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Census 2010 is Here! Please Remember to Fill Out and Return Your Census Form!

After years of planning, difficulties, funding battles, and political skepticism, Census 2010 has arrived. The U.S. Census Bureau sent forms to all the households in America in mid-March. Americans need to send them back by mid-April to avoid a costly (to the taxpayers) non-response follow-up visit by a Census employee.

The Bureau's multi-million dollar advertising campaign hopes to increase the rate of mailed returns so the counting can begin. The Constitutionally-mandated Census is necessary to reapportioning the House of Representatives and the redistricting of state legislatures as well as determining formula funding for close to \$500 billion in federal programs.

By law the Bureau must transmit by the end of 2010 the State population counts down to the block

level for congressional reapportionment. In early 2011 the States will get the data for their redistricting efforts as well as information from the race and Hispanic categories. In addition, the Bureau will release data on occupancy and vacancy rates for housing units again down to the block level.

In May 2011, the Demographic Profile file with selected population and housing characteristics will become available. In June-August 2011, people can get the Summary File with detailed information on the 63 race categories and Hispanic or Non-Hispanic status and American Indian and Alaska Native tribes, this time at the census tract as well as block level. At the same time, the Bureau expects to release selected population and housing characteristics.

In late December 2011 thru April 2012 detailed population and housing characteristics will appear iterated for many detailed race, Hispanic status, and American Indian and Alaska Natives tribes at the census tract level.

Beginning in January 2013, the Bureau will have available summary population files for the newly redistricted Congress followed that June with re-tabulations for newly redrawn state legislative districts.

All this data combined with more detailed information from the American Community Survey (which replaced the long-form questionnaire of previous censuses) will provide a portrait of the American people and the demographic changes and challenges facing the country. It will provide fodder for many research projects and policy debates. But remember, "We can't move forward, until you mail it back!"

COSSA is a partner of the 2010 Census and serves on the 2010 Census Advisory Committee.

Bement Defends NSF's FY 2011 Budget in Swan Song before Research and Science Education Panel

National Science Foundation director Arden Bement appeared before the House Science and Technology (S&T) Committee's Research and Science Education Subcommittee on March 10 in what will probably be his final appearance defending the NSF budget before the panel. Bement has announced he will leave NSF to return to Purdue University on June 1 to head a policy institute. Steven Beering, former President of Purdue, whose term as chair of the National Science Board (NSB) ends in May after four years, testified with Bement, in what is also likely Beering's last time as a NSB witness before the Subcommittee.

The first part of the hearing consisted of strong praise for the departing duo from Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-IL). There were also words of commendation from the Chairman and the witnesses for Rep. Vern Ehlers (R-MI), Ranking Republican on the Subcommittee, and former Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Brian Baird (D-WA), who have announced their retirements from Congress at the end of this session.

Lipinski expressed his strong support for the eight percent increase proposed by the President for NSF in the FY 2011 budget. At the same time, he questioned the small increase for the Education and Human Resources (EHR) directorate, 2.2 percent, and pushed for a robust NSF role in the strong push for increased attention and resources for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education. Ehlers reiterated the Chairman's position and suggested NSF as the key player on STEM, rather than the Department of Education, even though he acknowledged that NSF has been working well with Secretary Arne Duncan and Institute of Education Sciences' director John Easton.

Bement responded by noting NSF's commitment to tripling the number of graduate fellowships, the new program with the Department of Energy to provide funds to educate future scientists in the

clean energy field, the climate change education program, and the Cyberlearning Transforming Education program. He also mentioned the new emphasis and increased funding in EHR's Division of Research on Learning in Formal and Informal Settings for research on and the evaluation of STEM programs. Neither the director nor the panel members made mention of the Science of Learning Centers, an SBE-funded program to research fundamental questions of learning and teaching science.

Also within EHR, Subcommittee members questioned NSF's plans to combine the programs for broadening participation in science even though the new consolidated program would receive a boost of \$14 million in the proposed FY 2011 budget. Reps. Russ Carnahan (D-MO) and Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) expressed significant skepticism about these plans. Bement defended the consolidation and suggested it would "position the program for accelerated growth" and allow for leveraging with other NSF programs such as the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCOR).

Bement outlined four tracks for the new program: 1) Louis Stokes Model Alliances, which would remain similar to the existing program designed to increase the number of underrepresented students pursuing degrees and careers in science and engineering; 2) Capacity Building for Institutions of Higher Education serving these underrepresented groups; 3) Better understanding of cultural and contextual issues in broadening participation activities; and 4) More research to overcome specific barriers for these students. It was unclear whether the Subcommittee members were convinced.

Lipinski also asked Bement about the possibility of reviving an Academic Research Infrastructure program that would provide funding for college and university science and engineering facilities. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) included \$200 million for this purpose. Lipinski referred to advocacy by higher education groups for keeping the funds flowing and the \$3.6 billion reported as necessary for bringing many colleges' facilities into the 21st Century. Bement responded by suggesting that in this constrained budget climate NSF had more important priorities than "bricks and mortar." Beering indicated that the facilities problem was not "dire" yet and agreed with Bement about NSF's priorities. With the Subcommittee and full S&T Committee about to consider the America COMPETES Act again, which includes NSF reauthorization, we have probably not seen the end of this proposal.

Reps. Baird and Ehlers also asked about NSF's role in global science diplomacy. Bement noted the budget growth of the Office of International Science and Engineering (which was moved into the Office of the Director from the SBE directorate a few years ago). He indicated NSF's role in the Administration's outreach to the Muslim world, exemplified by the President's Cairo speech, and NSF's partnership with the Gates Foundation on basic research on agriculture in the underdeveloped world.

Senate Panel Examines American Innovation and Competitiveness

Later that same day Bement shared a witness table with Presidential Science Adviser John Holdren, National Institute on Standards and Technology (NIST) Administrator Patrick Gallagher, and NASA Chief Technologist Robert Braun before the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee in a hearing on "Advancing American Innovation and Competitiveness." Committee Chairman Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) expressed his support for the Administration's emphasis on science and STEM education, and the funding provided in ARRA, but reminded the witnesses that with America COMPETES up for reauthorization "we need to evaluate our progress since the law was passed." He continued: "At a time when the economy continues to struggle, our future depends on the investments we make today to keep our nation competitive and ensure our communities' long-term economic security and prosperity."

At the hearing, Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA) made a strong statement about the lack of a U.S. innovation strategy, despite an Obama Administration report on the subject last year. Warner noted that there are "pockets of prosperity" around major U.S. research universities, but if we are

going to compete with newly emerging innovative countries a "broader, more comprehensive strategy" is necessary.

Members of the panel also spent time questioning the witnesses about STEM education and asked about evaluation and duplication in these programs. The witnesses mostly defended the Administration's proposals to increase spending and emphasis on these programs.

Sen. John Thune (R-SD) asked Bement about NSF's plans for further geographical diversity and how the selection process for grants could take this factor into account. Bement defended NSF's "Gold Standard" merit review selection process and noted that the ESPCOR program was the key instrument in providing those areas of the country underrepresented in the regular grantmaking process a chance to build capacity and compete.

