



# COSSA Washington Update

Consortium of Social  
Science Associations

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## HAPPY NEW YEAR!

2004. A leap year, an Olympic year, and an election year! Welcome back!

The second session of the 108th Congress will begin on January 20. That same night, President Bush delivers his campaign-year State of the Union address. Also that day, the Senate may vote to complete the FY 2004 appropriations process. When last heard from, the Senate was unable to pass the Consolidated Appropriations Act containing funding for many agencies, including the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Department of Education, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), and others. The latest Continuing Resolution currently keeping these agencies funded runs out on January 31. That is only two days before the Administration expects to release its proposed Federal budget for FY 2005.

The inevitable leaks from the Administration regarding the FY 2005 budget suggest another attempt to rein in discretionary spending, holding it to a 3 percent boost; a very difficult task in an election year. Already the NIH has been singled out as an agency whose enormous growth days are over. The rumors indicate a paltry 3 percent increase will be proposed. Again, getting the process done in time for an early October election-year adjournment may be the biggest hurdle facing lawmakers.

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## NSF SEEKS HUMAN AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS PROPOSALS

Pending final approval of its FY 2004 budget, the National Science Foundation (NSF) proposes to spend up to \$18 million on the second phase of the Human and Social Dynamics (HSD) priority area. The HSD program, which "aims to foster breakthroughs in knowledge about human action and development as well as organizational, cultural, and societal adaptation and change," is seeking proposals from researchers. **Required letters of intent are due on March 3, 2004 and full proposals are due on March 30, 2004.**

The FY 2004 competition will include three topical emphasis areas: Agents of Change (AOC); Dynamics of Human Behavior (DHB); and Decision Making and Risk (DMaR). In

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### **New Faces for Social/Behavioral Sciences? Four Searches Underway**

The New Year begins with significant turnover in the ranks of high level officials in social/behavioral science positions in the government. At the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), James Griffin has left as Assistant Director for the Social, Behavioral and Educational Sciences to return to the Department of Education. Griffin will work with Institute for Educational Sciences' (IES) Director Russ Whitehurst from a position in the Center for Educational Research, a component of IES. OSTP Deputy Director Kathy Olsen is conducting the search for Griffin's replacement.

At NSF, the term of Norman Bradburn as Assistant Director for the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) Directorate ends on March 12. Nancy Cantor, chancellor of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, is heading the search for Bradburn's successor. The announcement of the replacement for Philip Rubin as Director of SBE's Behavioral and Cognitive Science Division is imminent. In addition, the six-year term of Rita Colwell as NSF's Director ends in August. During her term she has been a stalwart supporter of the social/behavioral sciences.

At NIH, the vacancy as head of the Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research (OBSSR) remains. The previous occupant, Raynard Kington, has moved up to become NIH's Deputy Director. Virginia Cain continues to serve as Acting Director. Former NIH Acting and Deputy Director Ruth Kirschstein and National Institute for Child Health and Human Development Director Duane Alexander are in charge of finding Kington's replacement.

### **Issues on the Agenda**

Getting people on board for these positions will be important as each of these agencies faces significant challenges in 2004. NSF has just announced the second solicitation for the Human and Social Dynamics priority (see related story), which focuses on social and behavioral topics. In addition, SBE continues to face resource problems as appropriators maintain their tradition of using percentages to calculate funding increases, rather than looking at absolute dollar amounts.

At NIH, the budget-doubling era is over and we have now moved on to the oversight era. The attack on peer review and sexual behavior research represented by the Toomey Amendment (see *Update*, July 14, 2003) has now

been joined by a series of conflict-of-interest revelations that have whetted congressional committees' appetites for further scrutiny of this once most-favored agency. A possible reauthorization will necessitate hearings that may make NIH officials uncomfortable. Within the agency, Director Elias Zerhouni will continue to push the "Roadmap" (see *Update*, October 6, 2003) and panels will examine basic behavioral research across NIH and specifically within the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).

As President Bush continues to laud his No Child Left Behind legislation, now two years old, the IES moves ahead trying to elevate the status and funding of education research. The Institute's new advisory board awaits Senate confirmation and will probably have its first meeting early in the year. (For the list of members see *Update*, December 8, 2003). IES will maintain its focus on pushing for evidence-based policy through randomized control experiments in determining research priorities.

