



# COSSA

## WASHINGTON UPDATE

September 27, 2010

Volume 29- Issue 17

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## New Fiscal Year to Begin; CR to Keep Government Going

Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 will begin on October 1, 2010. The House and Senate expect to leave Washington on September 30 for their election recess. Before leaving they need to enact a stop-gap funding bill called a Continuing Resolution (CR) to keep government agencies and programs running. Questions that loom as this is being written: How long will the CR go and what additional spending may get attached?

Congressional leaders are hoping for a clean CR, which means simply funding the agencies at last year's levels, with some exceptions. For example, the Census Bureau was conducting the 2010 count last year and had a \$7.3 billion budget. It is finished with that and its proposed FY 2011 budget is \$1.3 billion.

At the same time, the Obama Administration, and some in Congress, would like to attach legislation to the CR, since it is a "must-pass" bill. There will be resistance to some of these ideas,

but others may get on the train.

### Senate Confirms Science Appointees

In the meantime, the Senate has moved on confirming some scientific appointments. On September 16, it confirmed Carl Wieman as the Associate Director for Science at the White House Office of Science and Technology, and Catherine Woteki, as the new Undersecretary for Research, Education, and Economics at the Department of Agriculture. On September 23, Subra Suresh, nominee to lead the National Science Foundation, received the blessing of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and it is hoped that the full Senate will confirm him before it leaves.

### NIH Scientific Management Review Board Recommends Creation of 'Institute for Addictive Disorders'

At its September 14 - 15 meeting, by a vote of 12-3, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Scientific Management Review Board (SMRB) voted to recommend to Director Francis Collins a structural reorganization. The Board wants to merge the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) and the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) as well as integrate all relevant addiction research portfolios from other NIH institutes. Addressing his advisory council on September 24, National Institute of Mental Health director Tom Insel reported the new institute would be known as the "Institute for Addictive Disorders" and would take many months to happen. He also reported that Collins has created a small committee to consider the recommendation led by newly appointed Principal Deputy Director Lawrence Tabak.

### SUAA Workgroup Divided



NIH Deputy Director Lawrence Tabak and Former NASA Administrator Dan Golden

The SMRB's Substance Use, Abuse and Addiction (SUAA) Working Group "unanimously agreed that the status quo is not ideal for fulfilling the NIH mission and optimizing substance use, abuse, and addiction at the NIH." Given that research has changed the understanding of substances of abuse, the SUAA believes that the "structure of NIH should evolve accordingly." Specifically, the Working Group believes that the "agency should act to bridge or dismantle barriers to collaboration in addiction-related research." SUAA thinks that "research and public health needs will be better served if addiction-related programs across NIH work together more closely." The ideal solution, according to SUAA, will reduce siloing and capitalize on evolving synergies

between and among addiction research programs.

In April 2009, the SUAA was given the charge to recommend to the Board whether "organizational change within NIH could further optimize research into substance use, abuse, and addiction and maximize human health and for patient well-being." According to the SUAA Working Group Chair Bill Roper, UNC-Chapel Hill, the group held 12 teleconferences and three in-person meetings. It also heard from NIAAA and NIDA directors, prevention and treatment specialists, patient advocates, policy specialists, scientists with diverse areas of expertise, leaders of academia, industry representatives, judicial system representatives and the NIAAA and NIDA advisories councils.

Roper reported that the Working Group came up with five criteria for assessing the need for change: 1) immediate crisis, 2) unaddressed scientific opportunities, 3) changes in the scientific landscape, 4) evolving or emergent public health needs, and 5) the need for improvements in

quality and for efficiency of research. It also looked at a range of possibilities from the status quo to establishing a blueprint across the institutes and centers (ICs) to the merger of two ICs, to the establishment of an entirely new institute that goes beyond alcohol and drugs with new research areas.

The Working Group found that there is a need for change but "not an immediate crisis." It also found that there are unaddressed scientific opportunities: preventing adolescent use, abuse and addiction; promoting an understanding of both alcohol and drug abuse as diseases; and understanding drug-drug interactions. It also found that there have been changes in the scientific landscape, including advances in systems-level understanding that warrant a joint approach for many aspects of substance use, abuse and addiction research. Likewise, the Working Group found that there are emergent public health needs: 1) populations suffering from co-morbid conditions associated with substance use, abuse and addiction; and 2) increases in other forms of addiction (e.g., gambling, food, sex, etc.).

According to Roper, throughout their deliberations, members of the SUAA Working Group remained "committed to their assessment that the status quo is no longer acceptable." The group, however, remained divided regarding the form that reorganization should take. Accordingly, it developed two options for reorganizing SUAA research as to maximize collaboration and facilitate progress in addiction research. Those options included: (1) a single institute focused on addiction, in which all NIH addiction research would be relocated, or (2) a trans-NIH addiction program (like the Neuroscience Blueprint) with participation from all institutes and centers that fund addiction-related research.

The SUAA recognized that the diverse interests across NIH, "including substances (e.g., tobacco) and behaviors (e.g., gambling) with the potential for addiction, an emphasis on addiction research will necessitate inclusion of perspectives and portfolios from many institutes and centers" (ICs). The mission of the reorganized entity should reflect the diverse array of substances and behaviors (e.g., gambling, exercise, sex) that have demonstrated the potential for compulsive use and abuse, along with the range of behavioral stages that can lead to the prevention or facilitation of compulsive use (e.g., abstinence, abuse, addiction, etc.), the Working Group emphasized in its report.

### **SUAA Report**

In its report the SUAA stressed that a successful structural reorganization strategy "must be underpinned by effective functional integration within the new structure." The successful structure will need to be characterized by shared goals; enhanced communication and collaboration; engagement and participation from all relevant parties; identification, creation, and sustention of new synergies; and cultural shifts needed to realize these elements.

#### **Option 1: Addiction Institute**

A new institute would integrate all relevant addiction research portfolios from the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), and other NIH institutes. Non-addiction research portfolios currently held by NIDA and NIAAA would be transferred to other ICs as deemed appropriate, and the current NIAAA and NIDA would be dissolved. "Funding for existing research should not be supplanted or reduced, but rather relocated so that addiction-related programs are funded out of the addiction institute to achieve better integration and integration across substance- and behavior-addiction research fields. The Working Group recommended that NIH recruit a new director, reassign current staff and add additional new staff. The creation of a new strategic plan to addiction-related research is also recommended.

The SUAA recommended that the NIH conduct an agency-wide portfolio analysis of intramural and extramural research to determine which addiction-related programs should be included in the new institute. The creation and establishment of a new addiction institute would require Congressional authorization along with accompanying funding. The new institute, according to the Working

Group, should consolidate structural components that are redundant across institutes and create new structural components necessary to support the newly defined mission. The Working Group further recommended the establishment of a transition committee to implement the reorganization.

"Members of the Working Group found the unaddressed scientific opportunities and unmet public health needs particularly compelling." Proponents of a new institute strongly believe that "the formation of a trans-NIH initiative would be insufficient and unsuccessful in advancing science around these unaddressed opportunities and unmet needs. They believe that in addition to providing a "highly visible home for addiction research," comprehensive training programs integrating both multi- and interdisciplinary approaches to addiction research could be developed and supported.