House Subcommittee Holds Hearing on 'Broadening Participation in STEM'

On March 16, the House Science and Technology Committee's Subcommittee on Research and Science Education held a hearing to examine and discuss the institutional and cultural barriers to broadening the participation in the STEM disciplines, efforts to overcome these barriers at both "mainstream and minority serving institutions," and the role that Federal agencies can play in supporting these efforts. Rep. Marcia Fudge (D-OH), subbing for Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-IL), welcomed witnesses and opened the hearing explaining that it was an effort by the Subcommittee to get "a better understanding of the unique obstacles faced by individuals from different, racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds." She observed that the Subcommittee is in the process of examining "the state of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) programs authorized under the 2007 COMPETES Act, with the goal of strengthening the NSF's research and education missions, including programs related to broadening participation." NSF and COMPETES are up for reauthorization this year.

Fudge pointed out that it is stated often that we, "as a nation, need to produce more scientists and engineers, as well as a more STEM-literate workforce to fill a growing number of technical jobs. But we will find it much more difficult to develop the well-trained STEM workforce we need if we continue to overlook significant portions of the talent pool," she emphasized.

Shirley M. Malcom, head of the Directorate for Education and Human Resources at the American Association for the Advancement of Science and a former member of the COSSA Board, agreed with Fudge's assessment, citing evidence underscoring the lack of diversity in the scientific workforce and stressed that it "is an important policy issue that deserves national attention." Malcom reported that women, in 2006, received nearly "58 percent of all bachelor's degrees awarded in the U.S. and 51 percent of the bachelor's degrees awarded collectively in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, the so-called STEM fields." Their representation in STEM ranged from highs of more than 77 percent in psychology and almost 62 percent in the biological sciences to lows of 19.4 percent and 20.2 percent, respectively, for engineering and computer science.

Malcom suggested looking at trends over time, noting that "broad field designations can hide a multitude of sins." She cited as an example the fact that representation in the physical sciences is driven by increases in chemistry, where women received almost 52 percent of bachelor's degrees in 2006, compared to physics, where women received less than 21 percent. She further noted that in the social sciences, women received about 31 percent of the bachelor's degrees in economics and 70 percent of such degrees in sociology in 2006.

"Un-packing the numbers" is also critical to understanding the participation of minorities in STEM, Malcom testified, and noted that underrepresented minorities are as likely to be present among the STEM bachelor's pool as they are among the pool for all fields. In 2006 African Americans received 9.1 percent of all bachelor's degrees awarded and 8.7 percent of STEM bachelor's degrees, this while representing 12.4 percent of the U.S. population. Hispanics received 8.1 percent of

bachelor's degrees and 8 percent of STEM bachelor's degrees. American Indians/Alaskan Natives received 0.7 percent of all degrees and 0.7 percent of STEM bachelor's degrees. Conversely, Malcom pointed out that Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders are more likely to be in the STEM pool in greater numbers than their representation among all bachelor's degree recipients in 2006, 9.7 percent versus 6.7 percent, respectively. At the same time, White, non-Hispanic degree recipients received 67.2 percent of STEM bachelor's degree and 69.7 percent of bachelor's degree recipients for all fields. She argued, however, "that this represents a declining proportion of degree recipients over the past decade, while the reverse is true for all other groups."

The present level of underrepresented minorities is being driven by women, Malcom observed, noting that underrepresented minority males are under-participating in all fields, including STEM. She reiterated the point that "broad fields hide wide variations of participation." For Hispanics in the social sciences, the 10.3 percent of bachelor's degree in 2006 conceals the differences in participation between economics, where they represented fewer than six percent of degree recipients, and sociology, where they received more than 10 percent of bachelor's degrees, she explained. Malcom also highlighted the lack of data on participation for persons with disabilities, claiming this makes it difficult to paint a clear picture of the presence of this population within STEM education or workforce and to identify field-specific obstacles.

Hearing witness Alicia C. Dowd, Professor of Education at the University of Southern California, shared her research findings with the Subcommittee. She noted that "currently we are experiencing a loss of talent from STEM, each year as African American, Latina and Latino, and American Indian students start their college studies as STEM majors, but then leave those fields at high rates." Dowd discussed the value of NSF funding as it relates to: 1) student services, academic support programs, and curricular reform; and 2) scholarships and fellowships. She raised concerns that current approaches do not address the fundamental problem of negative racial climates in STEM classrooms and programs.

Dowd pointed out that NSF currently funds special programs at community colleges and four-year institutions that aim to increase the number of students earning STEM degrees by providing enhanced study services and academic advising. She observed, however, the most common program designs implemented by the NSF grantees are not informed by studies of the racial climate of STEM classrooms and programs. Dowd emphasized that recent "research documents that racial stigma and discrimination create significant barriers to participation of underrepresented racial-ethnic groups in STEM. . . Programs that do not address the fundamental problem of negative racial climate in STEM fields are, therefore, unlikely to have a substantial impact to increase diversity," she stressed.

Dowd emphasized that to encourage diversity and active learning in STEM we must invest in bold experiments in curriculum and pedagogical reform that are informed by the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy. Priority, she stressed, should be given to initiatives that include a focus on mathematics education in real world problem solving and should involve people from multiple scientific, social science, and educational research disciplines. She also noted that the methods of benchmarking can create a more comprehensive evaluation system that measures program effectiveness and cost-effectiveness, student outcomes, faculty development, and changes in organizational policies.

Associate Professor of Astronomy at Vanderbilt University Keivan Guadalupe Stassun, discussed the Fisk-Vanderbilt Master's to Ph.D. Bridge Program. According to Stassun, the program is flexible and individualized to the goals and needs of each student. "Courses are selected to address gaps in undergraduate preparation, and research experiences are provided that allow students to develop and demonstrate their full scientific talent and potential," he explained. The Bridge program's basic design and structure -- a "bridge" from the master's degree at an HBCU to the Ph.D. at a major research university -- is based on research on the educational pathways the underrepresented minorities in STEM follow en route to the doctorate, he explained.

Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) represent large and "largely untapped" pools of underrepresented

minority talent in STEM. At the same time underrepresented minorities (URM) who earn Ph.D.s in STEM fields are nearly 50 percent more likely than their non-underrepresented minority counterparts to have earned a "terminal" master degree before eventually transitioning to a doctoral program, he explained. According to Stassun, there are three major challenges to achieving more diversity in science and engineering: 1) The very low production rate of URM STEM Ph.D.s limits the number of URM faculty in STEM available to serve as mentors and role models; 2) American citizens no longer earn the majority of STEM Ph.D.s awarded by the U.S.; and 3) The vast majority of doctoral programs are underutilized for training these students.

NIFA to Release Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Solicitations

On March 23, the United States Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) expects to release the solicitations for competitive grants under the FY 2010 Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) program. The solicitations will be available at <http://grants.gov>.

At 2 p.m. EDT on March 23, NIFA director Roger Beachy will host a webcast to discuss the opportunities for grants under the program. The webcast can be viewed online at www.nifa.usda.gov/newsroom/webcast.html.

Beachy appeared at the March 12 meeting of the President Council of Advisers on Science and Technology (PCAST) and reiterated many of the points he made at the meeting of the Social Science Subcommittee on the Experiment Stations' Committee on Policy (see Update, [February 08, 2010](#)).

