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# COSSA Washington Update

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## COSSA RELOCATES

After nineteen years at its current address, on OCTOBER 11, 2008 COSSA will be moving.

The new mailing address is:

1701 K Street, N.W.  
Suite 1150  
Washington, DC 20006

Our phone number: 202-842-3525, and our Fax Number: 202-842-2788 will remain the same.

Our email address [cozza@cozza.org](mailto:cozza@cozza.org) and all staff email addresses will remain the same.

## ZERHOUNI TO END TENURE AS DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH



Source: NIH

National Institutes of Health (NIH) director Elias Zerhouni has announced his plans to step down at the end of October 2008. Zerhouni has served as the agency's director since May 2002. "I have had the privilege of leading one of the greatest institutions in the world for six and a half years. NIH's strength comes from the extraordinary commitment and excellence of its people in serving a noble mission," said Zerhouni. He indicated that in the immediate future he intends to pursue writing projects and explore other professional opportunities

A physician-scientist and world-renowned leader in radiology research, Zerhouni's tenure saw an increased attention to the social and behavioral sciences. In 2002, early in his term, Zerhouni met with representatives of social and behavioral science organizations. At the meeting, he emphasized the need for balance in the NIH research portfolio and explained that his agency was confronting a "new frontier." He also acknowledged that at the same time NIH was facing "a challenge in the social and behavioral sciences." He further expressed his view that "discoveries cannot be made without interdisciplinary teams and multidisciplinary studies." According to Zerhouni, the challenge over the next 25-50 years is

to modify the spectrum of diseases that will increase the already large health care burden the U.S. will confront if it does not address this reality. He placed emphasis on the fact that the disease burden would become an ever-larger part of health care spending. The director also stressed that "We cannot ignore the behavioral and social sciences." Adjusting to the Washington culture of having to break a complex issue down to one sentence, Zerhouni simplified his message into what he calls the four Ps - predictive, personalized, pre-emptive (prevention), and participation (see Update, [July 10, 2006](#)).

While all of the attention to the social and behavioral sciences during Zerhouni's tenure was not necessarily by design, it was, in some instances, required. Barely a year into his leadership of the NIH, the director was confronted in the summer of 2003 by a congressional attack, led by the House Republican Study Committee, on peer-reviewed grants pertaining to sexual behavior and health research supported by the agency. Perhaps reflecting a background not grounded in the social and behavioral sciences, Zerhouni ordered a comprehensive review of the NIH's grant portfolio in this area.

At COSSA's annual meeting in November 2003, the NIH Director explained that he questioned the validity of investigating one area of research over another. He acknowledged his desire to answer the unfounded congressional assertions and noted that he would continue to defend the peer review process. "When the criticism is based on ideology, we have a problem," he declared. Reiterating the comments he made at an [October 2, 2003](#) hearing, Zerhouni explained that he stood behind the peer-review process, the process needed to be transparent, and the agency needed to take good stewardship of taxpayers' dollars. Adamant that he would continue to defend the research, he took umbrage at those who likened the support of this research to the controversy in the past over the funding of certain art projects that were considered objectionable. "AIDS kills, art doesn't," he asserted. "Sexual dysfunction kills families." The agency argued that the funding of this research would have a beneficial impact and that the NIH would "prevail because there is public health relevance."

In January 2004, NIH responded to the congressional attacks with a letter that underscored that when the agency "looked at the public health relevance, there was no question that these projects should have been funded and should continue to be funded." "While the defense of this research at the time seemed to come in a too deliberate manner for those defending the value and contributions this research has and can make to improving overall public health, hindsight allows one to see that in the end NIH's comprehensive review provided a written record of the scrutiny, followed by the unequivocal support of this very important research to public health," reflected Angela Sharpe, deputy director for health policy for COSSA and co-chair of the Coalition to Protect Research (CPR). [CPR is a coalition of social, behavioral and biomedical science organizations as well as patient groups and women's health organization to support the NIH's peer review process (<http://www.cossa.org/CPR>)].

