



# COSSA Washington Update

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## NIH CELEBRATES THE ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE ROADMAP

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On October 14, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) celebrated the one-year anniversary of its Roadmap for Biomedical Research and provided a preview of opportunities that will be available in 2005. Director Elias Zerhouni noted that the Roadmap process has already had a substantial impact in accomplishing its goal of uniting researchers across fields and coordinating the actions and priorities of NIH's many diverse components, while spending less than one percent of the NIH overall FY 2004 budget. The Roadmap is "series of far-reaching initiatives designed to transform the nation's medical research capabilities and speed the movement of scientific discoveries from the bench to the bedside" (see *UPDATE* October 6, 2003).

Expressing his surprise at the "enormous and amazing speed at which the NIH responded to the idea that the agency needed a common framework and intellectual leadership for science beyond the mission of any one Institute, but within the mission of NIH," Zerhouni acknowledged that there were doubts initially as to whether the NIH could truly encompass the entire field of science and come up with a cogent framework of research for NIH.

"We know that today's scientific landscape demands new ways of thinking, and we know we need to introduce a new paradigm for the conduct of medical research," said

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## NSF AWARDS GRANTS FOR HUMAN AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS, LEARNING CENTERS, DECISION MAKING UNDER UNCERTAINTY

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The National Science Foundation has announced awards in three competitions: Human and Social Dynamics (HSD), the Science of Learning Centers (SLC), and Decision Making Under Uncertainty (DMUU).

### Human and Social Dynamics

HSD is one of NSF's priority areas. The Foundation allotted \$21.7 million for 37 mainly interdisciplinary projects in the HSD competition. The competition drew over 700 project requests. The supported studies will examine a wide range of topics, such as:

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Zerhouni, explaining that the Roadmap is about “creating a supportive environment for scientists and their ideas to come together” in ways that they have not before. He emphasized that the NIH consultations with both its intramural and extramural communities “led quickly to the realization that there are core themes of science that are converging across the Institutes.”

### Director Surprised at Behavioral/Social Science Interest

Marking the progress underway in the various components of the Roadmap, Zerhouni cited his amazement with the “very comprehensive response to the Roadmap’s request-for-applications for *Supplements for Methodological Innovations in the Behavioral and Social Sciences*.” The 125 applications received (14 were funded) were “much more than expected.” It clearly represents a thirst for new tools and ideas, Zerhouni related.

Reiterating that the underlying the effort of the entire Roadmap is team science, Zerhouni noted that the new approaches to research call for increased flexibility and innovative modes of scientific collaboration. Included in those new approaches is a modification of the NIH grant application instructions, in order to “eliminate fiscal disincentives of establishing consortia.” Another new approach is the creation of the NIH Director’s Pioneer Award program, designed to encourage scientists to pursue highly innovative ideas with “unprecedented intellectual freedom.”

Several innovative training programs have also been launched under the Roadmap’s *Research Teams of the Future* theme. These programs are designed to provide closer collaborations between biologists, chemists, engineers, computer scientists, as well as social and behavioral scientists, among others. Additionally, the NIH is funding 21 awards for Exploratory Centers for Interdisciplinary Research, which are dispersed around the country. The centers will focus on health-related issues such as obesity, insect-borne diseases, diabetes, and stroke rehabilitation.

In closing, Zerhouni noted that the NIH’s 27 Institutes and Centers have swiftly picked up the Roadmap themes. He also noted that several of the currently funded Roadmap initiatives will be re-announced so that scientists who missed the first opportunity can apply next year, including the RFA for Interdisciplinary Health Research Training: Behavior, Environment and Biology (RFA-RM-05-010), and the RFA NIH Director's Pioneer Awards.

Zerhouni also stressed that it is very important for science to have a stronger translational engine, while at the same time not losing sight of the need for advances in the basic sciences. He suggested that the NIH Roadmap for Biomedical research defines the agency in this timeframe. Additional information about the NIH Roadmap can be found at: <http://nihroadmap.nih.gov>.

Meanwhile, October 7, the House passed H.R. 5213 by a vote of 418 to 0, which among other things, requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to coordinate with the Director of NIH in preparing a report outlining “the methods by which the Roadmap for Medical Research, an initiative of such Institutes, has advanced the use of multidisciplinary research teams and consortia of research institutions to advance treatments, develop new therapies, and collaborate on clinical trials, including with respect to spinal cord injury and paralysis research.” The report is due to the House Energy and Commerce and the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committees by February 1, 2005. The Senate has not yet taken up the measure.

