



# COSSA Washington Update

Consortium of Social  
Science Associations

August 8, 2005

Volume 24, Issue 15

## COSSA HOLDS CAPITOL HILL BRIEFING ON THE FUTURE OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Within the past two years, the current Administration and others in U.S. leadership positions have talked about transforming the entire Middle East into a bastion of democracy, with the war in Iraq serving as a jump-start for such a transformation. Even with seemingly growing global support for more democratic institutions, many important questions remain about the nature of this transition in the Middle East. In light of this ongoing discussion, COSSA invited three distinguished social scientists to Capitol Hill for a congressional briefing on July 18 entitled, "Transforming the Middle East: The Future for Democracy and Economic Growth."

COSSA Executive Director Howard Silver opened the seminar by setting forth some of the pressing questions that persist in debates about building democratic institutions in that region of the world: "Are the people of the region truly ready for the transition? Can the governments accept the challenges of democratic rule and will the changeover be peaceful? How will economic change affect democracy and vice-versa?"

### Middle East Public Opinion Widely Favors Democracy

Mark Tessler, a professor of political science and vice provost for international affairs at the University of Michigan, began the session by outlining some of his recent findings on public opinion in the Arab world. When conducting studies of public

(Continued on Next Page)

## HIGHER EDUCATION ACT REVISIONS EMERGE FROM HOUSE PANEL

On July 22, after three days of debates and amendments, the House Education and Workforce Committee, chaired by Rep. John Boehner (R-OH), passed the "College Access and Opportunity Act of 2005," (H.R. 609), also known as the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA), on a 27-20 party-line vote. The bill provides authorization for HEA programs until 2011.

Most of the legislation deals with the multifaceted undergraduate student loan system, Pell grants for disadvantaged students, and institutional support programs that

(Continued on Page 4)

### *Inside UPDATE...*

- MARK WEISS NEW OSTP SOCIAL SCIENCE DIRECTOR
- OLSEN CONFIRMED AS NSF DEPUTY DIRECTOR
- MARK SCHNEIDER TO HEAD EDUCATION STATISTICS CENTER
- SARAH HART LEAVES NIJ; BJS DIRECTOR SOUGHT
- SPECIAL AAPSS ANNALS ISSUE
- NIH REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
- OBSSR REQUEST FOR COMMENTS



## **MIDDLE EAST (Continued from Page 1)**

opinion, he said, one of the most important considerations is determining whose opinion will yield the most illuminating results: “There’s been a lot of research in political science and other fields...about what it takes to initiate a democratic transition, to sustain a transition to democracy, to consolidate that transition and have democracy survive. Certainly what elites do, institution building, and all of those things that concern the government and the leadership are very important. But all the literature shows that what ordinary men and women think is important as well. It’s important that people support democracy; that people value democracy.” Tessler went on to say that his “findings are extremely clear.” In spite of the drawbacks to democracy and regardless of the questions that were asked, “[a]cross all the countries, there is broad support for democracy.” In fact, 85 to 90 percent of people in all of the nations Tessler surveyed expressed their belief that democracy was the best system of governance for their country. He also asked: Does religion play a part in views of democracy? “The answer to that in every single case is no...The minority who don’t favor democracy do not have different views and are not different” with respect to religion, he pointed out. The only explanatory variable was education: “People who are better educated are more likely to want democracy and they’re more likely to want secular democracy than democracy with Islam — although the difference really isn’t all that big.”

Tessler’s research also attempted to investigate the linkages between Middle Eastern public opinion on the subjects of both democracy and terrorism. He found that terrorism flourishes “...to the extent that it finds support among the population.” He went on to summarize several studies conducted among Palestinians, which indicated that when terrorism declined, it was not necessarily due to greater Israeli security, but rather because support for terrorism among ordinary Palestinians went down. The data indicate that in the Arab world, “overwhelmingly, people do not support terrorism. They do not express approval for these things,” he argued. “But there is a meaningful, a reasonably significant minority that does express support...And we know from the literature that terrorism is likely to be more prevalent when there is a constituency,” Tessler added.

