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COSSA ANNUAL MEETING FEATURES ZERHOUNI, OLSEN, WHITEHURST

On November 3, representatives of COSSA members, affiliates, and contributors gathered in the Rayburn House office building for the Consortium's first-ever annual meeting held on Capitol Hill. The full-day event was highlighted by remarks from National Institutes of Health Director Elias Zerhouni, Office of Science and Technology Policy Associate Director for Science Kathie Olsen, and Institute of Education Sciences Director Grover "Russ" Whitehurst. In addition, COSSA Executive Director Howard Silver spoke about the past and future challenges to the Consortium. A panel examining "Higher Education Under Scrutiny" rounded out the day.

An Integral Part of NIH

"Health-related behavioral and social sciences research is an integral part of the NIH mission," declared National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Elias Zerhouni. He noted that his arrival at the agency occurred after a two-and-a-half year transition under Acting Director Ruth Kirschstein, during the fifth year of the budget doubling campaign, and amidst future funding fears.

Providing COSSA with "a better sense of where NIH is going," Zerhouni discussed the NIH's Roadmap for Medical Research. (See *Update*, October 6, 2003). According to Zerhouni, the term "roadmap" came about during a meeting he had with the directors of the 27 institutes and centers to discuss strategy for the agency. Immediately, said

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NSF DIRECTOR COLWELL REAFFIRMS IMPORTANCE OF SBE SCIENCES

Appearing before the Advisory Committee to the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE) on November 7, National Science Foundation (NSF) Director Rita Colwell strongly endorsed the importance of these disciplines and their need for increased budgets. "Overall [SBE sciences] are clearly a firm and strong part of NSF," she declared. Colwell also noted that the SBE sciences had been "embraced" by the White House, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and the key Congressional Committees responsible for NSF's appropriations and authorization.

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- **THE BUS IS LEAVING THE STATION; TIME FOR SPENDING BILLS TO GET ON BOARD**



Zerhouni, the directors cautioned him on the use of the word "strategic," referring to former NIH Director Bernadine Healy and the controversy her "strategic plan" caused. So he suggested the word roadmap, but to his chagrin, six months later, the State department announced its roadmap for Middle East peace.

Zerhouni related that the Roadmap seeks to address the complexity of interaction between the mind, brain, and behavior. He challenged the social and behavioral science community to help break down existing artificial barriers among scientists through the training and development of a new interdisciplinary workforce. Whenever you have a transition in science, whenever you have transition in health challenges and disease burdens, you need to make sure that the balance and integration are there. This is "truly what the NIH Roadmap tries to address," Zerhouni stated.

Acknowledging "the importance of behavioral and social science research," (BSSR), he noted that approximately 10 percent of the NIH's budget supports this research. Zerhouni declared that BSSR "is clearly outlined in the mission of the agency," which is "the pursuit of fundamental knowledge and application of that knowledge to extend healthy life and reduce the burden of illness and disability."

"There isn't a component of research that I can think of that does not have a social and behavioral science component to it." He acknowledged, however, "it is not yet fully integrated to the extent that it should be." An example of this lack of integration, he noted, can be witnessed in the difficulty of enrolling minorities into clinical research trials. "You are not going to understand [why it is so difficult] unless you understand the social memory that surrounds the participants in research for some of these communities." You are not going to understand how to best translate the findings of research in the context of health disparities. More importantly, we need "a cadre of scientists who have a trusted relationship with the diversity of communities" in the U.S., Zerhouni asserted.

"It is impossible for me to see how a laboratory discovery can get translated without that modulation function . . . of how do you then send the behavioral message, how do you understand behavior and how do you understand the social context in which this occurs," he explained.

A 'More Effective NIH'

According to Zerhouni, the NIH is attempting to examine the burdens of diseases that are evolving as a result of the investments that have been made in biomedical and behavioral research. It is from that background that the agency is trying to challenge itself "to be a more effective NIH and produce a more effective outcome" to a significant investment in research. Yet, he continued, when you look at the investment and the challenges, you realize that there is a need to accelerate the pace of discovery.

Success of the biomedical and behavioral research enterprise over the last 50-75 years has resulted in a reduction of acute, short-term, lethal diseases, he related. Accordingly, the burdens of disease have shifted to chronic conditions such as cardiovascular and coronary heart disease. Accompanying this shift will be an escalation of health care costs. If things continue as they are, America will spend 14-18 percent of its Gross Domestic Product on health care for chronic diseases, he predicted.

