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COSSA Washington Update

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CENSUS DIRECTOR EXPRESSES CONCERN ABOUT IMPACT OF IMMIGRANTS' FEARS ON 2010 COUNT

Returning to his roots as a rural sociologist, U.S. Census Bureau Director Steve Murdock addressed the Rural Sociology Society (RSS) meeting in Manchester, NH on July 31. He told the group that the Bureau is "making progress" and is "on track" to a complete and accurate count in 2010.

However, he declared that post 9/11 "there is unprecedented fear in the U.S. immigrant community." This always hard-to-reach group in a Census that is constitutionally-mandated to count all people residing in the U.S., not just citizens, could present significant difficulties in completing the 2010 count. To overcome this, Murdock reported on the major effort going into partnerships with groups from that community and expressed his hope that by 2010 some of the current anti-immigrant fever "will die down." He noted that the response rate on the recently completed dress rehearsal was "disappointing."

Murdock indicated that he was confident Congress now understood the Bureau's funding needs and that the upcoming Continuing Resolution would include the necessary money to keep the ramp-up to 2010 moving forward.

Referencing the difficulties with the planned use of hand-held computers for non-response follow-up that have plagued the Bureau during 2008 (see Update, [April 21, 2008](#)), Murdock admitted that “we didn’t supervise the contractor very well” and the “contractor didn’t perform very well.” He suggested that this problem for the 2010 count was not unlike other problems that have plagued earlier decennials.

Asked about using the Internet to conduct the Census, an idea favored by two key Senators with oversight responsibility for the Bureau, Tom Coburn (R-OK) and Tom Carper (D-DE), Murdock maintained that “no decision” has been made. He noted that 60 percent of the Economic Census’ responses come via computer. However, there are still “security” concerns that need addressing, he admitted.

He concluded his remarks about the decennial by pointing out the short-form only nature of the 2010 Census. After all the negative press about the long form in 2000, Murdock maintained that “no politician wants it back.”

One reason that there is no long form in 2010 is that the Bureau now conducts the American Community Survey (ACS), which provides annual data based on a sample survey on many of the variables that were once on the long form. The Director called the ACS a “very good alternative to the long form” and noted the coming December 2008 release of three-year average data for large areas.

Murdock acknowledged some difficulties with the ACS, particularly for researchers on rural America who are concerned with the lack of data for small population areas. He indicated that there are no extra funds to increase the ACS sample size and urged RSS members to provide “constructive suggestions” to solve this problem as well as sampling error problems that have led to inconsistencies in the data. He worried about a “backlash” against the ACS from clients such as small-town mayors who might not take kindly to year-to-year contradictions in the data.

HIGHER EDUCATION ACT REAUTHORIZATION ENACTED

After five years of discussions and extensions, Congress has passed and the President has signed the first reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) since 1998. Although most of the HEA deals with Federal student aid, the legislation also includes many Federal programs affecting colleges and universities, including support for international education and foreign language studies and graduate education. The new law also has a number of provisions reflecting some of the policy controversies affecting higher education.

The Title VI International Education and Foreign Language Education programs are renewed pretty much intact for another six years. After much discussion about “bias” in these programs, Congress listened to the Coalition for International Education to which COSSA belongs and did not include an advisory board to monitor the programs. The new law does have provisions for the various components of Title VI asking grantees to explain how their activities “will reflect diverse perspectives and a wide range of views and generate debate on world regions and international affairs.” There are also provisions where applicants have to demonstrate how they will “encourage service in areas of national need as identified by the Secretary [of Education].” At the same time, Congress declared that “Nothing in this title shall be construed to authorize the Secretary to mandate, direct, or control an institution of higher education’s specific instructional content, curriculum, or program of instruction.”

Congress also wants the Secretary to consult and collaborate with other Federal agencies such as the Defense and State Departments and to report every two years on the areas of national need in foreign language and area and international studies, and how they relate to government, education, business, and nonprofit needs.

The Act creates the position of Deputy Assistant Secretary for International and Foreign Language Education appointed by and reporting to the Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education. Rep. Rush Holt (D-NJ) had sponsored a bill to establish a separate Assistant Secretary for International Education.

A new provision of Title VI creates a Science and Technology Advanced Foreign Language Education Grant program. Among the uses of the grants from this program is the development of an on-campus cultural awareness program where students can examine the science and technology developments in a non-English speaking country while also studying the foreign language. It also allows for immersion programs where students take science or technology related course work in a non-English speaking country.