In investigating the indicators that might predict favorable attitudes toward terrorism, Tessler declared that many of the most obvious variables such as religion, gender, age, and culture had little or no explanatory power. There were only two factors that mattered,

according to his findings. The first is views of American policies. He explained that in these countries, “to the extent that you have a negative judgment about American policy, you’re more likely to have a favorable attitude toward terrorism.” The second explanatory variable was dissatisfaction with current political circumstances. When “people are discontent with their political circumstances,” which was especially the case in his studies of Algeria, “then there is support for terrorism,” he contended.

But according to Tessler, another looming question that needs to be addressed is: given the wide-ranging support for democracy in the Middle East, do the people there see democracy through the same lens as we do? Do they support secular government and possess democratic values, for example? Furthermore, “just because there is broad support for democracy doesn’t automatically mean that these societies...have all the values that come along with being a supportive democracy,” he added. Tessler found that “close to half of the people who expressed very strong support for democracy, said they want democracy in their country, and said they think democracy is the best political system when they’re given a range of alternatives, nonetheless convey that they want Islam to play a major role in political life,” which was not surprising. But significant disparities remained about the logistics of involving religion in political life among Sunni and Shi’a Muslims — ranging from an almost completely secular system to a more strict Islamic model. He also argued that the most salient point to emerge from these observations is that “strong support for democracy, clear as it is and important as it is, doesn’t automatically mean support for secular democracy.”

### **Political Reforms Can Make Way for Economic Change**

Tarik Yousef, assistant professor of economics in the School of Foreign Service and the Shaykh Al-Sabah Chair in Arab Studies in the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University, began his presentation by giving an overview of transitions that the Middle East has undergone since World War II. As with the other panelists, he posed several questions that proved to be important in how we look at these changes, as well as characterizing the general direction in which the Arab world is headed: “...what role does democracy play in this? What role do attitudes play in this? What are the set of obstacles that are there and how are we likely to overcome them or perhaps fail to do so?”

Yousef pointed out that “some profound changes have taken place in the Middle East since the year 1950, since the year 1980, since the year 1990, and the challenges of today and of the next ten to fifteen years are very different from the challenges of the previous forty to fifty years.” Since World War II, he argued, expectations and norms have been perpetuated that place the state at the center of public life as the guarantor of well-being, health, and income by allowing it to dominate the labor markets, product markets, and economic policy decisions. However, Yousef observed, since the mid-1980’s and early 1990’s, countries in the Middle East have faced an array of economic challenges having to do with what the state could (or failed to) deliver in light of labor markets, high education levels, and an already swelling population. The “condition we may be facing in the region or whatever resistance to economic change is a byproduct of recent circumstances,” he said, adding that “it may have nothing to do with innate beliefs or norms about what an Arab is or who a Muslim is.” But ultimately, in looking at the nature of the changes that went on during this period, Yousef and other researchers were encouraged because it was clear that change was indeed possible in the region. “You don’t have to remake societies, reengineer people to bring about the kind of change that we think is good for them and perhaps in the interests of the U.S.,” he argued.

As of right now, Yousef explained, the “number one headache” in the region is creating jobs, advancing economic growth, and unlocking the rigidity of the current systems. Despite many attempts at reform, very little has changed and the “cracks in the system” associated with poverty, income, and unemployment have become wider and more complex in the past two decades. He pointed out that “the list of potential solutions for this region’s problems are actually well known. We have been repeating them, repackaging them, representing them to the region for a very long time. It is about moving from state domination to private sector domination; moving from oil-dependent and highly volatile economies to more stable and diversified ones; and moving from closed and protected economies to more open economies.” While attempts at reform have been made, the pace has been slow, and in order to succeed, he argued, the region must go beyond economic solutions to perpetuate an open dialogue about what people in the region want. Yousef observed that many of those outside of the region who have tried to expedite these reforms have remained blind to the consequences of the political environment: “We convinced ourselves, even in

Washington, that somehow by sitting across from a minister or from a government official in charge of a particular line of work, and getting him to sign a piece of paper saying, ‘we will do this, we will promise to do this,’ that this will somehow get the job done. It didn’t. That is why we saw the reversal and the partial, incomplete, and extremely hesitant base of reforms.” He went on to add that “[y]ou need political reforms and government reforms to permit you to do the kind of economic reforms that are required in the future, not the other way around.”