There is a social dimension to research that needs enhancing further, said Zerhouni. "The social and behavioral sciences are intrinsic to meeting this challenge," he asserted.

In addition, there are political concerns that need addressing, the Director observed. Reflecting on the AIDS situation in Africa, Zerhouni cited Uganda's progress in reducing its incidence of HIV/AIDS, which "can be traced back to its political and social leadership"

By contrast, Zerhouni related that he repeatedly hears from public health officials in the U.S. that term limits have had a deleterious effect on the health of Americans. These officials often lament that by the time a legislator understands the dynamics of health, his or her term has expired. Before term limits, members were able to take political ownership of an issue. Term limits changed that. "We have a duty to make the links more apparent," he emphasized.

He commended the foresight of James Watson in the creation of the human genome project and its Congressionally-mandated ethical, legal, and social implications (ELSI) component. The concept should be widened to other areas, said Zerhouni, including stem cell biology. "ELSI should be an intrinsic component" of biomedical and behavioral research, he emphasized.

Sexual Health Research: There Is Public Health Relevance

Responding to an inquiry regarding the latest attack on sexual health research, the NIH Director explained that he questions the validity of investigating one area of research over another. He acknowledged his desire to answer the unfounded assertions and noted that he will continue to defend the peer review process. When the criticism is based on ideology, we have a problem. Reiterating his comments at an October 2 hearing, Zerhouni explained that he stands behind the peer review process, the process needs to be transparent, and the agency needs to take good stewardship of taxpayers' dollars. Adamant that he will continue to defend the research, he took umbrage at those who have likened the support of this research to the controversy in the past over the funding of certain art projects that were considered objectionable. "AIDS kills, art doesn't," he asserted. "Sexual dysfunction kills families." The funding of this research will have a beneficial impact. "The NIH will prevail because there is public health relevance."

According to Zerhouni, "the NIH will answer the Congress' request for more information" on the nearly 200 funded research projects compiled by the Traditional Values Coalition and submitted to the agency by the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

SBE Research in OSTP Priorities

Kathie Olsen, Associate Director for Science at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), used the luncheon keynote address to stress the importance of social, behavioral, and economic (SBE) research in OSTP's FY 2004 initiatives.

Explaining how OSTP plans to use a "bottoms up" approach in new initiatives, Olsen noted how other agencies opt for a "top down" method to assess initiatives that will affect society, but emphasized that OSTP's new strategies involve acquiring input from the people the agency's scientific policies directly impact. According to Olsen, "OSTP plans to get input from academics because each agency/department must supply a budget that supports their discipline." Praising COSSA for persuading the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to integrate the behavioral and social sciences in the Office of the Director, Olsen asserted, "Social, behavioral, and economic research plays a critical role in cross-agency agendas."

To achieve these ends, the inter-agency process in OSTP, known as the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC), will now include a subcommittee of the Committee on Science devoted to the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences. The panel will be co-chaired by Norman Bradburn of the National Science Foundation, Thomas Insel of the National Institute of Mental Health, and Gary Strong of the Department of Homeland Security. The SBE subcommittee has representation from agencies across the government that fund research in these disciplines. It will have strong ties, not only to its parent NSTC Committee of Science, but also to the NSTC Committee on Homeland Security. Its first order of business will be to inventory support for SBE research.

With the FY 2004 appropriations process still in limbo and the FY 2005 budget under preparation at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Olsen suggested it was difficult to discuss future science spending. However, she assured the audience that the Administration's interest in the NSF's Human and Social Dynamics priority was still strong and that there are other OSTP concerns where the SBE sciences will play an important role. One of these, according to Olsen, is the initiative on nanotechnology, which needs a strong behavioral and social science aspect, particularly in examining the social and ethical implications of the research.

Olsen also explained how OSTP is interested in a business model approach to research. "We at OSTP need to ask ourselves if we are doing things in the government that are changing our industries' or universities' work and may be hindering innovation. What do we need to do in terms of our relationship that would maximize science and science return?" she added. OSTP and OMB have proposed various changes to how universities and others conducting research will interact with the Federal government. A series of workshops are underway to explain the proposed changes and gather input from various parties.