Once again he referenced the National Academies' report, *A New Biology for the 21st Century*, as the basis for his vision of systems modeling of the agriculture and food system. He reiterated the NIFA-defined "Priority Science Areas," for AFRI, which include: 1) Global Food Security and Hunger; 2) Climate Change; 3) Sustainable Energy; 4) Childhood Obesity; and 5) Food Safety.

At the same time, he noted that one of USDA's goals was to assist rural communities "to create prosperity so they are self-sustaining, repopulating, and economically thriving." In moving to create rural prosperity, Beachy cited Secretary Tom Vilsack's commitment to increasing access to broadband communications, capitalizing on climate change opportunities, using renewable energy technologies, and creating green jobs, including in rural America's recreation and natural resource areas.

He also told PCAST that NIFA still faces choices on balancing formula fund programs like the Hatch Act with the AFRI competitive grants program and that a reassessment of capacity vs. competitive funding will occur. He also stressed NIFA's strong concern with training the next generation of agricultural scientists and the role his agency should play in the Administration's STEM education efforts. This could lead to a reassessment of education and extension programs, he suggested.

Finally, Beachy stressed the importance of partnerships, not only with the traditional groups like the Land-Grant Universities, Future Farmers of America and 4-H, and other non-governmental organizations, but with other federal agencies. He noted NIFA's working relationships with NSF, and the Department of Energy on modeling climate change as it affects agriculture, but cooperation with NIH, the U.S. Agency for International Development and other agencies as well.

NIH's Scientific Management Review Board Holds Third Meeting

On March 10, the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) Scientific Management Review Board (SMRB) held its third meeting. The NIH Reform Act of 2006 which created the SMRB requires it to hold five meetings before making any recommendations for change to the NIH. At its inaugural meeting the SMRB created three working groups: 1) Deliberating Organizational Change and Effectiveness Working Group (DOCE); 2) NIH Intramural Research Program Working Group; and 3) Substance Use, Abuse, and Addiction Working Group (see Update, [November 23, 2009](#)). The working groups provided updates regarding their progress towards coming up with recommendations for consideration by the full SMRB. NIH director Francis Collins remarked that he has been getting regular briefings from the chairs of the Working Groups and indicated that the level of communication was gratifying. He also observed that he has asked the Board to begin considering what additional topics it should consider.

Deliberating Organizational Change and Effectiveness

William Brody, President of the Salk Institute for Biological Studies and chair of the DOCE Working Group, explained that his group examined what are the circumstances under which an organization might contemplate change and the principles that would guide the change. According to Brody, DOCE met with former NIH directors and heard a familiar set of themes including resounding support for the NIH and the complexity of its mission going from basic science to health. The overarching theme, said Brody, is the changing nature of service and the need for increased collaboration within NIH, across other federal agencies, and internationally. He reported that there has been much discussion by DOCE surrounding the issue of balancing basic science and translational research. Rapid changes in discovery and innovation might require some nimbleness on part of the NIH. He further observed that as difficult as change is to effect in an academic institution, the NIH is even more complex because it has a larger external constituency.

Brody discussed organizational change and the degrees of change. There is structural change, he explained, where you change reporting relationships. He noted, however, that society views a restructuring as successful but this does not necessarily change the effectiveness of the organization. On the other hand, incremental change makes it too easy for an organization to move back to where it was, he cautioned. Change also has to be of sufficient magnitude to justify the energy expended, he indicated. Likewise, sufficient resources are needed to improve the agency's ability to fulfill its mission. It is critical to identify those resources.

Brody pointed out that the NIH uses a number of metrics: scientific, health, economic, return on investment, producing an educated workforce, to measure success. At the same time, the "science community looks at the NIH as the National Institute of Science." NIH's mission is to improve the health of the world, a very broad mission, Brody warned. It also has a mission to enhance and promote economic well-being and insure a high return on investment in public research which is important, but more difficult to measure.

The Working Group has arrived at a set of guiding principles, steps and coordination for change. The guiding principles include: Strengthen the ability of NIH to carry out its mission in advancing science and improving public health; Provide an environment that allows more effective collaboration, coordination, and interaction across all disciplines to advance the pace of scientific discovery and improve health; Create synergies of the scientific and/or clinical foundations for discovery and translation; Enhance the public understanding, confidence, and support for science and the impact on public health; and Increase operational efficiency and ensure a high return on public investment in biomedical research.

According to DOCE, there are three steps in the underlying process: 1) What is the need for change? 2) What is the option for change? and 3) How do we navigate the jungle of NIH's constituents (internal, external, political and social). Brody stressed that any change contemplated needs the full buy-in of the NIH director and will require the time and effort of the director to implement that change.

Assessing the need for change, he asserted, is another matter. Any option for change requires a

look at the risk vs. benefit, said Brody. Is the benefit of affecting change worth the risk (reputational, scientific, and organizational), he posited. There are spectrums of options from merging perspective scientific programs, creating blueprints that are crosscutting, merging existing institutes with existing missions, or merging existing institutes to create a new institute with a new mission that transcends the missions of their individual missions, he explained.

Indicating that there is not a broad demarcation between structural and functional change, Brody noted that it is a dynamic process that could start with functional initiatives and it could end up with significant organizational change. The rationale for undertaking significant structural change should include a higher likelihood of significant benefits. At the same time, the process does not address the willingness of Congress and the NIH constituency to come in and dictate new structural change for NIH, he pointed out. He contended that every change process requires a champion and supporters. The ultimate success depends on transparency, communication, and accountability, adding that these things are easy to write but difficult to effect. He reported that the DOCE Working Group is in the process of circulating a draft report to the full Board for feedback and it intends to discuss the report at the next meeting.

Arthur Rubenstein of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine noted that it is easier to make a change in a crisis and the problem is that most people think the NIH is working pretty well. National Institute of General Medical Sciences director Jeremy Berg added that an important ingredient is the "clarity of purpose." If you can't answer that, the pushback will be paralyzing, said Berg. Rubenstein cautioned that metrics are not reasonable in saying if we do this, it will happen. Former NASA administrator Dan Golden cautioned the Board to "beware of metrics." "If you press metrics too hard you will crush the flame of innovation."

Substance Use, Abuse, and Addiction: 'Status Quo Is Not Ideal'

William Roper, Dean of the University of North Carolina School of Medicine and Chair of the Substance Use, Abuse, and Addiction (SUAA) Working Group, presented the collective views of the group. According to Roper, SUAA had met in 13 sessions, both in person and electronically. Roper began by noting that the Working Group understands that substance use, abuse and addiction work is related to the overall work of the SMRB. He observed that some people view the Working Group's work as a prototype for other activities the SMRB might take on. SUAA is anxious to learn what the DOCE Working Group is doing and sees it as a prototype for larger and/or activities, Roper stated. He indicated that the SUAA is also anxious to pay particular attention to the issue in this sector and to be sure that the people in that research community see them as unique.