The law reauthorizes the Jacob Javits Fellowship program that awards stipends to graduate students in the social sciences, humanities, and arts until 2014. It makes some minor changes to the provisions and sets the first year authorization at \$30 million, a big dream from its current appropriation of under \$10 million. The Thurgood Marshall Legal Educational Opportunity program is also extended. The services provided under the program are enhanced to

include help for middle and secondary school students interested in a possible legal career. The program is authorized at \$5 million in FY 2009.

Congress also instructed the Secretary to provide student loan forgiveness up to \$10,000 in seventeen areas of national need including: public interest legal services (including prosecution, public defense, or legal advocacy in low-income communities at a nonprofit organization), child welfare workers, and foreign language specialists.

The House accepted a Senate provision to establish a new program that authorizes the Secretary to award competitive grants to institutions of higher education to establish or strengthen programs that promote "(1) traditional American history; (2) the history and nature of, and threats to, free institutions; or (3) the history and achievements of Western Civilization."

Congress also expanded its Sense of the Congress resolution regarding the protection of student speech and association rights by saying that "(A) the diversity of institutions and educational missions is one of the key strengths of American higher education; (B) individual institutions of higher education have different missions and each institution should design its academic program in accordance with its educational goals; (C) an institution of higher education should facilitate the free and open exchange of ideas; (D) students should not be intimidated, harassed, discouraged from speaking out, or discriminated against; (E) students should be treated equally and fairly; and (F) nothing in this paragraph shall be construed to modify, change, or infringe upon any constitutionally protected religious liberty, freedom, expression, or association."

Finally, the bill: requires the Secretary to convene a summit on sustainability in higher education no later than September 30, 2010; requires the Secretary of Education to consult with the Secretary of Labor and the Attorney General to conduct a longitudinal study to assess the effects of correctional postsecondary education; asks for a Government Accountability Office study of bias in standardized tests; and reauthorizes the U.S. Institute of Peace.

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON THE FY 2009 BUDGET FOR NIH

On July 16, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) held its only hearing on the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) FY 2009 budget. Last year the Subcommittee held six hearings with each of the directors of the NIH 27 institutes and centers. Opening this year's hearing, Subcommittee Chair Tom Harkin (D-IA) noted that he "enjoyed those hearings immensely," and lamented the lack of opportunity to repeat the process. He "promise[d]" that he would do it 2009, reflecting his desire to "get back to that system."

Harkin opened the hearing by expressing appreciation to Francis Collins, National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), "for his extraordinary service." He observed his admiration of Collins for the ability to relate to his audience and not "talk down" despite his brilliance. He also pointed out Collins "13-year crusade to pass the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA)," which became law in May 2008.

Harkin highlighted the "good news" of the \$150 million included in the supplemental funding bill recently signed by the president. The amount, according to the Chairman, is enough to award an additional 246 new project grants, bringing the total for FY 2008 to more than 10,000. Despite the increase, he pointed out, "FY 2008 is the fifth year in a row that NIH funding failed to keep up with the cost of inflation. In fact, since the doubling period in fiscal year 2003, NIH funding has dropped by about ten percent in real terms." It "should be no surprise then that many young people are deciding against a career in biomedical research, putting this nation at risk of losing a generation of talented investigators," the Chairman remarked.

Harkin announced his and Ranking Member Senator Arlen Specter's (R-PA) intention to introduce a supplemental appropriations bill that would add \$5.2 billion appropriation for NIH in FY 2008, with \$1.2 billion designated for cancer research, "in line with the NCI's professional judgment bypass budget." In the meantime, Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-WV) released a proposed Second Supplemental stimulus package that would include \$500 million for NIH. Congress expects to consider this package when it returns in September.

'Predictability' of NIH Budget Is Very Important

NIH Director Elias Zerhouni provided the Subcommittee with his perspective about what has been the return on investment at NIH in terms of benefits to the public. Zerhouni stressed that "in parallel to the difficulties" the agency has to sustain momentum, there is an incredible opportunity that is facing the NIH that has come from the work of his

colleagues. He singled out the completion of the human genome. He also described what the NIH faces in terms of scientific challenge and the core issues, from a scientific standpoint, "that members of the subcommittee should focus on and help the [agency] address."