### "The Importance of Social and Behavioral Science Research"

Zerhouni also acknowledged at COSSA's 2003 annual meeting "the importance of behavioral and social science research," (BSSR). He declared that BSSR "is clearly outlined in the mission of the agency," which is "the pursuit of fundamental knowledge and application of that knowledge to extend healthy life and reduce the burden of illness and disability." "There isn't a component of health that I can think of that does not have a social and behavioral science

component to it." He recognized, however, BSSR "is not yet fully integrated to the extent that it should be." He argued that it was impossible for him to see how a laboratory discovery can get translated without that modulation function . . . of how do you then send the behavioral message, how do you understand behavior and how do you understand the social context in which this occurs." He challenged the social and behavioral science community to help break down existing artificial barriers among scientists through the training and development of a new interdisciplinary workforce. Zerhouni maintained that whenever you have a transition in science, whenever you have transition in health challenges and disease burdens, you need to make sure that the balance and integration are there; something that the NIH Roadmap tries to address.

Despite his declaration of the value of social and behavioral science research, throughout Zerhouni's tenure and prior to his taking the helm of NIH, Congress has repeatedly expressed its interest in basic behavioral science research at NIH. Specifically, the issue surrounds establishing a program for a basic behavioral science program at the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS). In 2004, Zerhouni convened an ad-hoc workgroup of distinguished experts to conduct a review of basic behavioral research at the NIH. The panel issued its report in December 2004. To complete its charge, the Working Group reviewed the current behavioral and social sciences basic research portfolio at NIH. The group found a number of "strong and vibrant programs that contribute to basic scientific knowledge," and discovered that "many other NIH institutes do not support much, if any, basic behavioral and social sciences research."

Zerhouni responded to the report by noting that he felt "very uncomfortable" with the "specific structural recommendations" made by the Working Group because they are "always a prescription." He related that the Group seemed to address a gap that is being ignored. But the issue, according to Zerhouni, is that whenever you have such a gap, an opportunity cost analysis must be done relative to the portfolio. He pondered to what extent the NIH could have a "deeper look into this issue" because the question of undifferentiated basic BSSR was "difficult" for him to understand in terms of the total NIH portfolio. The concept of having a portfolio analysis, however, is one that resonates with him, he stated. In the end, Zerhouni argued that from the standpoint of NIH the agency recognized "the importance of behavioral factors." If you look at disease burden, 50 percent of it is driven by interaction between biology and behavior. Pointing out that at the time NIH was proceeding into an era of tight budgetary constraints, he explained that doing "something new" would require scaling down another program. He ultimately concluded that the NIH needed "to have a deeper look at what we need to accomplish" (see Update, [December 13, 2004](#)).

It was also under Zerhouni's tenure (2006) that the NIH celebrated the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research's (OBSSR) tenth anniversary. At the two-day NIH celebration of the OBSSR, Zerhouni expressed his satisfaction at having had the privilege of recruiting then director David B. Abrams to the OBSSR and having "enticed" Raynard Kington, former OBSSR director, to become his deputy. He stressed that he "value[d] the leadership" both had demonstrated. At that meeting, Zerhouni also emphasized that: What was needed was the provision of the "scientific base and the scientific evidence to provoke change at a profound level and not provoke change at the margins." He acknowledged that it would be a challenge because "our ideas and our ability to see a new organization for health are actually limited because there are a lot of barriers between disciplines." An interdisciplinary approach, he argued once again, was necessary and the social and behavioral sciences would have an important role (see Update, [July 10, 2006](#)).

### Key Accomplishments

As NIH director, Zerhouni launched new programs to encourage high-risk innovative research, including the Director's Pioneer Awards and the New Innovator Awards. The agency focused on the need to support new investigators and foster their independence through the creation of the Pathway to Independence Awards. Also, during his tenure, Zerhouni worked to encourage trans-NIH collaborations and to lower the barriers between disciplines of science. Examples of this effort include the NIH Strategic Plan for Obesity Research and the Neuroscience Blueprint.

