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New Congress Continues to Organize: Awaits State of the Union Address

The 112th Congress continued to organize its committees and subcommittees, while awaiting President Obama's State of the Union address scheduled for January 25.

In the meantime, the new Republican-controlled House voted to repeal the Healthcare Reform Act and

continued to discuss rolling back FY 2011 spending on domestic discretionary funding to FY 2008 levels when the current Continuing Resolution runs out on March 4. On January 20, the Republican Study Committee, whose members include 165 representatives from the 242 member House Republican Caucus, called for elimination of many programs and reductions in the others to FY 2006 funding levels.

The House Science, Space and Technology (SST) Committee named its Subcommittee Chairman. Rep. Ralph Hall, Chairman of SST, announced that Rep. Mo Brooks (R-AL), a first-term member, will lead the Subcommittee on Research and Science Education. Brooks, from North Alabama, is a lawyer who was the Republican leader of the Alabama House before moving to local government and a key role in the Alabama Attorney General's office. He has a law degree from the University of Alabama and an undergraduate degree from Duke, where he double-majored in economics (with high honors) and political science.

The other SST Subcommittee chairs include: Rep. Paul Broun (R-GA) as head of Investigations and Oversight; Rep. Ben Quayle (R-AZ), son of the former Vice President and another first-termer, will head the Technology and Innovation panel; Rep. Andy Harris (R-MD), elected in 2010, will lead the Energy and Environment Subcommittee; and Rep. Steve Palazzo (R-MS), also elected in 2010, will chair the Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee. The Democrats on SST have only announced their Ranking Member of the full panel, Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX), who is from Dallas.

On the House Appropriations Committee, the Republicans earlier chose their Subcommittee Committee Chairs (see Update, [January 10, 2011, Welcome to 2011: A New Politics?](#)). On January 19, the Democrats announced their spending panel Ranking Members. Rep. Chaka Fattah (D-PA) will work with Chairman Frank Wolf (R-VA) on the Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) spending panel. Fattah, who is from Philadelphia, is also the Chair of the Congressional Urban Caucus. He has been in Congress since 1995 and has a Master's degree in Governmental Administration from the University of Pennsylvania's Fels Center of Government. CJS has jurisdiction over the funding for the National Science Foundation, the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the National Institute of Justice, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Rep. Rosa De Lauro (D-CT) will move to the Ranking Member slot on the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education spending panel from her previous position as Chair of the Agriculture and Rural Development Appropriations Subcommittee. De Lauro, who spoke at the COSSA Annual Meeting in 2005, has been in the House since 1991 representing New Haven. She will work with new Subcommittee Chairman, Denny Rehberg (R-MT).

Rep. Sam Farr (D-CA) will become the Ranking Democrat on the Agriculture and Rural Development panel serving as the counterpart to the new Chairman, Rep. Jack Kingston (R-GA). Rep. David Price (D-NC), a political scientist who has also spoken at a COSSA Annual Meeting, will remain as the top Democrat on the Homeland Security Subcommittee, where he will work with the new Chairman, Rep. Robert Aderholt (R-AL).

The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, chaired by Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA) has announced its Subcommittee lineup. The Census Bureau will now come under the jurisdiction of the Subcommittee on Health Care, District of Columbia, Census and the National Archives chaired by Rep. Trey Gowdy (R-SC), who was elected in 2010. Gowdy is an award winning prosecutor from Spartanburg, SC. His panel will have jurisdiction over the Census and the American Community Survey (ACS). The Republican National Committee passed a resolution last year to make the ACS voluntary and there are others who would do away with this replacement for the former long-form of the Census altogether.

While all this activity occurred in the House, the Senate has been gone for the past two weeks and will reconvene on January 25 and get to work.

Examination and Potential Reorganization of HHS by House Energy and

Commerce Committee

On January 20, the House Energy Commerce Committee released, *Key Issues before the Committee on Energy and Commerce, 112th Congress, First Session*. The document outlines areas within the Committee's jurisdiction that it plans to examine: health; energy and power; environment and economy; commerce, manufacturing and trade; and communication and technology.

Part of the Committee's health agenda includes examining the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) discretionary budget. According to the document: "An examination and potential reorganization of HHS agencies will be a critical component of the Committee's agenda. Over \$80 billion a year is spent by HHS on discretionary programs often at overlooked agencies like the Health Services and Resources Administration, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, and the Centers for Disease Control [and Prevention]." It is noted that "these agencies frequently have overlapping functions and duplicative programs. As part of our commitment to balancing the budget and identifying wasteful spending we will examine the budgets and functions of each of the agencies to identify cost savings proposals and make government operations more efficient."

NIMH Advisory Council Member Resigns Citing 'Short Shrift' to Psychosocial Research



Carl C. Bell

On January 14, the National Advisory Mental Health Council (NAMHC) of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) held its 227th advisory meeting. NIMH director Tom Insel welcomed three new members to the NAMHC: Erich Jarvis (Duke University), a speaker at the COSSA-sponsored *Enhancing Diversity in Science* conference (for the summary report go to www.cossa.org), John Newcomer (Washington University, St Louis) and Greg Simon (University of Washington, Seattle). As the meeting came to a conclusion, three-year veteran advisory council member Carl C. Bell resigned in frustration with what he believed to be "short shrift" given to the "whole issue of psychosocial research."

Bell, President & CEO, Community Mental Health Council, Founder of The Institute for the Prevention of Violence, and a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and Public Health at the University of Illinois, explained to his fellow council members that he was "not hearing enough" attention surrounding these issues. In announcing his resignation, Bell stressed that he was hoping that the NIMH's Strategic Plan' Strategic Objective 4 (SO4): Strengthen the Public Health Impact of NIMH-Supported Research "would have public health and prevention elements." He explained that he "has tried to wait patiently" but he is bothered that he does not "see psychosocial, public health promotion" as significant part of NIMH's agenda. He noted that he did "not feel comfortable" and hopes that his resigning was not "taken as a sign of disrespect." His "philosophy," said Bell, is "way different" than that of the NIMH leadership.