Zerhouni reiterated his message of predictive, personalized, preemptive and participatory medicine which is movement from what the NIH calls a "late intervention, reactive paradigm to an early intervention proactive paradigm." According to the NIH director, the advances of the last decade allows scientists to be more predictive "about exactly how disease develops, in whom it develops, and what are the markers that tell us that someone is susceptible to a disease process." Secondly, this allows for more personalization in the treatment of individuals... Individual variability means that that we have to tailor therapies to the individual." He observed that for the first time in history, "we can foresee an era where we can be preemptive," and act years before the disease strikes a patient. Participation, Zerhouni insisted is essential, citing Specter as example of a fighter and who has had success in battling his cancer. He stressed that this paradigm is the future of medicine and is the basis for the strategies the NIH uses to advance knowledge.

Discussing some of the discoveries around the genome and cancer, Zerhouni explained that we are "witnessing, right in front of us, a revolution of knowledge." The question is, he asked, are we going to be able to take advantage of it? He noted that to take advantage of this knowledge requires the NIH to "be extremely proactive, dynamic, flexible, and adaptive."

Responding to Harkin's question about what the Congress should be thinking about in terms of the growth of NIH funding, Zerhouni emphasized that "the predictability of the budget is very important." You "cannot sustain an enterprise where you have to have people commit their lives, their careers [without] some certainty that the budgets will be there to sustain them in their effort." In addition, "you have to have a reasonable success rate," he stated. Zerhouni stressed that a 30 percent success rate on average allows the NIH to maintain its competitiveness. "Medical research is a long-term process. You have to commit."

Harkin also inquired of the NIH Director's New Innovator Awards and whether the \$56 million provided last year, and the \$108 million included in the FY 2009 budget would be enough to support the system? According to Zerhouni, the NIH's data shows that the agency needs to fund approximately 3,000 new scientists a year. Right now NIH is below that number. However, no matter what the budget does, the agency needs to encourage risk taking, new ideas, innovation and new investigators, Zerhouni explained.

Referencing Zerhouni's testimony with regard to the advances in genomic research, Harkin asked Collins where we go from here with the Human Genome Project or with the Human Genome Institute. Collins beamed that it "is a glorious time in genome research." Despite this, none of the 19 projects his institute is currently managing are "going as rapidly as they could. We are constrained, not by talent, not by ideas, not by opportunities, but very much by the budgetary abilities we have to expand on these projects." There is more that we could be doing, he insisted. "One of the things we really need to understand more about, of course, is how the genetic risk factors interact with the environment. . . It is an interaction between those genetic risks and environmental exposures, such as diet and lifestyle and medical surveillance and whatever's in the air and the water that determines whether somebody is going get sick or not." Collins stressed that "we could modify those things, if we understood exactly who is at risk." Collecting the data to accomplish this feat, he told the Subcommittee, is "not trivial."

Anthony Fauci (National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases), Elizabeth Nabel (National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute), and John Niederhuber (National Cancer Institute) appeared before the Subcommittee with Zerhouni and Collins.

FY 2009 SENATE APPROPRIATIONS FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT: CORRECTED

The following story corrects an inaccurate report in the July 28, 2008 Update on the Senate Appropriations Committee action on the FY 2009 Agriculture and Rural Development funding bill. The earlier story erroneously used the FY 2008 Committee report. We apologize for the mistake and we will correct the Web-archived version of the story in the July 28th issue as well.

One of the last actions the Senate Appropriations Committee took before suspending its activity on the FY 2009 spending bills was to approve the Agriculture and Rural Development appropriations bill on July 18. The Committee recommended \$78.2 million for the Economic Research Service (ERS), slightly less than \$900,000 above the FY 2008 enacted level, but almost \$4 million below the President's request. In the Committee's report ERS was told to continue the implementation of the Organic Production and Market Data Initiative at "no less than the fiscal year 2008 level."

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) was allocated \$149.1 million, \$13 million below the FY 2008 enacted level and \$4.4 million below the requested amount. The Senate panel included \$37.3 million to complete the Census of Agriculture, which is ending its five-year cycle of funding. The report asks NASS to continue to “collect in-depth coverage on acreage, yield, production, inventory, production practices, sales and expenses, marketing channels, and demographics of the organics industry.”

The Committee recognized the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008’s (aka as the “Farm Bill”) reorganization of the Research, Education and Economics activity. The panel suggested it expects the reorganization to provide “management efficiencies, if not cost savings,” and wants the Department to supply baseline amounts for management funding levels for use in future comparisons.

