COSSA
Washington Update

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HOUSE PASSES CR TO FUND GOVERNMENT; CENSUS PROTECTED

With FY 2010 about to begin on October 1 and the enactment of the appropriations bills delayed, the House of Representatives on September 25 passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) to keep the government open when the new fiscal year begins. The Senate is expected to enact the CR on September 30.

Attached to the one appropriations bill that Congress finished, the legislation that funds the Legislative Branch, the CR funds almost all agencies at the FY 2009 level. One exception is the U.S. Census Bureau. Accepting the argument of the Bureau and its stakeholders, including COSSA, the House provided $7,065.7 billion for the Bureau's Periodic Censuses and Programs to keep the preparations for the 2010 count on track. This is the number in the Senate Appropriations Committee bill, which is $50 million below the President's request. The Committee reduced the request because they deemed the reimbursement for travel for 2010 Census workers extravagant (see Update June 29, 2009).

Since the CR only goes through October 31, 2009, the Congressional leadership expects to continue working on individual appropriations bills through October hoping to avoid another year with spending bills wrapped into one Omnibus Appropriations bill.

CENSUS DIRECTOR GROVES APPEARS BEFORE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE TO DISCUSS 2010 PREPARATIONS

On September 22, the House Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census, and National Archives held a hearing to examine "The Census 2010 Integrated Communication Campaign; Criteria for Implementation: Measurements for Success."

The hearing provided an opportunity for new Census Director Robert Groves to present testimony on the status of the 2010 Decennial Census. The hearing also examined the 2010 Census Integrated Communications Campaign designed to convince people to participate in the 2010 count. In his opening statement Subcommittee Chairman Rep. William Lacy Clay (D-MO) asked: How will the communications plan decrease the undercount and increase the mail response rate of hard-to-count communities? Whether the campaign messaging will generate community support for the census?

Appearing before the Subcommittee as Census Director for the first time, Groves reminded the members of his commitment that: "Upon my confirmation I promised Congress and Secretary [Gary] Locke that I would spend the first month of my directorship evaluating key components of the 2010 Census." "I needed," he noted, "to make my own professional assessment regarding the current state of preparation and key risks facing the 2010 Decennial Census." Groves reported that he has used former Census Director Ken Prewitt and former Principal Associate Director John Thompson as consultants to help him with that assessment.

Groves asserted that overall the 2010 Census design is fundamentally better than the Census 2000 design. Specifically, he pointed out that for the first time every household will receive just the short form, which is simple, straightforward and easy to understand. Groves was certain that a bilingual questionnaire would lead to higher participation among the Spanish-only speakers who receive it. He also said that plans to send non-responding households a second questionnaire will also raise participation rates. In addition, Recovery Act funding has helped enhance and expand the outreach efforts through the paid advertising and partnership programs.

"A superior design alone, however, does not ensure a superior product," said Groves. "The Census Bureau," according to its new Director, "faces both internal and external challenges, some unprecedented, that must be directly addressed in the months ahead." Groves outlined the following key internal and external challenges the bureau has to face as Census Day approaches, which is now just over six months away.

The Internal challenges

1. The team for the 2010 count has less senior experience in managing censuses than in previous censuses.
2. There have been significant retirements in the Census Bureau's senior ranks--in particular, senior statisticians.
3. The Paper-based Operations Control System (PBOCS) administrative software, since the movement from handheld computer use for the Non-response Follow-up (NRFU) stage o f the census to a paper-based design, is still under development.
4. Following completion of the address canvassing operation this summer, a continued need to improve the MAF (Master Address File) through subsequent operations, and to follow-up on areas where there are duplicate or missed addresses and ensure that our addresses are correctly located in TIGER (Topographically Integrated Geographic Encoding Referencing).
5. The Bureau needs better cost estimation and control.

The External Challenges:

1. Estimating the mail response rate becomes more difficult as the housing vacancy rate is higher than in previous censuses, more people and more families are doubling up in single family dwellings, the rate of people experiencing homelessness is higher, and the public debate and tension over immigration issues is ongoing.

2. The new multidimensional media environment challenges the Bureau to get its message out to the right audiences.

3. The danger of having the Census "tainted by the intense political debates in the media driving the news media."

4. The threat of Internet scams that use the Census logo to fool people into giving up information.

Groves concluded, "I cannot overemphasize the need for every political, corporate, and religious leader to get the message out that the cost and quality of the 2010 Census is in our hands." Rep. Lynn Westmoreland (R-GA) highly recommended using members of Congress in campaign advertisements to generate interest and prepare the community for the upcoming decennial.

Jeff Tarakajian, head of DraftFCB the team leading the 2010 Integrated Communications Campaign, testified that his effort continues to be a work in progress. Most decisions about the Campaign will become finalized when the paid media launches in January 2010. "As 2009 closes, we will transition from preparation to deployment and a dramatically different phase of the Campaign will begin. In this phase we will be focused on accuracy and precision in execution as well as the careful monitoring of key marketplace metrics to ensure that we make any needed adjustments in the deployment of the Campaign to ensure success," Tarakajian told the Subcommittee.

The testimony and an archived broadcast of the hearing are available at:
http://informationpolicy.oversight.house.gov/story.asp?ID=2600.

AT THE REQUEST OF SENATOR GRASSLEY, GAO REPORT EXAMINES NIH OVERSIGHT OF INSTITUTES AND CENTERS

On September 11, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) released its report, *National Institutes of Health: Completion of Comprehensive Risk Management Program Essential to Effective Oversight.* Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA), Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Finance, asked the GAO to examine the NIH's oversight of the 27 institutes and centers (ICs) that make up the agency.

The report is in response to allegations involving an institute that raised questions about areas of oversight by the Office of the Director (OD) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). In light of these questions, GAO examined how NIH makes extramural research funding decisions and the extent to which the Office of the Director monitors this process. GAO also reviewed the design of selected internal controls over NIH's travel and personnel appointment process, and the design of the NIH Management Control Programs and the Enterprise of Risk Management Program to determine if they contain key components of an effective risk management program.

Funding NIH Extramural Research

For its report, the GAO looked at the National Cancer Institute, the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, and the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. They were chosen by GAO because they vary in budget size and focus on different disease-specific research missions. They also examined the Center for Scientific Review (CSR). CSR does not fund extramural research but is responsible for implementing the initial steps in the extramural research funding process, including receipt of all grant applications.

The GAO noted that the NIH is required by law to use a peer review system in its process for making extramural research funding decisions. The agency's dual peer review system, GAO explained, "is designed to help ensure the objective evaluation of the scientific merit of applications for extramural funding. After NIH's peer review process is concluded, IC directors have discretion when making final extramural funding decisions and "are not required to fund applications based strictly on the scores resulting from the evaluation of their scientific merit." In reviewing the IC data, GAO found that 18.5 percent of NIH's funded investigator-initiated (R01s) grant applications were funded as exceptions in FY 2007. According to the GAO this is an increase from 9.7 percent in FY 2003.

GAO's report explains that "in some instances, IC directors decide not to fund applications that scored above the fiscal year's payline, such as when the applications duplicate research that has already received IC funding. These applications are called 'skips." NCI is reported as having skipped three applications out of 656 applications that scored above the IC's payline in FY 2007.

GAO pointed out that "though the IC directors typically do not decide to fund applications with priority scores that fall below the fiscal year's payline, in some cases they do, which are referred to as 'exceptions.'" "In the case of exceptions, the IC directors may exercise their discretion and choose to fund these applications based on factors in addition to the application's priority scores. These factors can include efforts to support the IC or NIH's research priorities." GAO notes that "there can be good reasons for the decision to skip an application or fund an application as an exception, such as the desire to maintain a diverse portfolio of work. IC directors are required to, under NIH policy, document the rationale used for both skips and exceptions.