As NIH funding remained relatively flat, after the completion of the doubling of the budget in FY 2003, Congress did buy into Zerhouni's trans-NIH approach and increased the funding of the Office of the Director significantly. This confidence was also reflected in the passage of the NIH Reform Act of 2006. After three years of effort by the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health chaired by Rep. Joe Barton (R-TX), the NIH was reauthorized (see Update, [December 12, 2006](#)). For the NIH director, the agency's third omnibus reauthorization in history and its first since 1993 signaled a renewed appreciation by the Congress in the NIH's mission and its leadership.

On the other hand, Zerhouni and the Congress were not always in total agreement. Congress rebuffed the NIH's repeated attempts to zero out funding for continuation of the National Children's Study (NCS), a study the Congress mandated. Not only did the Congress provide the necessary funding to keep the NCS on schedule, it moved the funding for the study to the Office of the Director. Originally, support for the Study was part of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development's budget which has the primary responsibility for planning and implementing the study along with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences.

Resolving NIH's conflict of interest policy is another area that Congress insisted that the NIH address. Congress, particularly Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA), scrutinized and denounced the agency's lenient oversight of its researchers' roles as consultants. In the wake of several high profile instances of conflict-of-interest by NIH-funded individuals, Zerhouni, per the recommendations of a Blue Ribbon Panel, instituted stricter limits on the agency's employees. The goal, according to the NIH director, was to create transparency, a theme that ran through Zerhouni's tenure.

Zerhouni also dared, without reprisal, to disagree with the strict restrictions imposed by the Bush Administration on the federal funding of stem-cell research. Such public divergence was rare in an Administration that appeared to dole out consequences for those who dared to stray from its position.

Transparency was also the goal behind the NIH's creation of the Research, Condition, and Disease Categorization (RCDC) system in response to Congressional and public demand for clarity and accessibility when it came to disease funding. The RCDC utilizes a computer-based tool that applies a uniform process of accounting for NIH funding for disease and conditions. The process produces a list of grants underlying and supporting the dollar amounts for each reporting area. The NIH plans to unveil the first RCDC reports as part of the release of the President's 2010 budget request.

The NIH also increased its effort to reach out to the public. In 2007, the agency issued a Request for Applications for a Partners in Research Program designed to support studies of innovative ways to increase science literacy, improve public understanding of health research and engage the public through community-based organizations.

Zerhouni's other accomplishments as director includes:

- The NIH Roadmap launched by Zerhouni to address the explosion of new knowledge in the biomedical sciences and the growing challenges in public health.
- Trans-NIH Collaborations - Drawing from a "common fund" of money, NIH's 27 Institutes and Centers (ICs) collaborate on initiatives that are essential to the advancement of biomedicine, initiatives that no single IC are able to undertake alone.
- Transformative RO1 Program (T-R01) - Launched in September, the program is designed to provide support for individual scientists or collaborative investigative teams who propose transformative approaches to major contemporary challenges. The program is a High Risk/High Reward Demonstration Project with support from the NIH Common Fund. The Science of Behavior Change is highlighted as a research area where research proposals are encouraged (see Update, [June 18, 2008](#) and [September 22, 2008](#)).

Zerhouni also instituted organizational reforms designed to make NIH more responsive to changes and challenges of managing the NIH. These changes included:

- The formation of the NIH Steering Committee with a rotating membership of ten directors from the 27 ICs to provide strategic direction to the agency and streamline its decision making-process (see Update, [July 28, 2003](#)).
- The appointment of the Science Management Review Board required by the NIH Reform Act of 2006 (see Update, [September 22, 2008](#))
- The formal review of and announcement of major changed to the NIH's peer review system (see Update, [June 18, 2008](#)).
- The expansion and acceleration of public access to published articles resulting from NIH-funded research.

While no announcement has been made, it is expected that NIH's Deputy Director Raynard Kington will serve as Acting Director until a new director is appointed by the next Administration.

## CONTINUING RESOLUTION KEEPS GOVERNMENT AGENCIES FUNDED

In the midst of the financial meltdown and rescue debate, on October 1, fiscal year (FY) 2009 began. In the week leading up to the new year, Congress passed and the President signed a Continuing Resolution (CR) that will fund most government programs at FY 2008 levels until March 6, 2009. Congress managed to fold into the CR three regular FY 2009 appropriations bills. These will provide full FY 2009 funding for the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, and Veterans' Affairs as well as the military construction budget.