The new Farm Bill combines the National Research Initiative Competitive Grants (NRI) program and the Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems into a new program called the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). The Committee provided \$200 million in FY 2009 spending for AFRI. This is \$9.1 million above the FY 2008 NRI funding level. IFAFS has not received any funding in recent years. The Committee report expressed its concern with the “falling behind” of funds for research on forestry and related natural resource topics. It directed the AFRI program to put a greater emphasis on funding research on these topics.

The panel also provided \$2.6 million in FY 2009 for Agriculture and Rural Policy Research, slightly less than FY 2008 funding. Of that total, \$1.2 million will go to the Food and Agriculture Policy Institute, \$890,000 to the Rural Policies Research Institute (RUPRI), and \$500,000 to the National Drought Mitigation Center.

The Senate panel did not accept the Administration’s proposal to move specific programs previously funded under the Integrated Activities account into the AFRI appropriation. The Committee recommended \$55.9 million for the Integrated Activities account, including \$1.3 million for the Regional Rural Development Centers.

Special grants are funded at \$50.7 million and include \$261,000 for the Center for Rural Studies in Vermont and \$221,000 for a Center for Public Land and Rural Economics at Utah State.

The Committee supports Hatch Act formula funding payments at \$205.6 million, about \$10 million more than FY 2008 and \$66.4 million above the President’s request. The Committee did not comment on the Administration’s proposal to increase the percentage of Hatch Act money that would go to nationally, competitively awarded, multi-state, multi-institutional projects.

CONGRESS HEARS ABOUT THE STATE OF SOCIAL WORK IN AMERICA

On July 29 the House Education and Labor Committee’s Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities, chaired by Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY), held a hearing on the state of social work in America in light of the recent economic downturn and the nation’s aging population. A diverse panel of social workers in various fields provided an overview of the profession, and perspectives on the state of the profession through the lenses of education, research, diversity, and on the- ground experience.

Surfacing amid the late 19th century, social work began when concerns about increasing poverty led people to question how to prevent and protect people from “falling through the cracks” in society. Jane Addams has been widely credited for the emergence of the profession, creating Chicago’s Hull House in 1889, the first settlement house in America.

“Social work is *the* helping profession,” said Gary Bailey associate professor at Simmons College of Social Work in Boston, Massachusetts. A professional social worker for over 30 years, Bailey has worked in many capacities including the fields of child welfare, gerontology and social work education.

Bailey contended that informing the public about the breadth and depth of the profession is important as it affects the public’s access to care, the ability of social workers to perform essential duties, and to impact important policy decisions. He clarified some of the misconceptions that have been used to define social workers over the years. “There is confusion among the public as there is not one typical social worker...social workers may work in traditional child welfare agencies or may hold public office as a member of Congress.”

The largest groups of mental health providers in the country, social workers play a critical role in our military efforts at home and abroad. The Department of Veterans Affairs is the largest employer of social workers in the nation with over 5,000 professional social work employees.

Michael Bird, public health consultant, testified that as the baby boomers continue to age, the need of social work services ranging from mental health and family counseling to health education, group programs and case management will increase. However some reports suggest the profession is not equipped to keep pace with this demand. For example, there are currently 30,000 licensed social workers working in the field of aging; however the National Institute on Aging projects that 60,000 to 70,000 social workers will be needed by 2010. "If schools of social work do not recruit young professionals and if we do not retain experienced social workers, the public will suffer from a lack of critical services," emphasized Bailey.

The most recent edition of the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook states that social work employment is expected to grow faster than average where a master's degree in social work or a related field has become standard for many positions. In 2006 there were 595,000 social workers and that number is projected to reach 770,000 by the year 2016.

A key component of recruitment and retention of professional social workers is their ability to earn comparable salaries. Increases in social work salaries have not kept pace with other professions such as teaching and nursing. A survey conducted by the John A. Hartford Foundation, Inc. found that between 1992 and 1999 the annual rate of wage growth for degree holding social workers was less than one percent. In addition, high educational debt is a concern of every graduating social work student.

Chairwoman McCarthy expressed her view on the economic challenges many social workers face citing "the average person's image of a social worker is someone who is very passionate about what they do in the face of challenging, difficult, and even horrific situations and whose work results in life changing experiences, all while being underpaid and underappreciated."

Recently, the National Association of Social Workers, the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research and the Council on Social Work Education (all COSSA members) have worked to secure student loan forgiveness legislation for social workers for many years (see HEA story in this issue). However, the social work community agrees that more work is necessary to protect the professionalism and increase the value of social workers.