Providing the context for deliberations, Roper explained that according to SUAA, the question is: Considering both biological differences and similarities, does the current organization separating research institutes on drug and alcohol use, abuse and addiction provide optimal infrastructure for supporting these areas of scientific research? This also includes a social and political context: The establishment of the SMRB to advise NIH on the use of organizational authorities in the NIH Reform Act of 2006; the 2003 National Academies report recommending consideration of a merger of the National Institute for Alcohol Abuse and Addiction (NIAAA) and the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), an option identified by the Lewin Group in 1988; and the 2001 Drug Abuse Education, Prevention, and Treatment Act which required the Secretary of Health and Human Services to request an Institute of Medicine study to determine whether combining NIDA and NIAAA would strengthen scientific research efforts and increase economic efficiency (to date the study has not been conducted).

According to the chair, SUAA briefings to date include perspectives from prevention specialists, treatment providers, patient advocates, and policy specialists; views on the science of SUAA research; viewpoints of individuals from the judicial system, academia and industry on alternative models for organizing SUAA research; views from former NIAAA and NIDA directors; and insight from NIAAA and NIDA Advisory Councils. He noted that the Working Group had also briefed Collins, SMRB chair Norman Augustine, and Chair of the SMRB Working Group on the NIH Intramural Research Program on SUAA Arthur Rubenstein.

Roper reported that the advocates for reorganization believe that: Science would benefit from synergy of commonalities, high prevalence of drug users also use alcohol, suggesting both scientific and policy justification, segregation of disciplines creates public health gaps, and reorganization, particularly merging, would create synergy for advancing the science of SUAA and increase flexibility in cross-training. Conversely, advocates against reorganization believe that it would recreate research gaps in understanding the ubiquitous effects of alcohol and the unique factors underlying abuse and addiction; contextual and socio-cultural differences warrant separate, focused research efforts; lack of compelling evidence to suggest that reorganization would improve treatment, prevention, research, and/or training; the current organization mirrors the separation of professional and scientific associations; and reorganization, particularly merging, would decrease emphasis on effects of alcohol on multiple organ targets, jeopardize priority/budget of alcohol-related research, and create organizational/administrative obstacles and reversals.

He noted that the sessions raised additional questions: Are other areas of research being examined for potential inclusion in a merged Institute? Has the SMRB considered broadening the mission/scope of a merged Institute? Has the SMRB investigated intra-governmental relationships (e.g., the Office of National Drug Control Policy oversight of NIDA's budget)? Has industry participated in the discussion and/or voiced an opinion? Since patients have no difficulty combining substances, why does the government? Will the SMRB recommend a single solution or multiple solutions?

Questions for the SMRB to Consider

The Working Group also came up with a list of issues the Board should consider: the underfunded nature of both Institutes despite the burden of illness; potential funding loss due to stigma associated with combining these areas of research; the public health message for alcohol is different: moderate alcohol usage may be healthy, immoderate usage is not; focusing on reward pathways creates a dogma about abuse and addiction; constrains science to only one potential mechanism; the Diabetes Institute or the Aging Institute are more logical partners for NIAAA than NIDA; and if a merger is recommended, there needs to be a "genuine" combining of the Institutes and not the creation of two departments within one institute. He informed the Board that the advisory councils of both Institutes had passed resolutions on their respective positions on a possible merger of the Institutes: NIAAA against and NIDA for merging.

Referring to the deliberations of the DOCE Working Group, Roper noted that in assessing the need for change, SUAA asked: Is substance use, abuse, and addiction research at NIH capitalizing on scientific opportunities and/or meeting public health needs? Could reorganization better optimize SUAA research at NIH? This led to more questions: Are there significant organizational impediments preventing effective responses to external forces? Is there a health problem or an important area of scientific inquiry not addressed because of the limitations imposed by the current organization? Have there been scientific discoveries that create new opportunities for innovation and advance that would benefit from reorganizing components of the NIH? Are there evolving public health needs on the horizon that will create new challenges and opportunities that would be best faced by reorganizing components within NIH? Is there a problem (or could things be more effective) in the supply and demand of human and/or physical resources (e.g., training, dissemination of research/public health messages)?

The Working Group also requested and received additional data from NIDA and NIAAA on the: major challenges facing the advancement of SUAA research, funding history and Institute success rates, Institute support for early career investigators, extent of SUAA research in the entire NIH research portfolio, and SUAA demographics. Based on the perspectives heard and the data collected, the SUAA Working group is in agreement that the status quo is not ideal for fulfilling NIH's mission and optimizing research into substance use, abuse and addiction. Roper indicated that the Working Group is eager to improve how NIH manages research in this area.

Spectrums of Options

In evaluating the options for change, SUAA deliberated on which option is best for addressing the need for change. These included: the status quo; the creation of a single council, clustered functions, new initiative, blueprint across Institutes, clustered functions across Institutes, merged institute, and/or a new institute. Roper reported that to date, the Working Group disagrees as to the best way to proceed. A minority of the Working Group believes a structural reorganization is needed, involving a merger of NIDA and NIAAA into a single institute focused on alcohol and drug abuse and addiction. They believe the change in scientific landscape, research opportunities, public health needs, and the potential for more efficient research provide the rationale for considering structural change. They also believe that a substantial vision of a new way of approaching the science and addressing public health needs ought to compel us to take the difficult step towards merging the two institutes.

According to Roper, the majority of Working Group believe the best way to proceed is a functional reorganization of all research programs with a relevant scientific focus. The majority believes the change in scientific landscape, research opportunities, public health needs, and the potential for more efficient research provide the rationale for considering change. They are not yet, however, convinced structural changes would benefit the science in a way that functional integration could not. They also see substantial room to improve the science through functional integration across the entire NIH. The majority also believes that there is evidence that functional strategies have worked in the past, in other scientific areas, with varying degrees of success.

Having agreed as a whole that there is a need for organizational change, the SUAA Working Group plans to continue to analyze potential structural and functional options, including the historic success of different models. They will present the Working Group's recommendation at the May 17-18, 2010 meeting.

Collins acknowledged the tremendous debate regarding merging NIDA and NIAAA. He asked the Working Group to think through what the models would look like with a merger of the institutes versus a functional approach, recognizing the status quo is not adequate in its integration of addiction research. He further asked them to enumerate to the best of their ability the pros and cons of both. He acknowledged that a functional approach would resemble trans-NIH initiatives such as the Neuroscience Blueprint that not only taps into the addiction research supported by NIDA and NIAAA but also occurs in other parts of NIH. "You would not want to miss the chance if you are going down that road," said Collins, to "pull in other areas that have not been very well connected either or not as well as they could be, tobacco, particularly." He added that you could also "talk about food addiction, sexual addiction, gambling addiction and so on and that means bringing in some of the social and behavioral sciences research that maybe has not been as tightly connected as well." Collins suggested that the Working Group look at the Neuroscience Blueprint, an experiment in science management addressing the number of neurological-focused institutes and their ability to work together. He noted that former director Harold Varmus suggested that we "cram all of those institutes under one roof." The agency has not done that. Collins suggested the need to examine whether the Blueprint is accomplishing its goal.

Working Group on NIH Intramural Research

Rubenstein, chair of the NIH Intramural Research Working Group, noted the broad challenge the group had been given: to recommend whether organizational change could further optimize the NIH's intramural research program and thereby maximize human health and patient well being; and given the urgency of addressing the fiscal vitality of the NIH Clinical Center (CC), recommend steps to enhance its fiscal sustainability and utilization. The Working Group considered the fiscal sustainability "a more urgent issue" and with the agreement of full SMRB started with that issue, he reported.