## NSF AWARDS, (Continued from Page 1)

why people make different strategic choices; deciphering the relationships between genetic and cultural changes; exploring the causes and consequences of urban expansion and the effects of local policies on expansion; and identifying how people develop ways to manage common resources.

Among the winners is a project directed by Steven Ruggles of the University of Minnesota that will integrate census microdata from 150 surveys over 40 years and from 44 countries. These datasets will provide opportunities to analyze global transformations such as economic development, urbanization, migration, aging populations, democratization, international trade, and capital flows.

Susan Cutter of the University of South Carolina, a member of the COSSA Board, and John Wilson of the University of Southern California will use spatial social science methods to examine the role of inequality in people’s vulnerability to various types of environmental hazards. Baruch Fischhoff of Carnegie Mellon also received an award to continue his work on risk. He will investigate three different domains with an interdisciplinary team: radiological emergencies, adolescents’ safety and violence, and animals spreading disease to humans.

## Science of Learning Centers

Boston University, Carnegie Mellon University, and the University of Washington received NSF grants totaling \$36.5 million over the next three years for SLCs. According to NSF, the new centers will engage in basic research and serve as hubs for a national network of research focused on learning. Each center is built around an integrated, multidisciplinary research core, with each of the three centers devoted to a different aspect of learning.

The Center for Excellence on Learning in Education, Science, and Technology (CELEST), led by Stephen Grossberg and working with scholars from Boston University, Brandeis University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the University of Pennsylvania, will study and model the behavioral and brain processes involved in learning. These learning processes include: visual perception and recognition; speech and language; cognitive-emotional interactions; memory; and forming concepts and rules.

The Pittsburgh Science of Learning Center, directed by Kenneth R. Koedinger and involving researchers from Carnegie Mellon University, the University of Pittsburgh, and Carnegie Learning, will advance the scientific understanding of “robust” learning, defined as learning that lasts a long time, transfers to novel circumstances, and aids future learning. This goal will be accomplished through a new shared resource, called “LearnLab,” that will enable a new level of experimental rigor in classroom studies of learning.

The Center for Learning in Informal and Formal Environments (LIFE), directed by John Bransford and including investigators from the University of Washington, Stanford University, and SRI International, will advance and use neurosystem understanding to further guide educational practices. They will examine neural processes and principles associated with cognitive, linguistic, and social dimensions of learning in both formal and informal environments.

### Decision Making Under Uncertainty

Five interdisciplinary research teams will share approximately \$25 million from NSF over the next five years to study important aspects of problems associated with understanding climate-related decisions under uncertainty. According to NSF, the increased knowledge generated by recent scientific research on the causes and consequences of climate change and

variability has increased the need to better understand how decision makers make choices among alternative courses of action. Funding for this research has been a priority of the Bush Administration and its Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as part of the multi-agency Climate Change Research Initiative.

The Decision Center for a Desert City (DCDC) at Arizona State University will use nearby Phoenix as a laboratory for studying adaptation strategies, particularly related to water management in an arid climate. Carnegie Mellon University’s Climate Decision Making Center will focus on how to deal with irreducible uncertainties, or the current limits on accurate predictions of climate change and its impacts, including costs and policy decisions.

At Columbia University, the new Center for the Study of Individual and Group Decision Making Under Climate Uncertainty will study decision-making processes on multiple scales. The focus of the center will integrate psychological information with data from the other social sciences to examine individuals’ mental processes. It will also investigate the interplay of individual and group decision-making and how individuals and groups interact with organizations.

The team at the University of Colorado’s Science Policy Assessment and Research on Climate Center will look at decision makers’ expectations about what science can deliver, whether policy makers can use available information, and what future information might be useful to them.

Finally, the Rand Corporation team will conduct fundamental research on different characterizations of uncertainty and develop quantitative tools on decision making. It will draw upon interactions with decision makers from long-term water supply management in California, and in the design of observation systems to provide abrupt climate change warnings.

## SENATE DISCUSSES STUDENT VISAS

In light of the high number of international students currently attending or serving as faculty in American universities, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, chaired by Senator Dick Lugar (R-IN), held a hearing on October 6 to address current problems with student visas.

The hearing, entitled “Addressing the New Reality of Current Visa Policy on International Students and Researchers,” included a witness panel with the presidents of three COSSA member universities – the University of Maryland, Purdue University, and Indiana University.

Other witnesses included the International Office Director for Duke University, also a COSSA member, and representatives from several other organizations that facilitate international education.