CDC: NEW HIV INFECTIONS HIGHER THAN PREVIOUSLY ESTIMATED

According to a recent report released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 250,000 Americans are unaware they are HIV positive. Bernard Branson, associate director for Laboratory Diagnostics in CDC's division of HIV/AIDS prevention reported that the epidemic is changing, and that there is an increased proportion of cases that have been reported in heterosexual transmissions and among women.

Because many HIV infections are not diagnosed until years after they occur monitoring trends in new HIV infections has historically posed a major challenge. However, the updated findings are the result of a new sophisticated technology that can distinguish between both recent HIV infections and those that are long-standing. CDC has applied this advanced technology to develop the first national surveillance system of its kind that is based on

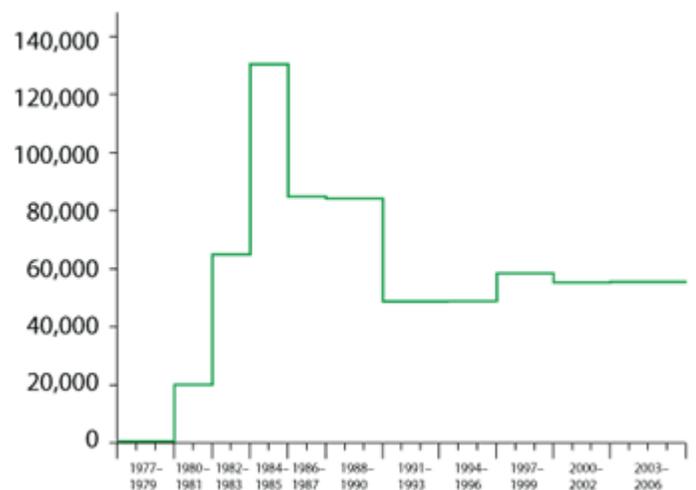


Figure 1. Estimated Number of New HIV Infections, Extended Back-Calculation Model, 1977-2006

direct measurement of new HIV infections. Based on an approach known as STARHS (serologic testing algorithm for recent HIV seroconversion), CDC's new HIV surveillance system uses innovative testing technology to determine, at the population level, which positive test results indicate new HIV infections (those that occurred within approximately the past 5 months).

Before the widespread availability of this technology, HIV diagnosis data provided the best indication of recent trends in key populations. However, diagnosis data indicate when HIV infection is diagnosed, not when a person becomes infected (infection can occur many years before a diagnosis). This new system represents a major advance in HIV surveillance and allows for more precise estimates of HIV incidence (the annual number of new infections) than ever before possible.

The study indicated that testing rates for HIV rose sharply from 1987 to 1997, but stalled between 2001 through 2006. Currently, about 40 percent of Americans aged 18 to 64 say they've been tested for HIV at least once. Branson said that efforts to test people who are in high-risk groups for HIV had been successful, but to reach the remaining 25 percent of Americans who are HIV positive but don't suspect it, efforts have to be quickly broadened.

Although the new estimates show that gay and bisexual men of all races and ethnicities and African American men and women are the groups most affected by HIV, the CDC study found that people with high risk factors (gay men, needle drug users, hemophiliacs, prostitutes and people with HIV-positive partners) were more likely to get tested than others. In the past year, 21.7 percent of African Americans who account for 49 percent of reported HIV/AIDS cases had been tested, compared with 12.6 percent of Latinos and 8 percent of whites.

Although the new numbers do not indicate an overall increase in annual infections, CDC researchers say the rate of new infections in the U.S. remains "unacceptably high." In 2006 the CDC recommended that HIV testing become part of routine medical care to alert those who are HIV positive and don't know. Sexually active gay and bisexual men are recommended to be tested for HIV at least once a year.

For more information on HIV incidence, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/surveillance/incidence.htm>.

POLITICAL SCIENCE GROUP ISSUES REPORT AND HOLDS BRIEFING ON GLOBAL INEQUALITIES

The American Political Science Association (APSA) recently issued a report *The Persistent Problem: Inequality, Difference, and the Challenge of Development* that was also the feature of a congressional briefing on July 24. Rep. David Price (D-NC), a political scientist, introduced the session with remarks that focused on his efforts as Chairman of the Democracy Assistance Commission. The Commission works to strengthen legislatures in emerging democracies such as Eastern Europe, Kenya, East Timor and Kosovo.

Professor John Echeverri-Gent of the University of Virginia chaired the APSA Task Force that produced the report. Former APSA President Susanne Hoerber Rudolph of the University of Chicago convened the task force. Echeverri-Gent presented an overview during the Hill briefing.