The CR funds agencies such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) at their regular FY 2008 appropriations' bill levels. This means that the CR does not include the extra \$150 million for NIH and the additional \$62.5 million for NSF from the Supplemental Appropriations legislation.

Congress created an exception for the Census Bureau, which received its full FY 2009 requested level of \$2.635 billion and the additional \$546 million supplemental request. This will allow the Bureau to continue its preparations for the 2010 count with the additionally requested funds used to rectify the problem of changing the non-response follow-up from handheld computers back to paper (see Update, [April 21, 2008](#)).

In the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations bill, Congress provided close to a \$200 million increase for research and development. The Human Factors division of the Science and Technology Directorate received \$12.5 million, same as the request and slightly down from FY 2008. However, the \$7 million earmark from last year's bill is gone. Congress gave the University Programs account \$50.3 million to fund the Centers of Excellence and the Fellowship and Scholarship programs, an increase of almost \$1 million above FY 2008 enacted, but \$5 million over the request. Within this funding \$36.7 million is for the Centers of Excellence and \$2 million supports an ongoing Memorandum of Agreement with the Naval Postgraduate School.

Congress provided \$1.842 billion for funding basic research at the Department of Defense, a 12.7 percent increase over FY 2008, and eight percent above the Administration's request. Given Defense Secretary Robert Gates' interest in reconnecting DOD with the social and behavioral sciences (see Update, [April 7, 2008](#)), some of the increases should go to scientists from these disciplines.

When the new Administration and Congress convene in 2009, they will move to produce full FY 2009 budgets for those agencies in the CR. Democratic Congressional leaders, hoping to be working with a President Obama, promise a return to "regular order" next year with the appropriations process completed before the new fiscal year starts. If they are working with a President McCain, who promises to cut spending, particularly congressional earmarks, next year's process could be as "irregular" as this and many other recent years.

## NSF ANNOUNCES SEARCH FOR NEW SBE LEADER

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has announced a search for a new Assistant Director (AD) for the Social, Behavioral and Economic directorate (SBE). David Lightfoot has served in the position since May 2005 and under Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) rules must leave in May 2009.

Jeremy A. Sabloff, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania and former director of its Archaeology Museum, will head the search committee.

SBE is one of seven NSF directorates and the AD serves a key member of NSF's senior management team. The SBE directorate consists of three divisions: Social and Economic Sciences (SES), Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences (BCS), and Science Resources Statistics (SRS). SES and BCS support fundamental research on human behavior, interactions, and social and economic systems, organizations and institutions. The SRS division collects and analyzes data on the human and institutional resources vital to the nation's science and engineering infrastructure.

Nominations and recommendations should be sent to: AD/SBE Search Committee, email: [sbesrch@lists.nsf.gov](mailto:sbesrch@lists.nsf.gov) or by regular mail to: National Science Foundation, Office of the Director, Suite 1205, 4201 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22230. NSF would like to hear from you by November 15, 2008.

## ACADEMY REPORT RECOMMENDS UPGRADING FOR HUD'S POLICY AND RESEARCH OFFICE

The Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R) has undergone tough times in the past two decades. Its budget has declined, its focus has scattered from its core functions, and its ability to fulfill its research support and data collection mission has deteriorated. A National Academies' panel charged with evaluating the Department's research plan has produced its report: *Rebuilding the Research Capacity at HUD*. At a briefing on September 24, panel chair John Weicher, former HUD Assistant Secretary for PD&R, outlined the Committee's conclusions.

The major recommendation was that the HUD Secretary “should refocus PD&R’s responsibilities on its core mission of policy development, research and data collection.” It should, Weicher and his colleagues maintained: conduct regular, rigorous evaluations of all major HUD programs; develop a more systematic internal research agenda; produce enhanced surveys more closely related to programs and more publicly available administrative data sets; and disseminate its research products more effectively. They urged Congress to: include a small portion of HUD program appropriations to support evaluation; work with PD&R to conduct more large-scale, high-impact studies that answer basic policy questions; and help to reverse the decline in staff levels and resources.