While we were away, President Bush dismissed Democratic Senators' skepticism about Robert Lerner's ability to head the National Center for Education Statistics in a non-ideological manner and provided him with a recess appointment. This allows Lerner to serve through 2004 without facing a Senate confirmation vote.

This year, the Senate will tackle the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. Concern over increases in tuition, charges of bias in international education programs, and retention of college students, are some of the issues the Senate will examine. The House has already passed a series of separate bills, including one that establishes an oversight committee to scrutinize international education and foreign language studies programs. (See *Update*, October 6, 2003).

At OSTP, a new subcommittee of the National Science and Technology Council will focus on the social and behavioral sciences. Currently co-chaired by Norman Bradburn of NSF, Tom Insel of NIMH, and Gary Strong of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the subcommittee includes representatives of Federal agencies that conduct or support social/behavioral science research. Among its first activities, the subcommittee will undertake an inventory of social/behavioral science activities across the Federal government. Sally Kane of NSF and Susan Brandon of NIMH are leading this effort.

As part of its research strategy, DHS will award a number of new centers of research excellence. One of these is expected to focus on the behavioral sciences.

The NIJ and the Bureau of Justice Statistics remain a concern. The Senate Appropriations Committee's attempt to cut all discretionary funding for NIJ and the resulting large cut that the agency sustained in the final appropriations bill create significant difficulties for further funding of a number of its initiatives. Although funding for BJS was restored, both Justice Department agencies continue to face the prospect of competitive sourcing through the A-76 process and the further de-professionalization of the staff.

Other issues that expect to surface on the congressional agenda in 2004 include:

- Further attempts to reauthorize the welfare reform act. Attempts in 2003 stalled as the Senate and House cannot agree on work requirements, child care funding, and other issues.
- The reauthorization of the highway bill includes research provisions under discussion that would include social/behavioral research in a much larger context than before.
- The President's recent immigration proposal will focus debate on that policy area where social scientists have conducted significant research.

In addition, Representative Diana DeGette (D-CO) has re-introduced her legislation concerning protecting human participants in research (H.R. 3594).

Of course, examination of all of these issues will occur in the context of an election year, continuing wars in Iraq and against terrorism that will not restore comity, good-will, and bipartisanship among the denizens of the nation's capital. Happy New Year again and stay tuned!

#### Editor's Note

*This is the first issue of COSSA Washington Update for 2004. Published 22 times per year, Update is written and produced by the COSSA staff and covers Federal policies and debates relevant to social and behavioral scientists. Please e-mail wertman@coffa.org with your questions, comments, and ideas for future issues.*

## **NSF PROPOSALS, (Continued from Page 1)**

addition, three resource-related emphasis areas will be eligible for funding: Spatial Social Science; Modeling Human and Social Dynamics; and Instrumentation and Data Resource Development. Projects seeking funding in the resource-related areas must also advance knowledge in one of the three topical areas. NSF will provide support for research-focused, education-focused, infrastructure-focused, and exploratory projects. Of the available funds, \$5 million has been reserved for infrastructure projects.

The AOC area focuses on the dynamics of large scale changes in humanity and society, such as globalization, democratization, migration, and epidemics. The DHB topic "seeks to unravel links between mental processes and human behavior as well as the dynamic processes through which individual and collectivities form, grow, learn, change, and act under internal and external stimuli." The DMaR emphasis focuses on the processes by which people, groups, and organizations make decisions under conditions of risk and uncertainty.

The full text of the announcement may be found at: [http://www.nsf.gov/pubsys/ods/getpub.cfm?ods\\_key=nsf04537](http://www.nsf.gov/pubsys/ods/getpub.cfm?ods_key=nsf04537). For further information contact: Miriam Heller, (703) 292-8360 or mheller@nsf.gov or Sally Kane, (703) 292-7467 or skane@nsf.gov.

## **RANKING DEMOCRAT ON SCIENCE PANEL SWITCHES PARTIES**

Representative Ralph Hall of Texas, the Ranking Democrat on the House Science Committee, announced on January 2nd that he was becoming a Republican. As a Democrat, Hall's voting record has been quite supportive of the GOP agenda and his fellow-Texan, President Bush. Although he has denied any desire to switch parties in the past, Hall's action is not surprising as he did not vote for Democratic House Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) for Speaker at the beginning of the 108th Congress. In this key test of party loyalty, he instead voted present.