The report, he noted, highlights the "complex, multidimensional nature of inequality in the era of globalization." Despite the economic rise of nations such as China and India, the report claims that "absolute inequality between the richest and poorest countries is greater than ever before in history." Under these conditions of high inequality, the report suggests, both international and within-country elites "create socially suboptimal institutions and policies and resist changes that promote development, but would threaten their dominance."

This inequality, the report contends, leads to persistent problems for the world. First, international economic inequality enables powerful countries to shape the growth of global markets in ways that limit the benefits that globalization might bring to poorer countries. Second, economic inequality within developing countries often enable elites to establish policies and institutions yielding patterns of development that disproportionately favor their own interests and allow them to resist institutional changes. Third, disparities in status within nations may produce hierarchies that empower elites to establish institutions that discriminate against, and marginalize, weaker groups, often provoking resistance that leads to violent conflict. Rapidly improving communications and transportation technologies are increasing people's awareness of inequality thus exacerbating the problem, according to the report.

The task force offered no universal policy prescriptions. It suggested that international institutions, to retain their legitimacy and effectiveness, need heightened accountability to poor countries. The report maintains that democracy

and capitalism offer the promise of alleviating inequality in developing countries. However, democracy and capitalism flourish best “only if the peoples of those nations can develop economic and political institutions that reflect their own histories and cultures.” “Effective change will be interactive, not imposed,” the report concluded. This was a position that Rep. Price also strongly endorsed in his introductory remarks to the briefing.

Carol Lancaster of Georgetown University’s Mortara Center for International Studies led a trio of commentators at the briefing. She wondered how some countries have managed economic growth while inequality persists. She also suggested that the source of the inequality may differ. For example, she asserted that in Africa inequality stemmed from political disputes, whereas in Latin America land distribution policies were to blame. As always, she noted, better education and improved health, were the keys to moving people out of poverty. She declared that inequality and poverty were not the same and that focusing on improving the latter is doable, whereas inequality was inevitable.

John Williamson of the Peterson Institute for International Economics disputed the report’s finding that inequality among nations has grown during the past forty years. He argued that world economic differentiation peaked in 1980 and has fallen ever since with the rise of China and India a key contributor to that decline. He did not dispute, however, that it is still a problem. Solutions are difficult, Williamson said, because nationalism remains very important. He noted the withdrawal of certain less-developed-countries from the latest WTO bargaining because of their desire to protect native producers through discriminatory tariffs. He also raised the issue of why inequality persists despite democracy? To affect change, Williamson posited the question: How do previously marginalized groups organize to assert their rights?

Philip Keefer, a research economist at the World Bank, focused on the domestic political influences in poor countries that foster inequality. He also noted that poor countries, for the most part, have grown more slowly than rich countries thereby producing more divergence. He worried about the global financial situation sensing that poor countries are more vulnerable in future crises. He stressed the importance of capital access, which is another problem for poor nations. Finally, Keefer argued for improved civil society without which poor nations’ political systems will still harbor uninformed electorates that continue in power leaders who promote disparities.

For a copy of the full report go to: www.apsanet.org/~globalinequality.

NSF SOLICITS PROPOSALS AS PART OF PROJECT MINERVA

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has issued a program solicitation for research proposals under the rubric of the “Social and Behavioral Dimensions of National Security, Conflict and Cooperation.” Letters of intent for small or large awards, but not workshops, are due September 30, 2008.

The solicitation follows the Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Defense (DOD) and NSF (see Update, [July 14, 2008](#)). The new NSF-based program seeks to further implement the Minerva Project initiated by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates (see Update, [April 7, 2008](#)). An earlier solicitation from the Army Research Office remains on the streets (see Update, [June 16, 2008](#)).

According to the new solicitation, the NSF and the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy are working to jointly: 1) develop the DOD’s social and human science intellectual capital in order to enhance its ability to address future challenges; 2) enhance the DOD’s engagement with the social science community; and 3) deepen the understanding of the social and behavioral dimensions of national security issues. These reflect the goals of Minerva outlined in Gates’ speech in April.

The current competition will include new programs of research, scholarly papers, conferences, publications, and research and data archives. All work funded through the NSF solicitation will be unclassified and with no constraints on researchers’ freedom to publish their results.