NIH pointed out in its general comments to GAO that "these applications are still well within the range of scores that are considered to be highly meritorious. In order to protect the viability of the extramural workforce the NIH reaches for additional applications from New Investigators." During FY 2007 through FY 2009, the Office of the Director designed and implemented policies to support new investigators. The policies were designed to reverse the steady decline in the number of new investigators that started in FY 2003. The OD has presented annual guidelines to the Institute directors, including new targets for the ICs. Awards to New Investigators are then tracked during the course of the year. The agency has reached those established targets the past three fiscal years. NIH emphasized that "the importance of new investigators to the continued success of the NIH extramural programs is well understood."

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), however, disagreed with the GAO's recommendation that the NIH Director should establish a process for routine monitoring of extramural funding decisions in which the directors use their discretion to skip applications or fund applications as exceptions. "NIH stresse[d] that while IC directors authorize these actions, their decisions are not made in isolation or without consultation, and review. The NIH OD ensures that there is a process in place that documents these decisions and that these documents are available upon request should questions arise. ..GAO implies a role for the OD that is not scientifically appropriate. Specific reasons for skips and exceptions must and should rely on the judgment of scientific officials who understand the current trends in s science, as well as the portfolios of the institute."

Currently, the OD collects information on the number of extramural grants funded by each IC; the percentage of applications that receive funding; and the priority rankings, by percentile, of funded applications. Collection efforts are also targeted toward specific types of extramural grants such as the number of extramural grants awarded to New Investigators.

REPRESENTATIVES BARTON AND WALDEN REQUEST DETAILS ON NIH PEER REVIEW AND THE FUNDING OF 'QUESTIONABLE STUDIES'

On September 25, Reps. Joe Barton (R-TX), Ranking Member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and Greg Walden (R-OR), Ranking member of the House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, sent a letter to National Institutes of Health (NIH) director Francis Collins requesting "information about the NiH grant review and award procedures as well as certain grants recently awarded by the NIH." In the letter, Barton and Walden acknowledge the "relatively static" funding provided by Congress over the five past years" and the fact that "it has become increasingly difficult, therefore for researchers to obtain funding for their **health** [*emphasis added*] projects." They also cite the decreasing "success rate for obtaining NIH funding," "with only 21.8 percent, or 9,460 of 43,467 applications submitted, receiving funding."

A consequence of the $10.4 billion in funding provided the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the America Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), is that the NIH, its peer review process, and the research projects it funds are under increasing scrutiny. Much of the inquiry is directed towards social and behavioral science research and reveals a lack of understanding of contributions these sciences can make toward improving health and well-being and reducing the economic burden of health care (See Update, September 22, 2008).

Barton and Walden acknowledged that "inevitably, some projects that have scientific merit and may benefit the health of U.S citizens were not funded." To get a better idea of what types of projects did not survive the NIH peer review process and receive funding, Barton and Walden relate that Minority Committee staff conducted a review of recently awarded NIH grants. "We identified a number of grants that, from our point of view, do not seem to be the highest scientific rigor which raises many questions about how the NIH peer review system is working," they concluded. The Congressmen provided the agency with a list of the NIH summaries of those grants in an attachment to the letter. **Eleven of the 12 research projects targeted in the letter are social and behavioral science grants:**

1) A study designed to develop "targeted, low cost, empirically-validated prevention interventions" (HIV/STI Prevention among Alcohol-Abusing Women in Mongolia),
2) A study to carry out a small-scale nonrandomized trial that builds on previous research that tests "a novel, holistic approach to survivorship that could have broad implications for how to best improve the post-diagnosis experience and will provide strong pilot data in support of a subsequent large-scale R01 submission. It uses a "team-oriented exercise program (dragon boating) to learn more about how physical, mental, social,

and spiritual factors impact the quality of life of cancer survivors" (The Impact of Dragon Boat Racing on Cancer Survivorship).

3) A project designed to use the principles and methods of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) and Tribal Participatory Research (TPR) "to further plan, refine, implement, and more rigorously evaluate … [a] community-based and culturally congruent substance abuse and prevention intervention among Suquamish tribal youth, and (2) to extend, adapt, and evaluate this model with the Port Gable S'Klallam Tribe." Both Tribes are rural, federally recognized American Indian/Alaska Native reservation communities within the same county and school district (The Healing of the Canoe).

4) An exploratory project that is a first step in the process of better understanding the emerging club drug epidemic in the South of Brazil. Preliminary studies in Miami suggest that club drug users are at high risk for both physical and mental health consequences requiring intervention, particularly those who also abuse prescription drugs (Patterns of Drug Use and Abuse in the Brazilian Rave Culture).

5) A study that will address a significant gap in the understanding of how gender attitudes and roles in sexual relationships contribute to heterosexual men's HIV-related sexual risk behaviors and will aid in the development of more effective programs to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa (Gender Roles and Ideology Effects on HIV Risk in Tanzania).

6) A study responding to a request for applications "Integrative Prevention Research for Alcohol Users At-Risk for HIV/AIDS" to conduct development research to design and field test a culturally adapted theory-based behavioral risk reduction intervention for men and women who use alcohol and are at risk for HIV infection in St. Petersburg, Russia." Russia has one of the highest HIV incidence rates in the world (Alcohol and HIV Risk Reduction in St. Petersburg, R.F).

7) A study designed to gain an understanding of the influence of the workplace on patterns of alcohol use and resulting problems among young adults in the restaurant industry, a food service workforce at high risk for alcohol-related problems. The objectives of the study are to: 1) estimate the prevalence of alcohol use patterns and alcohol problems in this workforce; 2) investigate effects of alcohol use patterns on health and social problems (e.g., absenteeism, injuries, hangovers) both at work and generally; 3) examine drinking in relation to individuals' personal background characteristics; 4) analyze the relationship between work environment and alcohol use, with a focus on major conceptual areas of social control (e.g., relevant policies, procedures for enforcement, visibility, and mobility), availability, and stress factors; and 5) assess the impact of characteristics of restaurant culture on normative beliefs, expectancies and behaviors in the domain of alcohol use. The study's findings will provide guidelines for the development of culturally relevant prevention programs (Young Adult Food Service Workers: Alcohol Use & Risk).

8) A project designed to produce the first comprehensive and analytical book about public health education campaigns in twentieth-century China. The study also examines how health campaigns contributed to the elimination and reduction of epidemic diseases. Chapters include: pioneering groups in public health education, the ascendance of scientific knowledge of medicine and health in China, the experiment of community-based health demonstration stations, politicization of public health movements and maximization of methods for the prevention of diseases, rural health reform and agrarian transformation, maternal and child health care and education, and transition to market economy and new challenges to public health (Public Health Education and Campaigns in China, 1910-1990).

9) A study investigating the social, cultural, and environmental factors which influence substance use and HIV risk behaviors among female and transgender female (Kathoey) sex workers in Bangkok, Thailand. The results of the study will be used to develop substance abuse and HIV/STI prevention intervention programs culturally appropriate to Thai female and Kathoey sex workers. The study responds to the need to learn how to translate and adapt interventions that have proven to be effective in the U.S. to other communities and international settings, and to ascertain from other conditions and cultures to inform the understanding of the causes, consequences, and differences in HIV-related risks, morbidity, and mortality in diverse populations (Substance Use and HIV Risk among Thai Women). This study is one of the three targeted by Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA) in an amendment to the House Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations bill which cleared the House in July (see Update, July 27, 2009).