## **Option 2: Trans-NIH Initiative on Addiction**

The second reorganization option suggested by the Working Group is the establishment a trans-NIH collaborative initiative, similar to the NIH Blueprint for Neuroscience Research or the newly created Basic Behavioral and Social Science Opportunity Network (OppNet). Existing institutes would remain, but those with relevant addiction-related research portfolios would be integrated within the new program. Again, the Working Group recommends that the NIH conduct a portfolio analysis of extramural and intramural research to survey the current landscape of addiction research supported by the agency, in addition to identifying all relevant programs and research gaps.

Each institute would be required to include a substantial amount for their addiction portfolio funds. Some of the Working Group members believe that the majority of each institute or center's addiction funds should be devoted to the effort. The Working Group also recommended that the NIH Office of the Director also contribute to the initiative to supplement individual ICs contributions and to demonstrate the NIH Director's commitment to its success.

The SUAA recommended the establishment of a steering committee to lead the new initiative which would include IC directs whose respective institutes have research portfolios that fall under the mission of the initiative. The steering committee, according to the Working Group, should be chaired by four or five IC directors with permanent seats for NIAAA and NIDAA and the other seats rotated among the steering committee members. The initiative would be staffed by NIAAA and NIDA personnel and individuals from other NIH ICs to achieve the new mission and/or address gaps in research. It is further recommended that the initiative have dedicated staff for its day-to-day operations.

The Working Group encouraged the development of a strategic plan and establishment of clear metrics to determine whether the initiative is successful in achieving its mission. The steering committee, SUAA recommended, should have "the authority and willingness to terminate efforts that are not successful."

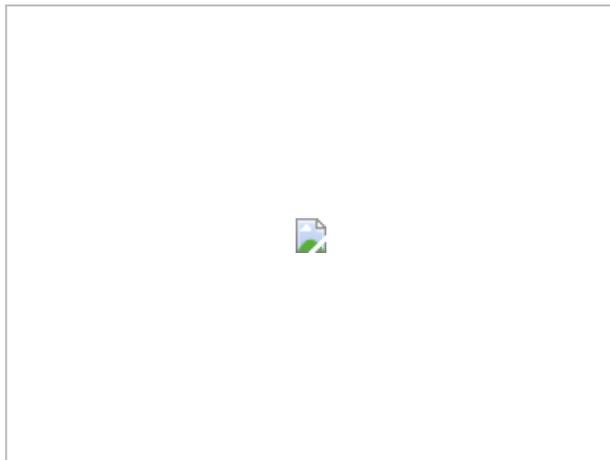
Working Group members in favor of a trans-NIH initiative agreed with the concerns of those who favor an institute, but "remained unconvinced that the creation of a new institute would produce significant change that could not be achieved through a trans-NIH initiative.

## **Next Steps**

Collins now has the option to accept the SMRB's recommendations which would further require the approval of the Secretary of Health and Human Services. The Secretary, who currently has the authority to create institutes, would need to notify the Congress. A public comment period is also required before any structural change is implemented.

The full SUAA report can be read at: [http://smrb.od.nih.gov/Sept2010\\_SUAA\\_Working\\_Group.pdf](http://smrb.od.nih.gov/Sept2010_SUAA_Working_Group.pdf). More information about the Board can be found at: <http://smrb.od.nih.gov/index.asp>. The next

## House Panel Examines SciSIP



Lane, Sarewitz, Murray and Teich.

In April 2005 at the AAAS Science and Technology Policy Forum and in two subsequent appearances at COSSA Annual Meetings, John Marburger, then President Bush's Science Adviser, called for the establishment of a "science of science policy." (The word innovation was added later to produce the acronym SciSIP). The objective, according to Marburger and others, was to develop scientific theories, analytical tools, and rigorous datasets that would assist policy makers in science policy decisions.

The National Science Foundation's (NSF) Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) directorate took up Marburger's challenge and established a cross-Foundation, interdisciplinary program to support research and metric production. Working with the Department of Energy and through the SBE Subcommittee of the National Science and Technology Council, they conducted an assessment of SciSIP, which led in 2008 to a research roadmap.

On September 23, the House Science and Technology Committee's Subcommittee on Research and Education, chaired by Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-IL), held a hearing to examine "the current state of SciSIP research and the role of the federal government in fostering the emerging interdisciplinary field."

Testifying before the Subcommittee, Daniel Sarewitz, Co-Director of the Consortium for Science, Policy, and Outcomes at Arizona State University, indicated that for over sixty years, "the core of science policy has been the belief that more money for R&D translates into more benefits for the nation. Science policy has, above all else, been science budget policy."

In addition, he related, three other powerful beliefs have dominated science policy decision making: 1) research becomes valuable for society as part of a linear progression from basic discovery to application, which is either technological innovation or information to inform decision making; 2) there is a clear distinction between research for creating new knowledge and research for application to solving problems; and 3) scientific excellence, as defined by scientists themselves through the peer review process, is the best way to measure the value of science for society. This, Sarewitz concluded, has led to a simple input - how much is being spent on science - and simple output - how much scientific knowledge is produced - approach to understanding S&T policy.

To change this, Julia Lane, head of the SciSIP program at NSF, told the Subcommittee that the program has three major aims: "advancing evidence-based science and innovation policy decision making; developing and building a scientific community to study science and innovation policy; and developing new and improved databases."

She also informed the panel about the STAR METRICS program (Science and Technology in America's Reinvestment - Measuring the Effects of Research on Innovation, Competitiveness and Science) a multi-agency effort led by NSF, the National Institute of Health and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. The goal is to develop a system that can track the impact of federal science investments. A natural experiment occurred with the large amount of science funding under the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA). This has led to the collection of longitudinal employment data resulting from ARRA research expenditures.

In addition, the STAR METRICS program has sponsored workshops to examine issues surrounding performance management of federal research and development portfolios, and to engage the federal community with the academic community to advance the "Science of Science Measurement." A website <http://scienceofsciencepolicy.net> has been established for information on best practices.

Al Teich, Director of Science and Policy Programs at AAAS, informed the Subcommittee of his organization's role in developing SciSIP. NSF has provided support to help AAAS facilitate, what Teich called, "a community of practice," among the many researchers engaged in the study of science and innovation policy and its conscious effort to build bridges between this community and the practitioners in the federal government.

AAAS, Teich noted, organized a workshop of the grantees from SciSIP's first two NSF competitions and in November 2010 will sponsor another workshop connecting the researchers with potential users of their results in the policy making community. This second workshop should lead to overcoming a significant problem, according to Teich, the ability of SciSIP researchers to communicate their results to policymakers.

Teich also promoted increased education and training in SciSIP, noting that about 25 universities offer graduate education in science, engineering, and public policy. Although AAAS produces a guide to these programs, Teich indicated that more outreach is necessary since these programs exist within many different academic departments of a university.

Fiona Murray, Associate Director of the MIT Entrepreneurship Center, who is a chemist by training and a SciSIP grant recipient, testified about her own work regarding the impact of intellectual property rights on research tools, scientific productivity and diversity. Her work focused on the discovery, patenting and then exclusive licensing of mouse genetic technology. Murray noted that SciSIP scholars have combined methodological advances in program evaluation -particularly a natural experiments approach-with novel datasets, including publications, patents and citations.