The 80-year-old Hall, first elected in 1980 from the area that sent legendary Speaker Sam Rayburn to the House, had his district reconfigured in the infamous line redrawing just carried out by the Texas legislature. Faced with a difficult decision that would have put him in a primary against another Democratic incumbent, he moved naturally into the GOP. President Bush in welcoming him to the Republican party, endorsed his re-election.

Hall's switch elevates Rep. Bart Gordon (D-TN) to the Ranking Member slot on the Science panel. Gordon, serving his tenth term from the district that Al Gore represented in Congress, has been the top Democrat on the Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee active in the recent investigations of the NASA shuttle program. A rising star in the House in the 1980s, he left the Science Committee to move to the prestigious Rules Committee. Following the switch to Republican control of the House in 1995, however, Gordon lost his Rules seat and returned to the Science panel. Though opposing his party on some votes, Gordon has been a good Democratic soldier in the House.

The Science panel prides itself on its bipartisanship, and its chairman Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY) is from the shrinking moderate wing of the House GOP. How much change all of this brings in the rest of the 108th Congress is unclear. Looking ahead to the 109th Congress, Boehlert (assuming he is re-elected) may be tempted by the expected opening to lead the House Intelligence Committee and Hall may claim the Science Committee chairmanship as a Republican.

## AHRQ RELEASES REPORTS TRACKING QUALITY AND HEALTH DISPARITIES

The Agency for Health Research and Quality (AHRQ) recently released two reports providing assessments of health care quality and disparities in the U.S. using data on several common clinical conditions: cancer, diabetes, end-stage renal disease, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, mental health and respiratory disease. Mandated by Congress in 1999 under the Health Research and Quality Act (P.L. 106-129), the two reports – the National Healthcare Quality Report (NHQR) and the National Healthcare Disparities Report (NHDR) – were intended to establish “a baseline view of the quality of health care and differences in the use of services,” AHRQ Director Carolyn Clancy explained. As the first comprehensive national effort to measure and report the quality of health care in America as well as differences in access to health care services, both reports present examples of what progress has been made in increasing quality and reducing disparities while also acknowledging that many areas are still in need of improvement.

## How Can We Improve Health Care Quality?

“We are making progress, we can improve, and we can do more,” was the central theme that resonated in the key findings of the NHQR, which include:

- High quality health care is not yet a universal reality;
- Opportunities for preventative care are frequently missed;
- Management of chronic diseases present unique quality challenges; and
- There is more to learn and greater improvements are possible.

According to Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Tommy Thompson, “Strategies supported under this [NHQR] include efforts to reduce medical errors with research, implementation of proven evidence-based practices, and improving reporting systems for errors and adverse events; increasing the appropriate use of effective health care services by medical providers; increasing consumer and patient use of valid, reliable health care quality information; improving consumer and patient protections; and accelerating the development and use of an electronic health information infrastructure.”

The NHQR contends that the quality of care has improved noticeably with the public health system and the vast majority of patients are getting the care they need in many areas. In patient safety, for example, there has been significant progress in reducing infection rates in certain types of hospital intensive care units. NHQR's “primary role is to provide the data and information that can tell us how the nation's health care system is performing in terms of quality of care” and inform policymakers what improvements can and need to be made. Moreover, the report will provide the foundation for the translation of research and evidence into action and practice, Clancy noted.

### Reducing Health Disparities

While AHRQ is committed to providing quality care in the nation's public health infrastructure, the Agency is also dedicated to reducing various health disparities. “The NHDR provides a comprehensive view of the scope and characteristics of differences in health care quality and access associated with patient race, ethnicity, income, education, and place of residence,” Clancy asserted. With the release of the NHDR, policymakers will have a system to evaluate

challenges in accessing high quality care and to track the poor health experienced by people of lower socioeconomic status and racial and ethnic minorities.

According to Clancy, “The gaps in income between the richest and poorest households in America are widening, and some racial and ethnic minorities are growing at much more rapid pace than the majority white population.” Eliminating health disparities has become a cornerstone of HHS’ disease prevention program and “activities under this priority will create new, affordable health insurance options, strengthen and expand the health care safety net; improve the delivery of services in rural and underserved areas; eliminate racial and ethnic disparities; strengthen and improve Medicare programs; expand access to health care services for targeted populations with special health care needs; and increase access to health care services for American Indians and Alaska Natives,” the report noted.

