



COSSA Washington Update

Consortium of Social
Science Associations

May 3, 2004

Volume 23, Issue 8

AAAS FORUM HEARS MARBURGER, DASCHLE, AND VARMUS

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) held its 29th Forum on Science & Technology Policy in Washington, D.C. on April 22-23. The conference gave President Bush's science adviser, John Marburger, a chance to defend the Administration's research budgets and practices. It also provided Senator Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD) an opportunity to provide a Democratic response. In addition, former NIH Director Harold Varmus presented the annual William Carey Lecture, allowing him to survey some of the current conditions facing the science enterprise. (Links to all three talks are available at www.aaas.org)

Marburger, as he did during the February release of the President's proposed FY 2005 budget, pronounced that "R&D expenditures in this Administration are up 44 percent over the past four years to a record \$132 billion." For FY 2005 Daschle countered that "the entire increase" for this year "would go to the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security for the development of weapons systems and counterterrorism technology." Marburger noted that "non-security" science would have a 2.5 percent growth rate in FY 2005. Sifting through these competing claims, AAAS Budget Analyst Kei Koizumi told the forum that for the foreseeable future R&D budgets outside of homeland security, defense, and space (the proposed Moon-Mars project) would see real declines, including NIH and NSF.

Varmus focused on the impact of the rapidly growing budget deficit, calling it "the darkest cloud on the horizon of the marriage of government and science." He warned

(Continued on Next Page)

NIH SOCIAL/BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE WORKING GROUP MEETS FOR FIRST TIME

On April 28, the Working Group of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Advisory Committee to the Director (ACD) on Research Opportunities in the Basic Behavioral and Social Sciences held its inaugural meeting. The panel's task was to begin examining basic research in the social and behavioral sciences across the 27 NIH institutes and centers. The Working Group is chaired by sociologist Linda Waite, University of Chicago and a member of the ACD.

The mission of the Working Group includes addressing issues related to NIH's support for research in the behavioral and social sciences that is fundamental to the prevention,

(Continued on Page 4)

Inside UPDATE...

- NOAA GLOBAL CHANGE PROGRAMS: SOCIAL SCIENCE ACTIVITIES THREATENED
- ZERHOUNI CONTINUES CONGRESSIONAL TOUR
- SCHWETZ APPOINTED OHRP HEAD BY THOMPSON
- SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT
- COSSA WELCOMES NEW GOVERNING MEMBERS



AAS FORUM, (Continued from Page 1)

about the dire consequences: less knowledge to advance the public's interest and support industrial innovation; the decay of universities; fewer U.S. students entering science or foreign scientists coming here to do it; a loss in international prestige.

The former NIH head briefly mentioned his role in the letter signed by sixty of his Nobel prize colleagues protesting the Administration's "inappropriate behavior" in its perceived attempts to politicize science. Daschle also referenced the report issued by the Union of Concerned Scientists, which claimed that the Bush Administration has suppressed or distorted the scientific analyses offered Federal agencies to bring these results in line with Administration policy. "Time and time again, the Administration is choosing politics over real science," Daschle asserted. (For the two statements go to www.ucsus.org.)

Marburger retorted that "President Bush believes policy should be made with the best and most complete information possible, and expects his Administration to conduct its business with integrity and in a way that fulfills that belief." The science adviser suggested that it was time "in the best interest of science to get [this controversy] behind us." (Marburger's full response to the charges can be found at www.ostp.gov.)

Societal Impact of Nanotechnology Important

In other comments, Marburger noted the importance of focusing on the societal impact of nanotechnology. It is something the Office of Science and Technology Policy "is following closely," he said. Referencing the Nanotechnology Research and Development Act enacted last year, Marburger applauded its provisions related to societal concerns. He concluded that it is critical "to establish credible approaches to identifying and dealing with potential impacts of nanotechnology to preserve public credibility for this important emerging field." He clearly does not want a repeat of the negative reaction in some places, particularly Europe, to genetically modified food.

Daschle suggested a major initiative in neuroscience as the next big project following the mapping of the human genome. "Now that we have surveyed the map of human life, let us turn our attention to that which makes human life unique: the mind," he declared. The initiative would focus on trying to understand how we learn, remember, think, and communicate as well as attempting to solve the puzzle of addiction, he explained.