Rubenstein noted that historically, the NIH CC has provided a versatile clinical research environment allowing the NIH mission to improve health. There are, however, unresolved problems in governance and budget that are impediments to enabling this mission, he noted. This

Working Group, like the others, has also consulted broadly including with the CC's advisory board, hospital administrators, NIH investigators and advisors, and the directors of the NIH institutes and centers, he reported.

The Working Group's findings included three "well-defined" overlapping issues: 1) Vision and role; 2) Governance and 3) Budget. According Rubenstein, when it comes to the vision and role of the CC there is a perceived lack of prioritization of and commitment to funding clinical research at the CC; barriers to partnerships and leveraging resources (e.g., barriers to intra-/extramural collaborations, intellectual property); and barriers to recruitment, mentorship, and retention of investigators. There is modest use of the input from extramural investigators, he noted. The challenge in terms of governance is the lack of a trans-NIH vision for priority setting in clinical research and complexity in overall the administrative setup. A key driver is the issue of how the CC will be optimally funded. The cost of taking care of patients is increasing and is not keeping up with inflation. The funding of the CC is unstable. Cost shifts have had undesirable impacts on other parts of intramural research. The budget mechanism does not support outside investigators' use of the CC.

Rubenstein noted that the Working Group would not say that the CC is being run inefficiently. The Working Group looked at whether the CC is more expensive than other kinds of hospitals and found that it is within range of costs, on per patient day basis, with comparable hospitals. He pointed out that the CC is a research focused hospital and has significant fewer beds which preclude the same economies of scale that can be achieved by the others. Additionally, all CC patients are on a research protocol which often drives up the costs.

Meeting these challenges the Working Group submits that the role of the CC should be to serve as a state of the art national facility, with resources optimally managed to enable both internal and external investigators. This is especially important as translation and clinical research become a greater imperative, Rubenstein pointed out. The Working group suggests that external use of the CC could be enhanced and expanded. Growth in four programmatic areas would be key to realizing the vision of the NIH CC as a national resource: 1) collaborative research, 2) access to NIH clinical services, 3) clinical research training, and 4) bench to bedside programs. There could be a tremendous upside to opening up the CC, he emphasized.

Steve Katz, National Institute on Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases Institute, and Anthony Fauci, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, jointly presented the Working Group's deliberations on governance and budget. The goal is that governance should have a simplified structure, capable of developing and overseeing a clear, coherence plan, Katz explained. The Group came up with three options with regard to CC governance: 1) retain the Advisory Board for Clinical Research (ABCR) and establish to a CC Governance Board populated with NIH institute and center directors and others, knowledge of the CC's budget; 2) the NIH Governance Board and the NIH director would receive input directly from the ABCR, something that has not been done in the past; and 3) the NIH director would receive input from the ABCR and an internal group. Any one of the proposed options is a "vast improvement" over the current governing process, Katz suggested.

Regarding the budget, the Working Group believes the budget "should be linked to a strong planning process, remain stable (in source) and equitable (in distribution), be effective in attracting and supporting a high quality workforce and assure efficient use," Katz stated. The Working Group came up with five potential funding options: 1) a "school tax," the status quo where the funding for the CC is supported by the institutes' and centers' intramural research budgets via a reallocation of funds appropriated for their respective intramural research programs (Katz reported this does not work); 2) a modified "school tax" which would allow for a reallocation of funds appropriated to the institutes and centers intramural research programs either to fixed costs which are 80 percent of the costs of the CC or to variable costs which would be associated with an institute's use of the CC. (The decision-making remains at the NIH.); 3) a line-item for the CC in the mechanism table for the NIH decided by the Congress via the appropriations process; 4) a line-item for the CC in mechanism table of the NIH Office of the Director also decided via the appropriations process; and

5) a direct appropriation by the Congress for the CC comparable to those received by the individual NIH institutes and centers. Katz emphasized that the "school tax" models continue the current budget practices where the CC costs compete with other intramural research program resources. The Working Group provided the Board with information on the impact of each model and the accompanying budget implications. According to Katz, the majority of the IRP Working group prefers a line item in the appropriations process.

Rubenstein reported that the next steps for the Working group include: Continuing its analysis of each of the options in terms of how they compare to the optimal option; Further explore potential users of the CC by external community; Continue development and refinement of optimal governance models; Continue ongoing internal in-depth analysis of each funding option; and Re-examine the IOM recommendations regarding CC research across the NIH.

NIH Establishes Director's Pathfinder Award to Promote Diversity in the Scientific Workforce to Fill Knowledge Gaps

National Science Foundation (NSF) data provides evidence that lack of diversity remains an important problem for the biomedical research workforce. At the same time, there is a growing body of evidence that the research enterprise will directly benefit from broader inclusion. Further, research indicates that diversity enhances the quality of education in multiple settings. To address the concerns regarding the lack of diversity, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has created the NIH Director ARRA Pathfinder Award to Promote Diversity in the Scientific Workforce. The Award is designed to foster new ways of thinking about research related to scientific workforce diversity.

The Award is expected to fill fundamental knowledge gaps and to encourage the development of new approaches to this complex problem. The Award will be given to "extremely creative individual scientists who propose innovative - and possibly transforming - approaches to this major challenge to biomedical research." Proposed approaches should have the potential to produce an unusually high impact in an area of research on workforce diversity. The proposed research should also reflect ideas substantially different from those already being pursued elsewhere. New interventions that have the capacity to improve workforce diversity in new ways incorporating strong research designs to assess unambiguously the effects of those interventions are being solicited in proposals.

The NIH defines biomedical research broadly in the announcement "as encompassing scientific investigations in the biological, behavioral, clinical, social, physical, chemical, computational, engineering, and mathematical sciences that have the potential to improve public health." For the Director's Pathfinder program, diversity can address the participation of individuals currently underrepresented in the biomedical, clinical, behavioral, and social sciences on a national basis including: individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups; individuals with disabilities; individuals from socially, culturally, economically, or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds that have inhibited their ability to pursue a career in health-related research; and women at the faculty level. The research conducted with support by Director's Pathfinder Award can address diversity on a national or institutional basis.

The program is supported by funds provided to the NIH under the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA). Budget proposals are limited to \$2 million in total costs over a three year project period. **Letters of intent are due on April 5, 2010. Applications are due on May 4, 2010.** For more information see <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-OD-10-013.html>.

COSSA Sponsors Congressional Briefing on "Better Living Through Economics"

On March 15, the COSSA sponsored a Congressional briefing on how basic economic research has improved people's lives. The speakers were co-authors of *Better Living Through Economics*, a book that illustrates the fundamental contributions of economic research to important public policy decisions through twelve case studies.



L-R: Nancy Lutz, NSF Economics Program Officer, Roth, Ausubel, Madrian, Siegfried, and Dan Newlon, American Economic Association, Government Relations.

Brigitte Madrian, Aetna Professor of Public Policy and Corporate Management at the Harvard Kennedy School and Director of the Social Science Program at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, described how research in behavioral economics on personal financial management led to the "autosave" features of the Pension Protection Act of 2006. These features harness the power of inertia to increase employee savings - if employees do nothing, the result will be that they are saving rather than that they are not. The automatic IRA system proposed by President Obama in his State of the Union speech, a system in which all workers are automatically enrolled into 401(k) or equivalent plans, is also based on this research.