### **What Policymakers Need to Know**

Although gaps still exist between the ideal health care and actual health care of the Nation, the report examined five aspects of quality of care to assess the information found in the NHDR. The five aspects of care include effectiveness, safety, timeliness, patient centeredness, and equity. The report’s key findings included:

1. Americans have exceptional quality of health care, but some socioeconomic, racial, ethnic and geographic differences exist.
2. Some “priority populations” do as well or better than the general population in some aspects of health care.
3. Opportunities to provide preventative care are frequently missed.

With greater improvements in the future, the NHDR is just one of the initial steps in identifying and understanding differences in access to and quality of health care services among specific populations. “Future reports will serve as a report card on efforts to address these differences, and working together, using tools like this report, among others, public-and private-sector policymakers and health system leaders can help make full access to high quality care a reality for all Americans,” Clancy concluded.

## **NHGRI ESTABLISHES ELSI INTRAMURAL RESEARCH BRANCH**

In recognition of the importance of and need to increase attention to the ethical, legal, and social implications (ELSI) and the subsequent translation of the discoveries and findings from research on the human genome, the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) has created a new branch devoted to these issues – the Social and Behavioral Research Branch (SBRB) – within the Institute’s Division of Intramural Research.

One of seven intramural branches at NHGRI, SBRB will develop cutting-edge approaches to “translate genomic discoveries into interventions that improve health-related decisions and outcomes, and investigate the social, ethical, and public policy impact of genomic research.” Colleen McBride, a prominent behavioral epidemiologist was recruited from Duke University’s Cancer Prevention, Detection and Control Program, to lead the new branch. Her research interests include the development of “innovative public health interventions to promote risk-reducing behavior changes.”

“This is an exciting time for social and behavioral researchers who in the coming years will be responsible for translating discoveries from genome research into medical care and public health interventions,” says McBride. Praising the NHGRI for its “forward thinking in acknowledging the centrality of social and behavioral science,” she emphasized that the “research landscape is wide open and research programs like the SBRB will have unprecedented opportunities to do truly innovative research.”

Initially, the SBRB’s research portfolio, according to McBride, will encompass four conceptual domains:

1. Testing communications strategies aimed at relaying an individual’s risk for developing a genetic condition.
2. Developing and evaluating interventions aimed at reducing genetically susceptible individuals’ risk of acquiring a disease.
3. Translating genomic discoveries to clinical practice.
4. Understanding the social, ethical, and policy implications of genomic research.

Within SBRB, there will be several research units, including behavioral genetics, health communications, genetic counseling services, a health promotion research

section that includes a unit for disseminating counseling research methods, community genetics, and ethics and social policy. Additionally, the Branch will have several cross-cutting themes addressed by researchers, including implications of genomic discoveries and research for health disparities, the ethical and legal implications, and strategies for information dissemination to medical and other communities, said McBride.

Job postings for the three positions that the SBRB hopes to fill over the next two years have been released by the Branch. The Branch continues to seek strong social and behavioral scientists, particularly in the area of risk communications and health services research. In addition, the SBRB will be holding a forum of 25 social and behavioral scientists, any of whom would make a wonderful addition to the branch, stressed McBride. She acknowledged that there are not a lot of social and behavioral scientists doing genetics research, but the research being conducted by the individuals selected to participate in this forum is closely related and “the context of genetics would be the next step for them,” she emphasized.

McBride describes the SBRB as a “really multidisciplinary group.” She expressed her surprise by seemingly how “reassuring her selection” as the SBRB chief has been to those in the social and behavioral science community. Although she has not previously done genetics research herself, McBride says that she is “absolutely committed to developing as a transdisciplinary scientist.”

## NIH CREATES TRANS-NIH SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE CENTER

The Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) [by establishing a new transdisciplinary training program], the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) [Social and Behavioral Research Branch], and the National Institute of Mental Health [Mood and Anxiety Branch] are collaborating to create a trans-NIH Social and Behavioral Science Center (SBSC) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The new Center, which would be akin to the NIH’s neuroscience center, is slated to open in January 2005.

