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COSSA Washington Update

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OSTP RELEASES REPORT ON SBE SCIENCES

After many years and many delays, the White House Office of Science and Technology (OSTP) through the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) has released the report "*Social, Behavioral, and Economic Research in the Federal Context.*" On January 13, just before he left Washington to return to Stony Brook University, Presidential Science Adviser and OSTP director John Marburger noted in his forward to the report that: "Research information provided by the SBE [social, behavioral, and economic] sciences can provide policy-makers with evidence and information that may help address many current challenge areas in society...This is a particularly important time to reassess the role and opportunities for the SBE sciences...The report is a distillation of the most pressing scientific challenges in the SBE sciences, and their policy implications for federal agencies."

The report was compiled by the SBE Subcommittee of the Committee on Science of the NSTC. David Lightfoot, Assistant Director for the SBE directorate at the National Science Foundation, David Abrams, former director of the Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research at the National Institutes of Health, and Joe Kielman of the Department of Homeland Security, shepherded the report through most of its preparation period. Many other agencies also provided input.

The document explains the federal context of support for SBE research, discusses the policy relevance of that research in six areas, notes three "foundational research themes," focuses on four "priority research areas," includes appendices that list the SBE disciplines and the major questions they try to answer, and describes three important new tools that SBE scientists use to conduct their research.

The Federal government, the report declares, should be interested in SBE data, research, and analyses because without it “there is a greater likelihood of engaging in ineffective or counterproductive policies” that affect “securing the welfare of its citizens and institutions... and understanding the causes and effects of human activity.” Human factors research and economics research on auctions are cited as two examples of important SBE research that have had policy implications.

Although the report does not focus on Federal funding and there are no calls for increased dollars, it does note current support for “high quality longitudinal data gathered in surveys.” The Panel Study on Income Dynamics, the American National Election Studies, the High School Longitudinal Studies, the Health and Retirement Study, and the General Social Survey are cited as examples. The report also points out how SBE research has demonstrated the ineffectiveness of policies such as DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education program), Scared Straight, and Grade-level retention programs.

The six policy relevant areas are: education; health; cooperation and conflict; societal resilience and response to threats; creativity and innovation; and energy, environment, and human dynamics. (As a comparison, when COSSA produced *Fostering Human Progress* in 2001 its policy relevant categories for its review of SBE research were: Creating a Safer World; Increasing Prosperity; Improving Health; Educating the Nation; Promoting Fairness; and Protecting the Environment.)

The education section discusses research on early life developments, educational technology and other learning tools, real-time assessments, and the involvement of older Americans in the schools. It also focuses on evidence-based education studies and the identification of what works. It cites the No Child Left Behind Act and the Educational Sciences Reform Act (which created the Institute of Education Science and its What Works Clearinghouse) as enhancing the “support of effective instruction based on scientific research.”

The health section notes the oft-cited statistic that 80 percent of all premature deaths in modern industrial societies are related to voluntary behavioral factors such as tobacco and alcohol use, poor diet, lack of physical activity and risky sexual behaviors. The report asserts that “SBE research on behavioral approaches to lifestyle change has been instrumental in improving human health,” mentioning programs on reducing tobacco use and preventing HIV-AIDS transmission. It also proclaims the importance of “context,” particularly social and economic factors, on healthy behavior. The section concludes with a discussion of research on health disparities and the changes coming because of “an evolving knowledge of genomics” that will lead to personal medical treatments.

The contrast of cooperation and conflict in human activity is a major focus of SBE researchers, the report declares. Game theory and computer simulations are noted as ways these scientists have explored this question. So far, the report suggests “the human capacity for violence and aggression is not a problem that has a solution,” and thus “violence is a reality that has to be managed.” The research, according to the report, has indicated ways to improve that management as it relates to school violence, environmental disputes, or battlefield operations.

The work of SBE scientists in response to both natural and human-made disasters, particularly after Katrina, the 9/11 attacks, and the Indian Ocean Tsunami, provide evidence of how people and organizations behave during a disaster, how they make decisions in the face of uncertainty, time pressure, and chaos. In addition, SBE scientists have investigated the behavior of critical infrastructures during disasters and have developed important insights into how to communicate during disasters.

The oft-touted Science of Science and Innovation Policy, a Marburger-inspired research program at NSF, is mentioned in the section on Creativity and Innovation. The report notes: “The actual process of innovation is still a mystery,” and SBE scientists are working towards understanding what it is, how it helps the U.S. to remain competitive, and how to nurture it. The research also extends to studies of innovative organizations and how to better incorporate the role of research and development investments in measuring Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and economic growth.

SBE research on how human activity affects the energy consumption and the natural environment is the final policy area the report mentions. Research on demographic shifts, land use, and the consumption of natural resources are all part of this arena. The example cited is research on common-pool resources. In addition, studies of human social structures and group dynamics are important to determining acceptance by businesses and individuals of regulatory mechanisms.

The Foundational Research Themes are:

1) Understanding the structure and function of the brain, and discerning how consciousness, behavior and emotions arise and are regulated. This relates to basic research on individuals and their behavior. It involves understanding the intertwining of nature and nurture and genes and experience, the learning of language, the role of perception, emotion and memory, and other brain-mind matters.

2) Understanding the complexity of human societies and human activities. Here the focus of the research is looking at human societies as “complex ecosystems.” Using network modeling, SBE researchers have enabled investigations of interpersonal and inter-organizational ties that foster the spread of information and ideas within and across populations.

3) Understanding the origins of genetic and environmental factors in shaping identity and diversity. The core of this theme is studying human origins to determine human migration and settlement patterns, variations in human anatomy and genetics, and the evolution of the brain and with it the human capacity for language, social relationships, and visual ability.