Regarding this last point, the Committee also made clear that “many of PD&R’s problems stem from the erosion of its budget; and that the office cannot accomplish the recommendations presented here without resources for additional well-trained research staff, data collection, and external research.” Weicher suggested that the lack of resources has produced many “missed opportunities” for the Office.

In discussing the PD&R’s external research program, the Committee examined the large-scale, high-impact studies, such as an evaluation of the Moving to Opportunity program, and found that only four of these were undertaken in the past decade. Intermediate scale projects such as an evaluation of the Mark-to-Market program have been generally quite good, the panel concluded, but only 17 had been supported in the last decade. Small studies, including exploratory research and dissertation support have been hurt by declining funding. Over the decade Congress has asked PD&R to support technology in housing programs that have often been more than 25-30 percent of the research budget. That has changed recently as the Partnerships for Advanced Technology in Housing (PATH) has become a collaboration with NSF.

In the last decade PD&R staff conducted 60 studies in-house. These were near-term studies for policy purposes. After reviewing 29 of them, the Committee concluded: “PD&R researchers displayed deftness in the selection, merging and manipulation, and analysis of a wide range of program-specific administrative databases and public-use surveys.”

Since policy development is also part of the office’s title and responsibility, PD&R, the Committee declared, has a “unique role” to provide independent analysis to the HUD Secretary on policy proposals. The panel also indicated that PD&R is “not the only participant in the process.” They further noted that PD&R’s role has been limited by its lack of presence in HUD’s overall budget preparation and deliberation process; an oversight the Committee recommended correcting.

With regard to public-use data sets, PD&R is the major source of housing data in this country through the American Housing Survey (AHS) and the Residential Finance Survey (RFS). The AHS used to be conducted annually, but during the past decade its sample size has been reduced, the number of metro areas covered has declined (the San Francisco Bay Area is no longer included in the sample), and it is now taken every two years. The RFS is conducted decennially in the year after the regular decennial census. At the moment, the RFS has no funding for its 2011 survey. A situation the Committee found incredulous given the current economic crisis.

The audience at the briefing strongly criticized P&R’s web page as a poor dissemination tool for its work and reports. Weicher and his colleagues at the briefing – George Gastner of Wayne State University, Sandra Newman of Johns Hopkins, Edgar Olsen of the University of Virginia, Michael Stegman of the MacArthur Foundation, and Margery Turner of the Urban Institute – concurred.

There was also much discussion of culture and leadership as two key factors in the deterioration of the Office. The sense was that PD&R had been relegated to the backwater of HUD and that the leadership from the Department Secretary level as well as from the Congressional appropriations’ panels had not taken a great interest in the Office.

## **MAKE THE CENSUS BUREAU AN INDEPENDENT AGENCY?: REP. CAROLYN MALONEY AND FORMER DIRECTORS SAY YES!**

Proclaiming that “after three decades of controversy surrounding the decennial census, the time has come to recognize the Census Bureau as one of our country’s premier scientific agencies,” Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) has introduced legislation to remove the Bureau from under the Department of Commerce and make it an independent agency.

“This action will be a clear signal to Americans that the agency they depend upon for unbiased monthly economic data as well as the important decennial portrait of our nation is independent, fair, and protected from interference,” Maloney added.

The legislation has been endorsed by all the living former directors of the Census Bureau: Vincent Barabba, (1973-76 and 1979-81); Bruce Chapman (1981-83); John Keane (1984-87); Barbara Everitt Bryant (1989-93); Martha Farnsworth Riche (1993-98); Kenneth Prewitt (1998-2001), and Charles Louis Kincannon (2001-2008).

Appointed by both Republican and Democratic Presidents, the former directors gave three reasons for their endorsement. First, "following three decades during which the press and the Congress frequently discussed the Decennial Census in explicitly partisan terms, it is vitally important that the American public have confidence that the census results have been produced by an independent, non-partisan, apolitical, and scientific Census Bureau."