In conclusion, Yousef warned that skyrocketing oil prices and the dearth of incentives that those prices often bring about in the region “may undermine this decade again and would force one to write ten years later, an article saying ‘another lost decade for the Middle East.’” In order to avoid this, political openness and transparency must be encouraged in a real way, and those hoping to transform the Arab world into a more democratic place will have to move the issue to the top of their agenda.

## Defining Democracy

Lisa Anderson, dean of the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia and author of several books and articles on Arab nationalism and democratic reforms in the Middle East, concluded the session by fleshing out some of the finer distinctions western nations must make in their efforts to help democratize the region. After the Cold War, she pointed out, the preponderance of the Middle East was ignored for the most part, while the Israeli-Palestinian Oslo peace negotiations and rebuilding the former Soviet Union took center stage. Throughout this period, America worked cooperatively with the autocracies and monarchies in the Arab world to serve our interests, but as Anderson explained, “the failure of the Oslo Process, rising oil prices, and most importantly, September 11<sup>th</sup>, suggested that we needed to revisit the assumption that autocratic regimes would serve American purposes.” Social scientists entered the fray by arguing that democracies are less likely to go to war with one another, further fueling the theory that more democratic regimes would better serve U.S. interests, she pointed out. And while in the long run, Anderson agreed with the general principle that democracies foster peace, she stipulated that “democracy” and “democratization” are two distinct and separate things in the short run, and that “in fact, the process of democratization is associated with heightened levels of conflict, particularly in societies where you have ethnic heterogeneity.”

While a large segment of the population in this region aligns themselves in favor of democratic regimes, it is difficult to stimulate democratic reforms from the outside without better guidelines by which to do so, she argued. Most democracies appear out of crises such as war, economic failure, and the leading factor — collapse of previous governments. All of these, Anderson observed, are domestic impulses that stimulate change from within. Like Tessler, she argued that despite all of the most obvious factors that would be likely to affect democratic transitions, very few of them were actually significant predictors. In fact, the only truly significant factor that Anderson found was the need to have a minimal consensus as to the social definition of the community in question and consequently, who the proposed democratic institutions would encompass. For example, nations wracked by civil war have been consistently unsuccessful with democratization, she argued, while countries such as Tunisia and Egypt may be more ripe for democratic transitions because of their more cohesive sense of community.

Anderson went on to draw another fine distinction between western definitions of democracy and what it means to the Middle Eastern nations. “I think we need to define what we mean by democracy very, very carefully,” she said, adding that otherwise, “we will find that 90 percent of the people in the region agree with us. Everybody likes democracy. You know, it is the apple pie of the world. But in fact, we’re talking about very different things.” Using democratic reforms as tools to promote economic development or peace, for example, is not necessarily equivalent to valuing or promoting democracy itself, she contended. Anderson went on to ask, “do we care more about war and economic development or do care about democracy?” Furthermore, anti-Americanism and anti-westernization are also two different sentiments, she argued, only the latter of which may determine views of democracy itself.

Overall, our expectations in the region should be realistic, Anderson explained. Not only do we need to promote elections, but we need to promote overall ideals of democratic accountability. As she pointed out, “you can have undemocratic elections, and we have to therefore think about whether we’re more interested in the appearance of elections or accountable government...” According to Anderson, part of this effort involves western politicians ditching the expectation that reforms will be swift enough to tally them on a list of accomplishments in time for Election Day, as well as western nations being slower to take credit for democratic victories.

## HIGHER EDUCATION (Continued from Page 1)

drive the higher education system in this country. In addition, the bill contains provisions affecting graduate students and support for international education and foreign language study, as well as other issues related to colleges and universities, public, private, and proprietary.

With regard to graduate education, the Committee reauthorized the Javits Fellowship Program, which provides support for graduate students in the social sciences, humanities, and arts. It added a provision allowing for interruptions of study due to military service and personal or family member illness that would not affect keeping the fellowship. Unlike the appropriators, who so far have recommended zero funding for FY 2006, the Committee authorized continued funding for the Thurgood Marshall Legal Educational Opportunity Program, which awards fellowships to help prepare students for study at accredited law schools.