Enhancing SciSIP and moving beyond the input-output model, which according to Sarewitz is increasingly necessary in an era of constrained resources, leads him to recommend a number of activities. These include: 1) supporting research that will allow fundamental understanding about the drivers and dynamics of transitions in complex socio-technical systems; 2) assessing existing tools and developing and testing new tools that would bring future-vision techniques to bear on science and innovation policy; 3) fostering programs that integrate the natural sciences and engineering, and the social sciences; 4) developing case studies to identify and characterize key attributes of S&T institutions and programs that link S&T activities with desired social outcomes; and 5) supporting training grants to build more quickly capacity in SciSIP.

For Chairman Lipinski and Ranking Republican Rep. Vern Ehlers (R-MI) the testimony indicated a promising beginning to determining the methods, training, and interagency cooperation necessary to keep SciSIP moving forward. Ehlers, who will retire at the end of this Congress, also called for more scientists to move into decision making positions, particularly in Congress. He also indicated that it was time to update *Unlocking the Future*, a study of the nation's science policy, he produced back in 1996.

For the complete testimony of the witnesses, please go to: [http://science.house.gov/publications/hearings\\_markups\\_details.aspx?NewsID=2911](http://science.house.gov/publications/hearings_markups_details.aspx?NewsID=2911).

## Senate Budget Committee Hears Economists' Assessments of Federal Response to Financial Crisis

On September 22, the Senate Committee on the Budget, chaired by Sen. Kent Conrad (D-ND), heard sharply conflicting assessments about the federal policy response to the financial crisis from Alan

Blinder, Princeton University and former Vice Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, Mark Zandi, Chief Economist for Moody's Analytics, and John Taylor, Stanford University and Hoover Institution.

Blinder and Zandi published a paper "How the Great Recession Was Brought to an End" in July, 2010 that is attracting a great deal of attention. In his introductory Chairman Conrad noted that according to Blinder and Zandi's estimates the federal policy response pulled the economy back from the brink of another Great Depression. In the absence of the extraordinary policy measures taken in 2008 and 2009, there would have been 8 1/2 million fewer jobs at the end of the second quarter of 2010. Unemployment would have been 16.2 percent instead of 9.7 percent. However, Conrad also noted that current record levels of government deficits are unsustainable and a credible long-term financial plan is needed to reassure financial markets.

Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH), the Ranking Minority Member of the Budget Committee, agreed about the importance of adopting a credible long-term plan for reducing government deficits, but disagreed about the short-term benefits of the stimulus package. He said the stimulus package was misdirected. Instead of focusing on capital formation, it provided "walking around" money for appropriators to support programs that would otherwise not have been supported. Uncertainty about increased health care costs, the creation of a new financial regulatory over-structure and possible increases in taxes were also depressing the economy, according to Gregg.

Both Conrad and Gregg are members of the bipartisan National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, which is supposed to make its recommendations to the President on December 1.

Asked for a brief progress report they said deliberations had a seriousness of purpose but had not gotten to the option stage yet.

According to Blinder, the purpose of the Blinder/Zandi study was to bring quantitative estimates to a debate over policy that "seemed long on rhetoric, short on analytics, and discordant with the facts." Blinder in his testimony discussed criticisms of the study's methodology. He and Zandi used the Moody's Analytics model, a large-scale econometric model of the U.S. economy, to estimate the effects of a lengthy list of fiscal and financial policies. This model is a statistical representation of the economy based on past history. This model has been criticized because it doesn't represent the economy's true structure, that policy interventions might change it and that it doesn't handle expectations very well. The work has also been criticized as "old-fashioned" by some academics who reject its Keynesian approach.

### **Jobs Deficit More Important than Federal Deficit**

Blinder suggested old ideas are not necessarily bad ideas. Both Adam Smith's Invisible Hand and the Declaration of Independence date from 1776, he reminded the panel. Blinder agreed with thoughtful critics of his work, such as John Taylor, that other models might give different estimates and welcomed alternative efforts to estimate the effects of federal policies. Blinder said that monetary and fiscal policies to spur immediate growth were necessary because the economy was sputtering and actual growth will not be high enough to reduce current high unemployment rates. He agreed that budget deficits are on a long-run path that will eventually require more revenue and less spending, but in the short-run the jobs deficit is more urgent than the budget deficit. He favored temporary tax cuts for new jobs and temporary public employment on relatively low-wage workers as a more cost-effective way of creating new jobs than the stimulus package.

Mark Zandi testified that the overall federal policy response was very successful in stabilizing the financial system and averting a 1930s Great Depression. Without extraordinary government action the economy would still be contracting, not hitting bottom until 2011. Real GDP would have fallen 12 percent peak to trough, compared with an actual decline of 4 percent, and 16.6 million jobs would have been lost, about twice as many as actually were. The policy response was very expensive, but the cost of not responding would have been significantly more expensive, Zandi argued. He defended the Moody's Analytics model as a mainstream econometric model used for

twenty years by a large number of non-financial corporations, financial institutions, regulators and government agencies for forecasting, scenario analysis, and quantifying the impact of policies on the economy.

According to Zandi the timing of various aspects of the response and the subsequent performance of the financial system and the economy suggest that these policies were very successful. For example, the credit spreads, i.e., the spread between the three-month interbank lending rate and three-month Treasury bills (the TED spread); the spread between fixed mortgage rates and 10-year Treasury bonds; and the spread between below-investment grade corporate bonds and Treasury bonds, rose to record

levels during the crisis, but fell sharply with the adoption of extraordinary financial policies. The TED spread rose from an already high level of 100 basis points to over 400 basis points when Congress failed to pass the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act - the \$700 billion Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) legislation - and then declined shortly after Congress reversed itself and passed TARP a few days later. The TED spread hit an all-time high and then declined sharply on October 13, 2008, the day the FDIC federally guaranteed any debt issued by qualifying financial institutions. The timing of further declines in the TED spread matched the adoption of the zero interest rate policy by the Federal Reserve and the bank stress tests.

### **Delay Tax Hikes Until 2012?**

The National Bureau of Economic Research found that the Great Recession ended on June 2009, Zandi noted, the month the fiscal stimulus reached its maximum. In addition, Zandi indicated that the free-fall in production and jobs in the US automobile industry both bottomed out August 2009, the date the cash-for-clunkers program was in full swing. Given the fragility of the economic recovery, Zandi would not increase any taxes now. He recommended delaying any tax hikes in 2011 and then phasing-in higher rates on upper income households beginning in 2012. He recommended temporarily reducing the payroll taxes of businesses for new hires and more aggressive lending by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

Taylor criticized the Blinder/Zandi study because it runs the federal stimulus through one model but does not compare these results with what actually happened or discuss the results from other more modern models. For example, the evidence from models used by an International Monetary Fund study finds government spending impacts that are a fifth of those found in the Zandi/Blinder study. In general, Taylor argued, old Keynesian models like Moody Analytics show large effects for government spending and more modern models that take account of expectations of the future show much smaller effects.

He asserted that we need to go beyond the models and examine the actual data, which he has been doing as part of a research project at Stanford over the last three years. This project provides a comprehensive empirical evaluation of policy based on empirical studies of the individual components of the stimulus package and based on economic theory. His bottom line is that the federal policy response did not stimulate the economy much if at all and left it burdened with debt and with concerns about future tax increases. Programs like cash-for-clunkers and subsidies for first-time home buyers moved purchases forward by a few months, but did not increase economic growth on a more permanent basis.