Varmus also noted the threat to the independence of peer review from "poorly informed political action." He cited the amendment offered by Rep. Pat Toomey (R-PA) to last year's NIH spending bill to strip funding for already awarded grants "because he had determined from the abstracts describing the awards that they were inappropriate for funding." (See *Update*, July 14, 2003). Varmus also warned about the impact of restrictive immigration policies, the danger of "dogmatic faith-based" elements "invading government" and the need to "globalize science."

NOAA GLOBAL CHANGE PROGRAMS: SOCIAL SCIENCE ACTIVITIES THREATENED

The proposed FY 2005 budget for the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) includes a reduction of approximately \$9 million for its Office of Global Programs, which would result in the elimination of three social science oriented programs: the human dimensions of global change; the health and climate variability program; and the environment, science, and development program. These three cost about \$3 million total.

This proposal comes despite a memorandum giving guidance on the FY 2006 budget from Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere Conrad Lautenbacher, Jr. which recommends sharpening NOAA's interdisciplinary focus, including the need "to place more emphasis on social sciences (notably, economics, sociology, and law) in order to support complex decision-making in which competing socioeconomic interests must be weighed."

It also contradicts the advice from the U.S. Climate Change Science Plan (CCSP) and the review of its strategic plan by the National Academies. The latter was a focus of an April 9th meeting of the Academies' Coordinating Committee on Global Change, chaired by Peter Raven of the Missouri Botanical Garden.

Academies' Report Calls for More Social Science Research

At the meeting, Thomas Graedel of Yale University presented the conclusions of the committee he chaired that produced the report *Implementing Climate and Global Change Research*. Graedel made clear that to execute CCSP's strategic plan, social science research needs continued support.

Focusing on Goal 4, which calls for understanding the sensitivity and adaptability of ecosystems and human systems to climate and related global changes, the Academies' report endorsed "ensuring a balanced and societally-relevant program." Meeting this goal, according to Graedel and his colleagues, "will require significantly new efforts in areas not presently well supported by CCSP, including: human dimensions, impacts, adaptation, mitigation, and economics."

Goal 5 of CCSP calls for exploring the uses and identifying the limits of evolving knowledge to manage risks and opportunities related to climate variability and change. The report suggested this area, known as decision support, needs further development in the plan's implementation. There is a need to: identify stakeholders and the decisions they make; support national and international policy decisions, as well as state, local, and regional adaptive management decisions; and support economic analyses of impacts and possible response decisions.

William Clark of Harvard, a member of the Coordinating Committee, picked up on this point and strongly criticized NOAA for the proposed budget reductions. Clark argued that funding for decision-support research was a special responsibility for NOAA, because he did not envision alternative sources of funding. Tom Wilbanks, a geographer at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, endorsed Clark's critique, while also emphasizing the under-represented areas of human dimensions and adaptation in our attempts to understand the relationship of nature and society.

Ari Patrinos, a Department of Energy official filling in as NOAA's head of the Office of Global Programs, responded to Clark and Wilbanks. He asserted that the decision-support and human dimensions were difficult areas to research. He advised those concerned with the proposed budget eliminations to "wait until the dust settled." He also suggested that this kind of research could be incorporated into the research of "hard" scientists. Mary Glackin, also from the Office of Global Programs, also disputed the notion that the budget cuts meant that NOAA "was walking away" from funding decision-support research. "Just the opposite," she claimed.

Finally, Graedel focused on the need to improve strategies for implanting and sustaining a global Earth observing system and meeting climate modeling goals. Wilbanks then spoke on the need for "making sense of sensings from global change observing systems." He asked for a focus on important questions to be answered, not just the collection of staggering amounts

of data "without evident value." He also argued for combining observations from space with ground truth, process models, and experiments "to assure validity and value."

The budget situation is before the Congress and probably will not be resolved for quite a while.

ZERHOUNI CONTINUES CONGRESSIONAL TOUR

Continuing to make the rounds to the various Congressional committees with oversight over the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Director Elias Zerhouni appeared before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (Labor-HHS) on April 21 and 22. Noting that 2004 marks a "sea change for the NIH and its Roadmap for Medical Research," Zerhouni informed the Subcommittee that the agency was "refining its basic and clinical research programs to ensure that new discoveries rapidly lead to new and improved diagnostics, treatments, and prevention strategies that extend the length and improve the quality of human life."