10) A project that aims to advance the understanding of, among other factors, the role of cognitive and affective processes and condom application skills in explaining problems with condom use in young, heterosexual adult men. The knowledge gained can be used to inform the development of innovative, more effective, and targeted intervention and education strategies tailored to the needs of individuals who have trouble using condoms effectively (Barriers to Effective Condom Use).

11) A study that proposes to develop, implement, and evaluate a venue-based alcohol use and HIV risk reduction intervention focusing on both environmental and individual factors among venue-based female sex workers (FSWs) in China. The study will evaluate the intervention to discern whether it is culturally appropriate, feasible, effective and sustainable in alcohol use and sexual risk reduction among FSWs (Venue-based HIV and

Alcohol Use Risk Reduction among Female Sex Workers in China). This study was also targeted in the Issa amendment.

12) A study that examines the use of soy to reduce the risk of prostate cancer. Obstacles to soy consumption include the lack of consumer friendly, food-based "phytochemical delivery systems." The researchers have formulated two systems that they hypothesize will serve as sources for future phase II/III randomized clinical trials (Soy Almond Bread as Complimentary Therapy for Prostate Cancer).

Barton and Walden seem to be questioning whether the peer review system prior to 2009 allowed less than stellar research to be funded. There also seems to be misunderstanding of the purpose the agency's 2007-2008 peer review self-study, *National Institutes Of Health, 2007-2008 Peer Review Self-Study, Final Draft*. Consisting of "two, discrete phases: a diagnostic phase and an implementation phase, the "goal of the first, diagnostic phase,. . . was to identify the most significant challenges to the system used by the NIH to support science and propose recommendations that would enhance this system in the most transformative manner." In the letter, Barton and Walden note that "[w]hile we understand the NIH recently enhanced its peer review criteria for grants award for Fiscal Year 2010 and thereafter, the peer review system in place at the time these particular grants were awarded nonetheless required that reviewers find that the project 'address[ed] an important problem." They state that "at first glance, some of these grants we identified do not seem to meet this standard."

Barton and Walden further note that they "do not doubt there may be some degree of scientific benefit to be gained from the studies." "[G]iven the number of urgent public health issues facing the NIH, such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and pandemic disease," they "question how peer review panels determined these projects have 'high scientific caliber' and how they are particularly relevant to the NIH Institute and Center research priorities." Accordingly, they requested that the NIH provide them written responses within four weeks with the following information: (1) How the grant relates to the funding priorities of the relevant NIH Institute and Center, (2) The overall impact score, (3) A roster of the number of peer reviewers at the initial peer review meeting and at the second level of review, who reviewed the grant, the score each reviewer gave the grant, and the designated "payline" or fundable score, and (4) Identify the number of grants that were reviewed at that meeting and the number of grants that received a second level of review.

What a Difference a Year Makes

At the September 9, 2008, House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health hearing on the NIH Reform Act of 2006, entitled, "NIH Reform Act of 2006: Progress, Challenges and Next Steps," Barton issued a statement : *"I'm proud to say that the new system appears to be working. Having said that, there are some stakeholders who don't understand the new system, and perhaps they don't want to understand the new system. "In any case, once again this Congress and this committee have had numerous disease-specific bills before us, all clamoring, with some justification, that they should be the newest, highest priority to fund. The whole purpose of the NIH bill was not to say we should not fund newer research with a higher priority, but we should let the experts, let the people who are most qualified to do the research, decide where to put the highest priority."* Ironically, now it is Barton who is questioning the "flexibility" that the NIH Reform Act supposedly gave to the agency.

NIH: 'Enhancing Peer Review'

The National Institutes of Health's (NIH) stresses in its final draft of its report, *National Institutes Of Health, 2007-2008 Peer Review Self-Study, Final Draft*, that the "The peer review process as it relates to NIH funding is a multifaceted, multi-stage endeavor. The NIH makes funding decisions using a range of criteria, to balance several issues including scientific quality, potential impact, portfolio balance, and relevance to the NIH mission."

The self study was initiated on June 8, 2007, when then NIH director Elias Zerhouni announced the formation of two working groups to examine the agency's peer review process with the ultimate goal of maximizing its effectiveness. The internal and external working groups solicited input from the scientific community, including investigators, scientific societies, grantee institutions, voluntary health organization, and from within the NIH. The groups were tasked to study the context, criteria, and culture of peer review to make sure that the most talented individuals and reviewers are engaged in the process. The ultimate goal of the self study was to allow the agency to continue to "fund the best science, by the best scientists, with the least amount of administrative burden."

When initiating the study, Zerhouni emphasized that "Peer review is such a fundamental and critical part of the research process, that it requires our constant vigilance." "With the increasing breadth and complexity of science, along with the increased number of research grant applications, we need to take a comprehensive look at our review process, and make the necessary changes to strengthen it for applicants and reviewers alike." The NIH director emphasized that while the agency's peer review system is "outstanding and emulated throughout the world" he wants to make it "even better." Zerhouni also stressed that the agency must "continue to adapt to rapidly changing fields of science and ever-growing public health challenges." It must also continue to draw on the most talented reviewers and fund the most promising research, he maintained (see Update, December 10, 2007)

In June 2008, the NIH began implementing the recommendations from the report (see Update, June 16, 2008). In 2006 and 2007, the agency had begun to make modifications to the system but not in a systematic way. Since the study of the peer review process, modifications to the system have included:

- Restructured Application Forms and Instructions for Submissions for FY2011 Funding, 09/16/2009 The NIH Announces Consolidation of Review Criteria for Institutional Research Training Grant Applications (T32) Submitted for FY 2010 Funding, 03/27/2009
- Early Stage Investigator Policies: Requesting an Extension of the ESI Period, 12/31/2008
- The NIH Announces Updated Implementation Timeline, 12/02/2008
- The NIH Announces New Scoring Procedures for Evaluation of Research Applications Received for Potential FY2010 Funding, 12/02/2008
- The NIH Announces Enhanced Review Criteria for Evaluation of Research Applications Received for Potential FY2010 Funding, 12/02/2008
- Clarification on New NIH Policy on Resubmission (Amended) Applications, 11/07/2008
- New NIH Policy on Resubmission (Amended) Applications, 10/08/2008
- Revised New and Early Stage Investigator Policies, 09/31/2008
- Encouraging Early Transition to Research Independence: Modifying the NIH New Investigator Policy to Identify Early Stage Investigators, 09/26/2008
- Announcing Initial Implementation Timeline for Enhancing Peer Review, 09/19/2008

There is an overview of the changes to the system for both applicants and reviewers on the NIH's website: Enhancing Peer Review at NIH. This overview includes: background on the NIH peer review system, goals of peer review enhancements; policy changes already in place, changes happening now, scoring of individual core criteria and overall impact/priority, summary statements, and application changes happening later.

Explaining NIH Peer Review

The NIH draft final report states that "the objective of the first stage of peer review is to evaluate and rate the scientific and technical merit of proposed research or research training. This takes place in Integrated Review Groups (IRGs, or "study sections") organized and managed by CSR. In addition, Review Branches of the ICs manage their own scientific review groups that evaluate applications submitted in response to special solicitations such as Requests for Applications, and for unique programs. The NIH Office of Extramural Research (OER) is integral to the overall process, since it manages the development and implementation of peer review policies and procedures across the NIH."