### **University Presidents Weigh In**

As Purdue University President Martin C. Jischke pointed out, nearly 600,000 international students are currently attending universities in the United States, and in 2002-2003, international students contributed almost \$12.9 billion to the U.S. economy. In his testimony, Jischke also highlighted several world leaders who had made use of the educational opportunities for international students in the U.S., including Kofi Annan, King Abdullah II of Jordan, and half of the Jordanian executive cabinet. He emphasized the importance of continuing to perpetuate these types of opportunities, not only in order to broaden the American perspective, but for the purposes of public diplomacy, as well.

Aside from the value of their presence in the general student population, Indiana University (IU) President Adam Herbert explained, "International students at IU bring hard-earned knowledge and skills to our classrooms, laboratories and research programs by assisting in the instruction of many basic courses. Our science departments would be seriously understaffed without them...and in language and culture classes, they provide an authenticity that cannot be replicated."

But as University of Maryland President C. Dan Mote argued, visa difficulties resulting from post-9/11 security measures have contributed to a 36 percent drop in international student applications and a 21 percent drop in new international student enrollment.

The witnesses told several individual stories of students who were lost to other international universities while waiting months, sometimes years, for visas to clear. For example, Mote spoke of an Iranian doctoral student who began his program in America and two years later, married his Iranian wife by proxy. Because she was unable to obtain a visa, he went back to Iran in hopes of returning to America with her, and her visa was eventually approved. But by that time, his had expired. Once he had received another visa one year later, his wife's visa was no longer valid. Across both panels, stories not unlike this one abounded in an effort to demonstrate a genuine need for systemic examination and substantial reform.

### **Recommendations for Reform**

During the question and answer session, Lugar inquired about the panel's recommendations for reform, and whether those recommendations had been drafted into legislative language for Congress. The panelists summarized several recommendations, including: more sharply defining the categories of visas requiring "Mantis" clearance for sensitive topics of study, a more predictable timeline for visa clearance, and extending periods of visa validity for the length of each student's program of study. Overall, the witnesses were unified in their views of what must be done in order to rectify a situation that is costing the U.S. valuable researchers. Mote also explained that the Association of American Universities had drafted legislative language, though he did not disclose specifics.

Both Lugar and Senator Sarbanes (D-MD) praised the "talented" and "visionary men and women ... from all corners of the world" who enhance American higher education and the U.S. national interest by studying here. In addition, Lugar, Sarbanes, and Senator Norm Coleman (R-MN) overwhelmingly agreed with the panelists' observation that other countries have improved their marketing and are picking up students that America leaves behind in the visa process.

The next panel focused upon the need for more coordination between the State and Homeland Security Departments. Catheryn Cotton, Director of the International Office at Duke University, delved more deeply into the nature of our post-9/11 security needs, saying that "We are engaged in repetitive visa reviews on people that represent very minimal security risks because we are not willing to review our own visa policies, decide if they really serve our interests, and change them if necessary." Marlene Johnson, Executive Director and CEO of NAFSA: Association of International Educators, echoed Cotton's sentiments, "...our immediate task is to create a timely, transparent and predictable visa process in which efforts are focused on those who require special screening and are not wasted on repetitive and redundant reviews of legitimate visitors."

This last panel concluded with both Senators and panelists acknowledging the pressing need for tight national security tempered with more interagency coordination. Lugar, Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN), and Sarbanes promised to investigate ways in which to bring the agencies and educators "to the table" in a cooperative environment.

## AGRICULTURE ADMINISTRATOR AGENDA

## RESEARCH DISCUSSES

Appearing before a meeting of the Council on Food, Agricultural and Resource Economics (CFARE) on September 27, Colien Heferran focused on the challenges facing the agency she heads, the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). CFARE is an organization of agricultural economists that works closely with COSSA on agricultural research issues.

She underscored the theme of the meeting – building partnerships – by praising the collaborative decision-making at her agency that often involves stakeholder groups. Although 40 percent of her budget is determined by congressionally-mandated formulae and 12 percent by congressional earmarks, the rest of the priorities are determined in consultation with the performers and beneficiaries of research, education, and extension.

Heferran also noted the “human behavior revolution” and the importance of both biological and social science research connected to agriculture. One issue where these come together is challenges in nutrition. How do people choose food? What are the economic implications of healthier diets, not just for health care, but for agricultural production as well? Will people be willing to pay for healthier food? All of these questions are now a more central part of the CSREES agenda, according to Heferran.

