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CONSORTIUM OF SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

# COSSA WASHINGTON UPDATE

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## FY 1986 REDUCTIONS UNDER GRAMM-RUDMAN-HOLLINGS

As required by the new law, on January 15 the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) disclosed the reductions necessary to meet the FY 1986 deficit reduction target mandated by Gramm-Rudman-Hollings (GRH). The General Accounting Office (GAO) issued its report on January 21. The GAO accepted, with some minor changes, the decreases of the CBO and OMB. The required \$11.7 billion reduction meant 4.3% across-the-board reductions for non-defense programs not exempted by the law, and 4.9% reductions in selected defense programs.

The following is a list of reductions for selected agencies. The initial report used the agency's FY 1986 appropriations account as the benchmark. How the reductions are distributed within the appropriations account is at the discretion of the agency with the appropriations committees looking over their shoulders. (The numbers below are for Budget Authority and are in millions).

National Science Foundation Research & Related Activities - \$58.1  
National Science Foundation Science and Education - \$2.4  
National Institute of Aging (Research) - \$6.5  
National Institute of Child Health & Human Development (Research)  
- \$13.2  
National Institutes of Health (total) - \$236.2  
Alcohol, Drug Abuse & Mental Health Administration (Research)  
- \$17.9

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Risa I. Palm, *President*

David Jenness, *Executive Director*

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Health and Human Services Policy Research - \$0.3  
Office of Human Developmental Services - \$238.0  
Bureau of the Census (total) - \$8.4  
Educational Research & Statistics - \$2.6  
Housing & Urban Development Policy Development & Research - \$0.7  
Bureau of Labor Statistics - \$6.8  
Soviet-East European Research & Training - \$0.2  
National Archives & Records Administration - \$4.4  
National Endowment for the Humanities - \$6.0  
State Justice Institute - \$0.3  
United States Information Agency Educational & Cultural Exchange  
Program - \$6.0

The President will issue his report on February 1. The reductions described above will take effect on March 1, unless the Congress and the President come up with alternative ways to achieve the \$11.7 billion in reductions. Since the President is scheduled to release his FY 1987 budget on February 3, the consensus is that the FY 1986 reductions will take place. The major battles will occur in shaping a compromise deficit reduction package for FY 1987 that, barring a court decision declaring GRH unconstitutional, looms as the only alternative to the massive across-the-board cuts mandated by GRH.

#### HOW AGENCIES ARE COPING

Program managers in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Alcohol, Drug Abuse & Mental Health Administration (ADAMHA) report a pervasive tendency toward disbelief, or 'denial,' among top agency leaders. In the past, other reprogramming directives partway through a year have in the end been avoided. The difference this time is that both Congress and the President have signed on to GRH, and March 1 looms as a fixed, statutory deadline.

Most of the NIH agencies have already awarded a third or so of their research grants for the year. Those researchers whose proposals for project grants and noncompeting renewals passed the various fall Council meetings are apparently home free. NIH leadership has decided not to adjust awards downward. Because Congress has authorized a 6100 grant level (and because it is in the Institutes' interest to keep the number of awarded grants as high as possible), the over-all policy is to cut the budgets of all remaining grants to be awarded this year. Since there are, typically, only two more rounds of competing proposals in the rest of the fiscal year, this will mean reductions of 3 to 12 percent with the larger decrease more frequent. The cuts are to be negotiated between budget offices, program managers, and investigators; but the discussions will focus on where in research budgets to cut, not how much. Program-project grants (for coordinated research) and grants for the work of research centers will suffer more than individual project grants; and training grant renewals, which were already against a ceiling, will be in serious trouble.

In intramural research programs, reductions of personnel levels by various means (attrition, furloughs, cancellations of special experts' posts) are viewed with extreme alarm. Job freezes and mandated reductions in personnel levels in previous years have already brought some programs to the edge of crisis. Intramural research is inherently more planned and scheduled than extramural, and scientific 'next steps' cannot always be delayed or re-routed.

At the National Science Foundation (NSF), staff have recently been through reprogramming 'exercises' that involved allocating reserves customarily held during the early months of a fiscal year by directorate and division directors. The purpose of such reserves is to balance, throughout the year, funding for mainstream research against funds for high-risk projects, and to respond to special opportunities and needs in and across programs. The projected 4.3 percent reduction that NSF's programs will have to undergo may thus be easier than in the NIH agencies, where research managers' discretionary funds are minuscule. Nevertheless, all NSF programs are calculating where and how to save on awards. One tack, for example, is to routinely reduce the established two-month summer salary item for investigators to one month, or none.