Finally, Olsen's closing remarks emphasized that "SBE cannot be a separate center, but has to be integrated" into an overall balanced basic and applied research policy agenda.

Evidenced-Based Education

Russ Whitehurst, who was originally appointed by President Bush as Assistant Secretary for the Office of Education Research and Improvement (OERI), became Director of the Institute for Education Science (IES) when OERI was revamped and renamed in last year's reauthorization. (See *Update*, October 21, 2002). That

bill created a board to oversee the agency's mission and activities, and Whitehurst noted at the outset that the White House would soon name board nominees.

The Director explained that his chief focus at IES is establishing an evidence-based education system – “decisions by practitioners should be grounded in the best evidence.” Such a system is dependent on “both research and the usage and collection of data by schools to measure and improve performance.” Whitehurst asserted that advocacy research has devalued research in general because there are studies that can be found to support almost any political position. The solution, he stated, “is to make studies fully empirically-evidenced based – too many are anecdotal and ideological.”

Whitehurst noted that his agency is working to increase the supply of evidenced-based research and trying to intensify the demand and utilization of it. The IES Deputy Director for Science is focused on strengthening the integrity of the peer review process for education research, while the Deputy Director for Policy aligns agency grant competitions with the focus on evidenced-based education.

Within the IES, the National Center for Education Statistics is working to: 1) reduce delay on the release of products; 2) reduce the likelihood of causal attributions from correlational data; 3) increase the scholarly and policy relevance of projects; and 4) look into new directions. The National Center for Education Research, meanwhile, is focused on its research agenda for 2004. Topics will include: teacher quality, math/science education, cognition and student learning, as well as ongoing research on preschool curriculum, character education and socialization, English language learning, and training programs.

Turning to the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), Whitehurst explained that NCEE is examining reading first, technology, and bilingual programs. Current *What Works Clearinghouse* topics include reading interventions, adult literacy, K-12 math curriculum, and preventing high school dropouts. He also noted that a new contract for the Educational Resources Information Center will be awarded in the next few weeks. To conclude, Whitehurst stated, “The vision of IES is that practitioners should turn to research and rigorous, relevant research should be available along with the tools to use it. This will help ensure an effective education for every student.”

Higher Education Under Scrutiny

An opening panel featuring Mary Anne Fitzpatrick, Deputy Dean of the College of Letters and Science at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Richard L. Harpel, Director of Federal Relations at the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, and Jane Oates, Senior Education Advisor to Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA), focused on challenges facing the higher ed community and the ongoing reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA). COSSA President Orlando Taylor, Dean of the Graduate School at Howard University, moderated.

Fitzpatrick noted the alarming trend that 42 of the 50 states have seen significant decreases in state support for public higher learning institutions in recent years. She explained that this is because state government officials see tuition increases as a solution to budget problems. Fitzpatrick noted that it's important that the money starts flowing again from state coffers when the budget situation improves. She also related some additional financial problems facing colleges and universities:

- Biological labs need to be highly secured as a result of post-September 11 security measures.
- Medical Schools and University hospitals are faced with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act compliance costs.
- Compliance costs are also a factor with Institutional Review Board regulations relating to human subjects research; in addition, the Internal Revenue Service has been looking into payments to subjects involved in research trials.
- Universities and researchers are being forced to decide on a more regular basis whether they want to take grant funds from the government to conduct classified research studies. These funds often come with strings attached.
- The Student Exchange and Visitor Information System has imposed complex regulations upon foreign students that have forced colleges and universities to certify these individuals are enrolled for a full course load.

Fitzpatrick asserted that these problems all have a common denominator: state budgets and funding are being cut just as implementation of new government programs requires heavy financial investment by institutions of higher education.

Harpel focused on the HEA reauthorization process in the House. He noted that the bill has been broken down into six parts (which are moving as individual pieces of legislation):

1. Teacher education/preparation (H.R. 2211 – has passed the House);
2. Teacher loan forgiveness (H.R. 438 – has passed the House);
3. Support for minority serving institutions (H.R. 3180 – pending in the House Committee on Education and the Workforce);
4. Graduate opportunities – revamping the Javits Fellowships, the Thurgood Marshall Legal Opportunity program, and Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (H.R. 3076 – has passed the House);
5. International education programs – renewing most programs, but creating an advisory board to oversee curriculum and international ed programs (H.R. 3077 – has passed the House); and
6. College costs (H.R. 3311 – pending in the House Committee on Education and the Workforce).