### **Not “Welfare” for Scientists**

In addition, Heferran argued that citizen understanding of the importance of science research to agriculture and rural development must improve. Researchers and others must make the case that this kind of research can no longer be viewed as “welfare for scientists,” a favorite charge of former Agriculture Appropriations Chairman Rep. Jamie Whitten (D-MS). Instead, according to Heferran, advocates need to explain that a “growing list of real problems are being solved by research.” She suggested that this lack of public understanding is a “particular problem in the social sciences.”

She did note, however, that Congress is beginning to understand these challenges, as the past few years have brought significant increases to the National

Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program (see *UPDATE*, September 27, 2004). In spite of continued congressional earmarking, Heferran declared that merit review systems at the department “are strong.” She also noted that CSREES is involved in many inter-agency research support activities, including joint efforts with both the NSF and NIH.

## ELECTRONIC VOTING TECHNOLOGY AND ELECTIONS FOCUS OF AAAS WORKSHOP

As Election Day moves closer, many are concerned about how the vote will be conducted. Following the 2000 debacle in Florida, Congress passed the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), in which the states were provided support to help improve their voting systems. In addition, funding was authorized to conduct research on these improvements. Thus far, the appropriations have been meager for both the state administration and research components of the bill.

On September 17 and 18, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) held a workshop on Electronic Voting Technologies. The participants included political scientists, computer scientists, state and local election administrators, and officials from the National Science Foundation (NSF), which co-sponsored the event. The goal of the workshop was to develop a research agenda to help evaluate the new electronic voting (E-voting) technologies.

The political scientists, who included Steve Ansolabehere from MIT, Thad Bell from Utah, Henry Brady from UC-Berkeley, Paul HERNSON from Maryland, and Mike Traugott from Michigan, were quite interested in developing an agenda that would evaluate various parts of the election system. This agenda included: eligibility to vote, rules and procedures, election administration, vote preparation, vote management, tabulation, certification, and election outcomes. Crossing these systemic variables were concepts such as privacy, security, usability, language, accessibility, intent, and accuracy.

The computer scientists seemed interested in a number of these topics, but were more focused upon the impact of the new electronic voting machines, particularly the more controversial ones without paper trails by which individuals can verify their vote. The election administrators essentially conveyed that they wanted to be left alone to manage their systems as best they could. They appreciated the willingness of researchers to help

them, and the researchers were grateful for the administrators' willingness to share their experiences. The election officials also expressed a need for help in providing enhanced training and recruitment techniques for poll watchers.

The importance of the E-voting issue will only grow, given Traugott's prediction that "voting in place is inevitable." The shared experience of going to the polls will be replaced by Internet voting, postal mail voting, or some other way of expressing preferences for political candidates and ballot measures. Some of this is already occurring in states like Oregon, which has converted to a completely postal mail voting system.

A video of the workshop's summary session is on the web at: <http://www.aaas.org/spp/sfrrl/projects/evoting>.

## BROOKINGS SEMINAR LOOKS AT PARTISANSHIP

On September 17, the Brookings Institution Governance Studies Program and the Center for the Democratic Politics at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs held the first of five roundtables planned this Fall to examine the 2004 election campaign.

Moderated by Thomas Mann (Brookings Institution) a panel of three political scientists, including Alan Abramowitz (Emory University), Larry Bartels (Princeton University) Donald Green (Yale University), and political editor John Harwood (the *Wall Street Journal*), discussed the "current state of partisan attachments in the American electorate, how these attachments develop and change, and how they shape political attitudes and perceptions."

Mann began the discussion by remarking that "Washington tends to react excessively to each new poll or candidate miscue." For example, he pointed out that the *Washington Post* found it "newsworthy to put a gossip story about who is up and who is down in [Senator John Kerry's] campaign itself" on page one, and Kerry's speech to the National Guard, "the sharpest and most coherent statement in a two-month period lacking coherent statements on Iraq," on A20. He noted that the *Wall Street Journal*, on the other hand, ran the Kerry story as its lead item on page one.

Mann questioned whether the morning reports on a series of polls released were accurate. Several polls, including a Pew poll, showed that the candidates were

dead even. A Gallup poll, however, indicated that President Bush had a 13-point lead over Senator John Kerry. "What are we to make of such wild swings in candidate sentiment," he asked. The polls are reported as news, which then shapes the way in which reporters cover campaigns and the questions they ask candidates. "It certainly shapes the way the commentary in the political community occurs," he remarked.