The legislation also continues the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need program, which makes awards to graduate students in disciplines designated by the Secretary of Education. The panel made a significant change to the program, adding a priority for grants “to prepare individuals for the professoriate who will train highly-qualified elementary and secondary school teachers of math, science, and special education, and teachers who provide instruction for limited English proficient individuals.”

### International Studies Advisory Board Remains

The provisions concerning international education and foreign language studies, Title VI of HEA, already passed the House Committee in 2003 under a separate bill (see *UPDATE*, October 6, 2003) that has now been incorporated, with some changes, into H.R. 609. When the earlier bill emerged there was considerable consternation over a new advisory board that was viewed in some circles as a threat to academic freedom. The new bill includes the provisions establishing the Board as an independent entity to “provide advice, counsel and recommendations to the Secretary and Congress on international education issues for higher education.”

When the House held hearings on Title VI in 2003, a number of witnesses attacked the programs, particularly those universities with Middle East studies centers, as promoting anti-American viewpoints. During the recent markup, Rep. Charles Norwood (R-GA) offered an amendment that would have prohibited

funding for programs that supported “anti-American activities as determined by the Advisory Board” established by the Act. Norwood’s amendment fell under a vote of 37 to 10, but it illustrated the hopes of some for the Advisory Board to rein in several of these programs.

The Title VI section related to the Board has language that states: “Nothing in this title shall be construed to authorize the International Advisory Board to mandate, direct, or control an institution of higher education’s specific instructional content, curriculum, or program of instruction.” The Board, however, is given the power to “study, monitor, apprise, and evaluate a sample of activities supported under this title *using materials that have been submitted to the Department of Education by grants recipients under this title* in order to provide recommendations to the Secretary and Congress for the improvement of programs under the title and to ensure programs meet the purposes of the title.” The italicized words were added to limit the Board’s assessment to only information already collected by the Secretary, thereby hoping to avoid fishing expeditions to harass and embarrass scholars.

The Board’s independence from the Secretary and its lack of accountability remain a sticky issue for many proponents of the Title VI programs.

The legislation also reauthorizes the Graduate and Undergraduate and Area Centers Programs, the Language Resource Centers, Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Language Programs, the Centers for International Business Education, and the Institute for International Public Policy. In addition, Title VI includes provisions to ensure access for students to recruiters from the U.S. government, and calls for a study to identify foreign language heritage communities in the U.S., with an emphasis on those languages “that are critical to...national security...”

The Committee rejected an amendment by Rep. Rush Holt (D-NJ) to create a new program linking foreign languages with science and technology education. Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI) and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) withdrew their amendment to renew the eligibility of undergraduates for Foreign Language and Area Study fellowships.

Another section of the bill expresses “the sense of Congress” on student speech and association rights, including language conveying that students should be “evaluated solely on the basis of their

reasoned answers and knowledge of the subjects and disciplines they study and without regard to their political, ideological, or religious beliefs.”

Finally, the bill asks for a study “of the best practices of States in assessing undergraduate postsecondary student learning, particularly as such practices that relate to public accountability systems.”

It is still unclear when the bill will reach the House floor. The Senate has not progressed very far on its version of the reauthorization.

## MARK WEISS NEW OSTP SOCIAL SCIENCE DIRECTOR

Mark Weiss has been detailed from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) as the new Assistant Director for the Social, Behavioral, and Educational (SBE) Sciences. Weiss replaces Susan Brandon, who has returned to the National Institute of Mental Health.

Weiss has served three times as NSF’s program officer for physical anthropology. He was a professor of anthropology at Wayne State University in Detroit for 28 years, which included service as chair of the department. In the 1980s, he spent six years as a visiting research scholar in the Department of Genetics at the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom. He is also a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and has won the NSF award for Management Excellence twice. Weiss earned a B.A. from Harpur (now Binghamton University), and a M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley.

For the past year, Weiss has chaired a Federal Interagency Task Force trying to develop a policy for the admission of scientific samples such as blood, DNA, and archaeological specimens from overseas into the United States.

At OSTP, Weiss will assist the SBE Subcommittee of the Committee on Science of the National Science and Technology Council to promulgate a strategic plan for “grand challenges” in the SBE sciences. The SBE Subcommittee is co-chaired by David Lightfoot of NSF, David Abrams of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and Joseph Kielman of the Department of Homeland Security.