Harpel explained that this last bill would prohibit higher learning institutions from raising tuition costs by more than two times the Consumer Price Index in a three-year period. Violating institutions would come under scrutiny and be forced to submit management and action plans as to how they plan to solve the problem. Harpel noted that this concept is problematic – it crosses over the line of Federal control and hurts the very people it's meant to help because financial aid programs would be limited. In addition, University bond ratings could be adversely affected. Overall, it would result in reduced access and quality.

Oates, before turning to the Senate's approach on HEA, noted that the Democrats on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee saw no point in participating in the October 29 hearing on intellectual diversity on college campuses, since it was set up as a one-sided affair. She also asserted that none of the examples mentioned by the panelists at that hearing rose to the level of First Amendment violations. (See *Update*, November 3, 2003).

On HEA, Oates emphasized that the HELP panel Democrats are working on a "message bill" to put forth their stance on the key issues. To the Democrats, retention is the major focal point of the reauthorization process. College and universities could be losing students because: 1) they need to take a job; 2) their academic foundation is lacking; 3) support services aren't available; 4) they're not prepared for the college experience; or 5) required classes aren't offered regularly enough.

Oates mentioned that this is a complicated problem that affects all levels of education. A major obstacle is that K-12 systems aren't adequately preparing kids for college. Transitions from community colleges to four-year schools don't run smoothly enough. In addition, counseling systems aren't good enough. To add to the problem, Oates noted that a Master's Degree is slowly but surely becoming the standard level of educational achievement necessary for a good job.

She explained that two other key issues in the reauthorization process revolve around teachers and capital-improvement costs. Policies must be put into place to ensure that the best and brightest want to become teachers and feel good about the profession. And the costs of hard wiring universities, keeping labs world class, and revamping and maintaining residence halls must be adequately considered.

Executive Director Examines Challenges

Celebrating his 20 years at COSSA and 15 as Executive Director, Howard Silver spoke about "Strengthening COSSA for the Challenges Ahead: Is the Past Prologue?" (The complete text is available at www.cossa.org)

In looking back, Silver noted that many things had not changed. Many of the headlines in the early 1980s charging the politicization of science are still with us. Budget deficits are back, constraining domestic discretionary funding. Policymakers still question peer review, believe social scientists can be found for every side on any issue, take social and behavioral science research results for granted, and believe some of the areas we study are illegitimate, e.g. the current brouhaha over sexual behavior research.

Yet many things have changed in the past 20 years. September 11, 2001 supposedly "changed everything." Clearly, the war on terrorism has focused attention on homeland security and the need to conduct research on terrorists and terrorism.

On the political front, the Congress, once dominated by the Democrats, is now and for the foreseeable future, at least in the House, under Republican hegemony. The oft-commented decline in comity and civility making compromises difficult is another alteration in the political landscape. The number of social/behavioral scientists in Congress has also diminished.

In addition, the communications revolution has altered the way COSSA does its business as e-mails and faxes replace letters and even phone calls. The proliferation of policy shops with agendas has influenced how policymakers get information, especially from research findings.

COSSA was influential in affecting three major changes that have increased the role of the social and behavioral sciences in the nation's science policy agenda. These were: the formation of the separate Directorate for the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences at NSF; the creation of the Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research at the NIH; and the establishment of the position of Assistant Director for the Social, Behavioral, and Education sciences at OSTP.

In looking to the future, Silver noted that science still engenders bipartisan support, particularly for basic research. He spoke about the important role of the SBE sciences in the debates over the ethical and social implications of further advances in knowledge. He also related the possible political changes and further erosion of Federal budgets, and the need for COSSA to develop new relationships with an ever-changing cast of policymakers.

Looking at the changes in science, COSSA's Executive Director indicated the current fashion for supporting large interdisciplinary projects and declared the need for social and behavioral scientists to develop large studies that will allow them to compete for these awards.

He concluded by noting "that it is difficult to play in the contemporary political arena, where the power of persuasion exists through your ability to convince people with your arguments, not your resources." He praised COSSA's constituents for their willingness to respond to threats to the community. However, he suggested that "for routine monitoring and advocating, they have, and hopefully always will have COSSA."