The tools and technologies mentioned involve data gathering and management techniques starting with the constitutionally-mandated U.S. decennial Census, whose data has formed the baseline for much SBE science and knowledge. It also includes the longitudinal studies mentioned earlier as well as short-lived data collected in the wake of disasters and other unexpected events. The key, the report states, is that “data collections should be accessible and widely shared – but with guarantees of privacy and security.”

The report argues that multiple forms of knowledge need integrating and the Federal government should encourage these efforts by establishing formal, interdisciplinary research centers on specific problems. (This may be the only significant policy recommendation in the report.)

The document also makes a pitch for more “evidence-led public policy,” that is also “evidence-generating,” the development of more sophisticated simulations, more dialogue between researchers and real-world practitioners, and better communication between SBE scientists and the public.

Finally, the report describes how new tools such as enhanced cyberinfrastructure, including advanced Geographic Information Systems (GIS), the sequencing of the genome, and functional neuroimaging have all created enormous opportunities for the SBE sciences to move forcefully ahead in the coming years to meet the research and policy challenges that confront scientists, policy makers, and the public.

The PDF version of the report is available on the COSSA Web page: www.cossa.org . A printed copy that will include pictures and graphics will be available soon.

STIMULUS PACKAGES BEGIN LEGISLATIVE JOURNEY; SCIENCE FUNDING INCLUDED

With the inauguration over and organization efforts continuing, the 111th Congress turned to its first major piece of business – providing an economic stimulus package to start the country on the road to “recovery and reinvestment” as the plans are designated. President Obama made a special pitch for their enactment in his first radio address as President on January 24. The new President said the stimulus will not only “jump-start the economy,” but “it’s one that will invest in our most important priorities like energy and education; health care and a new infrastructure that are necessary to keep us strong and competitive in the 21st century.”

The stimulus package, which includes both spending and tax plans, has successfully emerged from the House Appropriations, Ways and Means, and Energy and Commerce Committees. The House expects to consider the bills on January 28. The details of the Senate plan are still sketchy, with summaries released by the Senate Appropriations and Finance Committees on January 23.

Both the House and Senate plans include funding for science, because as the House Appropriations Committee put it in a section titled “Transform Our Economy with Science and Technology: “We need to put scientists to work looking for the next great discovery, creating jobs in cutting-edge-technologies, and making smart investments that will help businesses in every community succeed in a global economy.”

The House spending plan includes \$3 billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF). Of that sum, \$2.5 billion will go to the Research and Related Activities Account, which funds the research directorates, including the one for social, behavioral and economic sciences (SBE), and other activities. Included in the \$2.5 billion are \$300 million for the Major Research Instrumentation program and \$200 million for academic research facilities modernization.

NSF’s Education and Human Resources directorate would receive \$100 million, of which \$60 million fund Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarships and \$40 million would go to the Math and Science Partnership program that supports innovative partnerships to improve K-12 student achievement in math and science. Both of these are key components of the America COMPETES Act enacted in 2007. NSF would also get \$400 million for its Major Research Equipment and Facilities program, which supports large scientific infrastructure projects.

As of this writing, the Senate plan provides NSF with \$1.4 billion for “scientific research, infrastructure, and competitive grants” with no further details.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) would receive \$3.5 billion from the House bill. Of that sum, \$1.5 billion would go to biomedical and behavioral research. Another \$500 million would “implement the repair and improvement strategic plan developed by the NIH for its campuses.” The other \$1.5 billion would help “renovate university research facilities and help them complete for biomedical research grants.”

The House provides \$462 million to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for renovation and construction. It also allocates \$1.1 billion for healthcare effectiveness research. Of that sum, \$700 million would go to the Agency for Healthcare Quality and Research (AHRQ), of which \$400 million would be transferred to the Office of the Director of NIH. An additional \$400 million for comparative effectiveness research would come under the discretionary control of the Secretary of Health and Human Services. The bill also includes \$3 billion for a prevention and wellness fund, which includes “evidence-based disease prevention.” There is also \$40 million for the National Center for Health Statistics.

The Senate Appropriations Committee indicates that NIH would also get \$3.5 billion in the Senate version “for biomedical research and to improve NIH facilities.” Like the House, the Senate would appropriate \$1.1 billion for evaluation of the “relative effectiveness of different health care services and treatment options.” The Senate version also includes \$5.8 billion for “prevention and wellness...to fight preventable diseases and conditions.”

The education portion of the House package includes: \$6 billion for higher education renovation and modernization; \$1 billion for education technology including teacher training; \$15.6 billion to increase the maximum Pell Grant by \$500 to \$5,350; and \$250 million for Statewide Data System to help states “design and develop data systems that analyze individual student data” to help improve achievement of students and schools; and \$300 million for “improving teacher quality.” There is also \$4.7 million for early childhood development programs including Head Start, the Child Care Development Block Grant, and IDEA infants and families to help states serve children with disabilities age 2 or younger.

Funds for Census 2010

The House version also includes \$1 billion to the Periodic Censuses and Programs account of the U.S. Census Bureau “for work necessary to ensure a successful 2010 census, including \$150 million for expanded communications and outreach programs to minimize undercounting of minority groups.”

Since this is legislation designed to stimulate economic growth the House has included provisions that encourage immediate spending of the provided funds. According to the bill: “Competitive grants using funds made available in this Act shall be awarded not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act ... The time limits specified...may each be extended by up to 30 days in the case of grants for which funding was not provided in fiscal year 2008.” This last sentence applies to the research agencies such as NSF and NIH.

