in the United States contradicts this incorrect presumption, he said. Also, many believed that computers would "democratize work." Specifically, computers would allow for the quick free flow of information which would lead to a "decentralization of the decision-making process." Hakken noted that this too has not occurred. Despite the misconceptions, Hakken noted the importance of computers or AIT. For example, he said that a large proportion of the stock market growth is "attributable, directly or indirectly, to the successful promotion, production, and sale of AIT."

The Impact on Families

Jan English-Lueck, Associate Professor of Anthropology at San Jose State University, addressed how information technology affects the family and the community. Working with a team of anthropologists, she has been studying technology and the community in Silicon Valley. The team has "sampled the intersection of technology and

community in a variety of ways" through an extensive series of interviews.

She noted that "one of the most strikingly obvious impacts of information technology is the shift in the work-home relationship." She said that the team has encountered people who swore that they did not take work home. However, these same people, according to English-Lueck, have separate rooms for their computers and work-related magazines "littering every flat surface." What the team found, therefore, is that "a large proportion of supposedly free time was spent thinking about 'work-work' while in the shower, eating, or driving." Thus, she said that "information technologies have been instrumental in redefining the scope of work."

She proceeded to note that the "penetration of information technology into the home leads to an access dilemma." She said that people want immediate access to others, but want to limit others access to them. Therefore, "the non-use of devices is carefully managed — by turning off the phone, avoiding using cell phones in the cars, or checking for email or voice mail at only certain hours." Families, according to English-Lueck, are increasingly viewing "themselves as management problems to be solved." Specifically, "pagers, cell phones, and answering machines, and now palm pilots, are used in tandem to coordinate complex household schedules."

She discussed several assumptions about information technologies and the home that are "misleading." One false assumption, according to English-Lueck, is that information technologies do not transform families into "wholly new things." Instead, "technologies allow families to put old behaviors and relations into new contexts." For instance, "the old family game of control and resistance to control is still being played out, but now it is being played out on email." In conclusion, she said that information technology is only one of a host of forces that shape communities and families.

Impact on the Political Process

Phil Agre, Associate Professor of Communications at University of California, San Diego, concluded the seminar by discussing the role of information technology in the political process. Agre started his discussion by posing a question:

What effect has information technology had on the political process? He said the answer had two parts.

The first part of the answer is that "nobody knows." He noted that there is very little empirical research about the impact of information technology on the political process. Agre added that the second part of the answer to the question is "not much." Television, according to Agre, "is still, by far, the most important media."

Agre discussed a quote by an academic scholar regarding information technology and the political process. The unnamed scholar noted that "telecommunications technologies are breaking down the barriers of time and distance that originally precluded the nation's people from voting directly for the laws that govern them." Agre said that he has read this quote many times and it "oscillates back and forth between being common sense and absolute absurdity."

He noted that the idea that information technologies will lead to direct democracy or direct voting (voting from one's house over the Internet) and the "disintermediating of government . . . doesn't make sense." He said that even though information technologies have facilitated the distribution of information, there "are still a large number of things that go on in the political process that nobody has any idea how to automate."

In addition, Agre said that the notion of voting from home is "impossible" to envision. He noted that the idea of voting from one's house is a notion that technologists have a hard time conceptualizing. "There is a good reason for voting booths . . . to prove that votes are not being coerced," he said.

A question and answer session followed the presentations. COSSA is in the process of completing the transcript from this seminar. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the transcript when it is finished, please contact our office.

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT

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 apply.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR)
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)

The NINR and the NHLBI seek research applications for investigator-initiated research relevant to the development and/or testing of dietary interventions to improve the cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk profiles in children and adolescents, especially those with at increased risk for CVD or for development of CVD risk factors because of genetics, family history, socioeconomic status (SES), race/ethnicity, or other factors. Application kits can be obtained from the Division of Extramural Outreach and Information Resources, National Institutes of Health, 6701 Rockledge Drive, MSC 7910, Bethesda, MD 20892-7910. Telephone: 301/435-0714, Email: ASKNIH@od.nih.gov.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE

The National Institute of Justice is soliciting proposals for research on crime and criminal behavior in a cross-national and comparative nature. Each project supported by NIJ must have counterparts to conduct parallel research outside the United States. The foreign counterparts may be supported by the government agencies or departments, private non-profit organizations, or universities of other nations. Those interested in submitting proposals to NIJ must complete the required application forms and also submit related required documents. For more information on the applications materials or NIJ, contact the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000. Phone: 800/851-3420; email: askncjrs@ncjrs.org. Interested persons can also call the Department of Justice Response Center at 800/421-6770 or contact the National Institute of Justice website at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij>.

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