Insel responded that he "respected that stance and decision...and while not in agreement, the debate has been a good one." Insel noted that Council member Roberto Lewis-Fernandez, Director of the Hispanic Treatment Program at New York State Psychiatric Institute, Associate Professor of Clinical Psychiatry at Columbia University, and Lecturer on Social Medicine at Harvard University, "will need a wing man" and asked Bell for recommendations of individuals that share his "perspective." Lewis-Fernandez stressed that the issue raised by Bell "deserves a conversation by the council."

Strategic Objective 4

The goal of [SO4](#) is to "Through research, evaluation, and collaboration, we will further develop the capacity of the Institute to help close the gap between the development of new, research-tested interventions and their widespread use by those most in need." The Plan recognizes that:

"NIMH's mission depends inherently on our ability to understand the nature and developmental course of these disorders, enabling the development of research-based interventions for treatment and prevention. The Institute's role, however, does not end there. To pave the way toward prevention, recovery, and cure, we must find ways to ensure that the interventions and information we generate can be used by patients, families, health care providers, and the wider community involved in mental health care."

The four strategies outlined in the Strategic Plan to achieve Strategic Objective 4 include:

Strategy 4.1: Improve understanding of the factors that affect access to service, quality and cost of services, and the means by which newly discovered effective mental health interventions are disseminated and implemented. The strategy includes: Stimulate research that develops and tests novel models and methods on ways to best implement mental health interventions to diverse groups and populations (e.g., age, sex, stage of illness, racial/ethnic groups, rural, urban); Support research that identifies barriers and limitations to the uptake and implementation of interventions by various stakeholders (e.g., payers, patients, service providers) and subsequently use this knowledge to develop more effective models for implementation; and Expand research efforts to identify factors that will improve access to service as well as better the quality and lower the costs of services.

Strategy 4.2: Improve the research and dissemination activities of the Institute through monitoring and evaluation. Through improved research monitoring and evaluation efforts, we will be better positioned to ensure that supported research is aligned with the Institute's scientific priorities

Strategy 4.3: Strengthen partnerships between NIMH and its stakeholder groups. The success of the Institute's mission depends on the effective collaboration of all stakeholders in the field of mental health. This requires strengthening our current partnerships and working to build new ones so that we can understand the needs, capabilities, and limitations of the field as we work together to move forward.

Strategy 4.4: Strengthen NIMH's relationships with other Federal agencies that address mental health issues.

NIMH's Plan points out the "staggering" cost of mental illness, estimated as "\$100 billion each year for the direct costs of care and significantly more for indirect costs, including \$193 billion alone for lost earnings among individuals with serious mental illnesses." The Institute "supports a number of studies that demonstrate to policymakers, employers, health providers, and other decision-makers the tremendous cost savings that arise from investing in effective interventions for these disorders." It notes that "research has found that workplace depression screening, outreach, and enhanced treatment improves employees' health and productivity, leading to lower costs overall to the employer. . . . By demonstrating the long-term benefits of implementing evidence-based mental health interventions, NIMH research can provide compelling evidence of ways to improve the personal and economic components of mental health care."

The Plan further points out that "Despite their proven ability to alleviate mental illness, many tested interventions take far too long to be adopted into common practice, with some never reaching those most in need of them. Numerous barriers exist to prevent the successful integration of evidence-based interventions within clinical and community practice. Improving the fit between effective interventions

and the care settings in which they are delivered is an important focus of NIMH services research. NIMH researchers, for example, are exploring new strategies to advance the dissemination and implementation of efficacious interventions in individual practices, on the community level, and even the state level."

NIMH's Workforce Diversity Numbers 'Really Awful'

Pamela Collins, Associate Director for Special Populations, Director, Office for Research on Disparities & Global Mental Health and Director, Office of Rural Mental Health Research, gave the Council an update on NIMH's workforce diversity. According to Collins, who presented data from 2004-2010, since 2007 the Institute has seen the number of black investigators supported by NIMH "steadily decrease." NIMH, which was once concerned that its numbers were higher than the NIH average, has achieved alignment with the whole of NIH with regard to workforce diversity. Jarvis questioned the reason for the decrease. Collins noted that it has occurred as the Institute has "moved from social science to neuroscience."

Research Concept Clearances

Citing a flat budget, Insel emphasized the need for priority setting. Accordingly, Institute staff presented ten concept clearances to the Council. "These things need to be accomplished," Insel explained, noting that the Institute was not receiving "unsolicited" grant applications. The concepts were presented as they are reflected the NIMH strategic plan.

Objective 1: Promote Discovery in the Brain and Behavioral Sciences to Fuel Research on the Causes of Mental Disorders - Linda Brady (Director, Division of Neuroscience and Basic Behavioral Science)

Concepts:

- *Dimensional Approaches to Research Classifications*
- *Integrating Multi-Dimensional Data to Explore Mechanisms underlying Psychiatric Phenotypes*

Objective 2: Chart Mental Illness Trajectories to Determine When, Where, and How to Intervene - Shelli Avenevoli (Branch Chief, Division of Developmental Translational Research)

Concept:

- *Neurodevelopmental Trajectories in Children at Familial Risk for Schizophrenia or Bipolar Disorder*

Objective 3: Develop New and Better Interventions that Incorporate the Diverse Needs and Circumstances of People with Mental Illnesses - Ann Wagner (Branch Chief, Division of Developmental Translational Research)

Concept:

- *Translational Research for the Development of Novel Interventions for Mental Disorders*

Objective 4: Strengthen the Public Health Impact of NIMH-Supported Research - Varda Shoham (Special Assistant to the Director, Division of Adult Translational Research and Treatment Development)

Concept:

- *Optimizing Fidelity of Empirically Supported Behavioral Treatments*

Division of AIDS Research - Dianne Rausch (Deputy Director, Center for Mental Health Research on AIDS)

Concepts:

- *Promoting Engagement in Care and Timely Antiretroviral Initiation Following HIV Diagnosis*

- *Pathophysiology of HIV-associated Neurodegeneration in Aging Populations on Long-Term Anti-retroviral Therapy*

Office for Research on Disparities and Global Mental Health - Pamela Collins (Associate Director for Special Populations; Director, Office for Research on Disparities & Global Mental Health; and Director, Office of Rural Mental Health Research)

Concepts:

- *Grand Challenges in Global Mental Health*
- *Creating Diversity and Leadership in the Next Generation*
- *Determinants and Mechanisms of Prevalence Patterns of Common Mental Disorders by Race/Ethnicity*

Other discussions at the meeting included Insel's concern about the pharmaceutical industry's retreat from research and development, which could provide an opportunity for NIMH to join NIH Director Francis Collins' plan for a National Institute on Translational Science, which would move NIH into drug development research. Insel pointed out that NIMH is "an agency that has never developed drugs" and he "wanted the Council's advice" on this idea as the Institute plans its future budgets. He stressed that the Institute is in the "consultative stage" and "will dig deeper and look at the unintended consequences." Steven Paul, recently retired executive vice president, science and technology, and president, Lilly Research Laboratories, cautioned that he was "not sure that it is all that bleak in pharma." NIMH's work, he continued, "has encouraged pharma to take a second look at some areas."

Lewis-Fernandez stressed that there are "excellent psychosocial treatments for some things" and it is not as if everyone has access to them." He cited his concern for the lack of incentives to promote the "marvelous psychosocial treatments." Rhonda Robinson-Beale, United Behavioral Health's Chief Medical Officer, expressed her support for Lewis-Fernandez' point of view and noted the quick adoption of drugs compared to the adoption of psychosocial therapies. She pointed out that "adherence is very poor - whether right or wrong." She cited the need for more outcome measures for clinicians.

National Advisory Child Health and Human Development Council Meets: Hears Valedictory Advice from Departing Social Scientist

The Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development's (NICHD) National Advisory Child Health and Human Development Council (NACHHDC) held its 143rd meeting on January 20, 2011. As part of its meeting it heard from departing member Ronald Lee on the importance of NICHD maintaining support for population research at the Institute.

In his director's report to the Council, NICHD Director Alan Guttmacher discussed the Scientific Management Review Board's recommendation to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) should be seen less as a merger of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) and seen more as a focus on the creation of a new NIH institute that focuses on substance abuse and addiction. He explained that a NIH Task Force led by Deputy Director Lawrence Tabak and National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Diseases director Stephen Katz is looking at all related research areas across the 27 institutes and centers. According to Guttmacher, he does not see the creation of the new institute as having an impact on the NICHD portfolio.

Guttmacher also noted that the NICHD's Scientific Visioning workshops have begun and will continue through March 2011 (see Update, [June 14, 2010](#)). The Institute has identified a set of nine broad scientific themes which provides the focus of each workshop. Each workshop is designed to look beyond the Institute's current science and push new research frontiers, while being anchored by the core NICHD mission: "... to ensure that every person is born healthy and wanted, that women suffer no harmful effects

from reproductive processes, and that all children have the chance to achieve their full potential for healthy and productive lives, free from disease or disability, and to ensure the health, productivity, independence, and well-being of all people through optimal rehabilitation." Guttmacher stressed his desire to get "really good ideas for science."

Each workshop is expected to address the following three questions:

1. What are compelling scientific research opportunities within the workshop thematic area that lie within the NICHD mission?
2. To exploit these opportunities:
 - What basic, clinical, and translational research questions must be answered?
 - How would answering the questions affect public and global health?
 - What research tools, methods, or approaches should be developed to realize these scientific and public health opportunities?
3. What innovative training and other workforce development activities should be pursued?

Workshops (*co-chairs and organizers) are scheduled for the following dates:

- [January 13-14, 2011: Plasticity](#) -- *John Chae (Case Western Reserve University), *Pamela W. Duncan (Duke University), Kenneth Pugh (Yale University), and Michael E. Selzer (Temple University)
- [January 25-25, 2011: Reproduction](#) -- *Linda C. Giudice (University of California, San Francisco), *Régine Sitruk-Ware (Population Council), William J. Bremner (University of Washington), and Paula Hillard (Stanford University)
- [February 9-10, 2011: Development](#) -- *George M. Langford (Syracuse University), *David R. McClay (Duke University), Kristin K. Baldwin (Scripps Institute), and Jonathan D. Gitlin (Vanderbilt University)
- [February 14-15, 2011: Developmental Origins of Health and Disease](#) -- *Kjersti Aagaard-Tillery (Baylor College of Medicine), *Kent L. Thornburg (Oregon Health & Science University), Ira M. Bernstein (University of Vermont), and David A. Washburn (Georgia State University)
- [February 17-18, 2011: Behavior](#) -- *Jack M. Fletcher (University of Houston), *Linda J. Waite (University of Chicago), Jeanne Brooks-Gunn (Columbia University), and Allan L. Reiss (Stanford University)
- [February 22-23, 2011: Pregnancy and Pregnancy Outcomes](#) -- *Patrick M. Catalano (Case Western Reserve University), *Michelle A. Williams (University of Washington), *Paul H. Wise (Stanford University), Diana W. Bianchi (Tufts University), and George R. Saade (University of Texas Medical Branch)
- [March 1-2, 2011: Diagnostics and Therapeutics](#) -- *A. James Barkovich (University of California, San Francisco), *Stanley J. Szeffler (University of Colorado Denver), Eric Olson (Vertex Pharmaceuticals Incorporated), and William Rymer (Northwestern University)
- [March 10-11, 2011: Environment](#) -- *Barbara Cohn (Public Health Institute), *Esther Duflo (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), and Patricia M. Flynn (St. Jude Children's Research Hospital)
- [March 14-15, 2011: Cognition](#) -- *Joseph Piven (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), *Rick K. Wagner (Florida State University), and John E. Richards (University of South Carolina)