The stimulus package did increase people's disposable income by sending checks, temporarily increasing tax credits and reducing withholding, but aggregate personal consumption expenditures did not increase by much if at all. Taylor emphasized that this is what well-known economic principles,

i.e., the permanent income theory and the life cycle theory of consumption, would predict from temporary payments. Neither, he indicated, did the government purchases part of the stimulus package stimulate economic growth. Changes in government purchases did not correlate with the changes in economic growth from recession to recovery. One reason for this is the part of the \$862 billion package devoted to federal infrastructure projects is quite small - \$2.4 billion on infrastructure spending or only three tenths of a percent of the total. Federal grants to the states

were a large part of the stimulus package, but both government infrastructure and government consumption purchases at the state and local level have declined since the economic crisis began.

Taylor evaluated monetary policy in response to the crisis during three periods 1) pre-crisis August 2007 to the panic in late September 2008; 2) the period of the panic from late September through October 2009, and 3) the post-panic period. According to Taylor the confusion about ad-hoc bailouts and about TARP led to the severe panic. The FDIC bank debt guarantees and the clarification that the TARP would be used for equity injections were the major reasons for the halt in the panic. The large scale asset purchase programs during the post-panic period have had mixed results. For example the Fed's \$1.25 trillion mortgage backed securities purchase program had a rather small and uncertain effect on mortgage rates once one controls for prepayment risk and default risk and it could, Taylor suggested, restraining the recovery.

### **Keep Existing Income Tax Rates Permanently?**

Looking forward Taylor argued that existing income tax rates should be made permanent, the worker's tax credit proposed by President Obama should be permanent and not temporary, and the government should adopt a credible plan to balance budget.

Conrad said this was exactly the type of serious debate on economic policy the country needed and asked Blinder, Zandi, and Taylor to comment on the testimony. Blinder questioned the budgetary and political feasibility of permanent cuts in income taxes. He said that in some cases temporary policies such as temporary liberalization of depreciation have stronger effects by pulling spending forward. Zandi agreed with Taylor on the need for consistent and clear policies. The financial crisis, he remarked, was caused in part by treating each financial institution that requested a bailout differently. But how can you go through a financial crisis like this and not have regulatory reform?

Taylor said temporary policies won't get the economy growing again because they won't provide the necessary incentives for work and investment. He noted the massive increase in government purchases as a share of GDP from 18.2 percent in 2000 to 24 percent in 2009 and the Congressional Budget Office projects the government's share of output will rise to 30 percent to 40 percent so there is a lot of room for spending cutbacks.

Gregg criticized the Obama Administration for not coupling the short-term policies to address the financial crisis with long-term plans. Blinder said he was part of the Clinton economic team at the beginning of that administration and it would have been a tall order for the Obama economics team in its first six weeks in office to both address the short-term financial crisis and come up with a credible long-term plan to balance budgets.

Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) asked what policies should the nation adopt to help manufacturing. Blinder said manufacturing is the most cyclical component of GDP and is already rebounding from the Great Recession. He also pointed out that there has been a significant decline in the role of manufacturing over the last fifty years in the United States and in every other developed country, which he expects will continue. He recommended a carbon tax that starts at zero and rises on a predictable schedule as a stimulus to the development of energy saving techniques by US manufacturing.

Zandi disagreed with Blinder about the future prospects for US manufacturing. The manufacturing businesses that have survived the Great Depression have been tested and provide a good solid basis for growth, Zandi noted. He recommended accelerated depreciation, pressure on the Chinese to devalue their currency, and private/public sector partnerships to rebuild US infrastructure.

Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-AL) suggested the departure of most of the Obama Administration economic team leaves us with more uncertainty. He asked Taylor if he agreed with the testimony of Gary Becker and Kevin Murphy in February 2009 that the net stimulus from increased government spending will be modest. Taylor agreed with Becker and Murphy and said that budget restraint

needs to start now if any long-term plan for reducing budget deficits is to have credibility.

## NBER Tax Policy Seminar Hears Summers and Feldstein

On September 23, the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) celebrated, complete with birthday cake, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its conference on Tax Policy and the Economy. Begun at the suggestion of former NBER President Martin Feldstein, and nurtured by current President James Poterba for many years, the conference brings together economists and policy makers to discuss approaches to fiscal policy based on relevant research. The conference is now led by Jeffrey Brown of the University of Illinois.

After a morning of paper presentations, the luncheon speaker is usually a current economic policy maker. This year's choice, Lawrence Summers, was the editor of the first conference report 25 years ago. He was also Feldstein's student and Poterba's mentor. Fresh from his announcement that he is leaving as head of President Obama's National Economic Council to return to Harvard, Summers told the conference attendees that he is glad to return to the research community since, "today's policy debates are the direct descendants of the academic work of the previous generation." What were once the "frontiers of research" are now the staples of economic debates for both Democrats and Republicans, he contended.

He discussed the current economic crisis and the Obama Administration's policies for responding to it. He indicated that the essential feature of the current crisis is that monetary policy, which has been used to respond to recessions in the past, is constrained by zero-based nominal interest rates. The constraints were quite serious and that is why major fiscal legislation was the administration's first priority, Summers remarked. "The restoration of growth was the necessary condition of any acceptable outcome," he noted.

Summers wanted to make it clear that the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) did not simply include increased spending (about 60 percent), but tax reductions as well (about 40 percent). This two-pronged approach, Summers admitted, was a policy mix constrained by political considerations and full of uncertainty of which the Administration was well aware. On the other hand, Summers noted that it was attacked from both ideological sides, suggesting to him it was the right thing to do. The ARRA funds went to areas where return on investment would accelerate. The tax cuts went to those with lower to middle incomes who would have a marginal propensity to consume, he asserted. He argued that the "downward forces that threatened depression have been contained" by these policies. He noted the NBER announcement that the recession had formally ended in June 2009.

Summers also admitted that we have a long way to go and the country still faces serious economic problems. He pointed out that walking up from the bottom of the Grand Canyon is harder than walking down. The Administration's policy prescriptions going forward, he indicated, include: no extension of the Bush high income tax cuts, only the middle income tax cut; incentives for small business investment; permanency for the research and development tax credit; temporary expansion of credits for expansion of equipment investing, and a full scale reconsideration of the complexity of the tax system.

Earlier in the conference, Feldstein delivered his concerns about the current economy which focused on the exploding national debt. His prescriptions: "stop digging" a deeper debt hole by revising budget spending projections downward from 2013-2020; keep all the Bush tax cuts at least temporarily for the next two years and then let them all expire; fix the long term problems with Social Security and Medicare by allowing supplemental investment-based individual accounts; and reduce tax expenditures, the value of which he pointed out now exceeds non-defense discretionary spending.

Ray Fair of Yale University ran a series of scenarios on his macromodel of the economy to

determine the consequences of large future federal government deficits. He concluded that the U.S. cannot inflate its way out of the debt problem as defined as a ratio of GDP. He also noted that increases in personal income taxes and decreases in government transfer payments would stabilize the debt/GDP ratio, but would create economic growth problems.