The joint seminar series, Mann explained, is an attempt to distill what political scientists have learned about the American electorate and voting behavior. The series will look at the "enduring features of elections" to see how they "might help shed light on this election."

Larry Bartels briefly discussed what is currently known about parties and partisanship, including trends in partisanship and how they might matter. He drew on 50-year data from the National Election Survey (NES), conducted at the University of Michigan. The most important question from the survey, which is done every two years with a "good deal of continuity in the questions asked," is the question about party identification, Bartels related.

The question: "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?" Depending on the answer there is a follow up question: "Do you call yourself a strong Republican or not a very strong Republican or if you are an Independent or an other, do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party?"

He explained that the wording of the question is intended to "tap something other than people's short-term voting intentions or how they feel about the parties today." Rather, the question is designed to get "at some more underlying political disposition," he explained. According to Bartels, this question is successful in achieving its goal compared to polls that put more emphasis on how people are thinking at the time of the survey.

Amplifying Bartels, Donald Green noted that one of the classic perspectives views party identification as a longstanding attachment, a kind of psychological attachment, and sense of self-conception.

Bartels continued that according to the NES data, about 70 percent of the electorate think of themselves as attached to the Democratic or Republican Party in some enduring way. This is important because party identification is "strongly related to our voting behavior," he explained. At the individual level, there is a strong relationship between party identification and the vote. "It

is a relationship that is sufficiently longstanding that it can't be attributable to people just adopting partisan loyalties as a function of how they intend to vote in the current campaign." He argued that if you ask people how the war in Iraq is going, their responses would be conditioned very strongly by their partisan loyalties. The same holds true if you ask them who really won the 2000 election.

According to the NES data, Bartels observed that when it comes to how individuals identify themselves, there has been a gradual decline in the Democratic advantage from the 1950s to 2000. He explained the decline as the result of "southerners who were overwhelmingly loyal to the Democratic Party at the beginning of this period and now have gradually over the 50 years become more evenly balanced in their partisan loyalties. Consequently, there is now really very little difference in overall partisanship between southerners and non-southerners. But when you look at southern whites by themselves, you see they have actually become more Republican than the electorate," Bartels pointed out.

Bartels related that the Democrats have "really done quite a good job over the years of maintaining their partisan advantage among the people in the bottom third of the income distribution." Within the middle class, however, he noted that there had been some erosion. The most significant attrition has been among people in the upper third of the income distribution. These individuals were more likely to be Democrats than Republicans in the 1950s, but in recent

years have been "consistently more Republican than Democratic," Bartels noted.

Looking at the overall pattern, Bartels explained that the class differences have widened and the partisan balance between Republicans and Democrats is fairly even at the moment. On the other hand, if you look at voters only in recent years, there has been a slight, consistent advantage for Democrats.

Returning to that morning's Gallup poll, which gave the President a 13-point lead over Kerry, Green cautioned the audience to be careful in reading the polls that ask a very different question about party identification. "Instead of asking in general when it comes to politics, do you think of yourself as a Democrat, Republican, Independent or what, they ask in politics as of today, do you think of yourself. . ." Framing the question in this way "is more likely to pick up these kinds of short-term partisan fluctuations," Green explained. When you interview the same people over time, it is often astonishing how stable their responses are, he pointed out.

Alan Abramowitz echoed Bartels in saying that there is "some reason to be skeptical about what is going on" with poll results. He pointed out that there is a common view among many of the pollsters "that party identification is something that is much more ephemeral" than the way political scientists view it. It is viewed by pollsters as something that can fluctuate quite dramatically, even during the course of a single election campaign. Consequently, this has significant implications for the way in which the polls are interpreted. "Based on the way most political scientists understand partisanship, its stability over time and its impact on voting behavior, [it] raises some real questions about some of the recent poll results."

For more information on the series and to read the transcript of the seminar see: <http://brookings.edu/comm/events/20040917.htm>.

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The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), an advocacy organization for Federal support for the social and behavioral sciences, was founded in 1981 and stands alone in Washington in representing the full range of social and behavioral sciences.

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## AAHRPP ACCREDITS VANDERBILT, WASHINGTON UNIVERSITIES

The Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs (AAHRPP) recently awarded Full Accreditation to Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN and Washington University in St. Louis, MO. Their accreditation is valid for three years. Organizations placed in this category meet all of the standards set by AAHRPP and submit annual reports on the status of their human research protection programs. A complete list of AAHRPP-accredited organizations is available for viewing at the AAHRPP website: [www.aahrpp.org/.htm](http://www.aahrpp.org/.htm)