It explains that for most research grant proposals, after consideration and discussion, study sections assign the application under review a single, global score that reflects its overall impact relevant to significance, approach, innovation, investigator, and research environment. In this scheme, the best possible priority score is 100 and the worst is 500. Individual reviewers mark scores to two significant figures, and the individual scores are then averaged and multiplied by 100 to yield a single overall score for each application. Most research grant applications are then given a percentile rank, based on scores assigned to applications reviewed during the current plus past two review rounds.

In the second stage of peer review, the NIH National Advisory Councils consider the results of the first stage of peer review and make recommendations to ICs. Composed of scientists from the extramural research community and public representatives, advisory councils ensure that the NIH receives advice from a cross-section of the U.S. population in the process of its deliberation and decisions about funding. Councils meet three times per year, at the same time as NIH application submission deadlines. Ultimately, the final funding decision for all submitted applications rests with the director of the funding IC.

NICHD'S ALEXANDER STEPS DOWN AS ADVISORY COUNCIL HOLDS MEETING

After more than 23 years in his "ideal job" as Director of *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and 41 years at the Institute as an assistant director and the deputy director, Duane Alexander announced that he is leaving the position on September 30, 2009. He made the announcement at the 139th meeting of the National Advisory Child Health and Human Development (NACHHD) Council on September 18th. Alexander joined the NICHD in 1968, upon completion of his internship and residency at the Department of Pediatrics at Johns Hopkins Hospital. He left briefly to complete a fellowship in pediatrics at the John F. Kennedy Institute for Habilitation of the Mentally and Physically Handicapped Child at Johns Hopkins. He returned to the NICHD in 1971 as an Assistant to the Scientific Director.

Alexander informed the Council that he is moving on to a new assignment working closely with the Director of the Fogarty International Center (FIC) Roger Glass as a Senior Scientific Advisor on Global Maternal and Child Health Research. In his new capacity as senior scientific advisor, Alexander will assist Glass in "assembling and implementing" the National Institutes of Health (NIH) components of a new initiative under development coordinated by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton "to reduce maternal and child mortality and morbidity in less developed countries through research and delivery of health services." The initiative is a component of the White House's $63 billion Global Health Initiative. Alexander noted that "the opportunity to work at this level to translate research advances, many of them from NICHD and NIH, to people in challenging settings is too good to pass up."

NIH Director Francis Collins thanked Alexander for "his remarkable service to the NIH and to NICHD." He recognized Alexander's able service in a "variety of important leadership roles, spearheading projects that have done much to improve the health of the nation. Collins also thanked Alexander for the "next chapter of service he is about to take," noting that the "children of the world will benefit." He expressed his appreciation to the members of the Council for their service on NACCHD. Collins maintained that NICHD is a 'very important institute with an important scientific agenda" and told Council members that he will be paying close attention to the Institute during the course of his time as NIH director.

Collins pointed out that during Alexander's tenure NICHD scientists developed a vaccine for *Haemophilus Influenzae* Type b (Hib). NICHD-sponsored research verified that placing infants to sleep on their backs not only reduces the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), but does not carry with it any other risks to infant health. Based on this evidence, in 1994, Alexander formed a coalition of national organizations to join the NICHD to launch *Back to Sleep*, a national public awareness campaign. Since the campaign began, the overall rate of SIDS in the United States has declined by more than 50 percent. Collins also remarked that research conducted under Alexander's tenure also provided the first intervention shown to be both safe and effective in reducing the risk of preterm birth in women at high risk for preterm delivery. It was also during Alexander's tenure as NICHD Director that the rate of mother-to-child HIV transmission was reduced dramatically in the U.S., from 27 percent, to less than 2 percent.

Susan Shurin to Serve as Acting Director

Collins introduced Susan Shurin, who is currently the Deputy Director of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, and who will serve as Acting Director of NICHD, while a search is conducted for a new permanent director. Shurin joined NIH in 2006 from Case Western Reserve University, where she was Professor of Pediatrics and Oncology and Vice President for Research. Collins indicated that he had worked with Shurin on Genome Wide Association Studies during his tenure as director of the National Human Genome Research Institute. Pointing out that Shurin had worked on a number of large scale clinical research programs, Collins stated that from his perspective as NIH director the National Children's Study (NCS) "is a critical part of the NIH's future and the aim in this period of transition is to ensure that the study is carefully managed, that all of the components are scrutinized to ensure that the study remains on track to provide the kind of information that it is hoped NCS can generate" as it relates "to the role both environment and genetics play into the health of children" (see Update, August 10, 2009).

IDD Branch Presents Branch Report; Public Comments Wanted on Draft

The Council also heard a presentation from the Intellectual Developmental Disabilities Branch (IDD) (formerly the Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Branch) within the Center for Developmental Biology and Perinatal Medicine of NICHD. In 2005, the Institute implemented a revised process for reporting to the NACHHD Council by expanding the reports to include a section on possible future directions for its extramural Branches, Divisions, and Centers. To better inform these possible future directions, the Institute also makes a draft of each report available for public comment. NICHD considers the feedback it receives from the public critical to help the institute fulfill its mission, and at the same time consider the needs of the different communities impacted by NICHD research.

IDD Branch Chief Melissa Parisi provided the Council with an overview and future directions for the Branch. The IDD Branch supports a diverse portfolio of research projects, training programs, and research centers committed to promoting the well-being of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The IDD's mission is to: develop and support research and research training programs in IDD; administer a program of support for centers for research in IDD; coordinate with university-affiliated programs for IDD with respect to integration of research, training, and service activities; and partner with other federal agencies, organizations, and advocacy groups to advance efforts toward the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and management of IDD that will improve the quality of life for these individuals and their families.

The report highlights advances from Branch-sponsored research, emphasizes major IDD initiatives from the past four years, and outlines areas of future expansion in the field of IDD research. The Branch's activities are organized in topical research initiatives, with some areas of programmatic overlap. There was broad consensus among an expert panel that reviewed the Branch's activities and suggested potential future directions for IDD-related research on April 30, 2009. The panel discussed key scientific opportunities, public health issues, and training efforts that the Branch will consider pursuing in the next four years, with a particular focus on prioritizing specific areas of the research agenda. According to the panel, "a major emphasis of the Branch should be efforts to reconceptualize IDD research into broader areas, such as shared pathways or systems approaches, in order to promote development of interventions for a wider population of individuals with IDD. Six main areas of emphasis were highlighted.

1. **Research on Therapeutic Interventions for IDD -** The panel recommended a general emphasis on clinical and translational research to identify potential interventions for individuals with IDD. The need to promote longitudinal natural history and population-based studies was also recognized. The panel also discussed support for empirical studies to assess existing, commonly used behavioral and educational interventions for IDD. The panel noted that while in general there are many interventions available for individuals with IDD, there is little or no empirical data to support their utility and validity. During the next four years the Branch intends to consider supporting research to systematically evaluate commonly used behavioral and educational interventions for IDD to determine whether children who receive these interventions actually benefit from them. The Branch also plans to encourage and explore partnerships and collaborations to better utilize resources and expertise. Potential partners might include other NICHD Branches, Centers and Programs such as the National Children's Study; other NIH institutes and centers; other federal agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, HRSA, U.S. Department of Education, the Institute of Education Sciences, among others.

2. Early Identification and Diagnosis via Newborn Screening – While recognizing that newborn screening has significantly improved the ability to diagnose a treatable inborn error of metabolism in a newborn infant, the panel noted a need to develop screening tools for other forms of cognitive impairment not identifiable via available methodologies. Based on the panel's discussions, the IDD Branch plans to consider this research activity.