#### AMERICAN EVALUATION ASSOCIATION ESTABLISHED THROUGH MERGER

Two of COSSA's longstanding Affiliates, the Evaluation Research Society and the Evaluation Network, recently merged to form the American Evaluation Association (AEA). 1986 AEA President Richard J. Light of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government recently gave COSSA the following account of the new organization:

"January, 1986 marks the beginning of a new professional organization resulting from a merger between two existing groups. The Evaluation Research Society and the Evaluation Network, each with approximately 1500 members, have joined together to create the American Evaluation Association. The new organization's membership is diverse, with approximately one third of the members in universities, one third in government, and one third in private organizations that carry out evaluation studies.

"The initial impetus for merger came when the two original organizations started holding a joint Annual Meeting. The merger was consummated in 1985 under the leadership of Interim President Jeri Nowakowski (Northern Illinois University) and an Interim Board. The first president for the new AEA is Richard J. Light (Harvard University) in 1986, and the president-elect for 1987 is Robert Covert (University of Virginia). Secretary-Treasurer is Nancy R. Kingsbury (General Accounting Office). The AEA's first Annual Meeting will take place October 29-November 1, 1986, in Kansas City. In each of the last few years the joint meeting of the two former organizations attracted over 600 participants.

"Four themes are prominent as AEA begins its activities. One is the importance of dissemination and utilization of findings. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent evaluating public sector programs, especially in human services such as health care, education, job training, criminal justice, and others. Some of these have yielded research findings that influenced policy, changed legislation, or improved program management. But others have had little real impact. Many AEA members are studying how to present evaluation findings in ways that are both credible and useful to decision makers.

"A second theme is developing stronger methodologies for evaluation. Many techniques evaluators use come from disciplines such as statistics, economics, psychology, and sociology. Some are gradually being modified as special needs and problems are recognized. For example, planned experimentation is combined with naturalistic studies far more frequently now than five to ten years ago. Similarly, new ways of analyzing management records are being developed.

"A third area that many AEA members are working on is pulling together 'what we have learned.' After twenty years of social innovations sponsored by various levels of government and by many private Foundations, we are finally in a position to report concrete results for several program areas. When does ability grouping in education help or harm certain children? How would increasing the availability of home health care for the elderly reduce hospital costs? Which of the many efforts to reduce youth unemployment have produced the most promising results? This work of gathering results from evaluations and aggregating them is a major theme for the 1986 Annual Meeting.

"Finally, a fourth area, growing rapidly, is the challenge of applying techniques originally developed for public sector programs to similar efforts in the private sector. For example, as large corporations increasingly internalize job training and job upgrading efforts, what can they learn about how to do it well and how to assess their success? These questions are asked more and more frequently in the last few years, especially by rapidly growing HMOs, accounting firms, and technology companies that give in-house training to employees."

#### COSSA CONTINUES TO GROW

In addition to the new American Evaluation Association (see above), the Consortium welcomes The Institute of Management Sciences (TIMS) and the Operations Research Society of America (ORSA) as Affiliates. The Consortium now comprises 29 Affiliates and 43 Contributors in addition to the ten founding Member associations.

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FOREIGN SOCIAL SCIENCE FUNDING: A MIXED REPORT

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British government figures for science budgets for 1986-87 show the five Research Councils receiving increases ranging from zero to 6.2 percent. At the head of the line is the Science and Engineering Research Council, which receives its increase for "strategic research of industrial relevance." Coming in last, with no increase, is the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

An indication of the problems with which the ESRC has been grappling is that next year's level funding is regarded as something of a victory. The ESRC was cut in each of the three preceding years, and last October it underwent a grueling inquiry by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils. At that time the ESRC staff considered it quite possible that another deep cut would be forthcoming. The review went well; but, according to the (London) Times Higher Education Supplement of 30 December 1985, the Board intends to test (at some unstated time and by unspecified means) "the quality of UK economic and social research against world standards."

Recently, also, there has been criticism of social science programs in British universities for postgraduate students who take too long to complete their degrees (despite the fact that, generally in Western higher education, time-to-dissertation in the social and behavioral sciences has been greater than that in the natural sciences, though not than that in the humanities). The ESRC has now embargoed research grants to some U.K. universities with particularly questionable records.