## OLSEN CONFIRMED AS NSF DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Mark Weiss arrives at the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) as Associate Director for Science Kathie Olsen (see *UPDATE*, May 30, 2005) officially leaves her position there. The Senate confirmed her nomination on July 22 to replace Joe Bordogna as Deputy Director of NSF. In addition, President Bush is expected to nominate OSTP Associate Director for Technology Richard Russell to a seat on the Federal Communications Commission.

Also, Marcus Peacock, who as the Associate Director for Natural Resource Programs at the Office of Management and Budget, played an important role in the development of science budgets, was confirmed by the Senate on July 29 as the deputy administrator of the EPA. At his June 14th confirmation hearing before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Peacock noted that important environmental policy issues must be based on “the best scientific information available.”

## MARK SCHNEIDER TO HEAD EDUCATION STATISTICS CENTER

On July 27, President Bush announced his intention to nominate Mark S. Schneider as the new Commissioner of Education Statistics at the Department of Education for the remainder of a six-year term expiring on June 20, 2009. Schneider is currently the Deputy Commissioner of the National Center for Education Research in the Institute of Education Sciences. He previously served as Professor and Chairman of the Department of Political Science at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Schneider has also been Vice President of the American Political Science Association. He received his B.A. from the City University of New York and his Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina. He is the recipient of a Fulbright Hays Senior Fellowship, which he used at Osmania University in Hyderabad, India. Schneider also contributed a paper on school vouchers that was later incorporated into COSSA’s 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary publication, *Fostering Human Progress: Social and Behavioral Research Contributions to Public Policy*. The statistics’ commissioner post has been vacant since Robert Lerner’s recess appointment expired at the end of the last Congress.

## SARAH HART LEAVES NIJ; NEW BJS DIRECTOR SOUGHT

Sarah Hart, director of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) for the past four years, has announced her intention to leave her post on August 30. She will become a Visiting Professor with the Rutgers Criminal Justice Graduate Program on September first. Since becoming NIJ director, Hart has been commuting daily from Philadelphia to Washington, an ordeal she described as “a killer” in her resignation note to her NIJ staff.

During her tenure, Hart’s priority was to ensure that research findings were accessible to criminal justice practitioners and emphasizing research areas important to them. This was particularly noticeable in the agendas for NIJ’s annual research and evaluation conferences.

Although NIJ’s social science research suffered significant budget reductions, primarily from Congress’ fascination with the technological side of law enforcement, Hart led NIJ to develop a portfolio of studies on understanding terrorism and terrorism prevention since 9/11 to assist responders at the local level. She also provided funding to the National Research Council’s Committee on Law and Justice for a number of research roundtables on terrorism, originally co-chaired by current Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff. In addition, following a particularly critical Government Accountability Office report, Hart and her experienced career staff worked to strengthen the quality of evaluations funded by NIJ.

Yet, some critics believed that under Hart’s leadership, NIJ never seemed to develop a focused agenda of priority issues. Many critics also believed that this was partly because she was someone put in charge of a research agency with no prior research background. But it also stemmed from the Ashcroft-led Justice Department’s lack of attention to research, while at the same time, hampering the NIJ’ director’s ability to make independent decisions.

In addition to seeking a new director for NIJ, Regina Schofield, new Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs, is searching for a new director for the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). Lawrence Greenfeld, who became director in 2002 after over 20 years of service at BJS (starting as a statistician and rising to deputy director), has been asked to leave.

## SPECIAL ANNALS ISSUE EXAMINES USE AND USEFULNESS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

The American Academy of Political and Social Science (AAPSS) has published a special commemorative edition of its journal *The Annals* to celebrate its 600<sup>th</sup> issue. This edition, which examines *The Use and Usefulness of the Social Sciences: Achievements, Disappointments, and Promise*, was edited by Robert Pearson, AAPSS' Executive Director, and Lawrence Sherman, past president of AAPSS and Director of the Jerry Lee Center of Criminology at the University of Pennsylvania.