The NIH Director highlighted for the Subcommittee research advances from the last year representing the critical contributions of NIH-funded researchers, gave examples of how the NIH Roadmap will shape the approach to patient-oriented research, and presented an overview of the budget. Zerhouni also noted for the Subcommittee "emerging priorities" and the agency's plans for "responding to the health challenges ahead."

Zerhouni enumerated several areas that are "driving the research agenda" for the NIH, including chronic conditions, addressing the aging population, health disparities, emerging diseases, and biodefense. Noting the need for aggressive research to combat the emerging obesity epidemic, Zerhouni underscored that the co-morbid conditions associated with obesity are significant.

Another driver of the research agenda, he explained is the rapid increase in health costs. According to Zerhouni the following issues need to be addressed: What are the roadblocks? What are the major challenges? How can we most effectively invest the funds to fashion the fastest track to discovery as well as translate those discoveries to the patient's bedside or the doctor's office?

Zerhouni acknowledge that in seeking the answers to these questions, it has become clear to him that "the traditional paradigm of medical care – when practitioners

waited for the disease to cause the patient the loss of some function – must be replaced by a paradigm where health professionals act before the individual loses any functions.” This has become even more critical since chronic diseases now consume about 75 percent of our fastest-growing health care expenditures, he declared.

According to Zerhouni, the NIH Roadmap is a shifting of the strategic agenda and a way to accelerate basic research discoveries. The goal is to identify new interventions sooner. “Chronic diseases don’t occur in the hospital,” Zerhouni asserted.

Subcommittee ‘Sandbagged’

Ranking Member David Obey (D-WI) noted that the Subcommittee was in a strange position – the mistakes made are incremental and result in missed opportunities. Lamenting the current budget constraints, Obey noted that the Subcommittee would provide the agency with “its smallest percentage increase in 19 years.” It will not keep up with inflation, he added.

Noting the amendment offered last year by Rep. Pat Toomey (R-PA) to rescind funding for four previously funded grants, Obey explained that the Subcommittee was “sandbagged” by the amendment. The Subcommittee leadership was caught “unawares” and had no specific ability to answer the attack on the NIH’s peer review system for determining which grants are funded, Obey explained.

“If you have something that should not be funded, for God sakes say so,” Obey told the NIH director. Members need adequate information. If individual members have concerns, he continued, they should be advising the Chair so that he can make the inquiries and give them a solid answer.

Zerhouni emphasized to the Subcommittee that he “took the inquiry very seriously” and “focused on members’ concerns.” It is a telling example of how NIH can do better, he added. He noted that he asked every Institute director to evaluate every grant to see if it had a relevant public health interest, to examine the science, and whether the funding was disproportionate to the burden of disease. The burden of STDs is large and increasing, he noted, explaining that 65 million Americans have STDs, with approximately 4 million new cases in young people. Further, STDs are growing in the senior population and 12 percent of HIV/AIDS cases are in the senior population. From a public health standpoint, it is a very import issue. He also noted that 30 percent of divorces are related to

sexual dysfunction. The NIH needs to convey the importance of the research and will do a better job of providing information on the purpose and importance of research grants, he informed the Subcommittee.

SCHWETZ APPOINTED OHRP HEAD BY THOMPSON

On April 8, Health and Human Services Secretary (HHS) Tommy Thompson announced the appointment of Bernard Schwetz as the Director of the HHS Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). Schwetz had been serving in an acting capacity since February 2003.

Prior to joining the OHRP, Schwetz held positions at the Food and Drug Administration, the University of Maryland, College Park, and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. In announcing the appointment, Thompson noted: “Dr. Schwetz brings a wealth of experience to this critical mission. Human subject protections within the clinical research enterprise will benefit from his strong and positive leadership.”

Schwetz holds a D.V.M. from the University of Minnesota and a Ph.D. in Pharmacology from the University of Iowa. The appointment is not at the presidential level and will not require Senate confirmation.

WORKING GROUP, (Continued from Page 1)

treatment, and cure of illnesses but is not directed at a specific disease or condition. Specifically, the Working Group is to:

- Review the existing portfolio of basic behavioral and social sciences research across the NIH;
- Identify the areas of opportunity in the basic behavioral and social sciences, consistent with NIH’s mission, that NIH should consider supporting; and
- Examine the barriers to the submission and peer review of grant applications in the basic behavioral and social sciences.