Second, they argue that the Commerce Department interest in the Census Bureau "waxes and wanes," paying close attention only as the Decennial approaches. However, the former directors suggest that the Bureau is busy during the whole decade prior to the decennial, not only preparing for the constitutionally mandated count, but carrying out other major statistical responsibilities, including producing the nation's ongoing economic monitoring data. As an independent agency, the Bureau "will more efficiently focus on these continuous responsibilities," they declare.

Third, they suggest that responding to congressional requests and oversight would have been more timely and thorough without having to go through the Department's bureaucratic legislative response structure.

Maloney's legislation would have the Bureau's independence delayed until 2012 after the completion of the 2010 count. It also calls for a five-year term for the Director, nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate.

She concluded her announcement by noting that the goal of the bill "is to begin a serious national discussion in advance of hearings next year in the new Congress." She encouraged Census stakeholders, the Congress and America's businesses and universities to offer their views.

In 1998, then Rep. Stephen Horn (R-CA), who chaired the House Subcommittee that was responsible for oversight of the Census Bureau, introduced legislation to establish a commission to explore how to consolidate the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Census Bureau, and the Bureau of Economic Analysis into an independent agency known as the Federal Statistical Service. After a series of hearings, that included testimony by COSSA, and despite the strong support from then Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY), and all the former Chairs of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, the consolidation and independence proposal did not succeed.

Perhaps, given the highly politicized 2000 Decennial (for one example see Update, [April 3, 2000](#)) and the difficulties surrounding this year's preparations for the 2010 count, independence for the Bureau is an idea whose time has come.

## BROOKINGS SESSION EXAMINES NEW ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGIES

On September 29, the Brookings Institution held a policy seminar sponsored by the C.S. Mott Foundation on "Poverty Reduction Strategies for the Next Decade." The panelists included many of those who had contributed papers for the discussion.

The general theme of the sessions was that the poor in America are disproportionately represented by single mothers and their children, people of color, those with little skills or education, and by people with physical or mental disabilities. The panelists discussed policies they advocate to help alleviate poverty.

Rebecca Blank, Robert S. Kerr Senior Fellow at Brookings and a former COSSA Annual Meeting speaker, contributed the paper "High Priority Poverty Reduction Strategies for the Next Decade." She presented three policy strategies to help reduce poverty levels over the next decade. Providing incentives and support for low-wage workers should be a priority, she said. For many working women finding stable and affordable childcare remains a major problem. Thus, Blank's first recommendation would be to increase the availability and affordability of childcare. Blank also suggested we need to increase the labor force participation of low skilled men, especially men of color. She noted one of the primary reasons why work force participation has fallen among these men is that the jobs available to them pay very low wages. She called for the expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to workers without children in their households, as a way to provide added incentives for work among this group. In addition, she proposed an expansion of health care coverage and health services for the poor. Low skilled workers, she indicated, are often in jobs that do not provide insurance, or they are unable to pay the insurance premiums. These workers tend to experience many problems due to their lack of health insurance; and their lack of regular medical care leads to more illness and time off from work.

Another panelist Mary Jo Bane, Professor of Public Policy and Management at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, submitted the paper "Poverty Reduction Strategies for the US." She recommended: creating an

alternative measure of poverty and measures to assess the success of programs; making changes to the Food Stamp Program; and tackling the tangle of issues connected with incarceration and its effects on communities.

Katherine Newman, Director of the Princeton Institute of International and Regional Studies and a former COSSA Congressional Seminar speaker, submitted "The Next Time Around: Some Thoughts on Poverty Policy in the Next Administration." Newman discussed four areas for increased focus to help reduce our nation's poverty level. Her recommendations included tax reform, early childhood education, increased access to non-traditional routes to both secondary and postsecondary education, and home ownership. In the area of tax reform, Newman called for the reduction of state income taxes for the working poor, the elimination of sales tax on food, and transportation tax credits for poor and near-poor workers. She also declared we need to reform how we educate our youngest and older students. She advocated universal full-day pre-K for all four year olds, as well as giving high school students access to vocational training and increasing financial aid to all non-traditional students, especially the poor and adults. Lastly, she proposed increasing subsidized low income-home ownership, but with more regulatory control over lending practices.