## Gathering Storm Redux: Things Are Worse

In 2005, the National Academies produced a report, *Rising Above the Gathering Storm*, that decried the coming disaster facing the United States' competitive position in the world because of its lack of commitment to science and engineering research, and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. The report was produced by a committee chaired by former Lockheed Martin CEO Norman Augustine.

Many of its recommendations, including a commitment to doubling funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF) and new STEM education programs became part of the America COMPETES bill enacted by Congress in 2007. In addition, the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) in 2009 committed billions of federal funds to enhance research and education in this country.

Yet, the Committee that produced *Gathering Storm*, at a press conference on September 23, announced that "although significant progress has been made," since 2005, "our nation's outlook has worsened." They suggest the gathering storm has now reached Category 5.

They point to the economic turmoil of the past few years with its fiscal constraints making it more difficult to carry out the multi-year effort necessary to tame the storm. They also argue that despite some important education reforms in the nation's school systems, the overall picture suggests "little sign of improvement, particularly in mathematics and science." Most significantly, other nations have not stood still and they have been "markedly progressing, thereby affecting America's relative ability to compete effectively for new factories, research laboratories, administrative centers and jobs."

Citing Nobel Prize winning economist Robert Solow's work on the importance of knowledge and technology to economic growth, the Committee again concludes that "a primary driver of the future economy and concomitant creation of jobs will be *innovation* (their emphasis), largely derived from advances in science and engineering." They conclude by reiterating that strengthening the public school system and investing in basic scientific research are still the keys to keeping Americans "among those people who do prosper."

## PCAST Issues STEM Education Report: Social Sciences Not Part of K-12 STEM

On September 15, the President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology (PCAST) released its long awaited report on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Education. Entitled *Prepare and Inspire: K-12 Education in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) For America's Future*, the report was shepherded through PCAST by co-chair Eric Lander, head of the Broad Institute and a major geneticist, and S. James Gates, Jr., John S. Toll Professor of Physics at the University of Maryland, College Park.

In their transmission letter to the President, PCAST indicates its goals and recommendations: "We envision a two-pronged strategy for transforming K-12 education. We must *prepare* students so they have a strong foundation in STEM subjects and are able to use this knowledge in their personal and professional lives. And we must *inspire* students so that all are motivated to study STEM subjects in school and many are excited about the prospect of having careers in STEM fields. But

this report goes much further than that. It includes specific and practical recommendations that your Administration can take that would help bring this two-pronged strategy to fruition. These recommendations fall under five overarching priorities: (1) improve Federal coordination and leadership on STEM education; (2) support the state-led movement to ensure that the Nation adopts a common baseline for what students learn in STEM; (3) cultivate, recruit, and reward STEM teachers that prepare and inspire students; (4) create STEM-related experiences that excite and interest students of all backgrounds; and (5) support states and school districts in their efforts to transform schools into vibrant STEM learning environments."

According to PCAST, "STEM education, as used in this report, includes the subjects of mathematics, biology, chemistry, and physics, which have traditionally formed the core requirements of many state curricula at the K-12 level. In addition, the report includes other critical subjects, such as computer science, engineering, environmental science and geology, with whose fundamental concepts K-12 students should be familiar. The report does not include the social and behavioral sciences, such as economics, anthropology, and sociology; while appropriately considered STEM fields at the undergraduate and graduate levels, they involve very different issues at the K-12 level."

This differs from the definition included in the report of the House Science and Technology Committee in the reauthorization of the America COMPETES Act in its section regarding STEM at the National Science Foundation. That report noted: "For the purposes of Title II of this Act, the term `STEM' should be understood to be an umbrella term that covers every academic discipline and research area supported across the entire Foundation, including discipline based education research. Where the term `STEM' is used elsewhere in this Act, it is likewise meant to cover all disciplines supported by the relevant agency, or in the case of the PCAST and NSTC committees established in Title III, STEM should be understood to encompass the entire breadth of Federally supported research areas." The PCAST distinction is never fully explained in its report.

Later, the PCAST report notes: "The dynamic nature of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics - where new advances are constantly expanding our knowledge of the physical, biological, and social world - has enormous implications for STEM education." However, there is no indication that helping students understand changes in the social world by learning social and behavioral science is something that is part of STEM education.

The report calls for the federal government to create a mission-driven, advanced research projects agency for education (ARPA-ED) housed either in the Department of Education, in the National Science Foundation, or as a joint entity. "ARPA-ED should propel and support (i) the development of innovative technologies and technology platforms for learning, teaching, and assessment across all subjects and ages and (ii) the development of effective, integrated, whole-course materials for STEM education." Once again technology will solve a national problem.

## National Science Board Expresses Concern about Gifted and Talented

In another part of the STEM forest, the National Science Board (NSB) has made its voice heard. It has issued a report, *Preparing the Next Generation of STEM Innovators*, in which it expresses concern about "America's best and brightest young men and women" who "go unrecognized and underdeveloped, and thus, fail to reach their full potential." According to the NSB, "this represents a loss for both the individual *and* society." Therefore, the Nation needs "STEM innovators"-those individuals who have developed the expertise to become leading STEM professionals and perhaps the creators of significant breakthroughs or advances in scientific and technological understanding and their education and training must receive federal support."

The NSB makes three "keystone recommendations." The nation needs to provide opportunities for

excellence by: 1) encouraging states and/or local education agencies to adopt consistent and appropriate policies on differentiated instruction, curriculum acceleration, and enrichment, and to recognize the achievement levels of students moving or transitioning to different schools; 2) increasing access to and quality of college-level, dual enrollment, and other accelerated coursework, as well as high-quality enrichment programs; 3) supporting rigorous, research-based STEM preparation for teachers, particularly general education teachers, who have the most contact with potential STEM innovators at young ages; 4) providing federal support to formal and informal programs that have a proven record of accomplishment in stimulating potential STEM innovators; 5) leveraging NSF's *Broader Impacts Criterion* to encourage large-scale, sustained partnerships among many formal and informal educational institutions; 6) creating NSF programs that offer portable, merit-based scholarships for talented middle and high school students to participate in challenging enrichment activities; 7) increasing the technological capabilities and network infrastructure in rural and low-income areas, and expanding cyber-learning opportunities; and 8) establishing a national database of formal and informal education opportunities for highly talented students, and publicizing and promoting such opportunities nationally to parents, education professionals, and content and resource providers.

The nation must also cast a wide net to identify *all* types of talents and to nurture potential in *all* demographics of students. The Board suggests encouraging pediatricians and early childhood educators, especially *Head Start* teachers, to become knowledgeable about early signs of talent and the need for its nurturance.

In order for this to work, the report claims, the nation needs to "foster a supportive ecosystem that nurtures and celebrates excellence and innovative thinking. Parents/guardians, education professionals, peers, and students themselves must work together to create a culture that expects excellence, encourages creativity, and rewards the successes of all students regardless of their race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, or geographical locale."

Finally, the report recommends that NSF, in partnership with the Institute of Education Sciences, hold a high-level conference to bring together researchers in the learning sciences, other scientists, education school administrators, current teachers and principals, and teacher professional associations to discuss teacher preparation and pedagogical best practices aimed at fostering innovative thinking in children and in young adults.