After each workshop, the organizers will draft a white paper summarizing the main ideas that emerged from the workshop to serve as the foundation for the NICHD scientific Vision. Agendas, white papers, and other information related to each workshop will be posted on the NICHD's website at:

Social Science Belongs at NICHD

This was the last meeting for several of the Advisory Committee members including Ronald Lee, Professor of Demography at the University of California, Berkeley. In his farewell remarks to the Council, Lee expressed what a "great honor" it was for him to serve specifically as a social scientist and demographer. He acknowledged his struggle at times with the vocabulary and concepts, but admitted he was "proud of the spectacular advances in biomedical research supported by the NICHD."

According to Lee, many may wonder why a social scientist serves on the NICHD council. He wanted to explain why having a social scientist is important. First, despite the cutting edge biomedical research in the United States and the lavish expenditures on health care, the nation ranks below many industrial countries and third world nations on many measures of child well-being and health. The "basic reasons for this lag are social, economic and demographic," he maintained. It is important that social scientists work to understand the underlying trends in the behaviors that lead to these less than ideal outcomes. Lee expressed his hope that the importance of these contributions can be expressed in the visioning process.

Lee then shared a brief history of the creation of the NICHD Center on Population Research; another reason social science belongs at NICHD. He explained that in the late 1960s and 1970s, the Federal government decided to support this research because of the economic concerns about rapid population growth. President Johnson arranged for the funding of the Center on Population Research as the lead institution for these studies in the federal government. President Nixon continued that emphasis and his Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW, the precursor to the Department of Health and Human Services) wrote of guiding the center in various roles as the changing needs of population research dictate. Those needs continue to change, said Lee.

The Center was placed at NICHD, but these activities, he suggested, may not fit naturally with the core mission of NICHD, although that mission is much broader than child health. It is vital, Lee insisted, that they are included and protected in the ongoing planning for NICHD.

In addition, NICHD needs to explore other issues of great importance for the U.S. Lee cited the economic consequences of immigration and immigration's effect on the wages of native born labor wages. Other examples include economic behavior over the life course, the environmental consequences of population growth, methods for forecasting population growth and economic development.

If this broader role of social science and demographic research and training is weakened, Lee declared that he would have failed as a council member to adequately represent the intentions of the federal government and failed to adequately represent the interests of the American people. He admitted that he is leaving the Council with mixed feelings and grave concerns about the direction in which things may be headed. At the same time, he acknowledged that it has "been a marvelous experience." And the leadership and staff of NICHD are "terrific." He thanked Guttmacher for the opportunity to serve. Guttmacher thanked Lee again for his service and noted that he had left an "important set of messages for all to keep in front of us."

Nursing Institute Seeks Public Comments on Draft Strategic Plan

The National Advisory Council for Nursing Research held its 73rd meeting on January 18th. National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) director Pat Grady opened the meeting with a discussion of the lack of a final FY 2011 budget. Illustrating the various budgets of the 27 NIH institutes and centers, Grady noted that the Institute has the third smallest budget, more than those of the National Center for

Alternative and Complementary Medicine and the Fogarty International Center only. Conversely, NINR's training budget is second behind that of the National Institute of General Medicine Sciences, which has the mandate to provide biomedical and behavioral research training. Grady pointed out that the Institute's placement reflects its beginning as a Center before being made an Institute. She noted, however, that the Institute has received a higher percentage increase than the NIH on balance over the years. Additionally, NINR sees "a reasonable steady state success rate" when compared to the other NIH institutes and centers, slightly over 20 percent. NINR is currently celebrating its 25th anniversary as an Institute.

Comments Wanted on Draft Strategic Plan

NINR is updating its strategic plan and is seeking comments on a draft of that plan (<http://www.ninr.nih.gov/NewsAndInformation/StrategicPlan2011>). The comment period opened on January 18, 2011 and will close on March 19, 2011. Comments may be made by e-mailing them to: NINRstrategicplan@mail.nih.gov. NINR will release the Plan in October, 2011.

The draft Plan notes that the NINR supports clinical, basic, and translational research to: build the scientific foundation for clinical practice; prevent disease and disability; manage and eliminate symptoms caused by illness; enhance end-of-life and palliative care; and train the next generation of scientists. The Institute seeks to advance nursing science by supporting the exploration of the science of health, which focuses on the promotion of health and quality of life. It includes the investigation of multiple health determinants - such as psychological, physiological, genomic, environmental, familial, societal and cultural - and their impact on health promotion and self-management behavior in both the individual and the larger community.

NINR believes that overall the development of innovative interventions tailored to individual genetic, cultural, and environmental factors will improve health behaviors, decrease the incidence of chronic illness, and advance overall health while reducing healthcare costs. To advance the science of health promotion and disease prevention, the NINR intends to support research that:

- Studies the behavior of systems (e.g., family units, populations, and/or organizations) that promote health;
- Improves the understanding of behavioral patterns and the incentives for behavioral change across the life span, cultures, and environments;
- Develops and tests models of lifelong preventive care;
- Creates innovative communication strategies for individuals, families, clinicians, and communities that promote health and improve health literacy;
- Translates scientific advances to effect positive health behavioral change; and
- Incorporates interdisciplinary, interprofessional, community, and other healthcare partnerships in the design or conduct of health promotion research.