3. Research on Adolescent Brain Development – The expert panel noted that adolescent brain development in IDD is an area of relative lack of emphasis in the Branch portfolio. The dearth of research on adolescents in the IDD population, according to the panel, leaves them vulnerable to poorer outcomes and reduced quality of life. The panel recommended that additional research to address the medical, psychosocial, and psychiatric needs of a growing population of adolescents with IDD in the U.S. The Branch plans to consider:

- Supporting research to create and expand the existing evidence base related to the adolescent brains for those with IDD and those without IDD to: better inform future research and treatment interventions, improve quality of life for adolescents with IDD and their families, and address aspects for adolescent development that are specific to particular IDD conditions and those that are more generalizable.
- Explore the characteristics of IDD comorbid conditions, such as obesity, disordered sleep, complications of pubertal or hormonal-related conditions and support research on their management and intervention.

4. Health Disparities and Health Promotion Research Related to IDD -- Individuals from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to receive screening services, diagnostic evaluations, or treatment interventions. The expert panel pointed out that little or no research has focused on health disparities that impact life expectancy and quality-of-life for individuals with IDD throughout the lifespan. The IDD Branch, based on this discussion, plans to consider:

- Supporting research on the various factors that influence, contribute to, and/or ameliorate health disparities among IDD individuals. This work could include studies on cultural factors, belief systems, educational background, community resources, neighborhood influences, and access to services and their roles in health disparities that impact individuals with IDD and their families.
- Supporting research on medical, emotional, and societal aspects of transition to adulthood in the IDD population and the factors related to positive outcomes and quality-of-life.
- Encouraging health providers who care for adult populations to expand their expertise in the unique medical, psychosocial, and behavioral issues for the IDD population as these individuals transition to adulthood.
- Collaborating with support and advocacy groups to develop health-promotion and public education efforts for use within the IDD community to address issues such as obesity, nutrition, diabetes, and other conditions.

5. **Training Initiatives in the IDD Field** – The expert panel recognized the need to promote training-related initiatives and to encourage investigators to join the IDD research field. Given the paucity of clinician-investigators entering the field and critical shortages of scientists in many pediatric subspecialty areas, the panel recommended that training initiatives be offered not only to medical doctors, but also to allied health professionals and other healthcare providers from related disciplines. In addition, they noted that the evolution of the IDD field and the complexity of the associated research issues dictate that training programs emphasize multidisciplinary approaches to research.

6. **Toward a New Conceptualization of IDD Research -** Expert panel members and Branch staff also discussed the need for a shift in emphasis for IDD research to integrate the IDD field more broadly, rather than focus on individual, rare disorders. This reconceptualization could apply to basic research, genomic studies, clinical and translational approaches, and provision of services. Essentially, panel members felt that such a paradigm shift could encourage investigators to rethink the IDD field from the perspective of shared etiologic pathways, systems approaches, and interrelated networks, with the goal of developing interventions that may generalize across many conditions.

To read a draft of the IDD Branch Report to the NACHHD Council go to: http://www.nichd.nih.gov/news/releases/upload/DRAFT_IDD_Branch_Council_Report_Sept_2009.pdf. The period for comments closes on **October 16, 2009.** Written comments on the draft report should be sent via e-mail to NICHDPublicComments@mail.nih.gov; NICHD asks that you put "IDD BRANCH REPORT" in the subject line of your message. The final report will be available later in the year.

THE NIAAA ADVISORY COUNCIL GATHERS FOR ITS 122nd MEETING

The National Advisory Council to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) convened for its 122nd meeting on September 17 in Rockville, Maryland. Acting NIAAA Director Kenneth Warren presided over the Council's open session attended by NIAAA staff, liaison constituency groups and members of the general public.

In his legislative update Warren noted that NIAAA is currently closing FY 2009 spending. NIAAA received $113.9 million under the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) and is using it "to fund additional approved and highly meritorious projects than could be supported under our regular annual appropriation," Warren reported. An estimated 40 percent of NIAAA's ARRA funds will support R01 and R21 grant applications and about 28 percent will support Challenge Grants and Grand Opportunities Grants. (See Update, March 9, 2009). NIAAA will use the remaining 32 percent of the ARRA apportionment to supplement existing grants, contracts, and centers, as well as support faculty recruitment grants. Warren noted that preliminary work on the budget for FY2011 is in progress using the FY2010 President's budget request as the base. That budget will become public in February 2010.

Warren spoke briefly about his recent visit to Poland this past September to explore Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). Warren joined a group of Americans that visited a psychological clinic in Zywiec where children suffering from FASD were being treated. The group took part in several activities including a presentation on the effects of alcohol on child development, and a visit to the Institute of Pharmacology of the Polish Academy of Sciences to learn about its basic science projects on addiction. The trip ended in Warsaw at the Ministry of Health with a signing of a Letter of Intent between NIAAA and the Polish State Agency for the prevention of Alcohol Related Problems and to establish collaborative studies with Polish alcohol research centers.

Linda Spear of Binghamton University presented key conclusions and recommendations from the extramural advisory board (EAB) report on stress and alcohol relapse. The EAB suggested the following solutions for combating and managing stress and alcohol dependence:

- Characterize the phenomenology of the course of alcohol dependence, maintenance, abstinence and stress, as related to the dynamics of relapse and stress-related relapse;
- Use multifactorial measures in animal models to study processes contributing to stress-induced relapse across the lifespan;
- Utilize multifactorial human models to study stress induced relapse across the lifespan;
- Characterize the interaction between stressors and alcohol on biological processes, including structural, chemical, neural and genetic;
- Identify stress related markers predictive of relapse;
- Characterize the spectrum of reversible biological responses to mild stress and pathological irreversible responses to severe and prolonged stress and how they relate to alcohol dependence; and

- Develop medications for relapse prevention;

Vivian Faden, NIAAA's acting chief from the Office of Science Policy and Communications gave the council a preview of NIAAA Spectrum, a new web-based newsletter that features articles, short news updates, and colorful graphics. "The NIAAA Spectrum will offer accessible and relevant information on NIAAA and the alcohol research field for a wide range of audiences," said Faden. "Each issue will include two primary feature stories, a section on news updates from the field, 'charticles' and photo essays, and an interview with a key NIAAA staff member." The NIAAA Spectrum will appear on the Web three times a year in conjunction with NIAAA council meetings.

Cindy Ehlers, Professor in the Molecular and Integrative Neurosciences Department at the Scripps Research Institute, discussed the genetic factors at risk for alcohol dependence in Mission Indians, who are reservation dwelling Indians indigenous to San Diego County, CA. Ehlers asserted that American Indians have historically experienced numerous problems with alcohol since its introduction into their culture by European settlers. "Although tribes differ with regard to the use of alcohol, Native Americans as a group, have the highest alcohol-related death rates of all ethnic groups in the United States." Her research examines genetic, psychosocial, or behavioral factors that influence alcohol use in both adolescent and adult Native Americans.

The next advisory meeting will take place on February 4, 2010.

ISR CELEBRATES 60TH ANNIVERSARY WITH CAPITOL HILL BRIEFING

The Institute for Social Research (ISR) at the University of Michigan, a longtime COSSA member, celebrated its 60th Anniversary in 2009. As part of the celebration, ISR brought two of its distinguished researchers to highlight two of its major surveys in a session on Capitol Hill on September 16. The two were Richard Curtin, director of the Surveys of Consumers, and David Weir, director of the Health and Retirement Survey (HRS).