The volume consists of nine essays that examine the relationship of what contributor Kenneth Prewitt notes is the dual agenda of the social sciences: a science project and a national political project. Pearson and Sherman suggest that "the pursuit of these two projects has at times been harmonious and at other times in conflict...It is the ebb and flow of these two projects that has created such a complex – and we believe, interesting – history of the use and usefulness of the social sciences for more than one hundred years." The co-editors note the heterogeneity of the disciplines and the multiple methods employed in these sciences. They also declare that: "Paradoxically, the social sciences have often been preoccupied with improving their own science – not necessarily to distance themselves from politics as much as to claim a mantle of authority that would increase that influence and the value of their contributions to public policy."

The essays include a look at political science (Prewitt), economics (Barbara Bergmann), sociology (Michael Burawoy), behavioral genetics (Robert Plomin and Kathryn Asbury), psychology (Mitchell Ash), criminology (Sherman), international relations (Jeffrey Friedan and David Lake), and anthropology (Jamie Wedel, Cris Shore, Gregory Feldman, and Stacy Lathrop). Pearson also contributes a book review essay. For more information about AAPSS and *The Annals* go to [www.aapss.org](http://www.aapss.org).

## NIH PLAN TO RECOGNIZE MULTIPLE PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATORS: REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) seeks the input and advice of the scientific community on the various concepts associated with more than one Principle Investigator (PI) being associated with an NIH-funded grant, contract, or cooperative agreement. The NIH request for information is a companion to the request issued by the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) on July 18<sup>th</sup> (See *UPDATE*, July 25, 2005). While the OSTP request asks for input from the broader scientific community, the NIH request seeks input on policies and issues of special interest to the health-related research community.

Comments and opinions related the NIH request for information can be entered at: [http://grants.nih.gov/cfdoc/mult\\_pi/add\\_mult\\_pi.htm](http://grants.nih.gov/cfdoc/mult_pi/add_mult_pi.htm). The NIH site will permit anonymous responses until September 16, 2005. For more information, see: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-05-055.html> or contact Walter T. Schaffer, Office of Extramural Research, NIH, via telephone at (301)402-2725 or via email at [ws11q@nih.gov](mailto:ws11q@nih.gov).

### EDITOR'S NOTE

Like Congress, *UPDATE* will be taking a short recess during the month of August. We will return September 12, 2005.

### CONSORTIUM OF SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS (COSSA)

Executive Director: Howard J. Silver  
Dep. Dir. Health Policy: Angela L. Sharpe  
Public Affairs: Tracey S. Lesetar  
Gov't Relations: Julie A. Egermayer  
President: Myron Gutmann

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.

*Update* is published 22 times per year. Individual subscriptions are available from COSSA for \$80; institutional subscriptions - \$160; overseas mail - \$160. ISSN 0749-4394. Address all inquiries to COSSA:

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

[www.cossa.org](http://www.cossa.org)

## OBSSR: REQUEST FOR COMMENTS

The National Institutes of Health's (NIH) Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) is allowing an additional 30 days for public comment on the proposed collection: "Training Tomorrow's Scientists: Linking Minorities and Mentors Through the Web." The website allows federally-funded researchers supported by any of the NIH 27 Institutes and Centers (ICs) to submit an electronic form describing their research areas as well as interests in mentoring minority students or junior faculty. Descriptions of researchers' work is posted on the site for searching by interested applicants. The projects in the database involved cutting-edge research and are located all over the country. The primary objective of the program is ensure that there will be a concentration of minority researchers available to address behavioral and social factors important in improving public health and eliminating racial disparities.

The agency is requesting comments and/or suggestions that address the following:

- Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for proper performance of the agency's function, including whether the information will have practical utility;
- The accuracy of the agency's burden estimate for the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumption used;
- Ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and
- Ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who respond, including the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments, which are due 30 days after the August 3<sup>rd</sup> publication of the Federal Register notice, should be directed to the Office of Management and Budget, Office of Regulatory Affairs, New Executive Office Building, Room 10235, Washington, DC 20503, Attention: Desk Officer for NIH. For more information on the proposed project or to obtain a copy of the data collection plans, contact Dana Sampson: (301)402-1146 or email [SampsonD@od.nih.gov](mailto:SampsonD@od.nih.gov).

**Consortium of Social Science Associations**  
1522 K Street, Suite 836, Washington, DC 20005