Self-management research examines strategies that help individuals with chronic conditions better understand and manage their illness and improve their health behaviors, thereby reducing the need for visits to a healthcare provider. To improve quality of life through better management of the symptoms of chronic illness, the NINR plans to invest in basic, clinical, and translational research that:

- Improves knowledge of biological mechanisms associated with symptoms and symptom clusters;
- Designs interventions that reduce the development of symptoms or the impact of symptoms on the quality of life;
- Develops strategies to improve management of symptoms of chronic illness, particularly in the context of comorbidities;
- Designs strategies to improve management of symptoms over disease trajectories, including

the transition from acute to chronic illness; and

- Facilitates clinical effectiveness and outcomes research using improved implementation science and advanced technological methods, as well as consistent measures, taxonomies, and databases.

Because of nursing science's emphasis on integrating biological and behavioral research in the area of end-of-life care across the lifespan, in 1997 the director of NIH designated the Institute as the lead institute for research in this area. In order to advance the science of end-of-life and palliative care, NINR will support efforts to:

- Increase the scientific knowledge of the complex issues and choices underlying end-of-life and palliative care;
- Develop and translate into practice interventions that provide palliative care for chronically ill individuals across the lifespan and from increasingly diverse populations;
- Develop and test strategies to minimize the physical and psychological burdens on caregivers, particularly when the one for which they are caring nears the end of life;
- Determine the impact of providers trained in palliative and end-of-life care on healthcare outcomes; and
- Create new communication strategies among clinicians, patients, families, and communities to promote awareness of end-of-life care as an important clinical and public health issue.

The Institute plans to increase its focus on adapting existing or developing new technologies to link underserved populations with available resources that support healthy lifestyles, thereby promoting its goal of achieving health equity. Regarding innovation, the Institute invites research that:

- Develops new technologies and informatics-based solutions that promote health, prevent disease, manage symptoms, and involve patients in their own healthcare;
- Develops and creatively applies new technologies, including the adaptation and application of comprehensive high-throughput technologies;
- Encourages risk taking, innovation, re-invention, and creativity, including high-risk/high-return concepts;
- Expands knowledge and application of telehealth/telemedicine interventions to improve self-management and access to healthcare;
- Extends preventive interventions that improve health for underserved community groups;
- Investigates factors influencing how technology is adopted and used to generate best practices; and
- Mobilizes technology to form global partnerships with international schools of nursing in areas central to the NINR mission and to use the established infrastructure to facilitate research and exchange of information.

NIFA Director Pumps Up "Science for Food and Agriculture"

Speaking to a group of stakeholders including COSSA on January 19, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) director Roger Beachy discussed the importance of "science for food and agriculture." Kathleen Merrigan, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, also stressed the "need to invest in science even in this constrained [budget] environment."

Beachy noted the recent reorganization of NIFA and the tremendous demand for research grants. He indicated that over 500 institutions, most of them outside the Land Grant University system that has been the natural partner of agriculture and rural research for years, applied for research funding in FY 2010. The Agriculture Department's major competitive grant program, the Agriculture Research and

Food Initiative (AFRI), received over \$4 billion worth of proposals, according to Beachy, for a budget that had only \$262 million.

The director also made the case for NIFA's role in "solving grand societal challenges." Among those, he suggested, was sustaining America's rural economy in an era when global factors play an increasing role in food and agriculture. He mentioned investments by China, India, and Brazil in agricultural research as key competition.

One grand challenge is controlling obesity, which Beachy explicitly noted was a behavioral problem. He then cited a recent award to develop an obesity prevention program for children in rural Oregon. The award went to Oregon State University and its team of researchers, who received \$4,878,865 to start "Generating Rural Options for Weight-Healthy Kids and Communities." They intend to work with Cooperative Extension in six Western states to engage rural people in community-based research to assess features in rural communities that either prevent or promote obesity and community resources and readiness that could help with prevention efforts. The team will take these assessments and implement an obesity intervention program in three counties in Oregon to promote healthy eating and increase physical activity with the end goal to improve body mass index among rural children aged 5-8 years old. He also cited research funding for grants exploring adaptation to climate change.

Noting NIFA's new focus on larger, more regionally focused grants, Beachy also stressed the importance of multidisciplinary teams, including social scientists and economists, in many of the grants that NIFA and AFRI are funding.

Beachy expressed concern over future budgets and indicated that AFRI may face a situation that continuation grants may crowd out new awards. He indicated that receiving the \$700 million for AFRI authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill will not likely occur. With Congress about to consider a new Farm Bill, the willingness to commit larger funds to agricultural and rural research remains uncertain.

Among other topics Beachy covered were: increasing interagency cooperation, citing research and activities in the food safety area where NIFA is working with the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Institute of Food Safety; attempting to quantify the relationship between the Agricultural Research Service, the in-house Department research agency, and NIFA; continuing the commitment to involving extension in the research and development process, "we are not just a basic science agency," he declared; and including stakeholders in defining research agendas using "a bottoms-up approach."

Patricia Hu New BTS Director

The Department of Transportation (DOT) has announced that Patricia Hu will be the next director of the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS). She replaces Steve Dillingham who left in September 2010 to work at the Transportation Safety Institute. Steven K. Smith has served as Acting Director since then. Hu will start her new position in February.

Created as a statistical agency in 1992, BTS' mission is to "create, manage, and share transportation statistical knowledge with public and private transportation communities and the Nation." The agency receives its money from the Highway Trust Fund.

According to Peter Appel, Administrator of DOT's Research and Innovative Technology Administration of which BTS is a component, Hu has a "unique combination of statistical experience, deep knowledge of transportation, strong management skills, and a very solid track record of leadership."



Patricia Hu

Hu spent over 20 years with the Center for Transportation Analysis (CTA) at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee, nine of them as its Director. She led programs that focused on transportation survey methods and data quality, transportation analysis and model development, and visualization-based transportation decision making tools. These research products in part allow transportation decision makers, including the DOT to make their decisions based on sound data and rigorous analysis. Under her leadership, the Center developed products that leverage data from BTS's Commodity Flow Survey to significantly advance our understanding of freight flows in the U.S., created cloud-computing tools to analyze personal travel patterns based on DOT's National Household Travel Survey, constructed the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) deployment tracking database, and developed data and modeling strategies to estimate regional origin-destination flows of passenger travel.