Institute Director James S. Jackson, a former member of the COSSA Board of Directors, noted that the surveys discussed in the presentations were two indicators of a myriad of important work that ISR conducts in its many facets. He mentioned the Monitoring the Future Survey that measures alcohol, drug, and tobacco use by the nation's youth directed by Lloyd Johnston that is highlighted each year by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Among the other key components of ISR are the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), whose former director Myron Gutmann will soon take over as the Assistant Director for the National Science Foundation's Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate (see Update, July 27, 2009). ICPSR is the world's largest archive of digital social science data. Nancy Burns directs the Center for Political Studies, which houses the American National Election Studies and the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, two data collections that explain both American and cross-national voting behavior.

The Population Studies Center, directed by David Lam, includes researchers investigating demographic changes, and archiving key population data sets. The Research Center on Group Dynamics conducts experimental studies in laboratories and in natural settings that examine human behavior in social contexts. The program is directed by L. Rowell Huesmann.

Finally, the Survey Research Center led by William Axim houses the long-running surveys noted above as well as the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) a survey listed in the National Science Foundation's 50 top research projects in its history.

Before the presentations, Rep. John Dingell (D-MI), the Dean of the House and the Michigan delegation, delivered remarks praising ISR for its important work not only for the nation, but for helping the beleaguered state of Michigan understand its problems and possible solutions to its present difficulties.

Curtin spoke about "Consumer Spending and Saving Behavior in a New Economic Era." Based on the responses in the Surveys of Consumers he suggested consumer spending will lag rather than lead the recovery from the current recession. After noting that "consumer confidence fell to a greater extent in 2008 than in any other year during the past half-century," Curtin explained that this measure has accurately gauged consumer reactions to the changing economic environment thus playing an important role in business and policy decisions. The recent declines are due to rising unemployment, declines in home and stock values, shorter work hours, and lower incomes, Curtin said.

Although the latest survey shows some regained confidence among consumers indicating that they think the "worst is over," Curtin indicated that "fundamental changes in how consumers view their economic situation and its impact on their spending will persist for some time." This led him to assert that "In the coming years, U.S. consumers will save more and spend less," as they seek to replenish losses caused by the recession.

Weir, who spoke at a COSSA Congressional Briefing on the HRS in 2004, (see Update, July 26, 2004) addressed how the financial crisis has affected older Americans. Based on an Internet Survey of the HRS sample in April-June 2009, Weir reported that most "older Americans have weathered the financial crisis relatively well," although many now expect to work longer than they anticipated in response to questions in the regular HRS conducted in 2008.

Many older people were not affected by the housing crisis, Weir explained, because for them mortgages had already been paid off. For the elderly, the main consequence of this part of the economic downturn was felt through the troubles faced by their children. About ten percent had fallen behind in mortgage payments and others had moved back to their parents' houses.

Other findings Weir reported included an increase in depressive symptoms during the financial crisis. Those experiencing four or more symptoms of depression increased from 11 percent to 18 percent. Yet, there was no increase in core behaviors such as drinking or church attendance. Finally, about a quarter of the sample, said they were not satisfied with their financial situation after the crisis, an increase of eight percent over the 2008 results.

BRIEFING TAKES ANOTHER LOOK AT TERRORISM AND GLOBAL CONFLICT

On September 14, the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) and the Center for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM), both located at the University of Maryland, presented a briefing on "Global Conflict and Terrorism Trends."

Joseph Hewitt from CIDCM examined the risks of instability and conflict in the world and concluded that over the past two years they "have increased significantly in the regions of the world where those dangers were already very high." He explained that driving this increased risk is "the recurrence of armed hostilities in conflicts that have recently come to an end." Hewitt and his colleagues have developed a peace and conflict ledger using four domains of government activity – political, economic, security, and social – to focus on structural attributes that affect a nation's instability.

For 2007, Hewitt indicated the data suggested that Afghanistan and Niger were the world's two most unstable nations and that African nations made up 22 of the top 25 unstable countries. Two factors affecting instability are "neighborhood effects" and transitioning to democracy. An example occurs in Mauritania, where a "tenuous transition to democracy" began in 2005 and where continued low-intensity violence remains in its neighboring states of Mali and Algeria. The importance of this research comes in the huge costs associated with "state failure," estimated by Hewitt at $270 billion, much of it in refugee aid to neighboring countries.

Gary LaFree, the director of START and a member of the COSSA Board of Directors, focused his remarks on global terrorism trends. He concluded that the frequency of terrorist attacks is on the rise worldwide, including an increased number of fatal attacks; terrorist activity has been especially more frequent in the Middle East and Asia this decade; and countries emerging as "terrorist hotspots" are not necessarily the countries at risk of instability. LaFree used START's Global Terrorism Database (GTD), which is an open source, unclassified set of information on over 82,000 attacks from 1970 to 2007 for his analysis. Most of the attacks, including those causing the most fatalities, LaFree pointed out, have come from domestic rather than transnational groups.

The data also indicate that although the number of attacks peaked in the early 1990s, many of those did not cause fatalities. In the 21st Century, attacks and fatalities track more closely as terrorist "groups want a lot of people dead," according to LaFree. The attackers mostly use low-tech methods, "the weapons of the poor," as LaFree put it. In terms of region, the most attacks occurred in South America in the 1980s, with Asia dominating the 1990s. Today, the Middle East and Northern Africa have joined Asia as the dominant places for terrorist attacks. LaFree also noted that most terrorist groups have very short life spans, only about ten percent last more than ten years.

During this 37 year period the United States ranked 20th in the number of attacks (Colombia is #1) and 14th in the number of fatalities (Iraq is #1). According to the data, there has been a wave effect in the incidences of terrorism in the U.S., with peaks in the mid-1970s, the early 1990s, and now with what LaFree called, "the 21st Century Boom." Access to the GTD database is available on the START Web Site www.start.umd.edu.

Ethnic Groups and Terrorism

Jonathan Wilkenfeld, who is the director of CIDCM and has a joint appointment with START and who also participated in a COSSA Capitol Hill briefing in July (see Update, July 27, 2009), spoke about political organizations in the Middle East and their choices to use violence or remain peaceful. The data Wilkenfeld used came from the Minorities at Risk project (MAR), which has identified nearly 2,000 socially-significant ethnic groups that comprise at least 100,000 people or one percent of a country's population. The MAR estimates that nearly one in seven people in the world face some sort of discrimination based on ethnic identity.

Studying ethnic organizations in relationship to terrorism is important, according to Wilkenfeld, because: seven of the ten deadliest organizations have ethnically based ideology or membership, in full or in part (1998-2005 data); MAR data demonstrate some broad preconditions for ethnic groups to use violence or terrorism, not which specific organizations may use terrorism; and most ethnic groups are represented by multiple organizations that use different mixes of strategies (violent and nonviolent). Most importantly, Wilkenfeld asserted, "by focusing on ethnic organizations around the world, we have a *natural control group*: we can now ask why some organizations choose violence and terrorism and others do not, and why some groups start and why some groups stop using terrorism."

The good news is that there has been growth in the number of Middle East ethnic organizations committed to electoral politics and a decline in violent groups. Organizations professing a democratic ideology, Wilkenfeld concluded, are significantly less likely to engage in terrorism. However, many of these ethnic groups have "an ambiguous relationship to democracy," Wilkenfeld warned, and are represented by multiple organizations some of which may resort to violence. Conversely, organizations with the following characteristics are more likely to engage in terrorism: separatism; rhetoric justifying violence; foreign support; and facing state repression. Organizations that do not have a democratic ideology and have **all** the factors above have an 89 percent likelihood of engaging in terrorism.