Although Republicans in Congress have attempted to slow the march toward enactment of the stimulus, it will likely emerge from the House relatively unchanged from what passed the appropriations committee. In the Senate, Republicans may have more impact, but new Appropriations Committee Chairman Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI) has generally worked in a bipartisan manner in the past and his bill may already reflect GOP input.

PRESIDENT OBAMA RESCINDS EXECUTIVE ORDER ON PRESIDENTIAL RECORDS, RESTORES PRESUMPTION OF OPENNESS ON FOIA REQUESTS

On January 21, President Obama revoked former President Bush’s Executive Order regarding the Presidential Records Act. The House, but not the Senate, had already voted to rescind the order (see Update, [January 12, 2009](#)) to ensure that claims of executive privilege by former presidents and their families could not delay release of records.

The new President also issued a memorandum for heads of executive departments and agencies to issue new guidelines regarding the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The memorandum clearly states: “The Freedom Information Act should be administered with a clear presumption: In the face of doubt, openness prevails.” Therefore, “all agencies should adopt a presumption in favor of disclosure.” This reverses an order issued by former Attorney General John Ashcroft that led to restrictions and delays in agencies fulfilling FOIA requests during the Bush Administration.

CORA MARRETT NAMED NSF'S ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR

On January 16, National Science Foundation Director Arden Bement named Cora Marrett as the Acting Deputy Director. Marrett replaces Kathie Olsen who was reassigned within NSF to become a Senior Adviser to the Office of Information and Resource Management. How long Marrett serves in her new capacity is up to the Obama Administration.

A sociologist by training, Marrett has been the Assistant Director for the Education and Human Resources Directorate since February 2007. From 1992-96 she served as the first Assistant Director for the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences directorate. She was named by then-NSF director Walter Massey with whom she had served on a commission investigating the Three Mile Island nuclear power accident. In between her stints at NSF, she served as Provost of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs at the University of Wisconsin system office.

She was a member of the University of Wisconsin-Madison faculty from 1974 to 1997, and retains her tenured faculty appointment there. From 1990-1992, she held a half-time appointment while serving as director of two programs for the United Negro College Fund under a \$2.4 million grant from the Andrew Mellon Foundation. Prior to joining the faculty at UW-Madison in 1974, Marrett was an assistant professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina (1968-1969) and an assistant and associate professor of sociology at Western Michigan University (1969-1974). From 1973 to 1974, she was a senior policy fellow at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C.

In 2005, Marrett received the Erich Bloch Distinguished Service Award from the Quality Education for Minorities (QEM) Network, given annually to an individual who has made singular contributions to the advancement of science and to the participation of groups underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. She is an elected fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. She has also been a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in California and served on the COSSA Board of Directors in 2005-06.

She has a B.A. degree from Virginia Union University, and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from UW-Madison, all in sociology.

POLITICAL SCIENTIST TO LEAD HOUSE RESEARCH AND SCIENCE EDUCATION PANEL

On January 22, the House Science and Technology (S&T) Committee, chaired by Rep. Bart Gordon (D-TN), announced the heads of its Subcommittees for the 111th Congress. Some shifting occurred that resulted in Rep. Daniel Lipinski (D-IL), a Ph.D. in Political Science from Duke, as the new chairman of the Research and Science Education panel. Lipinski replaces Rep. Brian Baird (D-WA), a Ph.D. psychologist, who will now lead the Energy and Environment Subcommittee. Rep. Vern Ehlers (R-MI) will remain as Ranking Republican on the Research and Science Education panel.

Lipinski is from Chicago and in 2004 he replaced his father William in the congressional seat. He taught political science at the University of Tennessee and Notre Dame and wrote his dissertation on *Congressional Communication*. As he is fond of telling witnesses before the S&T Committee, Lipinski also has B.S. and M.A. degrees in engineering from Northwestern and Stanford respectively.

In 2007, Lipinski spoke at a National Capital Area Political Science Association event and described how his political science degree prepared him for his congressional career. (COSSA Executive Director Howard Silver was president of the organization at the time.)

Baird used his leadership of the Subcommittee to hold a series of hearings during the 110th Congress to feature the contributions of the social and behavioral sciences to the nation's energy, national security, and health policies (see Update, [October 8, 2007](#), [May 5, 2008](#), and [September 22, 2008](#)).

The Subcommittee's jurisdiction includes the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, the National Science Foundation, and the whole area of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Education (STEM). As outlined by Chairman Gordon the Committee's agenda for the new Congress includes evaluating STEM education programs across the Federal government and determining how to provide better coordination to make them more effective. Another priority is to assess efforts to promote diversity in the STEM workforce and gender equity at academic institutions.

BROOKINGS SCHOLAR NEW HEAD OF CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE

Douglas Elmendorf, senior fellow in the Economic Studies program at the Brookings Institution, has been named by the congressional leadership to direct the Congressional Budget Office (CBO). Elmendorf replaces Peter Orszag, the new director of the Office of Management and Budget in the Obama Administration. Orszag also came to CBO from Brookings.

Under the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the CBO Director is appointed by the Speaker of the House, Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, Sen. Robert Byrd (D-WV) after considering recommendations from the House and Senate Budget Committees. By custom, the House and Senate alternate in taking the lead role on the CBO Director's selection; this time it was the House's turn and Elmendorf was recommended by House Budget Committee Chairman Rep. John Spratt (D-SC) and Ranking Member Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI).

Elmendorf also chairs Brookings' Hamilton Project, an initiative that develops policy proposals to achieve shared economic growth. His areas of expertise are macroeconomics, the financial system, public economics, and fiscal policy. Elmendorf's current research focuses on policy responses to the current mortgage and financial crisis and on economic volatility at the aggregate and household levels. He recently completed a report with Martin Baily, a senior adviser at the McKinsey Global Institute and a former COSSA seminar speaker, and Robert Litan, vice president of Research and Policy at the Kauffman Foundation, on the causes and policy implications of the credit squeeze.