## NAS Research Universities Panel Holds First Meeting

When the National Academies' released *Rising Above the Gathering Storm* in 2005, the report provided Congress with a blueprint for improving research and science education in the United States. Congress adopted most of the recommendations in the America COMPETES legislation enacted in 2007. Although the reauthorization of COMPETES remains stymied and the authors of *Gathering Storm* suggest that things have not significantly changed (see other story), all agree that America's major research universities must remain strong to overcome the storm.

In 2009, Congress prodded by the major higher education associations, asked the National Academies' to examine the future of America's research universities. Under its Board of Higher Education and the Workforce, the Academies appointed an Ad-Hoc Committee, chaired by former Dupont CEO and current Bank of America Board Chairman Charles Holliday, to produce a consensus report, scheduled for release in May 2011. Holliday noted the "eclectic nature of the group" and the importance of having business people on the panel. Other members of the Committee include college presidents Teresa Sullivan of Virginia, John Hennessey of Stanford, Francis Cigarroa of the University of Texas System, and Heather Monroe-Blum of McGill. Former Presidents James Duderstadt of Michigan and Walter Massey of Morehouse, who were also National Science Board Chairman and National Science Foundation director in the late 1980s and early 1990s, are also on the Committee. There are other representatives from the private sector, as well as economists Laura Tyson of the University of California, Berkeley, and Ronald Ehrenberg of Cornell.

On September 21 and 22, the panel held its first open meeting to begin its consideration of the following question in its charge: "What are the top ten actions that Congress, the federal government, state governments, research universities, and others could take to assure the ability of the American research university to maintain the excellence in research and doctoral education needed to help the United States compete, prosper, and achieve national goals for health, energy, the environment, and security in the global community of the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

Charles Vest, former President of MIT and now head of the National Academy of Engineering, told panel members that they should focus on specific steps. Like *Gathering Storm*, they should provide a blueprint for Congress to enact, for state governments to implement, and for the private sector to engage with. He noted the changing world and the oft-cited examples of China and India, and their increasing interest in research and higher education, as well as the discouraging results of American students' achievement. Yet, the American university system is still top rate, the only game in town for fundamental research, and produces the people who are going to move the country forward in the knowledge age, Vest concluded.

### **AAU and APLU Leaders Make Their Case**

Peter McPherson, President of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), and Robert Berdahl, President of the Association of American Universities (AAU), both testified before the panel suggesting according to McPherson, that "the funding of research universities is at a critical juncture given their significant impact. It demands a national solution."

Citing the decline in state appropriations to state colleges and universities and the lagging salaries of public universities' faculty, McPherson recommended: 1) keeping state funding at viable levels; 2) rebalancing the Federal-University partnership; and 3) seeking supplemental federal funding for items the states are unlikely to sufficiently fund. In addition, public universities, McPherson asserted, should also play a role by "recommitting to our public purpose," including increasing retention and graduation rates, reducing educational costs, improving effectiveness, providing non-traditional routes for earning degrees, and ensuring public accountability.

From McPherson's perspective, rebalancing the partnership means increasing the ability of universities "to recover a greater portion of the cost of doing research." The supplemental funding, according to McPherson, could include a large doctoral trainee program resembling the 1958 National Defense Education Act, and a U.S. Chairs Program that would provide federally funded endowed chairs at universities across the country.

For Berdahl the current challenges to universities stem from the recent disastrous economic situation, the growing global competition in research and the growing attraction of foreign universities to international students, the changing demographics of the U.S. college population, the increases in tuition leading to growing indebtedness of graduates, and the difficulty in persuading decision makers of the importance of graduate education across all disciplines.

He recommended: 1) stop fluctuations in research spending - "set national goals and fund research to reach them;" 2) recognize the federal role in graduate education; 3) support young faculty - more debt forgiveness programs to keep them in higher education; 4) federal support for facilities; 5) review regulatory requirements; 6) more incentives for private donors to provide support; 7) emancipate flagship state universities from state control - as state financial support dwindles there is no reason to maintain strong state regulatory oversight; 8) avoid mission creep in state institutions - not all can be major research universities; 9) state boundaries should not preclude regional inter-institutional collaborations; and 10) universities have to address the cost situation.

The Committee will have a colloquium to further discuss these issues on November 22 and meet again on November 23 and 24. For more information go to:

<http://sites.nationalacademies.org/PGA/bhew/researchuniversities/index.htm>.

## GAO Releases Report on NIH Grant Process for Recovery Act Funding

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently released its August 6, 2010 response, *National Institutes of Health: Awarding Process, Awarding Criteria, and Characteristics of Extramural Grants Made with Recovery Act Funding (GAO-10-848)*, to Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY), the Republican Leader, and Rep. Joe Barton (R-TX), Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce, regarding the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) distribution of the \$10.4 billion in funding provided to the agency via the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). GAO was asked "to report on how NIH awarded Recovery Act funds for scientific research and the information NIH made available about the award of these funds."

The report describes the process (both peer review and administrative review) and criteria used by the agency and the characteristics of ARRA extramural grants and the information made publically available about the grants. GAO reported that NIH "used its standard review processes - peer review," for three categories of extramural applications 1) new grant applications from ARRA funding announcements; 2) existing grant applications that had not previously received NIH funding; and 3) administrative supplements and competitive revisions to current active grants.

As part of its investigation, GAO reviewed 15 randomly-selected extramural grants awarded through ARRA from three institutes, the National Cancer Institute, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. It found that the ARRA grant awards varied across the three grant categories and other characteristics. GAO also found that NIH made a variety of information about the grants publicly available. According to NIH data, as of April 2010, approximately \$7 billion of the \$8.6 billion in ARRA scientific research and comparative effectiveness research funds had been awarded for 14,152 extramural grants. In addition, NIH awarded nearly \$2.7 billion to make extramural grants for existing grant applications that had not previously received funding, slightly over \$2.4 billion for new grants applications and approximately \$1.9 billion for administrative supplements and competitive revisions. NIH expects to award the remaining ARRA scientific research funding by the end of the FY 2010 on September 30, 2010.

GAO found that six states accounted for 50 percent of the awards: California, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina and Pennsylvania. Six cities accounted for more than 25 percent of the awards: Baltimore, Boston, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia and Seattle. Five universities received more than 10 percent of the awards: Duke University, Johns Hopkins University, the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, University of Pennsylvania, and University of Washington.

Information on ARRA grants is available on NIH Recovery Act-specific Web pages, including NIH's Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tools (RePORT) system. RePORT contains information on both ARRA and non-ARRA extramural grants. NIH also developed ARRA-specific pages on their Web sites to disseminate information about ARRA grants.

The report can be downloaded from GAO's website: <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-10-848>.

## NIH Seeks Comments on Its Draft Strategic Plan for Obesity Research

"The pace of discovery in diverse areas of obesity research is rapid and accelerating. Advances in areas ranging from basic biomedical and behavioral sciences through clinical and community studies have opened the door to new opportunities for both better targeted and more comprehensive approaches to obesity prevention and treatment," according to the draft Strategic Plan for National Institutes of Health (NIH) Obesity Research.

The NIH established the Obesity Research Task Force in 2003. The previous Strategic Plan for NIH

Obesity Research was developed in 2004 and served as guide for coordinating existing obesity research. While continuing to serve as a guide for NIH-supported research, the Task Force emphasizes that the 2010 Plan is "not meant to be all-inclusive or limiting, but to highlight areas of challenge and emerging opportunity."