Other speakers included: David Ellwood, former Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and a former COSSA Annual Meeting speaker, now at Harvard University; Ronald Mincy of Columbia University and a former COSSA Congressional seminar speaker; Isabel Sawhill of Brookings and a former COSSA Board member; Wade Horn, former Assistant Secretary for the Administration of Children and Families at HHS now at Deloitte Consulting; and Ron Haskins of Brookings.

The session provided a portrait of the one-third of our population that is poor or near-poor who must confront the numerous difficulties and vulnerabilities associated with low incomes, substandard education, housing and healthcare as well as premature mortality. If we are to help this segment of the U.S. population out of poverty and on to success, the speakers indicated we will need to reassess and change our current strategies and find new and innovative ways to reduce our nation's poverty level.

*For more information on the Brookings event and to access all the papers presented go to [www.brookings.edu/events/2008/0929\\_poverty.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/events/2008/0929_poverty.aspx)*

## RURAL RESEARCHERS LOOK AT THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE AT THE RURAL-URBAN INTERFACE

The expansion of metropolitan areas from urban to suburban to exurban has important implications for rural America. Douglas Jackson-Smith of Utah State University and Jeff Sharp of the Ohio State University have examined this situation in "Farming in the Urban Shadow: Supporting Agriculture at the Rural-Urban Interface." They seek to address common misconceptions about the ability of agriculture to survive in the intersection of rural and urban environments by looking at the RUI (Rural-Urban Interface) and the related agricultural policies. The article has been published in the Rural Sociological Society policy journal Rural Realities and can be found at: <http://ruralsociology.org/pubs/RuralRealities/Volume2Issue4.html>

The authors tackle the primary misconception that agriculture does not exist or is negligible in urban centers. The central analysis looks at the relative contributions of rural centers and areas of the RUI (regions in which urban and rural environments coexist in close proximity) to the overall agricultural production of the United States. For example: "in 2002, 55 percent of all farm sales were from farms located in counties at the rural-urban interface, even though 60 percent of all farmland is located outside RUI counties." Most important, the study notes that agriculturally important (AI) counties, the top 25 percent of U.S. counties with respect to farm sales, are comprised of 40 percent of RUI counties. Since these counties appear to have the most potential for a viable agricultural economy, the authors recommend that policy should try to revitalize agriculture focus on these RUI /AI counties.

The article defines several kinds of RUI/AI counties based on farm sales, farmland, and farm numbers. Declining counties, include those whose farm sales and farmland and/or farm numbers decreased by more than ten percent. Deintensifying counties are places where farm sales are declining, but farm numbers and farmland are not. Stable counties are places where farm sales, farmland, and farm numbers have not increased or decreased by more than ten percent. Intensifying counties are places where sales are rapidly increasing, but farmland and farm numbers are relatively stable. Growing counties are places where farm sales, farmland, and farm numbers all increased by more than ten percent.

Analyzing the trends among these five categories, Jackson-Smith and Sharp show that traditional farm programs might not be the best way to approach agricultural support at the RUI. The authors propose a set of recommendations that



includes allowing conservation programs to subsidize environmentally-sustainable agricultural projects in the RUI, and promoting the direct marketing of agricultural goods to more urban consumers. They also produce three supporting case studies from counties at the RUI. In conclusion, Jackson-Smith and Sharp suggest "a more fundamental need is to create better strategies that better connect and articulate the merits of a vibrant agriculture to the vision and goals of each individual community."

## NSF SEEKS PROPOSALS FOR CDI COMPETITION

The Cyber-Enabled Discovery and Imagination (CDI) Initiative, according to the National Science Foundation (NSF), is a five-year activity to create *revolutionary* (their word) science and engineering research outcomes made possible by innovations and advances in computational thinking.