Lawrence Ausubel, Professor of Economics at the University of Maryland, described how economists, using modern game theory, were able to design "the greatest auction in history" for the U.S. Federal Communication Commission. These auction methods have since been copied around the world to sell over \$100 billion in spectrum rights to cell phone operators. These auctions, Ausubel reminded the audience, helped enable the telecommunications revolution. Subsequent research on the auctioning of many related items has been successfully applied in e-commerce, energy, and other industries, according to Ausubel.

Alvin Roth, George Gund Professor of Economics and Business Administration in the Department of Economics at Harvard University, and in the Harvard Business School, showed how insights from market design were used to redesign and improve the labor market for doctors in the U.S., United Kingdom, and Canada, to implement school choice systems in New York City, Boston and San Francisco, and to help organize kidney exchanges. Roth illustrated how he used matching theory to redesign the National Resident Matching Program, through which approximately twenty thousand

doctors a year find their first employment as residents at American hospitals.

He helped design the high school matching system used in New York City to match approximately ninety thousand students to high schools each year, starting with students entering high school in the fall of 2004. As one of the founders and designers of the New England Program for Kidney Exchange for incompatible patient-donor pairs, Roth has seen his research put to use to help save lives.

Siegfried, Professor of Economics at Vanderbilt University and Secretary-Treasurer of the American Economic Association, discussed the profound effect economic research has on our way of life and material well-being. He presented an overview of the twelve case studies in *Better Living Through Economics*. The issues not discussed at the briefing that are in the book include: Tradable pollution permits, Price index reform, Antitrust reform (entry considerations), Earned Income Tax Credit, Trade liberalization, and Monetary policy. Siegfried focused on airline deregulation and the all-volunteer military force. He described the key insights from economic research and the important role played by economists in changing policies in these areas. Passenger air service deregulation lowered fares from what they would have been under regulation by 30 percent for an estimated consumer gain of \$28 billion per year. Economists convinced President Nixon that a voluntary force would have lower opportunity costs than a conscripted one, and would have lower turnover and training costs, Siegfried noted.

Powerpoint slides from the presentations are available by [clicking here](#).

Secretary Duncan 'Keeps on Pushing' for Education Reform

U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan has made two appearances within the past two weeks in front of the House Education and Labor Committee. The first one to defend President Obama's FY 2011 Budget request on March 3, and on March 17, to discuss the Administration's blueprint for reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). At both hearings Duncan continued to push his message for education reform.

At the March 3 hearing Ranking Member John Kline (R-MN) told Duncan "You came billed as a reformer and have lived up to the name." Also, the hearing, Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller (D-CA) answered the question that is on everyone's mind stating that, "We would really like to get this [ESEA Reauthorization] done this session." He declared: "It's time to overhaul and improve ESEA so that the law finally lives up to its promise: to provide an equal and excellent education for every child in America." Duncan agreed, telling the Committee "that we need to stop lying to students; many believe they are on track to graduate with the necessary skills needed for college or the workplace, but because state standards are so low these kids are not ready for college or career." Miller concurred asserting that "every school needs to hold its students to rigorous, internationally benchmarked standards that would prepare them for college or careers."

The President's budget request includes \$14.5 billion in funds for Title I with a renewed focus on graduating every high school student "college or career ready." To achieve this audacious goal the Administration is supporting efforts by the National Governors' Association (NGA) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to implement a more rigorous set of common core standards. A draft of these standards was released by NGA and CCSSO on March 10.

The President's budget request for FY 2011 includes an increase in discretionary spending of \$3.5 billion, \$3 billion of which would be dedicated to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Another \$1 billion in additional funding would go to ESEA programs if reauthorization is completed this year and the bill is consistent with the President's blueprint.

This plan builds on the reforms already made under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). It includes providing funds to states and districts to help develop and support effective teachers and principals to ensure that "every classroom has a great teacher and every school has a great leader." The blueprint also calls for the implementation of college and career ready standards and the development of assessments aligned with those standards to give teachers, parents, and students more data to know if a student is on track. This new vision of standards and assessments, however, would not be as narrowly defined as in the past. In addition, the Administration calls for a well-rounded education for all students that includes not just reading and math, but everything from science and technology to history and the arts.

The Administration would continue to build on the legacy of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) by striving to improve student learning and achievement in the lowest performing schools. Miller underscored the need for improvement of these schools which are often in urban, primarily minority districts, stating that "the quality of a child's education should not be determined by their zip code." Thus, another key focus of the Administration's reform efforts has been turning around low-performing schools, the nation's so called "drop out factories." The budget request includes \$900 million for School Turnaround Grants program, currently named the School Improvement Grants. This funding is in addition to the already \$3 billion for school improvement grants provided under ARRA.

As with the previous Administration, the current one wants an accountability system that requires rigorous assessments of student achievement. The states would still be in charge, but the core standards would be the benchmarks and statewide data systems are under construction with over \$350 million in appropriated money in the past three years to track individual students' achievements contributing to this accountability system.

Duncan told the panel that "as a country we have lacked a sense of urgency." That by failing to act decisively on much needed reform, he declared, "we are putting our students at a competitive disadvantage," as America continues to fall behind other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries in math, science and graduation rates.

The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, under its new Chairman, Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), has commenced its own set of hearings to move a new ESEA bill this year.

For more information on the Administration's blueprint for ESEA reauthorization go to <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/index.html>. For more information on the Administration's FY 2011 Budget for the Department of Education go to COSSA's March 8, 2010 Budget Issue www.cossa.org/Volume29/29.4.pdf.

James Grossman Announced as New Historical Association Executive Director

The American Historical Association (AHA), one of COSSA's Governing Members, has announced that James Grossman will become the group's next Executive Director. He will succeed Arnita Jones, who will retire at the end of August, after serving as AHA's leader for eleven years.

The new Executive Director is currently Vice President for Research and Education at Chicago's Newberry Library, where he has overseen programs for the general public as well as for scholars and teachers, and has built a strong reputation for bridge-building across fields and disciplines. He



is also Senior Research Associate in the Department of History at the University of Chicago.

Grossman is the author of *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (1989) and *A Chance to Make Good: African Americans, 1900-1929*. He was also project director and coeditor (with Janice L. Reiff and Ann Durkin Keating) of *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*. Published in 2004, the encyclopedia was a collaborative project of the Newberry Library, the Chicago History Museum, and Northwestern University, that involved over 700 contributors, and is now available in both print and digital formats (www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org).

He has consulted on a broad variety of history-related projects (mostly films and exhibits) generated by the BBC, Smithsonian, Goodman Theater, Field Museum, New York Historical Society, Chicago History Museum, Chicago Public Library, American Social History Project, Blackside, and a variety of independent film producers.

Grossman is the editor of *The Frontier in American Culture* (1994) and coeditor of the Univ. of Chicago Press series "Historical Studies of Urban America" (32 vols. 1992-). His articles and short essays have focused on various aspects of American urban history, African American history, American ethnicity, and higher education. His book reviews have appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* and *New York Newsday* in addition to various academic journals. In addition to numerous awards for his scholarship, *Chicago Magazine* chose Grossman as one of seven "Chicagoans of the Year" in 2005.