The new CBO director was previously an assistant professor at Harvard University, a principal analyst at CBO, a senior economist at the White House Council of Economic Advisers (during the Clinton Administration), a deputy assistant secretary for economic policy at the Treasury Department (also under Clinton and new Obama Administration National Economic Council head Lawrence Summers), and an assistant director of the Division of Research and Statistics at the Federal Reserve Board. In these positions he worked on budget policy, Social Security reform, Medicare and national health reform, financial-market issues, macroeconomic analysis and forecasting, and other topics.

Elmendorf earned his Ph.D. and A.M. in economics from Harvard University, where he was a National Science Foundation Graduate Fellow, and his A.B. summa cum laude from Princeton University.

NICHD'S CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND BEHAVIOR BRANCH PRESENTS ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL: SEEKS PUBLIC COMMENTS

The *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute for Child Health and Human Development's (NICHD) Child Development and Behavior (CPB) Branch is seeking public comments on its annual report. Branch Chief Peggy McCardle presented the report at the 137th meeting of the Institute's advisory committee meeting on January 22, 2009. The Branch activities were unanimously applauded by the Council.

McCardle explained that the CDB Branch "seeks to improve the health and well-being of individuals from infancy through early adulthood by supporting research into healthy growth and development, including all aspects of child development." The research supported by the Branch includes the study of typical child development—of behavior, how to predict or change behavior, and how to recognize and intervene in learning and behavior difficulties—across the U.S.' diverse population. The central mission of the CDB Branch is "to examine in-depth the behavioral, neurobiological, and genetic aspects of typical development and factors that place such development at risk, and to determine the optimal prevention and intervention approaches and under what conditions and in what contexts interventions can be most effective for specific subsets of individuals."

The Council heard from two researchers supported by the Branch. Jack Fletcher, University of Houston, Texas, presented his research on "Advancing Learning Disabilities: An Interdisciplinary Approach" and Lynne Vernon-Feagans, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, provided an overview of The Family Life Project by discussing "Lives in Low-Wealth Rural Communities."

Annual Report

The CDB Branch funds research on child development, behavior, and health at a level of just less than \$130 million annually, supporting approximately 360 research grants per year. The Branch's overall research portfolio supports both basic and applied research within seven research program areas. Each program encompasses a broad scientific domain within the overall mission of the Branch, while also addressing cross-cutting issues that involve multiple Branch programs, other Branches, and other Institutes and agencies. Research, most often multidisciplinary, supported by CDB

use a variety of methods and designs, including cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, experimental and qualitative methods. Additionally, while CDB-supported research is primarily investigator-initiated, the Branch also uses a variety of grant mechanisms to advance its mission, including selected calls for research in specific areas.

1. **Developmental Cognitive Psychology, Behavioral Neuroscience, and Psychobiology (Dev-CBNP) Program** develops and supports research to identify linkages among the developing brain, behavior, the environment, and genes. Specifically, Dev-CBNP supports work on pathways to normal brain development and behaviors, the identification of underlying mechanisms at molecular, genetic, cellular, and network levels relevant to the developing brain and behavior, and research that identifies biological and behavioral indices of individual differences predictive of performance in sensory, motor, linguistic, cognitive, and social behavioral domains at different points of development.
2. **Early Learning and School Readiness (ELSR) Program** supports research on the experiences children need from birth to eight years of age to prepare them to learn, read, and succeed in school. This includes research that identifies early interactions with adults and peers in home, child care, and preschool settings that impact cognitive and social emotional development; plus studies of early childhood education teaching methods, curricula, and comprehensive interventions to prepare children from diverse backgrounds and environments for kindergarten and the early grades. This research focuses on the development of cognition, emergent literacy, language, numeracy and mathematics, social and emotional competence, metacognition and self-regulation, motor development, and physical health.
3. **Language, Bilingualism, and Biliteracy (LBB) Program** supports and encourages research in three closely related and often integrated areas: language development and psycholinguistics, from infancy through early adulthood; bilingualism and/or second language acquisition; and reading in bilingual and/or English Language Learning children and youth. The Branch is particularly interested in developmental studies that identify and explicate the cognitive, linguistic, social, cultural, socio-environmental, geographic, environmental, instructional, and neurobiological factors related to language, bilingualism, and biliteracy.
4. **Mathematics and Science Cognition and Learning: Development and Disorders (MSCL) Program** supports projects in both basic and intervention research within all aspects of mathematical thinking and problem solving, as well as in scientific reasoning, learning, and discovery, across all ages from infancy into early adulthood. Grantees have explored a variety of influences on atypical development in mathematics and science learning and cognition, including genetic and neurobiological substrates, as well as cognitive, linguistic, sociocultural, and instructional factors.
5. **Reading, Writing, and Related Learning Disabilities (RWRLD) Program** focuses on research and training initiatives to increase understanding of normal and atypical development of reading and written language skills throughout the life course, as well as the development of prevention, remediation, and instructional approaches and methods to enhance these abilities. The Program includes work on reading and writing development, from preschool through adulthood, particularly multidisciplinary studies that integrate genetic, neurobiological, cognitive/behavioral, and intervention studies; it also emphasizes the development and validation of measurement tools to support such studies.
 - **Social and Affective Development/Child Maltreatment and Violence (SAD/CMV) Program** supports research and research training relevant to normative social, affective, and personality development in children from the newborn period through adolescence. In addition, SAD/CMV focuses on the impact of specific physical and social environmental aspects on the health and psychological development of infants, children, and adolescents, including investigations of socio-cultural, familial, individual, and biological influences on development. Research on child developmental processes in high-risk settings (e.g., in violent or abusive environments, or in families experiencing stressors such as poverty, unemployment, or parental depression) is also supported by SAD/CMV.
6. **Pediatric Behavior and Health Promotion (PBHP) Program** focuses on developmental and behavioral aspects of health risk behaviors and health promotion in individuals from infancy to young adulthood. PBHP supports research and research training on biopsychosocial and developmental aspects of health behaviors with the goal of promoting healthier lifestyles and preventing injuries, diseases, and unhealthy conditions. Research supported by PBHP also includes basic, clinical, and translational research studies as well as studies utilizing secondary data analyses.