Specific topics for consideration by grant seekers are:

- 1) **New Approaches to Understanding Dimensions of National Security, Conflict, and Cooperation**, including new theories and models to address the security challenges of the 21st Century;
- 2) **Studies of Terrorist Organization and Ideologies**, including the interaction of political dynamics on the ground and terrorist goals and ideologies;

3) **Studies of the Strategic Impact of Religious and Cultural Change**, including historical projects that explain the relevance of findings to contemporary and strategic contexts; and

4) **Studies of Political, Cultural, and Social Dynamics Under Authoritarian Regimes**, including changes during transitions to and from dictatorial rule.

These resemble, but are broader than, the more specific topics of the Army Research Office solicitation.

Assuming the availability of funds, DOD will provide NSF with \$8 million to support 10 to 15 awards. The NSF expects to make one to five Workshop awards at \$50,000 to \$150,000 for one year; eight to ten Small Grant awards up to \$500,000 for two to three years; and one to three Large Grant awards up to \$2 million per year for three to five years. NSF will use its merit review system to evaluate the proposals. **The full proposal deadline is October 30, 2008.**

For further information contact: Amber Story at 703/292-7249 or astory@nsf.gov or Jonathan Leland at 703/292-7285 or jleland@nsf.gov.

The full solicitation is available at: http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=503294&org=NSF&from=home

NIH SEEKS PROPOSALS USING SYSTEMS SCIENCE METHODOLOGIES TO PROTECT AND IMPROVE POPULATION HEALTH

There is a growing recognition that most major threats to the public's health - including cardiovascular disease, pulmonary disease, cancer, diabetes, mental health problems, HIV, substance abuse, violence, emerging infectious diseases, obesity, sedentary lifestyle, poor diet, sleep disorders, and more - are complex in the sense that each one arises from an intricate mix of behavioral, economic and social factors interacting with biological factors as well as each other, over the lifespan and across an array of settings.

Given that approximately 50 percent of premature deaths and 70 percent of chronic illnesses in the U.S. are preventable by changing behavioral risk factors and the related social and physical systems necessary to achieve and sustain those changes, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), led by the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) are seeking research proposals ([PAR-08-224](#)) designed to tackle a "policy resistant" health problem. Such a problem is defined as one "in which the effects of planned interventions, policies, or programs, tend to be delayed, diluted or defeated by responses of the systems to the intervention/program/policy itself."

Most of the problems related to human health and disease are dynamically and relationally complex. System science methodologies provide a way to address complex problems while taking into account the "big picture" and context of such problems. These methodologies can also be used to refine and reform systems of care to enable planners to identify impediments to implementing proven innovations in everyday treatment and prevention practice.

Examples of research topics wanted include, but are not limited to:

- Projects that address policy resistant problems from an ecological perspective, especially where they study vulnerable groups such as children, women, and the elderly as well as on the socioeconomically disadvantaged and racial and ethnic minorities at high risk of obesity, cancer, and other chronic diseases.
- Projects that address policy resistant problems that are affected by or become apparent as development occurs over the lifespan. For example, projects might show how psychological development influences the trajectory of one or more health problems or health disparities.
- Projects that address policy resistant problems related to the ways in which families may influence the health trajectories of their children as well as biological and familial selection effects; clarifying the reciprocal relationship between families (e.g., parental choices and behaviors, parenting styles) and child health where the outcome can inform policy/program decisions.
- Projects that address policy resistant problems related to the connection between infectious diseases and chronic diseases/risk factors for chronic diseases within individuals, families, and communities, and the trajectories of development of these diseases over time.
- Projects that address policy resistant problems related to health behaviors that seem to cluster as there may be common causal pathways or complex interrelationships between them. For example, projects could examine

how tobacco use is associated with other risk behaviors (poor diet and nutrition, physical inactivity, substance abuse, etc.) and how these associations serve to undermine effective interventions, programs, or policies.