His professional service includes elected offices in the American Historical Association and Organization of American Historians (OAH), ethics committees for the AHA and the OAH, and Advisory Boards for the AHA, Center for New Deal Studies at Roosevelt University, Illinois Historical Society, City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, and Chicago Public Library. He has served as Chair of the Board of the Chicago Metro History Education Center and President of the Hyde Park Soccer Club, and currently serves on the Board of Trustees of the National History Center.

Grossman has a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, and has also taught at the University of California, San Diego.

Call for Ideas: Scholarly Knowledge on LGBTQ Issues in Education

The American Educational Research Association (AERA) is undertaking an initiative on research on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) issues in education. AERA is seeking assistance from scholars and researchers across fields to map the state of knowledge on LGBTQ issues in education. AERA aims to bring together research from diverse theoretical frameworks, ecological perspectives, and research methods in this work to assess what we know and do not know about LGBTQ issues in education and educational contexts.

The initiative is designed to examine the state of research on LGBTQ issues in education and has three components: (1) an extensive literature search and review; (2) an intensive small research workshop of scholars to be held in Fall 2010; and (3) this broad-based call for input and ideas on LGBTQ issues in education. This call is a key element of information gathering for the research workshop and ultimately for the research reports and publications that will follow. AERA seeks contributions from scholars and researchers whose work addresses LGBTQ issues directly related to education (e.g., student experience and perspectives, child/adolescent counseling, school violence) or in adjacent research areas of relevance (i.e., identity formation, LGBTQ families,

workplace discrimination). The association is specifically seeking help addressing the following:

1. What are the key studies and empirical findings on LGBTQ issues directly or indirectly related to education, learning, or human development? Provide complete citations.
2. Whom would you consider to be the most significant scholars on LGBTQ research relevant to education and which of their work demands attention? Provide complete citations.
3. From the perspective of policy implications what do you consider the strongest research findings on LGBTQ issues? Please provide complete citations.
4. From the vantage of your area of expertise what do you consider to be the greatest strengths in the current LGBTQ body of knowledge and research?
5. From the vantage of your area of expertise, what are the conceptual and methodological challenges and problems as they relate to studying LGBTQ issues?

The deadline for input is **April 30, 2010** and may be submitted via www.aera.net. If you have questions, contact George Wimberly, edresearch@aera.net or at 202-238-3200.

Participants Sought for Summer Training Workshop on African American Aging Research

The Program for Research on Black Americans at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan is seeking applicants to participate in their summer training workshop on African American Aging Research. The workshop will take place in Ann Arbor June 9-11, 2010. **The deadline for applications is April 2, 2010.**

The objectives of the workshop are to: 1) Identify and mentor investigators of multi-cultural backgrounds who are committed to conducting African American Aging Research; and 2) Contribute to the improvement of the quality and quantity of research conducted with the African American aging populations.

The eligibility requirements include having a Ph.D., M.D, or equivalent degree, or being a Ph.D. Candidate or Advanced Graduate Student. You must be a U.S. citizen or a permanent resident. Participants will receive stipends of \$1,400 to defray expenses. The workshop is funded by the National Institute on Aging.

Interested people should send the following to PRBA Summer Workshop, University of Michigan, 5062 Institute for Social Research, 425 Thompson Street, P.O.Box 1248, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1248.

- An application in which you concisely describe your research plans, detailing your current level of preparation for rigorous research, and stating how participation in this workshop would be advantageous to your professional growth (no more than 2-3 pages);
- A current curriculum vitae;
- The name and phone number or e-mail of one person who can speak of your research potential; and
- One example of a research manuscript demonstrating your potential for rigorous social science research.

Behavioral and Social Science Research on Understanding and Reducing Health Disparities - Funding Opportunity

Led by its Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has released a funding opportunity announcement (FOA) (PAR-10-136) to encourage behavioral and social science research on the causes and solution to health and disabilities disparities in the U.S. population and to develop and test more effective interventions for reducing and eventually eliminating health disparities. The goal is to move beyond documenting the existence of health and disability disparities to addressing causes and solutions.

The research opportunities identified in the FOA resulted from discussions between the extramural research community and the NIH Behavioral and Social Sciences Research Coordinating Committee, and the October, 2006, *NIH Conference on Understanding and Reducing Disparities in Health: Behavioral and Social Sciences Research Contributions*. The announcement also highlights areas of investigation that may not be included in the health-disparities strategic plans of the individual NIH Institutes and Centers. The FOA stresses the explicit employment of concepts and models from the behavioral and social sciences to guide basic and applied research by focusing on three action areas: public policy, health care, and disease/disability prevention.

The announcement emphasizes basic research on the social and behavioral - acting with or through biological - pathways that give rise to disparities in health and, applied or translational research on the development, testing, and delivery of interventions to reduce disparities. A multi-level analytic framework in investigating public health issues and their interactions as well as attention to risk factors or causal processes common to various health conditions is encouraged.

To achieve the twin goals of a more comprehensive understanding of the causes of health disparities and to design and implement effective interventions to reduce and ultimately eliminate health disparities, the FOA encourages the application of several research perspectives and themes. The NIH believes these approaches may move current research efforts to the next level of accomplishment. Applicants, however, are not required to incorporate all of the themes into their research proposals. The themes include:

Interdisciplinary Collaborations: Addressing health disparities requires a greater understanding of the full range of factors that determine health - biological, medical, behavioral, social and environmental - and their complex interrelationships. The FOA notes that while in many instances, a single research discipline is best suited to tackle specific health problems, it is increasingly recognized that particular problems cannot be adequately addressed within a single discipline, and instead require a more comprehensive approach.

Levels of Analyses: A level of analysis approach offers a framework for understanding the interdependence among levels. Models that integrate, for example, factors operating at the social and cultural levels with those operating at the psychological and biological levels are especially encouraged. A concern for health at the population level rather than the individual level underscores the need to take social and cultural processes into account. An understanding of current and changing population rates of morbidity, survival, mortality, and use of health services requires consideration of demographic, social, economic, and cultural features of the population. Investigation of the social, economic, and cultural systems as well as the individuals who participate in them is needed.

Systems Science Methodologies: "Systems thinking" refers to bringing a perspective to problem-solving in which the problem space is conceptualized as a system of interrelated component parts. System approaches offer insights into the nature of the whole system that cannot be gained by studying the component parts in isolation. It recognizes that embedded in the system are feedback loops, stocks and flows that change over time. Systems approaches are able to address a broad

range of factors within a single framework - from genetic to environmental, cellular to behavioral, and biological to social levels of analysis. Systems thinking is also logically related to knowledge and computing infrastructures necessary to link networks of researchers in their collaborative work. Successful application of these approaches in defense, business, and cellular biology have resulted in a growing interest in the use of systems approaches to population health research. The belief is that a systems approach shows promise for understanding and intervening on the complex, multi-dimensional relationships underlying health disparities.