She has also been an active member and leader on several National Academies' Transportation Research Board (TRB) committees and expert panels that cover transportation analysis, transportation safety, and transportation information systems and data. She has published in many of the leading transportation and statistics journals and has presented at numerous conferences.

Hu received her undergraduate degree in Statistics from the National Chengchi University in Taiwan, her M.S. in Statistics from the University of Guelph, Ontario, and did post-M.S. graduate work in Biostatistics at the University of Iowa.

NAS Report on Research Training in the Biomedical, Behavioral, and Clinical Research Sciences Released

The National Academies' National Research Council (NRC) Committee to Study the National Needs for Biomedical, Behavioral, and Clinical Research Personnel released its 13th in a series of reports assessing training needs for the health workforce. Begun in 1973, the National Research Services Award (NRSA) Program sets the standard for training, regardless of support. The legislation establishing the program called for periodic review by the NRC of the program and evaluation of the national needs for research personnel.

The Committee was chaired by Roger Chalkley, Vanderbilt School of Medicine. Neuroscientist William Greenough, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, served as vice chair.

Based on the ongoing need to maintain a strong research workforce, the committee recommended that "the total number of NRSA positions in the biomedical and clinical sciences should remain at least at the fiscal year 2008 level and in the behavioral sciences they should increase back to the 2004 level." The committee also recommended that the "future adjustments should be closely linked to the total extramural research funding in the biomedical, clinical, and behavioral sciences."

The committee noted that 2008 is the last year for which the most complete data are available and represents the highest level of support in recent years in biomedical and clinical sciences. "In contrast, 2008 support in the behavioral sciences declined from the 2004 level. Bringing the level of support in the behavioral and social sciences in 2008 up to the level in 2004 would require the addition of about 370 training slots at a cost of about \$15 million. Considering the importance of research in this area, a return to the previous level is essential." The committee pointed out that the "behavioral and social sciences receive considerably less training support than the other two major fields, but their role in the nation's health has become increasingly important."

According to the NRC committee, the lack of support may in part be due to the lack of a NIH institute that focuses exclusively on basic behavioral and social sciences research. It recognized that most of the current funding is "oriented toward the research areas of the categorical institutes, and this should continue since it links the behavioral and social sciences research to the missions of the institutes." It recommended, however, that "training programs in basic behavioral and social sciences that cut across

disease categories and age cohorts should be housed at NIGMS [National Institute of General Medical Sciences], which would be consistent with the NIGMS mandate." Additionally, the committee recommended that the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR), "given its disciplinary expertise," should cooperate in the effort. The committee acknowledged that "NIGMS will need funds and appropriate staff dedicated to this new effort.

The committee further recommends that training programs "in basic and traditional behavior and social sciences that bear specifically on particular diseases and specific age cohorts should be housed in all the relevant institutes and centers." Given both its disciplinary expertise and its role in connecting institutes and centers, OBSSR should cooperate in this effort as well.

The committee identified a number of other issues. The most pressing include: 1) the job situation for postdocs completing their training; 2) questions about the continued supply of international postdocs in an increasingly competitive world; 3) the need for equal, excellent training for all graduate students who receive NIH funding regardless of whether it is from the NRSA Program or through investigator-initiated (R01) support; and 4) the need to increase the diversity of trainees.

The committee pointed out that training grants "have been promoting diversity for 20 years." While the gender difference "has essentially disappeared for graduate students and, recently, even among postdocs," it is clear that "women continue to be less represented among tenure-track faculty in research-intensive universities."

Similarly, the committee points out, representation of ethnic and racial minorities in graduate programs has increased quite dramatically in biomedical research, yet "the appointment of minority groups to biomedical science tenure-track faculty positions has so far not followed this trend, and, indeed, minority representation in medical school basic science faculties has been static for 30 years."

According to the Committee, the issue of data collection repeatedly surfaced. The Committee underscored the need for a "modern recording and management system" which should be "implemented without delay."

National Research Center Conference Examines Teacher Issues

On January 14, the National Center for the Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER) held a conference on, *The Research Behind Race to the Top: Education Reform in an Age of Innovation*.

Race to the Top (RTTT), with over \$4 billion in funding, is a substantial and unprecedented investment in education reform by the Obama Administration. One area of intense focus is teacher improvement. That focus includes everything from boosting teacher retention and preparation, linking student achievement to teacher performance, and developing new teacher evaluation and compensation systems. All of this activity, much of it contentious, has come under the scrutiny of researchers, school districts and policy makers.

The last decade has also seen the development of longitudinal data systems with the capability of tracking individual students over time and allowing researchers and school districts to link student achievement to their teachers. There is growing interest among policymakers to use longitudinal data on student achievement to evaluate teachers. Washington, DC and other school districts have begun to use these data to evaluate teacher performance, and the District is also one of a handful of cities that have adopted compensation systems for teachers based on student performance. As a result of the federal Teacher Incentive Fund and RTTT, many more districts are expected to implement performance pay systems in the future.

Douglas Harris of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Tim Sass and Anastasia Semykina of Florida

State University, authors of a paper presented at the conference, *Value-Added Models and the Measurement of Teacher Productivity*, cautioned against going totally to such performance-based incentives. They argued: "Given the problems with the assumptions underlying commonly estimated value-added models, caution in using value-added measures of teacher productivity for high-stakes decisions would be advised, but it is still conceivable that there may be ways to use the information in conjunction with other measures to increase teacher productivity."