Future Directions

The Branch relies on a wide network of relationships and collaborations both to support research and to disseminate research findings. It also does a considerable amount of work with professional organizations and associations among others. For its annual report, the Branch convened a review panel of its annual report which included a member of the Advisory Council, two representatives from relevant professional associations, plus individuals with expertise in developmental, cognitive, and neuro- and biopsychology, demography, pediatrics, neuroimaging, genetics, human development, and linguistics.

From the review, the Panel made a number of recommendations which were consolidated into four overarching themes: 1) Cognition, learning and learning disabilities, 2) Social-emotional behavioral interventions, 3) Genetics and epigenetics studies, and 4) Brain imaging and brain development work. Recommendations for future directions included:

- Conduct further research on early cognition and learning in infancy; school readiness across domains; learning and learning disabilities in preschool- and school-aged children; bilingualism and language development; and the role of social and emotional development (e.g., motivation and engagement, aggression, bullying, etc.).
- Encompass work in mathematics and reading and place renewed emphasis on the learning of scientific concepts, a relatively under-represented, yet highly important area; give high priority to projects and efforts on early math and science learning.
- Enhance support for research on the impact of bereavement, disaster, and traumatic events (both natural and manmade) on children and families.
- Increase research efforts on exposure to violence, including the impact of individual and family violence, as well as political violence.
- Study ways to further reduce risk, including studies of multiple risk factors, in adolescence. Such research should incorporate measures of physiological responses to stress and interventions to reduce either the responses or the stresses themselves.
- Enhance support for studies to move beyond gene-environment interactions by studying entire pedigrees (i.e., families).
- Establish a training workshop to assist researchers in learning how best to access and use the brain-development neuroimaging database.
- Encourage data sharing.

The panel also emphasized general points with regard to ongoing and future research supported by the CDB Branch including:

- Research on child development should address the settings and contexts in which children grow and develop. Such research will require the inclusion of children from diverse backgrounds and cultures, children living in poverty, and children from different family structures and should address potential gender differences.
- Multi-level descriptive studies are critical to fully understand how children develop, what factors influence that development, and how influences may be carried across generations to impact both health and development.
- Studying development realistically must involve studying changes over time. Although these investigations are resource intensive, such longitudinal studies are necessary to studying many aspects of child development. The National Children's Study may present opportunities for adjunct studies, but is limited by its breadth of scope and cost; further, it does not replace the need for targeted longitudinal studies of specific aspects of child and adolescent development.
- When possible, studies should consider international perspectives to build on work in other cultures and countries, including the impact of war, violence, famine, etc. on children's development.
- The development of valid, replicable measurement methods are ongoing challenges for studies of child development and behavior. The need for new or more-reliable, better-validated measures is constant. The Branch, and possibly the Institute, should examine mechanisms for supporting work specific to measurement and the development of innovative methods to enhance the science of child development.

- Continued and enhanced coordination with relevant funding agencies, such as the Department of Education and the Administration on Children and Families, should be a required and routine part of all Branch activities. Regularly scheduled sessions to convene relevant agencies could help to ensure that basic research findings influence the funding of more applied work, and that basic research needs are clearly defined and addressed. Similarly, communication with professional associations and advocacy organizations should continue to be a regular part of the Branch's efforts.

A copy of the draft report is available at <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/news/releases/upload/CDB-DRAFT-Council-Report-2009.pdf>. Written comments on the draft report should be sent via e-mail to NICHDPublicComments@mail.nih.gov; with "CDB BRANCH REPORT" in the subject line. The Comment period closes on **February 5, 2009**. It is expected that the final CDB Branch report will be available later in 2009, both for single-copy order and for viewing/download.

CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING UNDERSCORES URGENCY CONCERNING CENSUS 2010

"We are very late in the cycle" and the "U.S. Census Bureau needs a new director as soon as possible," declared former director Martha Farnsworth Riche at a congressional briefing on January 23. The session organized by the Census Project, of which COSSA is a member, drew a standing room only crowd mainly of congressional staff many of whom represented new members. Reps. Lacy Clay (D-MO), Charlie Gonzales (D-TX), Mike Honda (D-CA), and Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) helped coordinate the briefing as well.

Previous director Steve Murdock left the bureau in early January to return to Rice University. Deputy Director Thomas Mesenbourg Jr. has become Acting Director. The New York Times has written two editorials urging the immediate appointment of former director Ken Prewitt, now at Columbia University. It is unclear whether the delay has anything to do with Bill Richardson's withdrawal as Secretary of Commerce-designate and the need to find a new person for that position before naming a Census director.

Riche also noted the importance of the \$1 billion included for the Bureau in the House version of the stimulus plan (see other story) and argued forcefully that this was clearly needed to make up for funding shortfalls in the past few years, particularly for the communications and outreach programs. She suggested these deficiencies led to a "partial dress rehearsal" in 2008. She also discussed the Bureau's need to hire a massive workforce to administer the 2010 count including the non-response follow-up (NRFU) for those who do not return the mail questionnaire.