The draft plan notes that "Research findings are yielding new and important insights about social and behavioral factors that influence diet, physical activity, and sedentary behavior. Research regarding social networks, decision making, behavioral economics, sensory input, and sleep patterns as they relate to weight may yield novel targets for intervention." The plan also underscores that the advances in "statistical and computational methodologies are emerging to help capture and illuminate the dynamic complexity of obesity and test the effects of intervention strategies on individual and societal outcomes."

Accordingly, the NIH is seeking comments on its draft Strategic Plan for NIH Obesity Research which will serve as a guide for supporting obesity research. The draft Plan acknowledges the "complex interaction between biology, behavior, and the environment in contributing to the rise of obesity [and that] formidable barriers stand in the way of simple solutions for altering energy balance toward a healthy body weight."

The draft Strategic Plan places special emphasis on three areas: 1) **Translational Research** - "A key element in meeting the public health challenges of obesity;" 2) **Training** - "strengthening and diversifying the pool of researchers who are dedicated to understanding and ameliorating obesity and its many adverse outcomes is a priority for NIH;" and 3) **Transdisciplinary Research** - "Meeting the obesity research challenges of the future will require transdisciplinary research teams that include the talents of many, such as basic and molecular scientists; geneticists; behavioral, clinical, environmental, and policy scientists; community leaders; industry partners; transportation scientists; and urban design experts."

Developed by the NIH Obesity Research Task Force with input from extramural researchers and professional and other health-related organizations, the draft Plan has been posted on the web to invite further scientific and public comment. **The deadline for commenting the draft Strategic Plan is October 14, 2010.**

To view the Plan:

[http://obesityresearch.nih.gov/About/DRAFT\\_StrategicPlan\\_NIH\\_Obesity\\_Research\\_2010.pdf](http://obesityresearch.nih.gov/About/DRAFT_StrategicPlan_NIH_Obesity_Research_2010.pdf).

Comments should be sent to [NIHObesityStratPlan@mail.nih.gov](mailto:NIHObesityStratPlan@mail.nih.gov).

## OppNet Short-term Interdisciplinary Research Education Program for New Investigators

The National Institute of Nursing Research as part of the NIH Basic Behavioral and Social Science Opportunity Network (OppNet) seeks short-term Research Education Project ([RFA-NR-11-002](#)) applications focused on providing creative and innovative education research experiences for new scientists in basic behavioral and social science research (b-BSSR). The goal of this funding opportunity announcement (FOA) is to support the growth of a cohort of scientists with research expertise in b-BSSR to further the understanding of fundamental mechanisms and patterns of behavioral and social functioning relevant to the health and well-being of individuals and populations. These goals include: 1) encouraging new investigators to engage in the field of basic behavioral and social science while also facilitating their long-term career development as principal investigators within the field; and 2) supporting research on how to best transfer b-BSSR knowledge into biomedical and/or other fields of research (e.g., physical sciences, engineering, and mathematics).

The FOA will support only educational activities focused on basic behavioral and social sciences research, but may not be used for support of non-research clinical training. However, it will promote proposals that will provide basic behavioral and social science research education to

scientists in clinical training or in a clinical research track within a clinical training program or from biomedical or other fields of research (including but not limited to physical sciences, engineering, and mathematics). Formats for the research education programs may vary to include single or multiple short courses, seminars, workshops, or structured short-term research experiences; or curriculum development, design, implementation and evaluation.

The ultimate goal of the FOA is to increase the number of scientists in b-BSSR by developing effective cross-disciplinary research education programs. According to the FOA, a recent inquiry of the health care research community indicated that improvement of the quality of training in b-BSSR is strongly needed. While basic behavioral and social science research has been supported by NIH for a number of years, the advancement of basic biomedical technologies, computational resources, and other research promotes emergent opportunities to foster research that further examines the intersection of b-BSSR with biomedical and other fields of research (e.g., physical sciences, engineering, and mathematics). Thus, the FOA provides an opportunity to build and strengthen capacity in new and early-stage investigators for b-BSSR, accelerating the availability of a competent biomedical research workforce.

Relevant b-BSSR research areas include:

- **Health Behavior** - New strategies to improve and sustain behavior change such as Basic behavioral processes such as habit formation, the development of automatic associations including cognitive automaticity, and non-goal directed motivational processes. These may include social and contextual factors that could be integrated with the cognitive neurosciences to improve understanding of how behaviors are maintained over time.
- **Social Stratification** - And social gradients or processes for sorting components of society into a dynamic system of layers or classes such as power, prestige, and wealth, and the intergenerational transmission of those properties.
- **Social Environment** -A broader approach of the conceptualization, operationalization, and analysis of social context is needed that includes multilevel and multi-scale measures (e.g., multi-level modeling; GIS; social network analyses; ecological momentary assessment techniques). These may include conceptual and methodological approaches to emergent properties of social environments above the level of the individual and further explication of the mechanisms through which the social environment shapes health outcomes.
- **Self Regulation** - Refine measures and theoretical conceptualizations of basic processes of social, personality and developmental psychology, including, cognition, emotion and behavior. For example, approaches may utilize approaches combining self-regulation with the fields of economics and neuroscience to map processes over time and across developmental life periods.
- **Sleep and Circadian Rhythms** - Prior research has established connections between disrupted circadian regulation, disordered sleep, and adverse health outcomes. Furthermore, mutations in genes involved in regulation of circadian rhythms have been shown to have effects on cognitive behavior (e.g., learning and memory), addictive behavior, and mood (e.g., aggression). Alterations in social systems and social learning and behavior are generated by altered sleep processes, such as sleep deprived parents who exhibit less sensitivity and lower frustration tolerance to their infants. A focus is needed on research to understand the biopsychosocial mechanisms underlying the reciprocal interactions of biological processes of sleep with behavioral processes and variables in the social environment.
- **Stress** - Psychosocial stressors, including social (e.g., person-person, person-family, and person-peer group interactions), behavioral, environmental, and cognitive factors) have been found to increase the risk of human morbidity and mortality. Prior research has emphasized the biological pathways through which stress has its health effects, but more focus is needed on the behavioral mechanisms involved as well as direct effects on disease initiation and progression. Advances in developing and validating conceptually-based,

comprehensive measures of psychosocial stress at multiple levels are needed. Such measures could incorporate variations in exposures, environments, cognitions, and responses, and examine linkages of stress with behavioral changes across the lifespan of animals and humans.

Letters of Intent are due December 6, 2010. Applications are due on January 6, 2010. For more information or to apply see <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-NR-11-002.html>.

## Board of Governors Appointed to New Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute

On September 23, Gene Dodaro, Acting Comptroller General and head of the U.S. Governmental Accountability (GAO) announced the appointment of 19 members to the Board of Governors for the new Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI). The directors of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are the other two members on PCORI.

PCORI was established as a non-profit organization "to assist patients, clinicians, purchasers, and policy -makers in making informed health decisions by carrying out research projects that provide quality, relevant evidence on how diseases, disorders, and other health conditions can effectively and appropriately be prevented, diagnosed, treated, monitored and managed" in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010. PCORI will set comparative effectiveness research (CER) priorities.

Members of the Board are appointed for a six-year term and may be reappointed for one additional six-year term. The terms of the board members are staggered. The first set of appointments has been made for two, four and six years.