COLWELL, (Continued from Page 1)

Concerned that the FY 2004 NSF budget has not been finalized (see other story), Colwell noted that the Foundation's FY 2005 budget proposal was already at the OMB, and that internally work had begun on initiatives in the FY 2006 budget. It is "budget time all the time" at NSF, she remarked. As a result of NSF's strong relations with OMB, Colwell expects the FY 2005 budget, which will be released by the Administration in February 2004, to be "reasonable."

Referring to the NSF priority in Human and Social Dynamics (HSD), Colwell highlighted its continued importance to the Foundation. She hopes to see its budget grow over the next few years. Responding to Advisory Committee Chairman Irwin Feller's concern that HSD have adequate staffing to conduct significant outreach activities, Colwell noted that increasing the personnel budget is her "number one priority" for the Foundation. NSF's workload has increased significantly in recent years – grant applications have risen to 40,000 in FY 2003 and are expected to hit 45,000 in FY 2004 – without a corresponding boost in the workforce.

Colwell also discussed NSF's role working with the intelligence and defense communities regarding homeland security research, asserting the Foundation is playing an "appropriate" broker role. This involvement "does not change the directions of our research" support, she declared. NSF has also "contributed to the discussion" regarding U.S. visa policy. She called White House Office of Science and Technology Policy efforts "rational, reasonable, and workable."

Research Difficulties in a 'Surveillance Society'

Advisory panel member Ken Prewitt, former Director of the U.S. Census Bureau, raised a concern that, in what he called the "surveillance society," Americans have demonstrated increasing anxiety about their privacy. This, he claimed, has made the conduct of social science research that relies on surveys increasingly difficult, exacerbated in studies where immigrant populations are the respondents. Citing his experience with the long-form of the 2000 Census, he noted that non-response rates for individual items, particularly income, were reaching unusable levels. The social contract that the social sciences have had with the American people that allowed researchers to gather vital information for policymaking has become very "fragile," Prewitt commented. He suggested that new scientific strategies are necessary to overcome this problem.

Chris Whelan, social science chair for the European Science Foundation (ESF), also addressed the Committee. He described how ESF plays a catalyst role for the 29 countries represented in his organization. The European Social Survey, modeled on the U.S. General Social Survey, was cited by Whelan as an example of a cooperative venture that has overcome the sometimes "nationalistic" tendencies of the research councils of the dominant nations of Europe, such as Germany and France. The ESF agenda is also driven by the research framework of the European Union whose 6th Framework includes "networks of excellence," some of which will focus on social cohesion, social integration, and the positive effects of welfare policies. A concern is that these networks are seriously under-funded, according to Whelan.

THE BUS IS LEAVING THE STATION; TIME FOR SPENDING BILLS TO GET ON BOARD

As Congressional leaders seek to meet their announced new adjournment date of November 21, five FY 2004 spending bills remain unresolved. The leadership has decided to wrap these bills into an Omnibus Appropriations measure, catch-all legislation that will allow the first session of the 108th Congress to become history.

The five outstanding bills are: the VA, HUD, Independent Agencies bill, which includes funding for the National Science Foundation; the Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), Education bill; the Agriculture and Rural Development bill; the Commerce, Justice, State (CJS) appropriations; and the District of Columbia spending bill. While the VA, HUD appropriation may still pass the Senate early in the week of November 17, there is no time to reconcile House-Senate differences and bring them back to both Houses for final passage. The need to find \$1.3 billion extra for veterans' medical care may necessitate an across-the-board funding cut for other agencies in the bill.

The Labor, HHS bill has been in conference since early September without a final agreement, mainly over whether to overturn the Administration's new overtime rules. The Agriculture bill finally passed the Senate on

November 6, but again time constraints prevent a full conference. The Senate version provides almost \$70 million for the Economic Research Service, almost \$129 million for the National Agricultural Statistical Service, and \$180 million for the National Research Initiative Competitive Grants program. The CJS bill includes the negation of the FCC rule on media ownership and, in the Senate version, severe funding cuts for the National Institute of Justice, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, and the Census Bureau. The DC bill may include an experimental school voucher program.

In addition, Congress is still working on a Medicare Drug Prescription bill and comprehensive Energy legislation that the leadership hopes to push through before adjournment. If agreement cannot be reached on the leadership-negotiated compromises on these bills, the session may continue into December.

Editor's Note: The next issue of *Update* will be published on Dec. 8, after a three week break. Have a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday.

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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.

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