Despite the lack of a confirmed director, the Bureau continues to move ahead with preparations for the count. The Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA), a coordinated effort to insure that the mailed questionnaires get to the right places, is underway. Riche also indicated that it takes almost a year to print and address the questionnaires and that will begin in a few months. The 2010 count only includes a short, six question form as the previous long-form questions are now handled by the American Community Survey.

William Ramos, Director of the Washington, DC office of the National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO), discussed the "fear factor" that will need mitigating to enhance participation of Latinos in the Census. He noted the integrated communications plan the Bureau has put in place that targets hard-to-count people. Ramos also stressed the importance of working with local officials and community-based organizations that can be brought together as they were in 2000 in "Complete Count Committees."

Terry Ao of the Asian American Justice Center also related the difficulties of counting groups that are wary of the Federal government in this age of anti-immigrant rhetoric, identity theft, and fears of data sharing. Reporting on her observation of a focus group, she suggested that educating Asian Americans about the importance of the count to Federal program funding, especially for schools, is a significant way to encourage participation. She also indicated that in-language promotional campaigns were another factor for enhancing compliance with the count.

Despite all this, Phil Sparks, Co-Director of the Census Project, warned that unless a number of things started happening very quickly, particularly the appointment and confirmation of a new director, the 2010 count could turn into the most inaccurate ever. He encouraged the congressional staff present to inform their bosses of the importance of full funding for the Census, including what will be a huge budget request in FY 2010, and of the other non-budgetary issues that need monitoring.

NATIONAL ACADEMIES' REPORT MAKES RECOMMENDATIONS DESIGNED TO IMPROVE HHS' PERFORMANCE

On December 12, 2008, the National Academies' Institute of Medicine (IOM) Committee on Improving the Organization of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to Advance the Health of Our Population released its report with recommendations for the Congress. The report, *HHS in the 21st Century: Charting a New Course for a Healthier America*, is in response to a request from Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA) and Rep. Tom Davis (R-VA) former chair and former ranking minority member, respectively, of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform in the 110th Congress. Waxman and Davis asked the IOM "to assess where HHS is 'ideally organized' to meet the enduring and emerging health challenges facing our nation." Leonard D. Schaeffer, University of Southern California, served as chair of the Committee.

Instead of "wholesale reorganization," the Committee identified five areas of action to improve the performance of the department: 1) Defining a twenty-first vision; 2) Fostering adaptability and alignment; 3) Increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the U.S. health care system; 4) Strengthening the HHS and U.S public health and health care workforces; and 5) Improving accountability and decision making. The most critical conclusion the Committee made was that "large-scale reorganization of the entire department was not the best way to support key decision makers at HHS." The Committee also made recommendations directed specifically to Congress. Some of the recommendations relate to the funding and oversight of the department, and the effectiveness and efficiency of the health care system, and others relate to the need for greater flexibility in its internal operations and decision making. These recommendations included:

Define a 21st Century Vision -- The Secretary of HHS should clearly articulate and actively promote a vision for the nation's health, ensure that the department's mission supports that vision, and establish a small number of measurable goals focused on critical challenges. Under the agency's current structure, 30 official positions report directly to the secretary.

Foster Adaptability and Accountability -- The Committee noted given that public health focuses on the health of populations rather than individuals, HHS should integrate public health principles across its programs, including the major financing and research programs. According to the Committee, "HHS policies and health and human services programs should incorporate current scientific knowledge and evidence-based practices. To accomplish this, the department needs to strengthen the science base of its programs and policy decisions. It emphasized that political considerations cannot be allowed to override scientific evidence in the department's decision making." Recommendations included:

The secretary should ensure a more prominent and powerful role for the surgeon general, who, in addition to leading the Commissioned Corps, should be a strong advocate for the American people and work actively to educate Americans on important health issues. The secretary should work with the President and Congress to establish a process for identifying surgeon general candidates for Presidential appointment that gives high priority to qualifications and leadership, and Congress is strongly urged to consider a longer term for this office.

The secretary should work with the President and Congress to establish an appointment process for the department's senior-level officials that protects the scientific and administrative integrity of major departmental units, promotes progress toward departmental goals, and is based primarily on the candidates' qualifications and experience. Congress again is strongly urged to consider longer terms for some of these officials—especially the directors of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)—which would provide critical continuity in the nation's public health and scientific endeavors.

The President should make timely appointments and Congress should expedite the confirmation process for key HHS officials, including the secretary, deputy secretary, surgeon general, and the heads of FDA, and NIH. Secretarial appointments such as the director of the CDC also should be expedited.

Congress should allocate sufficient, predictable funding for NIH, CDC, FDA, and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) in order to preserve and enhance these agencies' scientific missions. Congress should also establish a specific budget line for AHRQ that is independent of appropriations to other HHS agencies.

Increase Effectiveness and Efficiency of the U.S. Health Care System -- The Committee noted that achieving a value-driven system will require the analyses of the clinical and cost-effectiveness of options for disease prevention and treatment and the way care is organized and delivered. The analyses, according to the report, should build on existing data collection efforts in such agencies such as CDC, FDA, NIH, CMS, and AHRQ - as well as external data sources. "The

committee sees this type of research as providing useful guidance in clinical decision making, but recognizes that it cannot be an absolute guide to the clinical care of *individual patients*, whose circumstances vary widely.” Recommendations included:

The secretary should work with Congress to establish a capability for assessing the comparative value—including clinical and cost effectiveness—of medical interventions and procedures, preventive and treatment technologies, and methods of organizing and delivering care. The assessment of comparative value should begin by leveraging department-wide data sources in conjunction with supportive evidence from providers, payers, and health researchers.*

The secretary should work with Congress to ensure that the department’s programs and reimbursement policies are outcomes-based, reflecting best available evidence of value and creating incentives for adoption of best practices, including integration of care, in order to improve quality and efficiency.