**Eugene Washington** (UCLA) has been appointed chair of the Board of Governors. **Steven Lipstein** (BJC Health Care) has been appointed vice chair. Washington's and Lipstein's terms will expire in 2016. They will be joined for six years by: **Christine Goertz**, (Palmer College of Chiropractic and Palmer Center for Chiropractic Research), **Sharon Levine** (The Permanente Medical Group of Northern California), **Ellen Sigal** (Friends of Cancer Research), **Harlan Weisman** (Johnson & Johnson), and **Robert Zwolak** (Dartmouth Medical School).

Commissioners whose first term will expire 2014 include: **Lawrence Becker** (Xerox Corporation), **Arnold Epstein** (Harvard University School of Public Health and Brigham and Women's Hospital), **Andrew Imparato** (American Association of People with Disabilities), **Robert Jesse** (Department of Veterans Affairs), **Freda Lewis-Hall** (Pfizer Medical Division), and **Grayson Norquist** (Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior, University of Mississippi Medical Center).

Commissioners whose first term will expire 2010 are: **Debra Barksdale** (University of North Carolina), **Kerry Barnett** (The Regence Group), **Allen Doum** (Empower, LLC), **Leah Hole-Curry** (Washington State Health Care Authority), **Harlan Krumholz** (Yale

University School of Medicine), **Richard E. Kuntz** and (Medtronic, Inc.).

## **PCORI Methodology Committee: Nominations Wanted**

The Act also directs the Comptroller General to appoint "not more than 15 members to a Methodology Committee of PCORI. The call for nominations to this Committee is expected by September 20, 2010. According to the PCORI's website, however, letters of nomination and resumes should be submitted by October 29, 2010 to ensure adequate opportunity for review and consideration of nominees prior to appointment. For more information see [http://www.gao.gov/about/hcac/methodology\\_comm.html](http://www.gao.gov/about/hcac/methodology_comm.html).

## **Public Input Wanted for National Health Care Quality Strategy and Plan**

The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is seeking public input in the development of a National Health Care Quality Strategy and Plan ([PDF](#)). The agency welcomes comments and suggestions on all aspects of the proposed structure, principles, conceptualization, and specific details of the National Quality Strategy.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 require the Secretary of HHS "to establish a national quality strategy, including a comprehensive strategic plan and the identification of priorities to improve the delivery of health care services, patient health outcomes, and population health." It also requires that "the strategy be developed in a transparent and collaborative process and also calls for a parallel National Prevention and Health Promotion Strategy that is scheduled to be released in March of 2011. The initial Health Care Quality Strategy and Plan is due to Congress by January 1, 2011 and must include provisions for: 1) agency-specific plans and benchmarks; 2) coordination among agencies; 3) strategies to align public and private payers; and 4) alignment with meaningful use of health information technology (IT)." The National Health Care Quality Strategy and Plan is intended to be a living and changing guide for the Federal government, as well as for States and the private sector. HHS' initial thinking regarding the Plan is available on its website at [www.hhs.gov/news/reports/quality/nhcqsap.html](http://www.hhs.gov/news/reports/quality/nhcqsap.html). In the Plan, the agency identifies specific areas where feedback would be particularly valuable. These areas include:

1. Are the proposed Principles for the National Strategy appropriate? What is missing or how could the principles be better guides for the Framework, Priorities and Goals?
2. Is the proposed Framework for the National Strategy sound and easily understood? Does the Framework set the right initial direction for the National Health Care Quality Strategy and Plan? How can it be improved?
3. Using the legislative criteria for establishing national priorities, what national priorities do you think should be addressed in the initial National Health Care Quality Strategy and Plan in each of the following areas? Better Care: Person-centered care that works for patients and providers. Better care should expressly address the quality, safety, access, and reliability of how care is delivered and how patients rate their experience in receiving such care; Affordable Care: Care that reins in unsustainable costs for families, government, and the private sector to make it more affordable; and Healthy People/Healthy Communities: The promotion of health and wellness at all levels.
4. What aspirational goals should be set for the next five years, and to what extent should achievable goals be identified for a shorter timeframe?
5. Are there existing, well-established, and widely used measures that can be used or adapted to assess progress towards these goals? What measures would best guide public and private sector action, as well as support assessing the nation's progress to meeting the goals in the National Quality Strategy?

6. The success of the National Health Care Quality Strategy and Plan is, in large part, dependent on the ability of diverse stakeholders across both the public and private sectors to work together. Do you have recommendations on how key entities, sectors, or stakeholders can best be engaged to drive progress based on the National Health Care Quality Strategy and Plan?
7. Given the role that States can play in organizing health care delivery for vulnerable populations, do the Principles and Framework address the needs and issues of these populations?
8. Are there priorities and goals that should be considered to specifically address State needs?
9. What measures or measure sets should be considered to reflect States' activities, priorities, and concerns?
10. What are some key recommendations on how to engage with States and ensure continued alignment with the National Quality Strategy?

Feedback is requested via the agency's website at <http://www.hhs.gov/news/reports/quality/nhcqsap.html>. Comments may be submitted electronically to [national\\_quality\\_strategy@hhs.gov](mailto:national_quality_strategy@hhs.gov). Written comments may be submitted and should be addressed to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Attention: Nancy Wilson - Room 3216, 540 Gaither Road Rockville, MD 20850 or faxed to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Attention: Nancy Wilson at (301) 427-1210. **All comments are due no later than 5 p.m. on October 15, 2010.**

## Head of Transportation Statistics Bureau Sought

The U.S. Department of Transportation is seeking a Director of the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS). BTS, which is part of DOT's Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA), is charged with advancing rigorous analysis and the deployment of cross-cutting technologies to improve our Nation's transportation system. The Director position would lead the BTS, which is responsible for leading the development of high quality transportation data and information. BTS' budget is about \$27 million and it gets all of it from a set-aside in the Highway Trust Fund.

The new leader would replace Steven Dillingham, who has left to run the Transportation Safety Institute in Oklahoma. Steven Smith, BTS' Deputy Director, currently is serving as Acting Director.

RITA is looking for a visionary leader who can apply expertise in the collection, analysis, and use of transportation statistics positioning BTS as an integral part of a DOT that bases its very significant investment and policy decisions on sound science and rigorous analysis. In addition to possessing superior technical acumen, candidates must demonstrate an ability to lead a diverse team and promote cross-office collaboration in the pursuit of achieving organizational excellence.

For more information go to: <http://www.rita.dot.gov/jobs.html>

## Boston University Newest Member of COSSA

After a significant hiatus, Boston University has rejoined the Consortium. We look forward to working with the university to help promote and defend the social, behavioral and economic sciences.

# Consortium of Social Science Associations

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### MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS

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Social Science History Association  
Society for Behavioral Medicine  
Society for Research on Adolescence  
Society for Social Work and Research  
Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues  
Southern Political Science Association  
Southern Sociological Society  
Southwestern Social Science Association

### CENTERS AND INSTITUTES

American Academy of Political and Social Sciences  
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Cornell Institute for Social and Economic Research  
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National Bureau of Economic Research  
National Opinion Research Center  
Population Reference Bureau  
Social Science Research Council

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University of Maryland  
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University of Missouri, St. Louis  
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UPDATE is published 22 times per year. ISSN 0749-4394.

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