The Working Group will also make recommendations for improving the basic behavioral and social science program at the agency.

Welcoming the Working Group and outlining its charge, NIH Deputy Director Raynard Kington related that he hopes that a report of the Working Group's findings and recommendations will be discussed at the December meeting of the ACD. To assist the working group, the NIH has already begun inventorying the basic behavioral and social science research currently supported by the NIH.

Silver Addresses Panel

The Working Group began by hearing the views and concerns of the social and behavioral science community, including those of COSSA Executive Director Howard J. Silver. Silver commended the NIH for the steps that it has taken in recent years to enhance the social science contributions to health research. He focused his remarks on the social sciences as the panel heard the concerns of the behavioral sciences from Steven Breckler, American Psychological Association; Alan Kraut, American Psychological Society; Barbara Wanchisen, Federation of Behavioral, Psychological, and Cognitive Sciences; and Richard Shiffrin, Indiana University.

Silver noted that despite the significant advances in uncovering the biological and genetic basis for specific diseases and conditions over the past couple of decades, it has also become increasingly apparent that knowledge about biological and genetic markers are limited in predicting who gets sick, who seeks treatment for their health problems, and who recovers from illness. "The social and behavioral sciences contribute to filling these gaps in our understanding of health," he emphasized.

Silver applauded NIH Director Elias Zerhouni's acknowledgement and recognition that "health-related behavioral and social sciences research is an integral part of the NIH's mission." Zerhouni, he noted, reaffirmed this with the current controversy over sexual behavior and function research supported by NIH. In his response to Congress regarding the NIH's support of this research, Zerhouni emphasized that "the constant battle against illness and disease cannot be limited to biological factors but has to include behavioral and social factors as well." (See *Update*, February 9, 2004).

Highlighting the landmark conferences, *Toward Higher Levels of Analysis: Progress and Promise in Research on Social and Cultural Dimensions of Health* (held in June 2000), Silver stressed to the

Working Group that as with the biological sciences, there are basic concepts and constructs in the social sciences that are highly relevant to health research and are themselves important subjects for additional inquiry. He also noted that basic social science research on the effects of social constructs and social processes is central to research on the etiology of health and illness. In addition, the application of basic knowledge about social constructs and processes to health services, treatment, and prevention research is essential to addressing health problems (part of the mission of NIH) and health disparities (a top priority of the agency).

Silver emphasized the "greatest barrier to conducting health-related social science research at the NIH remains the lack of a home for basic social science research." Accordingly, the lack of an identifiable entity at the NIH for researchers submitting grant applications and the Center for Scientific Review, which directs those applications to the applicable NIH institute or center, has "left the majority of the social science research support by the NIH to be mostly disease-related."

He underscored that "recent activities by the NIH, including the NIH Roadmap for Medical Research, suggest a growing commitment to social science research and its integration into interdisciplinary health research." The concern for health at the population, rather than the individual level, indicates the need to take social and cultural processes into account. An understanding of current and changing population rates of morbidity, survival, mortality, and use of health services requires the consideration of demographic, social, economic, and cultural features of the population. These concepts are important whether we are studying racial/ethnic health disparities or the spread of AIDS in the global community.

"Social science research has the potential to make great contributions to health. What is needed is for this research to be considered essential enough by NIH that the necessary infrastructure needed to support the social sciences is available to the social science community," he concluded.

The Committee also heard from National Institute of Mental Health Director Thomas Insel and National Institute of General Medical Sciences Director Jeremy Berg. The panel members directed a number of questions to the association representatives that suggested their concern with how the current NIH structure would accommodate basic social and behavioral science research.