Strengthen the HHS and U.S. Public Health and Health Care Workforces -- During the five-year period that began in 2007, according to the report, half of all managers within HHS will be eligible to retire. To make government service more attractive, the Committee urged that federal hiring practices should be revised and greater flexibility in fringe benefits and work patterns should be offered. Citing the unevenness of federal support for health workforce training programs, it emphasized the need for biomedical scientists, health economists, other health service researchers, biostatisticians, and epidemiologists to continue the advances in the health-related sciences. The difficulty in attracting young people to these vital fields begins at the earliest grade levels, with poor math and science skills, and extends throughout the education pipeline. Recommendations included:

Congress should authorize the department, in cooperation with the Office of Personnel Management, to assemble a package of current and innovative programs and benefits designed to encourage talented, experienced individuals to transition back-and-forth between government and private sector service, thereby identifying ways to leverage the best of both.

Congress should provide the secretary with additional authority to reward performance, innovation, and the achievement of results, through bonuses, merit-based pay, recognition awards, or other mechanisms of proven effectiveness.

Congress should give the secretary authority to create new programs that invest in the future generation of biomedical and health services researchers, enabling the continued discovery of new, more effective methods of preventing, treating, and curing disease, promoting health, improving health care delivery and organization, and controlling health system costs.

Improve Accountability and Decision Making -- The Committee called for a department-wide information system that provides a panoramic view of how its health and human services programs work together to achieve departmental goals. Calling for greater management flexibility for the secretary, “the committee determined that increased congressional involvement in HHS management and operation “has hindered the department’s flexibility.” Recommendations included:

A “new compact” between Congress and the department is essential as HHS works toward achieving its vision for a healthy nation, departmental mission, and key health goals. Under this compact, the secretary would provide Congress and the nation regular, rigorous reports about departmental activities and assume greater accountability for improving performance and obtaining results; in return, Congress should allow the department greater flexibility in its internal operations and decision making.

Congress should authorize the secretary to direct funding from the budgets of all departmental units to support the development of an HHS-wide information system. Funding for such a system would benefit all department units.

Congress should establish a new, strategic initiative fund to enable the secretary to support cross agency and cross-departmental activities that exhibit innovation in responding to twenty-first century challenges, and to respond quickly to new, unforeseen, or expanding public health threats.

The report is available at <http://www.iom.edu/CMS/28312/55311/60704.aspx>

IOM COMMITTEE ISSUES A CALL TO ACTION TO THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION ON GLOBAL HEALTH

The National Academies' Institute of Medicine (IOM) Committee on U.S. Commitment to Global Health has issued a call to the Obama Administration to make global health a priority. The Committee, co-chaired by Thomas R. Pickering, (Hills & Company) and Harold E. Varmus, President and Chief Executive Officer of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center and recently appointed by President Obama to Co-Chair the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST). Varmus is a former director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

According to the Committee which also included former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala and former Centers for Disease Control and Prevention director Jeffrey Koplan as members, the global health community has reached a critical juncture in that now, more than ever before, the knowledge, innovative technologies, and proven tools to help millions of people in need are within reach. But, despite demonstrated success in tackling certain health issues, the gap continues to grow between what can be done with existing knowledge, and what is actually being done in disadvantaged communities. It also emphasizes that existing interventions are not widely used even though many are inexpensive and easy to administer. At the same time, chronic diseases (such as diabetes and heart disease) have joined the traditional list of infectious "poor country" diseases in an extraordinary global epidemiologic transition."

The Committee recommended that prevention and treatment of chronic and noncommunicable diseases become a priority in global health, along with interventions to reduce risk factors such as tobacco use, obesity, and sedentary lifestyles. Stressing that this rising tide of chronic and noncommunicable diseases in both industrialized and low-resource settings also cannot be ignored any longer, the committee noted that "80 percent of chronic disease deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries." It cited as an example the cardiovascular disease rate in 2001 which was responsible for almost three times as many premature deaths in low- and middle-income countries as AIDS, malaria, and TB combined. Smoking, which greatly increases the risk of acquiring diseases such as TB, heart attacks, and cancer, remains an addiction in many poor countries. Unless large numbers of adults quit, smoking will account for one billion deaths this century, the Committee pointed out.

The "pivotal role" of the NIH's Fogarty International Center in building the capacity of researchers in low- and middle-income countries is highlighted in the report. "Fogarty's highly successful AIDS International Training and Research Program provide training in multi-disciplinary biomedical and behavioral research at institutions that address the AIDS epidemic in their particular countries." In addition, the report noted Fogarty's efforts to build on this model with its Millennium Promise Awards, "a program that builds research capacity in low- and middle-income countries in fields related to cancer, cerebrovascular disease, lung disease, obesity, lifestyle factors, and genetics as related to chronic diseases."

A Coherent Strategy Needed

The IOM stressed the need for coherent strategy for U.S. involvement in global health. Currently, the Committee reports that more than 20 U.S. government agencies work internationally, with many of them contributing to some aspect of human development. It highlighted the lack of efforts, to date, by the agencies "to broadly coordinate and quantify U.S. actions in global health across" their organizations. "The tools available to track U.S. government global health funding are limited, and their results are often piecemeal, subject to double counting, and not inclusive of all agencies' work. As a result, the total U.S. government commitment to global health is not known with any certainty; the United States can neither measure the positive impacts nor justify the level of its investments in global health." To address this need, the Committee recommended that the government "inventory current U.S. efforts as a baseline, and track, measure, and coordinate future investment across different federal agencies."