NSF recently announced a new competition for this initiative for FY 2009. It seeks "ambitious, transformative, multidisciplinary research proposals" within or across the following thematic areas:

(1) **From Data to Knowledge:** enhancing human cognition and generating new knowledge from a wealth of heterogeneous digital data; including research on "the development and evaluation of new approaches to data mining, data federation, knowledge extractions and knowledge representation, and visualization in demanding scientific and engineering applications;"

(2) **Understanding Complexity in Natural, Built, and Social Systems:** deriving fundamental insights on systems comprising multiple interacting elements; including research that develops "advances in numerical methods for differential, algebraic, and discrete systems, agent-based modeling, neural networks, and dynamically interactive human-in-the-loop calculations;"

(3) **Building Virtual Organizations (VOs):** enhancing discovery and innovation by bringing people and resources together across, institutional, geographical and cultural boundaries; including research on "the design, development, and implementation of VOs and to test and verify proposed theories and models of distributed learning and discovery with specific problems, populations, and purposes."

There are two types of awards in this competition: Type I awards will require efforts up to a level roughly comparable to: summer support for two investigators with complementary expertise, two graduate students, and their collective research needs (e.g. materials, supplies, travel) for three years. Type II awards will require larger (than Type I) efforts up to a level roughly comparable to: summer support for three investigators with complementary expertise, three graduate students, one or two senior personnel (including post-doctoral researchers and staff), and their collective research needs (e.g. materials, supplies, travel) for four years. The integrative contributions of the Type II team should clearly be greater than the sum of the contributions of each individual member of the team.

Preliminary proposals are required. They are due: for Type I proposals December 8, 2008; for Type II proposals, December 9, 2008. Full proposals (by invitation only after reviews of the preliminary proposals) are due May 20, 2009.

For further information contact: Mary Lou Maher, Eduardo Misawa, or Thomas Russell, all at 703/292-8080 or [cdi@nsf.gov](mailto:cdi@nsf.gov). For special questions regarding the social, behavioral and economic sciences' aspect of this competition contact: Rita Teutonico at 703/292-7118 or [rteutoni@nsf.gov](mailto:rteutoni@nsf.gov).

The full solicitation can be found at:

[http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm\\_summ.jsp?pims\\_id=503163&org=SBE&from=home](http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=503163&org=SBE&from=home)

## SRCD FELLOWSHIPS IN PUBLIC POLICY AVAILABLE

The Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) has announced the availability of its Policy Fellowships for 2009-2010. SRCD Policy Fellows - in both Congressional and Executive Branch placements - work as "resident scholars" at the interface of science and policy. Applicants must have a doctoral level degree in any discipline related to Child Development. Both early and mid-career doctoral level professionals of all scientific disciplines related to child development are encouraged to apply. The deadline for applications is December 15, 2008.

For more information and application instructions, please visit  
[http://www.srkd.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=181&Itemid=306](http://www.srkd.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=181&Itemid=306).

## FORD FOUNDATION DIVERSITY FELLOWSHIPS AVAILABLE

The National Academies is now accepting applications for the 2009 Ford Foundation Diversity Fellowships Program for Achieving Excellence in College and University Teaching. Full eligibility information and on-line applications are available on the National Academies' web site: <http://nationalacademies.org/fellowships>

The fellowships are for U.S. citizens who are planning a career in teaching and research at the college or university level in a research-based field of science, social sciences, or humanities.

Ford expects to fund approximately 60 predoctoral, 35 dissertation, and 20 postdoctoral fellowships. The National Research Council of the National Academies administers the fellowships for the Ford Foundation.

The Stipends and Allowances include: Predoctoral: \$20,000 to the fellow, with an institutional allowance of \$2,000 for three years; Dissertation: \$21,000 for one year; and Postdoctoral: \$40,000 for one year, \$1,500 employing institution allowance, to be matched by employing institution. In addition, fellowship recipients have expenses paid to attend one Conference of the Ford Fellows.

The applications deadline dates are: Predoctoral: November 14, 2008; Dissertation: November 28, 2008; and Postdoctoral: November 28, 2008.

For further information contact: Fellowships Office, National Research Council of the National Academies: Phone: (202) 334-2872; Email: [infofell@nas.edu](mailto:infofell@nas.edu)

## CONSORTIUM OF SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

# COSSA

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The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) is an advocacy organization promoting attention to and federal support for the social and behavioral sciences.

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Phone: (202) 842-3525; Fax: (202) 842-2788

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