Members of the Working Group on the NIH Advisory Committee to the Director on Research Opportunities in the Basic Behavioral and Social Sciences include:

- **Linda Waite**, University of Chicago (Chair)
- **Richard Axel**, Columbia University
- **Maja Bucan**, University of Pennsylvania
- **Laura Carstensen**, Stanford University
- **Richard Davidson**, University of Wisconsin, Madison
- **Susan Fiske**, Princeton University
- **James P. Smith**, RAND Corporation
- **William T. Greenough**, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
- **Frances Degen Horwitz**, City University of New York
- **James Jackson**, University of Michigan
- **Robert Levenson**, University of California, Berkeley
- **Bruce E. McEwen**, The Rockefeller University
- **Jane Menken**, University of Colorado, Boulder
- **David Takeuchi**, University of Washington
- **Virginia Cain**, Acting Director, Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research, NIH

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT

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

The Office of Public Health Research (OPHR) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has posted the following requests for applications (RFA) as part of their Health Protection Research Initiative:

Mentored Research Scientist Development Award

The OPHR announces the availability of funds to support the development of a qualified and experienced cadre of independent public health researchers to address

priority health protection issues. The award will support 20 new grants directed towards the career development experiences of postdoctoral professionals with public health research experience. The CDC dictates that grant recipients devote at least 75% of their full-time professional efforts either to health promotion/disease, injury, and disability prevention or preparedness against infectious, environmental, and terrorist threats, which represent the two overarching research priorities of the CDC's Health Protection Research Initiative. To apply, visit the NIH website: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-CD-04-001.html>.

Investigator Initiated Research

The OPHR is seeking highly trained and creative scientists to conduct innovative public health research that focuses specifically on health promotion in the work place. Priority will be given to research that identifies innovative cost-effective health promotion policies, programs, and activities in the workplace or affecting the workplace. This RFA is not intended to cover research on occupational safety; rather it is meant to support CDC's health promotion research priorities. The CDC intends to provide funds for 20 to 40 new grants in response to the RFA. Additional information can be found at website <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-CD-04-002.html>.

Institutional Research Training Grants

The OPHR has made funds available to eligible institutions for institutional training grants to develop or enhance training programs and provide research and training opportunities for individuals who are pursuing careers in specified areas of health protection research. The institutional training grants are intended to provide support to programs at institutions of higher education, and CDC is committed to funding two to four new grants. These grants are designed to allow the director of the institutional program to select the scholars and develop a curriculum of study and research that would advance public health research in the area of health protection and promote the conduct of research in highly collaborative settings. Specific grant guidelines can be found at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-CD-04-003.html>.

Centers of Excellence in Health Promotion Economics

Funding is being made available to establish Centers of Excellence in Health Promotion Economics that would explore economic solutions to developing, evaluating, and implementing health promotion guidelines,

recommendations, programs, and policies; and to evaluate their cost-effectiveness as a means of improving upon all aspects of health promotion efforts. A Center of Excellence in Health Promotion Economics would represent an organization or academic institution in a trans-disciplinary setting with core faculty involved in priority areas such as econometrics, decision science, health policy, economic evaluation, macroeconomics, health care finance, industrial engineering, operational research, and environmental health economics. Preference will also be given to strategies that employ health promotion economics to address major causes of death in the U.S., e.g. obesity, diabetes, and poor nutrition. The CDC will fund one new grant in response to this RFA and further information regarding eligibility can be found at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-CD-04-004.html>.

For those interested in applying to any of the aforementioned RFAs, a letter of intent must be received by both the Center for Scientific Review (CSR) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the OPHR at CDC by **May 24, 2004** and the completed application is due by **June 22, 2004**. All applications must be submitted using the PH 398 Research Grant application instructions and forms and also have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System number. Please consult the website, NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/index.html>), for additional information on how to apply.

COSSA WELCOMES NEW GOVERNING MEMBERS

The American Association for Public Opinion Research and the Midwest Political Science Association have both recently changed their status within COSSA from Membership Organization to full Governing Member. We look forward to working closely with both organizations on issues of interest to their members.

COSSA TO BRIEF CAPITOL HILL ON CRISIS COMMUNICATION

On June 7, from 12-2 p.m. in room B-340 of the Rayburn House Office Building, COSSA will hold its second congressional briefing of the year. The event will focus on crisis communication and will feature Dan O’Hair of the University of Oklahoma, Havidan Rodriguez of the University of Delaware, and Katherine Rowan of George Mason University.

Editor’s note: At COSSA *Washington Update*, we value any questions or comments you may have throughout the year. Please feel free to contact us anytime at cossa@coffa.org.

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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 \$80; institutional subscriptions - \$160; overseas mail - \$160. ISSN 0749-4394. Address all inquiries to COSSA:

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