It is within this context that the Committee suggests reforms to the U.S. global health enterprise. This includes the recommendation by the Committee that the within the first year of the Obama Administration that the President "create a White House Interagency Committee on Global Health to lead, plan, prioritize, and coordinate the budgeting for major U.S. government global health programs and activities." The Interagency Committee would consist of the heads of major U.S. departments and agencies involved in global health activities. The Committee also calls on the President to "designate a senior official at the White House (Executive Office of the President, potentially within the [National Security Council]) at the level of Deputy Assistant to the President for Global Health to chair the Interagency Committee." The Deputy for Global Health would serve as the primary adviser at the White House on global health, attend NSC meetings which deal in any way with global health issues, and work with the National Security Advisor, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and the President's Science Advisor in carrying out his or her responsibilities. The Committee also recommend that that by the end of the administration's term, the President and Congress "double annual U.S. commitments to global health between 2008 (\$7.5 billion) and 2012 (\$15 billion)."

Four federal agencies along with five private foundations provided support for the Committee, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Homeland Security, Department of State, and the National Institutes of Health. A copy of the report is available is at <http://www.iom.edu/CMS/3783/51303/60714.aspx>.

SCIENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION LAUNCHED

On January 14-16 over 200 representatives of scientific societies and human rights groups gathered at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) to launch the Science and Human Rights Coalition. The new group is a network of scientific and professional associations devoted to facilitating communication and partnerships on human rights within and across scientific communities, and between these and human rights communities. According to its mission statement, "the Coalition strives to improve human rights practitioners' access to scientific information and knowledge and to engage scientists in human rights issues, particularly those that involve scientists and the conduct of science." As AAAS Chief Executive Officer Alan Leshner declared, the Coalition hopes to "use the power of science and the scientific community in the service of human rights," both to protect the human rights of scientists and to bring science to bear on human rights.

The Coalition's work is grounded in the principles and laws set forth in the International Bill of Rights, comprising the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and all other relevant international human rights treaties and norms.

The opening session of the meeting heard from three distinguished human rights activists: Mary Robinson, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the former President of Ireland; Sidney Verba, Professor Emeritus of Government and Director Emeritus of the Widener Library at Harvard and current Chair of the Committee on Human Rights at the National Academies; and Mercedes Doretti, co-founder of the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (Ms. Doretti was unable to attend the meeting, but her remarks were read by a colleague member of the team).

All welcomed the new Coalition, coming as it does following the recent 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Although Robinson acknowledged that the past 60 years have seen many violations of that Declaration, she also argued "there has been genuine progress" in that governments now understand their human rights responsibilities, and that the growth of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has provided "monitoring and reporting, naming and shaming."

She cited Article XXVII of the declaration which asserts that "Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits." She also noted the importance of the social sciences in providing methodologies to analyze evidence, whether through forensic anthropology, geographic information systems, or new statistical techniques.

According to Verba, "when science prospers, humans benefit." Human rights include the protection of individual scientists from governmental abuse, Verba said. He recounted the importance of the scientific community's efforts on behalf of the Soviet scientists, most notably physicist Andrei Sakharov. The co-author of *The Civic Culture* also discussed the social, economic, and cultural contexts of human rights abuses and the role political leaders play in both promulgating and confronting those abuses.

Doretti described her role in using forensic anthropological techniques to help recover the remains of victims of the Argentine junta which ruled from 1976-83 during which many people "disappeared." Telling stories of fieldwork to find unmarked graves, to identify the remains, and to return them to their families, Doretti remarked on the personal nature of this kind of science. Working with NGO forensic teams Doretti has now extended her work to other nations of Latin America that have also seen human rights abuses during the past thirty years. She also reflected on the difficulties of enforcing international protocols on domestic political situations.

Peter Agre, Nobel Prize winner from Johns Hopkins University and AAAS President-elect, admitted that human rights activities were "not an inherently frolicsome experience," but they are the "right things to do." Successes do occur, Agre said, indicating that 600 people have been released from prison as a result of the work of the NAS Committee.

Mona Younis of AAAS will coordinate the new group. Douglas Richardson, Executive Director of the Association of American Geographers, made a pitch for organizations to join the group. For more information about the Coalition including how to join go to <http://shr.aaas.org/coalition>.

AGENCIES ANNOUNCE 'DIGGING INTO DATA' COMPETITION

On January 16, four leading research agencies: the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) from the United States, the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) from the United Kingdom, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) from Canada announced a new international competition called Digging Into Data.

According to the announcement, the Digging into Data Challenge encourages humanities and social science research using large-scale data analysis, challenges scholars to develop international partnerships and explore vast digital resources, including electronic repositories of books, newspapers and photographs to identify new opportunities for scholarship.

Applicants will form international teams from at least two of the participating countries. Winning teams will receive grants from two or more of the funding agencies and, one year later, will be invited to present their work at a special conference. These teams, which may be composed of scholars and scientists, will be asked to demonstrate how data mining and data analysis tools currently used in the sciences can improve humanities and social science scholarship. The hope of this competition is that these projects will serve as exemplars to the field and encourage new, international partnerships among scholars, computer scientists, information scientists, librarians and others.

The goals of the initiative are: to promote the development and deployment of innovative research techniques in large-scale data analysis; to foster interdisciplinary collaboration among scholars in the humanities, social sciences, computer sciences, information sciences, and other fields, around questions of text and data analysis; to promote international collaboration; and to work with data repositories that hold large digital collections to ensure efficient access to these materials for research.

In order to apply, interested applicants must first submit a letter of intent by March 15, 2009. Final applications will be due July 15, 2009. Further information about the competition and the application process can be found at <http://www.diggingintodata.org>.

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