Tjip Walker commented on the three presentations from his perspective at the Office of Conflict and Management and Mitigation at the U.S. Agency for International Development. He worries about the recurrence factor noted by Hewitt and its implications for foreign aid. The tendency is to reward countries that democratize quite quickly and then move on. Hewitt's data suggest that the recurrence of hostilities should change that aid strategy. It would better to provide it later, four to seven years after the transition to democracy, rather than immediately, Walker concluded. Walker also focused on conflict risk and terrorism's relationship to development, particularly on the job situation for young men, which in many of these countries is quite bleak, he noted.

The slides from the presentations can be found at: http://www.start.umd.edu/start/announcements/PressClub_FINAL_all.pdf.

In addition, START, which is a Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence, has just published its 2009 Research Review. In the review START presents nine of its policy relevant projects, as well as summaries of 23 other finished projects and a look into ongoing research within the Consortium. This is also available at: http://www.start.umd.edu.

EDUCATION OFFICIALS ADDRESS AERA POLICY MEETING

The American Educational Research Association's (AERA) Organization of Institutional Affiliates (OIA) held its annual meeting September 13-14. The meeting dealt with issues that constantly plague education research: what exactly is good education research, what are the implications of education research in policy and practice, and how do we help states, schools and other stakeholders effectively utilize this research?

Currently, there are 41 states at various stages of creating state longitudinal data systems (SLDS). To further advance educational research using SLDSs, AERA and The National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER) have joined forces to create the "State Longitudinal Databases Initiative" for the purpose of advancing sound scientific research on the SLDSs. The initiative will be a two-year collaboration starting in October 2009 and lasting until September 2011.

One of the key speakers during Monday's session was Senior Counselor for the U.S. Department of Education, Marshall (Mike) Smith. He discussed the four assurances states must guarantee to obtain American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds. The assurances are meant to help further the department's education reform agenda. These assurances include assessments and standards. The department is encouraging states to work towards a set of common standards that would ensure when students leave high school they are either ready for college or the workplace. Another assurance would be to provide more investment in human capital development and the development of assessments to measure teacher effectiveness. Smith mentioned the need to move beyond just teacher assessment in terms of measuring student achievement, but looking at different measures during every point of a teacher's career, from before they enter schools of education to even after they obtain tenure. He also said the conversation of human capital investment needs to include principals and that we need to work on how we recruit and train our nation's school leaders.

Also, speaking at the meeting was John Easton, the new director of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). Easton outlined his four goals for IES. First, he wants the IES to keep its emphasis on rigorous research. But he also said IES needs to move beyond just answering the basic questions and answer the question of why not. Secondly, Easton said IES needs to build a stronger knowledge base on what is needed to turnaround low-performing schools. He noted that despite the Obama Administration's goal of turning around 5,000 of the lowest performing schools, we need more research on what really works and what doesn't. Thirdly, he said that IES needs to foster stronger more robust research and development, including the structures necessary to conduct effective research. And lastly, he mentioned that researchers need to do more than just facilitate research. IES and other research institutions need to increase the dissemination of that research, to move the research from the researchers to the practitioners.

One of the general themes of the meeting was the need to create studies that are currently relevant and provide information in timely fashion that can help states and school districts right now. That mission is more important than ever as states receive Race to the Top funds to try new innovative programs.

THE QUESTION OF COLLEGE: SHOULD EVERYBODY GO AND HOW TO RETAIN THOSE WHO DO

On September 16th the Brookings Institution hosted an event "Completing College at America's Public Universities," in conjunction with the recent release of the book, *Crossing the Finish Line*, authored by William Bowen, Matthew Chingos, and Michael McPherson.

President Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan have committed the U.S. to the goal producing the highest proportional number of college graduates in the world by 2020. However, currently less than 60 percent of students enrolled in four year colleges and universities graduate with a degree within four years. Unless we increase the number of students who graduate and graduate on time it will be difficult for the U.S. to achieve that goal.

Speaking at Brookings, Bowen pointed out that one of the most important findings in the book is the importance the role of a parent's educational attainment has on a child's future educational success. Only nine percent of kids whose parents never graduated from college and who are in the bottom quartile of a socio-economic status scale manage to graduate from college with a degree by age 26. However, encouragingly the figure rises to 29 percent, for those same students if just one parent went to college.

Russ Whitehurst, Director of the Brown Center on Education Policy and former Director for the Institute of Education Sciences, said that "what we've seen in the U.S. over the last 15 or 20 years is an increasing divide among those who have a good education and those who do not. That divide is reflected in employment, income and all the other dimensions on which we measure success in this economy."

The conclusion of the meeting was that if the nation is going to remain globally competitive and prosperous we need to raise the number of college graduates. To do this, the nation's educational agenda should ensure that students have the ability and access to go to college and most importantly to finish.

Alternatives to College

Conversely, at a September 17 Urban Institute event, "School of Hard Shocks: Should Everyone Go to College," the debate wasn't how to get students to complete college, but whether they should even go in the first place.

This fall more than 18 million students, including four million freshmen, will attend a four-year university. According to a Public Agenda poll, 55 percent of Americans say that college is necessary in today's economy. However, teachers in different poll replied that only 33 percent of students are better off going to college and 65 percent believe that many students should take a different path than college.

Robert Lerman of the Urban Institute believes we should not discourage students from college, but we also should encourage more non-college opportunities. He asserted that we need to give students more options than a purely academic one, such as apprenticeships.

Jean Johnson of Public Agenda, however, pointed out that most employers still require employees to have a college degree even if the work itself doesn't really demand one. In 1973, our labor force had 91 million people, and only nine percent of the workforce had a bachelor's degree. In comparison in 2007, there were 154 million people in the workforce and 21 percent had a bachelor's degree. Since the 1960's the number of jobs that have required at least some college has increased. The Center on Education and the Workforce estimates that by 2018, 63 percent of all jobs will require some postsecondary education or training.

Lerman countered, by arguing that the qualities employers most look for in employees are not necessarily skills they learn in college. According to a 2001 survey done by the National Association Manufacturers 69 percent of the respondents said the most common reason companies reject hourly job applicants is their lack of basic skills such as timeliness, work ethic, attendance etc.

As the debate continues on education reform for elementary and secondary schools, there is a budding question of what we are preparing these students for; college, work, apprenticeships, a combination of these? Is it feasible to declare that all students should go to college or do we need to develop new pathways for students beyond the traditional ones?

More information about the Brookings event can be found at: http://www.brookings.edu/events/2009/0916_public_universities.aspx

For more information on the Urban Institute event go to: http://www.urban.org/events/Should-Everyone-Go-to-College.cfm

CARNEGIE REPORT CALLS FOR EXPANSION OF LITERARCY TRAINING INTO HIGHER GRADES

On September 15, the Carnegie Corporation of New York released "Time to Act: An Agenda for Advancing Adolescent Literacy for College and Career Success," one of several of its new recently released reports.

The report concludes that early literacy instruction should not stop at the 3rd grade and that teachers must offer students ongoing literacy instruction that goes far beyond the basic instruction received in the early grades. This would involve a change in the schools' culture to have all teachers become involved in teaching students literacy, not just English teachers.

Internationally, U.S. students in the fourth grade score among the world's top readers. However, as they progress through school their reading skills fall and by the tenth grade U.S. students score among the lowest in the world. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) only 29 percent of 8th graders nationwide can read at grade proficiency. The data also shows that more than eight million students in 4th-12th grades read below grade level, and that two-in-three high school students read below grade level.