In addition, according to the Supplement dated 13 December 1985, British social scientists have recently submitted fewer proposals to the general research support program of the ESRC, which is aimed at sustenance of competitive, field-initiated research, and more proposals to the council's special initiative programs -- i.e., where earmarked funds are available. It is not clear whether this reflects the genuine salience of the Council's special initiatives to scientific interests, or general discouragement on the part of researchers. If it is the latter, the lessening in number of proposals clearly worthy of funding (regardless of the fact that all such proposals cannot actually be funded) may itself harm the reputation of the ESRC's general program and make it more difficult for the Council to argue for more funds in the future.

In Canada, by contrast, officers of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) report that they are currently able to support about 60 percent of their research proposals, an encouraging trend. More impressive still, other Research Councils are proving cooperative in co-funding large-scale projects submitted under the SSHRC's 'strategic plan,' which encourages proposals targetted at problem areas of general importance to Canadian society.

FINN OUTLINES PRIORITIES FOR NEW EDUCATION RESEARCH

Chester Finn, the new Assistant Secretary for the reorganized Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) in the Department of Education, revealed plans and priorities for his new Office at a luncheon on January 13 co-sponsored by the American Educational Research Association and the Institute for Educational Leadership.

Finn said that although research and statistics are a high priority for Secretary of Education William Bennett, there clearly has been an "excessive dependency on the federal government to sponsor education research." He decried the lack of support at the State and local government levels for education research, noting that the opportunities for such support are now substantial since most of the reforms and innovations of recent years have occurred at those levels.

Finn suggested that OERI received "decent" treatment from the Office of Management and Budget for its Fiscal Year 1987 budget request. Claiming that the United States has "very unsatisfactory factual information about American education" Finn said his number one priority would be to "repair the data base." He noted that although the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) did a generally good job, much of the data it has collected is "terribly inadequate" and obsolete. The development of better "qualitative indicators" of educational performance would be a second priority. Finn noted: "There is a need for better educational outcome indicators at all levels."

A third priority would be to better "synthesize what we already know." Finn pointed to a new publication Becoming a Nation of Readers, a synthesis of reading research, as an excellent example of this kind of activity. Although there would be meager sums available for "new individual investigator initiated research" he wanted to spend them to support studies on teacher quality and effectiveness, school leadership, subject matter content instruction, character formation, and assessments of the quality of higher education.

Finn did note that perhaps the real top priority was to get the major components of his Office -- the old National Institute of Education (now the Office of Research in OERI) and the

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NEXT ISSUE OF UPDATE . . .

will be COSSA's annual budget analysis issue: FY 1987 Budgets for Social and Behavioral Science Research. It will be published about February 14th, depending on when the administration's FY 1987 budget appears.

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National Center for Education Statistics (now the Center for Statistics in OERI) -- reauthorized. Noting the problems of utility and credibility of much educational research, Finn suggested this may be "the last best chance" to turn things around. The House Select Education Subcommittee, Rep. Pat Williams (D-MT), Chairman, will conduct hearings on the new education research structure on February 18.

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

COSSA provides this information as a service, and encourages readers to contact the agency rather than COSSA for more information.

Unsolicited Proposal Program  
(Office of Educational Research and Improvement)

The Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) recently issued a solicitation for new projects under the Unsolicited Proposal Program. Proposals are encouraged that propose work that is both significant and potentially useful for the betterment of knowledge and practice about American education. No specific guidelines or priorities have been established for this competition. Eligible activities include both basic and applied research; statistical, laboratory, and clinical studies; training; and planning, development, and demonstration projects,

Eligible applicants include any qualified individual, public or nonprofit private organization, institution, or agency. The Department has no application forms or prescribed format for the unsolicited proposal program.

FY 1986 Funds Available: \$500,000

Funding Mechanisms: There are no restrictions on the size of awards. Grants will be awarded for one year only.

Review Process: The review process will be consistent with regular Department of Education peer review procedures. Applications will be evaluated by panels of three or more qualified reviewers, at least one of which must be a nonfederal member.

Disciplines Funded: Any field of science or education is eligible.

Deadline: July 31, 1986

Contact: Clara Copeland  
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American Statistical Association  
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Linguistic Society of America

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Speech Communication Association  
The Institute of Management Sciences

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