These authors also note that the implications of using longitudinal data systems go beyond the K-12 education system. As calls for accountability in the higher education system increase, the expansion of data collection and data systems of accountability are also under consideration to evaluate professors, universities and colleges. Such data could have drastic effects on widely touted school rankings and ultimately change how prospective students select universities and how universities teach undergraduates. The National Academies has a panel currently examining developing metrics for higher education (see Update, February 8, 2010)

As the current economic crisis hits the states, many school districts are confronting difficult choices. The financial crisis means many districts have no alternatives to laying off teachers. Currently, in most school districts layoffs are determined by teacher seniority. James Wyckoff of the University of Virginia, Donald Boyd and Hamilton Lankford, both from the University at Albany, and Susanna Loeb of Stanford, the authors of the policy brief, *Teacher Layoffs: An Empirical Illustration of Seniority vs. Measures of Effectiveness*, stressed that alternative approaches to teacher layoffs could substantially reduce the effects teacher reductions have on students.

Many school district leaders and policymakers are beginning to raise important questions about whether other criteria, such as measures of teacher effectiveness, should inform layoffs rather than a seniority-only system. According to the authors, there are several reasons to move beyond a seniority-only based approach. First, since salaries of new teachers are often much lower than those of veteran teachers, seniority based policies lead to more teacher firings, thus disrupting a greater number of classrooms and students. Second, staff reduction policies that do not consider effectiveness allow the retention of some ineffective veteran teachers while sacrificing recently hired effective teachers. Third, many districts recently have placed greater emphasis on the recruitment and retention of effective teachers, and seniority layoffs would undo all those efforts. Lastly, in many districts new teachers are concentrated in high poverty schools, seniority policies disproportionately affect the very students who are often in the most need of effective teachers regardless of their seniority.

Wyckoff and his colleagues contended that neither seniority nor measures of value-added to student achievement should be the sole criterion determining layoffs and call for the use of multiple measures of effectiveness. "Given the large differences found in our layoff simulation, developing fair and rigorous measures of teacher effectiveness are likely to pay important dividends. Measures that include a variety of approaches of assessing teacher effectiveness offer promise and should be carefully evaluated to better understand their strengths, weaknesses, and complementarities," they concluded.

In *Assessing the Determinants and Implications of Teacher Layoff*, Dan Goldhaber and Roddy Theobald of the University of Washington, described the findings from a Washington state study on the factors that predict teacher layoffs. They find a teacher's seniority is the greatest predictor of retention, but that it is not the sole factor. Teachers with a master's degree and teachers credentialed in high-needs areas, such as math, science, and special education, are less likely to receive a layoff notice than those who are not.

Teacher reductions based on effectiveness result in fewer layoffs, and are much more equitably distributed across student subgroups. Black students are far more likely to lose a teacher with seniority-based layoffs. Under an effectiveness based system Black students are only marginally more likely to have a teacher who is laid off. The authors' simulations demonstrated that these two systems would result in a very different distribution of teachers targeted for layoffs.

"Our findings are not terribly surprising to anyone who is familiar with seniority provisions in collective bargaining agreements: seniority clearly matters for teacher job security. In fact, while our results show that districts are protecting teachers in high-needs areas, the simulations illustrate that having more seniority in a district is far more important than having an endorsement in a hard to recruit or retain area," Goldhaber and Theobald summarized.

The Education Jobs and Medicaid Assistance Act (known as the "Edujobs bill") saved thousands of teacher jobs nationwide. However, with state budgets still in crisis, school districts will once again face steep budget cuts and the specter of massive teacher layoffs, this time with little hope of federal assistance. Districts, policymakers, and unions will have to determine how they will go about these unprecedented layoffs in a way that better serves students, teachers and their schools.

For more information on the conference and to read all the submitted papers please go to <http://www.caldercenter.org/>.

NSF Solicits Proposals for Large Multidisciplinary, Multi-Institutional Science and Technology Centers

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has issued a solicitation for its Science and Technology Centers Integrative Partnerships program that supports innovative, potentially transformative, complex research and education projects that require large-scale, long-term awards.

These STCs, according to NSF will conduct world-class research through partnerships among academic institutions, national laboratories, industrial organizations, and/or other public/private entities, and via international collaborations, as appropriate. They provide a means to undertake significant investigations at the interfaces of disciplines and/or fresh approaches within disciplines. STCs may involve any areas of science and engineering that NSF supports."

The partners comprising an STC must share an ambitious research vision or theme of national importance of sufficient scale and complexity to require the Center mode of support. NSF indicates that these partnerships may include multi-institutional collaborations or arrangements with other universities/colleges, national laboratories, research museums, private sector research laboratories, industrial organizations, state and local government laboratories, and international collaborations.

NSF expects that STCs to "foster excellence in education by integrating education and research, and by creating bonds between learning and inquiry so that discovery and creativity fully support the learning process." It also expects the Centers to "demonstrate leadership in the involvement of groups traditionally underrepresented in science and engineering at all levels (faculty, students, and postdoctoral researchers) within the Center."

In addition, the STCs "must undertake activities that facilitate knowledge transfer, i.e., the exchange of scientific and technical information with the objective of disseminating and utilizing knowledge broadly in multiple sectors. Examples of knowledge transfer include technology transfer with the intention of supporting innovation, providing key information to public policy makers, or dissemination of knowledge from one field of science to another."

The program should also promote organizational connections and linkages within and between campuses, schools and/or the world beyond (e.g., state, local, federal agencies, national labs, industry, international collaborations), capitalizing upon cyberinfrastructure to facilitate these linkages. They need to further science and/or engineering in service to society especially with respect to new research areas and promising new instrumentation and technologies.

NSF hopes to have \$30 million available for this competition to make up to six awards.

Preliminary proposals are due by **May 30, 2011**. The full proposal deadline is **February 03, 2012**. The awards will be made in June 2013.

For further information contact: Pamela O'Neil, (703) 292-8040, poneil@nsf.gov; Randy L. Phelps, (703) 292-8040, rphelps@nsf.gov; or Dragana Brzakovic, (703) 292-8040, dbrzakov@nsf.gov.