- Projects that address policy resistant problems and improve our understanding of the factors that influence the effectiveness of policies designed to influence the adoption of lifestyle behaviors such as skin cancer prevention practices, obesity prevention, physical activity, and/or dietary options in various settings (worksites, senior citizen centers, schools, faith based organizations, etc.). For example, such projects could develop models or produce network analyses to aid in determining how and with whom to intervene in a person's social network to best encourage healthy lifestyle behaviors. In addition, projects could examine the impact of age on the degree of policy resistance; for example, older adults might (falsely) perceive the benefits of exercise as diminishing and therefore be more resistant to behavior change.
- Projects that address policy resistant problems related to multilevel factors that affect screening (e.g., for cancer, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, stroke, alcohol abuse, or any other disease or risk factor) and the multilevel causal pathways through which these factors ultimately influence screening behavior and health outcomes. Proposals could consider economic and practical trade-offs among access to care, type and scope of service (e.g., penetration of managed care), quality of care, and cost containment to increase appropriate screening behavior, and prevent or improve health outcomes.
- Projects that address policy resistant health problems as they relate to oral health and disease. For example, projects that seek to identify ways to optimize the implementation of oral health care programs, policies, or interventions in special populations, or address barriers to such optimal care. This may include clarifying the fit between the beliefs and values of special populations and the modes of oral health care available to these populations; testing the contribution of individual, family and community factors to oral hygiene and to professional oral health practices.
- Projects that address policy resistant problems related to social insurance systems and tax policy on retirement and savings behavior.
- Projects that address policy resistant problems related to alcohol-related behaviors and the associated complex interactions of individual, biological, social, and environmental factors as determinants of these behaviors and their outcomes in specific population groups or contexts. Also, projects could address the adoption (or lack of adoption), outcomes, or effectiveness of specific preventive, treatment, or ameliorative interventions, programs, or policies that target alcohol-related behaviors.

Institutes and Centers participating in the announcement include: Fogarty International Center (FIC); Child Health and Human Development (NICHD); Cancer (NCI); Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM); Heart, Lung and Blood (NHLBI); Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS); Mental Health (NIMH); Aging (NIA); Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA); Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR); Drug Abuse (NIDA); Office of Disease Prevention (ODP), and the Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS). For more information see: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-08-224.html>

FOGARTY INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH COLLABORATION – BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Led by the Fogarty International Center (FIC), the National Institutes of Health (NIH) seeks proposals for its “Fogarty International Research Collaboration – Behavioral and Social Sciences (FIRCA-BSS) Research Award.” The award is designed to facilitate collaborative behavioral and social sciences research between scientists supported by the NIH and investigators in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC).

In addition to responding to a number of goals in the new FIC strategic plan, the main objectives of the FIRCA program are to: (1) support collaborative research efforts between NIH-funded scientists and LMIC scientists on research of high scientific merit, relevant to global health and of mutual interest and benefit; and (2) help build research capabilities and foster further sustained and productive research and research collaborations at the LMIC site (see Update, July 16, 2008).

Participating NIH institutes and Centers include: Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), Cancer (NCI), Aging (NIA), Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD), Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR), Drug Abuse (NIDA), Environmental

Health Science (NIEHS), Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH), Heart, Lung and Blood (NHLBI), and the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR). Supporters of the funding opportunity announcement intend to fund ten to twenty applications.

For more information see: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-08-223.html>

NIDDK SEEKS PLANNING GRANTS

The National Institute of Diabetes's and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), on behalf of the NIH Genes, Environment and Health Initiative (GEI) seeks Implementation Planning Grant applications that propose to plan for multi-center research on:

- 1) educational and communication initiatives for health care providers and consumers regarding interpretation of and findings from genetic studies of common diseases and the results of their dissemination; and
- 2) behavioral or psychosocial aspects of clinical application of genetic findings.

As the number of reported gene variants associated with common diseases increases, it has become increasingly evident that the new knowledge has not been used widely in clinical practice. The FOA stresses that little is known about the implications of the dissemination of such data, or the psychological and behavioral responses of patients or providers to such information, "especially given the concerns raised in the academic literature as well as in the popular press regarding the use and implications of 'personal genetic' testing or information." As a result, practitioners may be hesitant to use new data from genetic studies of common diseases in addressing concerns of treating individual patients.

The Genes and Environment Initiative is a four-year, NIH-wide program with the long-range goal of determining the etiology of common diseases by focusing on genetic and environmental factors that increase the risk of these diseases, and the interaction among these factors. The FOA for the Genes and Environment Initiative Implementation Planning Grants for Educational, Behavioral or Social Studies for Translation of Genetic Factors in Common Diseases is designed to focus on translational clinical studies of educational initiatives for patients and practitioners that incorporate genetic findings. It is intended to facilitate the development of materials, infrastructure, and perhaps, crucial pilot data in preparation for a large clinical study.

For more information see: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-DK-8-003.html>.

EDITOR'S NOTE: UPDATE TAKES A VACATION

Like Congress, *UPDATE* will take a recess during the month of August. We will return September 08, 2008

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1522 K Street, NW, Suite 836
Washington, D.C. 20005
Phone: (202) 842-3525; Fax: (202) 842-2788

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