The issue is also gaining attention on Capitol Hill. Bethany Little, Chief Education Counsel of the Senate Committee on Health Education, Labor, and Pensions, said there is increased realization on the importance of focusing on literacy not just in the early grades, but through the entire education spectrum. She said that lawmakers have made the connection with the nation's dropout crisis. Little noted more action is needed to address the issue of adolescent literacy and that we need to look at literacy along the entire education spectrum as a vital part of education reforms.

Marshall "Mike" Smith, Senior Counselor for the Department of Education, stated we need to push language really hard in the early grades and not just in reading programs. Language components, Smith contended, should be included in science, history and other courses that would help students learn the meaning behind the words. Smith declared "we have a nation of fourth graders with the skills to read but with no comprehension of what they are reading."

All of the speakers and authors agreed that we must move students from learning to read to reading to learn if we are going to ensure that students leave high school ready for the demands of college or the workplace.

NSF SEEKS APPLICANTS FOR SBE MINORITY POST-DOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

The National Science Foundation's (NSF) Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) has announced the availability of Minority Postdoctoral Research Fellowships and Research Starter Grants. These activities support training and research in the areas of social, behavioral and economic sciences within the purview of NSF.

According to NSF, it offers postdoctoral research fellowships in selected areas to provide opportunities for recent doctoral scientists to obtain additional training, to gain research experience under the sponsorship of established scientists, and to broaden their scientific horizons beyond their research experiences during their undergraduate or graduate training. Postdoctoral fellowships are further designed to assist new scientists to direct their research efforts across traditional disciplinary lines and to avail themselves of unique research resources, sites, and facilities, including foreign locations.

Congress and others have expressed concern about the scientific leadership position of the United States in the world, continued American competitiveness, and the need to develop untapped pools of scientific talent that exist in this country. To bolster these areas, they have enacted the America COMPETES Act into law. Thus, NSF provides these fellowships to help increase the diversity of researchers who participate in its programs in the social, behavioral and economic sciences and thereby increase the participation of scientists from underrepresented groups in selected areas of science in the U.S.

For the Fellowships: At the time of application, applicants must have earned the doctoral degree in an appropriate scientific field no more than 30 months before the deadline date of the application or plan to earn this degree no more than one year after the deadline date; have completed no more than 12 months (or full-time equivalent) in a postdoctoral research or lectureship position prior to the award; have not accepted any other full-time employment for the term of the fellowship; have proposed a research and training plan that falls within the program areas of SBE; and have explicitly explained in the proposal how the fellowship award will broaden participation of underrepresented minorities in the U.S.

For the Follow-up Research Starter Grants: The Fellow may apply for a one-year research starter grant to initiate an independent research program at a U.S. academic institution eligible to receive NSF funding. To qualify for the starter grant, the Fellow must hold a tenure–track position and apply within one year after the expiration of the Fellowship.

NSF estimates it will fund up to 12 total fellowships and follow-up research starter grants contingent upon the quality of the applications and availability of funds. The maximum anticipated funding amount is approximately $1.25 million per year, again contingent upon the quality of applications and availability of funds.

For further information contact: Fahmida N. Chowdhury, (703) 292-4672 or fchowdhu@nsf.gov
The full solicitation can be found at:
http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=503424&WT.mc_id=USNSF_39

NATIONAL ACADEMIES S&T GRADUATE FELLOWSHIPS AVAILABLE

The Christine Mirzayan Science and Technology (S&T) Policy Graduate Fellowship Program of the National Academies seek applicants. The program is designed to engage its Fellows in the analytical process that informs U.S. science and technology policy. Fellows develop basic skills essential to working or participating in science policy at the federal, state, or local levels.

Graduate students and postdoctoral scholars and those who have completed graduate studies or postdoctoral research in any social/behavioral science, medical/health discipline, physical or biological science, any field of engineering, law/business/public administration or any relevant interdisciplinary field within the last five years are eligible to apply.

The program takes place in Washington, D.C. and is open to all U.S. and non-U.S. citizens who meet the criteria. However, non-U.S. citizens must be currently enrolled in a U.S. university and have proof of holding a valid J-1 or F-1 status.

The session dates are: Winter/Spring: February 3 - April 28, 2010; Fall: August 30 - November 19, 2010. To apply, please visit www.national-academies.org/policyfellows for details on criteria, application instructions, and access to the online application and reference forms. Please note the requirement for submission of an online reference from a mentor/adviser.

A stipend grant award of $8,240 will be provided for the 12-week session to offset expenses. **The deadline for receipt of application material is November 1, 2009 for the winter/spring program, and May 1, 2010 for the fall program.** Candidates may apply to both sessions concurrently.

For further information direct questions to: policyfellows@nas.edu.

ACADEMY OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SCIENCES JOINS COSSA

COSSA is pleased to announce that the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS) has become its newest member. The Academy is an international association established in 1963 to foster professional and scholarly activities in the field of criminal justice. ACJS promotes criminal justice education, research, and policy analysis within the discipline of criminal justice for both educators and practitioners. COSSA looks forward to working with ACJS in areas of mutual interest to promote research in the social and behavioral sciences.

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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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American Economic Association
American Educational Research Association
American Historical Association
American Political Science Association
American Psychological Association
American Society of Criminology
American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association
Association of American Geographers
Association of American Law Schools
Law and Society Association
Linguistic Society of America
Midwest Political Science Association
National Communication Association
Rural Sociological Society
Society for Research in Child Development

MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS

Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences
Agricultural and Applied Economics Association
American Association for Agricultural Education
American Psychosomatic Society
Association for Asian Studies
Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management
Association of Research Libraries
Council on Social Work Education
Eastern Sociological Society
International Communication Association
Justice Research and Statistics Association
Midwest Sociological Society
National Association of Social Workers
National Council on Family Relations
North American Regional Science Council
North Central Sociological Association
Population Association of America
Social Science History Association
Society for Behavioral Medicine
Society for Research on Adolescence
Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues
Sociologists for Women in Society
Southern Political Science Association
Southern Sociological Society
Southwestern Social Science Association

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Arizona State University
Brown University
University of California, Berkeley
University of California, Davis
University of California, Irvine
University of California, Los Angeles
University of California, San Diego
University of California, Santa Barbara
Carnegie-Mellon University
University of Chicago
Clark University
Columbia University
Cornell University
Duke University
Georgetown University
George Mason University
George Washington University
Harvard University
Howard University
University of Illinois
Indiana University
University of Iowa
Iowa State University
Johns Hopkins University
John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY
Kansas State University
University of Kentucky
University of Maryland
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse
University of Michigan
Michigan State University
University of Minnesota
Mississippi State University
University of Nebraska, Lincoln
New York University
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
North Carolina State University
Northwestern University
Ohio State University
University of Oklahoma
University of Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania State University
Princeton University
Purdue University
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
University of South Carolina
Stanford University
State University of New York, Stony Brook
University of Texas, Austin
Texas A & M University
Tulane University
Vanderbilt University
University of Virginia
University of Washington
Washington University in St. Louis
West Virginia University
University of Wisconsin, Madison
University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
Yale University

CENTERS AND INSTITUTES

American Academy of Political and Social Sciences
American Council of Learned Societies
American Institutes for Research
Brookings Institution
Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences
Cornell Institute for Social and Economic Research
Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan
Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research
Institute for Women's Policy Research
National Bureau of Economic Research
National Opinion Research Center
Population Reference Bureau
Social Science Research Council