The full solicitation is available at: http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2011/nsf11522/nsf11522.htm?WT.mc_id=USNSF_25&WT.mc_ev=click

NSF Seeks to Stimulate Research Related to the Science of Broadening Participation

In a Dear Colleague letter, the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences' Division of Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences and Division of Social and Economic Sciences have established a goal for 2011 to stimulate research related to the Science of Broadening Participation (SBP).

According to the letter, "a Science of Broadening Participation will employ the cognitive, behavioral, social and economic sciences to inform approaches to broadening participation and will strengthen our national science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) capabilities and competitive advantage. Ultimately, the SBP can provide policy makers with the evidence needed for informed decisions."

In FY 2011, the two divisions will support research that utilizes the theories, methods and analytical techniques of the social, behavioral and economic sciences to better understand the barriers as well as factors that enhance our ability to broaden participation in STEM. The research NSF will support may identify from an empirical standpoint those strategies most likely to improve the representation and participation of women, minorities and persons with disabilities who are under-represented in STEM fields.

SBP involves the development and testing of theories aimed at discovering and understanding the causality, components and contingencies for social interactions and behavioral processes. The focus within SBP is on the psychological, sociological, behavioral and economic causes and consequences that are associated with effectively broadening participation. This is broader than concentrating on a particular program or policy as in program evaluation.

SBE posits that within the social, behavioral, and economic sciences, there is a rich tradition of research that can be used to inform the SBP. Investing in scientific research that informs the SBP involves almost all of the SBE sciences. Furthermore, because efforts to broaden participation in the natural and physical sciences have emphasized attracting students from underrepresented groups into the STEM "pipeline," there are unique opportunities for collaboration between scientists in these fields with those engaged in the actual science of broadening participation.

Prospective research proposals in the Science of Broadening Participation might be guided by the following types of research questions:

- *What role does geographic and demographic change play in the way that racial, ethnic and cultural groups interact socially at the individual, and group level?*
- *Under which conditions do social, economic and socio-legal factors influence recruitment and retention into STEM education at both the individual, meso and macro levels?*
- *What aspects of learning environments and workplace culture moderate the effects of the underrepresentation of minorities, women, and/or persons with disabilities?*
- *What data sources are needed for identifying and tracking the progress of underrepresented minorities in STEM fields, and for hypothesis testing, and how can we make them accessible to researchers?*

- *What approaches are successful in ensuring that women do not lose interest in science during adolescence?*
- *How do social, political, economic, psychological or other forces affect the identity and aspirations of underrepresented groups?*
- *How can an understanding of explicit and implicit attitudes held by both majority and minority individuals be useful in attempting to reduce prejudice and discrimination in the recruitment, and retention of underrepresented groups in STEM fields?*
- *What socio-cultural and developmental variables impact parental involvement in children's education, and what is the evidence that can be applied to affect these influences?*
- *What behavioral processes result in economic outcomes that are associated with success in STEM?*
- *What are the implications of linguistic relativity for interest and achievement in STEM?*

Scholars with research proposals that contribute to the Science of Broadening Participation should submit proposals to the most relevant standing programs of the SBE Directorate and designate the proposal as SBP by including "SBP" at the beginning of the proposal title. The SBE division web sites provide information about the standing programs: <http://www.nsf.gov/div/index.jsp?div=SES> and <http://www.nsf.gov/div/index.jsp?div=BCS>.

For more information contact: Kellina Craig-Henderson, 703-292-7023 or khenders@nsf.gov.

DBASSE Executive Director Sought

The National Research Council is actively seeking an Executive Director for the Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education (DBASSE). Robert Hauser has been Interim Director since Michael Feuer left the position in 2010.

According to the job announcement, the Executive Director is responsible for the intellectual, strategic, managerial, and financial leadership of the DBASSE, which is one of five divisions of the National Research Council the operating arm of the National Academies.

The Executive Director: establishes current and long-range objectives for the division; works with a division advisory committee for strategic planning; manages all aspects of the division's portfolio and staff; and works with individuals and organizations to secure financial support for the division's programs and projects. With the other four divisions, he/she supports the institution's leadership in management and policy making and reports to the Executive Officer of the National Research Council.

Recruitment for this position will continue until an outstanding candidate is identified. It is expected that the candidate selected will begin employment as DBASSE Executive Director no later than September 2011.

Nominations for this position should be sent to Robert Hauser at Rhauser@nas.edu.

Further information is available at: <http://tbe.taleo.net/NA4/ats/careers/requisition.jsp?org=NAS&cws=1&rid=6992>.

Search for New Director of Committee on Human Dimensions of Global Change

DBASSE is also searching for a new Director for its Committee on Human Dimensions of Global Change.

According to the job description, the Director in close collaboration with the Chair, senior staff, and

members of the Committee, provides intellectual leadership by identifying current and emerging issues of global change where social science research could clarify problems and lead to potential solutions; by developing workshops, conferences, and studies by separate panels of experts; and by seeking funds for these activities from federal government agencies and public and private foundations. The Director supervises the Committee's staff and represents the Committee in global change communities and before Congress, heads of government agencies, the media, and the public. The Director will need to have a keen interest in and broad knowledge of environmental social science and substantial experience working at the intersection of research, policy, and practice.

The applicant should possess a doctorate and ten years of related professional experience. He/she also needs demonstrated superior talents, skills, and abilities in networking and relationship building, project development and fundraising, communication and writing, and management and leadership, together with a willingness to work with distinguished scientists and policy makers in a team environment.

Further information is available at: <http://tbe.taleo.net/NA4/ats/careers/requisition.jsp?org=NAS&cws=1&rid=6960>.

COSSA Welcomes New Members

COSSA is pleased to announce that the **University of Delaware** and the **Vera Institute of Justice** have joined the Consortium. COSSA thanks them for their support and looks forward to working with them to promote attention to and federal funding for the social and behavioral sciences.

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