Life-course Perspective: Cumulative processes over the life course across multiple life domains at the individual and community levels are of central importance for understanding the associations between membership in socially-defined population groups and health. For example, racial/ethnic group status influences early life conditions, including the fetal environment that may be linked with later life expectancy and disease risks. Consequently, integrated investigation of psychosocial and physiological interrelationships over the life course and at critical developmental transitions are required in order to more fully understand the contemporaneous and cumulative impact of differential life experiences that underlie health disparities.

Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR): Community-partnered approaches to research promise to deepen our scientific base of knowledge in the areas of health promotion, disease/disability prevention, and health disparities. Community-partnered research processes offer the potential to generate better-informed hypotheses, develop more effective interventions, and enhance the translation of the research results into practice.

Prejudice and Discrimination: Bias, discrimination and prejudice are hypothesized to contribute to disparities in health through increased exposure and susceptibility to: 1) Economic and social deprivation; 2) toxic substances and hazardous conditions; 3) socially inflicted mental and physical trauma, either directly experienced or witnessed; 4) targeted marketing of potentially harmful commodities such as tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs; and 5) inadequate or degrading medical care. An insufficient focus on the impact of societal forces has hindered the ability to understand and effectively address the influence of prejudice and discrimination on health disparities. The growing evidence that health, socioeconomic status, and macro-economics are inextricably linked emphasizes the importance of undertaking a program of research to examine the relative magnitude of the influence of bias in the context of the other factors thought to affect racial/ethnic health.

Social Context: The social environments in which processes affecting health and health disparities play out are often referred to as social context. These include familial, demographic, economic, political, legal, organizational, physical environmental, and cultural factors that affect the resources available to individuals throughout their life course. Applicants are encouraged to conceptualize and measure social contexts in order to specify which particular aspects of social context are factors in the production or maintenance of the health disparity under examination. They are also encouraged to conceptualize and measure the social processes that operate within and across social contexts and between social contexts and individuals.

The NIH Institutes and Centers participating in the FOA include: Child Health and Human Development; Cancer; Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine; Eye; Heart, Lung, and Blood; Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases; Dental and Craniofacial; Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases; Environmental Health Sciences; Mental Health; Nursing; Aging; Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism; Deafness and Communication Disorders; Drug Abuse; and the Library of Medicine.

For more information and/or to apply see <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-10-136.html>.

Understanding and Promoting Health Literacy: Applications Wanted

Limited health literacy is a widespread problem. According to the Institute of Medicine, health literacy is a complex phenomenon that involves individuals, families, health professionals, communities and systems. More than one-third of U.S. adults would have difficulty with common health tasks, such as following directions on a prescription drug label. Limited health literacy is also likely to be a major contributor to adverse health outcomes. Research has linked low or limited health literacy with such adverse outcomes as poorer self-management of chronic diseases, less health behaviors, higher rates of hospitalizations and emergency department use, higher prostate-specific antigen levels, higher mortality, and overall poorer health.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) seek to encourage empirical research (PAR-10-133) on health literacy concepts, theory and interventions as these relate to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' public health priorities that are outlined in its Healthy People initiative. Health literacy is defined as "the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions."

Applications should address health promotion, injury or disease prevention, environmental exposure reduction, treatment or management of injuries, diseases or health conditions, and/or the improvement of health or health care outcomes within specific populations. The research must involve at least one of the following: health literacy, or one of its many components, as a key outcome; Health literacy as a key explanatory variable for some other outcome; Methodological or technological improvement to strengthen research on health literacy; and/or Prevention and/or intervention strategies that focus on improving health-literacy.

Multilevel, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary research is encouraged, especially studies that incorporate individual, family, community and societal mediators of health literacy in childhood and adulthood, or state-of-the-art health communication theory and knowledge. Researchers are also encouraged to address health literacy as it pertains to prevention, healthy living, chronic disease management, patient-based health care, cultural competence, and health disparities. Research questions can focus on consumers, patients, clients, providers, educators, communities and organizations and systems.

The NIH institutes and centers participating the funding announcement include: the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research; Cancer, Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities; Heart, Lung, and Blood; Aging, Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering; Child Health and Human Development; Deafness and Other Communication Disorders; Dental and Craniofacial; Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases; Environmental Health Sciences; Mental Health; Nursing; and the Library of Medicine.

Applications are due May 5, 2010. To apply or for more information see: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-10-133.html>.

NCMHD Seeks to Fund Health Disparities Research on Social Determinants Of Health

The National Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD) is seeking applications that propose innovative translational and transdisciplinary interventions on social determinants of health. The funding opportunity announcement (FOA) is in recognition that despite the fact that "field of medicine has entered a revolutionary period that offers the unprecedented opportunity to identify individuals at risk of disease based on precise molecular knowledge, and the chance to

preempt disease before it strikes," it might not be enough. "The importance of addressing social conditions in order to improve health is increasingly being recognized as key to ultimately improving health outcomes in the lower socioeconomic status population."

The intent of the FOA is to intensify investigator-initiated research, to attract new investigators to the field, and to encourage transdisciplinary research that will advance health disparities science. The expectation is that applicants will propose and ultimately conduct translational and transdisciplinary research linking the social determinants of health and health disparities science. This includes studies that assess a comprehensive array of social and health-related systems methods/interventions, which are innovative, rigorous and well grounded in appropriate theoretical framework. The FOA defines social determinants of health as economic and social conditions that shape the health of individuals, communities, and jurisdiction as a whole. Social determinants of health also determine the extent to which a person possesses the physical, social, and personal resources to identify and achieve personal goals, satisfy needs of daily living, and cope with their environment. Some of the important social determinants of health that have been identified include: early life factors or adversity in early life, low social status, education, employment and working conditions, relentless stress, food security and nutrition, addiction, gender, culture, neighborhood and housing conditions, social networks or social exclusion, transportation, access to health care and an environment that promotes physical inactivity.

Applications are due May 17, 2010. For more information, see: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-MD-10-005.html>.

New Call for Proposals Issued by Public Health Law Research Program

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's (RWJF) Public Health Law Research (PHLR) program has issued a second call for proposals (CFP) for studies that will examine the public health impacts of laws and legal practices, including innovative policy and legal approaches, and laws and regulations developed at the city or county level. PHLR is based at Temple University's Center for Health, Law, Policy and Practice and directed by Scott Burris. The program funds legal analysis and research to learn about the health impacts of specific laws and regulations. **The deadline for submitting brief proposals is April 14, 2010.**

While PHLR funds studies that mainly focus on the intersection between law and public health, researchers from other disciplines, such as medicine, economics, sociology, psychology, and public policy and administration are encouraged to be part of multi-disciplinary teams of applicants. Up to \$3.5 million is available in this round of funding. Short-term studies will be funded up to \$150,000 each for up to 18 months. Complex studies will be funded up to \$450,000 each for up to 30 months. Applicants to the new CFP will have access to methodology and other technical resources.

In 2009 PHLR issued its first call for proposals. Fourteen studies were funded that addressed a wide range of legal and public health issues, including: effective legal decision-making during public health emergencies; issues related to the public health infrastructure at the state and local levels; the influence of zoning laws on violent crime and health, and the impact of exemptions from immunization laws on diseases that can be prevented through vaccines.

The new call for proposals is available at www.publichealthlawresearch.org.

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