According to Acting OBSSR Director Virginia Cain, “The OBSSR offices will be relocating within the new Social and Behavioral Research Center in Building 31” on the NIH campus. “We are looking forward to developing new linkages with the NIH intramural

program and exploring new opportunities for collaboration,” says Cain.

The new Center is being designed to hasten the progress of behavioral and social science research among participating NIH intramural research programs. It will bring together a cadre of social and behavioral scientists from various NIH institutes and disciplines – experimental and clinical psychologists, sociologists, geneticists, public health experts, ethicists, decision scientists, community health professionals, informaticists, and health communications specialists. It is hoped that the SBSC will bring a new focus to this type of research among the NIH intramural research community.

Colleen McBride, chief of the NHGRI’s newly created Social and Behavioral Research Branch (SBRB) and who is spearheading the development of the Center, emphasized that the Center is being designed to be truly collaborative (see previous story). “Faculty and staff from participating institutes will be intermixed, with offices configured to maximize cross-institute interactions.” According to McBride, the Center will allow for the sharing of infrastructure resources that the individual entities by themselves would not have been able to get, including a telephone survey lab, an interactive lab, a cognitive processing lab, and a telephone counseling lab.

McBride also observed that “having a group of social and behavioral scientists from across the institutes of NIH in shared space is a new way of doing business . . . that will enable the kinds of ongoing conversations and collaborations that are needed to encourage health research innovation.”

Besides providing an identity and high visibility to social and behavioral research within the NIH intramural research program, the SBSC is seen as indicative of the growing need for multidisciplinary approaches, as communicated in the NIH Roadmap for Medical Research, to address complex problems (See *Update*, October 6, 2003).

## THE SHELBY AMENDMENT REVISITED: AGENCIES’ IMPLEMENTATION

In late 1998, Sen. Richard Shelby (R-AL) inserted a provision into the FY 1999 Omnibus Appropriations Act providing that “the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) amends Section .36 of OMB Circular A-110 to require Federal awarding agencies to ensure that all data produced under an award will be

made available to the public through procedures established under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).” This provision, commonly known as the Shelby Amendment, arose from concerns about scientific fraud and the desire to make public the scientific rationale supporting government regulations. (It was specifically related to Clear Air Act standards).

Following a comment period, OMB issued a rule that went into effect in November 1999 limiting public access to data that were used to support a government regulation, had already been published, or met other criteria. At that time, Shelby criticized the rule as too narrow and contrary to the intent of his amendment but no changes were made. In 2001, the National Academy’s Science, Technology, and Law Program held a session to discuss implementation of the rule, and it was revealed that few FOIA requests related to the Amendment had been made at that time despite expectations that the U.S. Chamber of Commerce would mount a court challenge to the narrowly-drawn rule. (See *Update*, March 23, 2001).

In November 2003, as part of a report on Financial Conflicts of interest involving University Research requested by Shelby, the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) issued an update on implementation of the revised A-110 circular. The report revealed “Only the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have received FOIA requests citing the Shelby Amendment.” Furthermore, none of the 42 requests (40 to NIH and two to EPA) have met the criteria of the circular.

Specifically, NIH declined 20 requests because they did not seek research data and nine because they “requested data generated from grants funded prior to the effective date of the NIH regulation implementing the Shelby Amendment.” Seven requests were found not to apply to the Shelby Amendment (no specific reason was given because the FOIA files have already been destroyed) and four were withdrawn. At EPA, both requests were denied “because the requested data were generated by projects funded prior to the effective date of the Agency’s regulation implementing the revision to” the circular.

## COSSA WELCOMES BACK CONTRIBUTOR

COSSA welcomes back the University of Washington as a Contributor. The University was previously a member of the COSSA family from 1983-2001. We look forward to once again working with the University on issues of interest to their social and behavioral scientists.

## COSSA TRANSCRIPTS NOW AVAILABLE

Transcripts from the Consortium’s final Congressional Seminar of 2003 are now available. *Rebuilding the World Community: Global Institutions and Interactions in an Era of Terrorism* features Lael Brainard of the Brookings Institution, Linda Putnam of Texas A&M University, and Beth Simmons of Harvard University. For more on the seminar, see *Update*, October 20, 2003.

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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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