



# COSSA

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**COSSA Annual Meeting: Last Chance for Reduced Registration**

The COSSA Annual Meeting and 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration will take place on Wednesday, November 2 and Thursday, November 3. The event will include a keynote address by Thomas Mann of the Brookings Institution on the political landscape of the past 30 years as well as panels on the contributions of the social/behavioral sciences to public policy, a look ahead at new data and research opportunities in these sciences, as well as concurrent sessions on STEM Education and Demographics and Immigration policy. On Thursday morning, sessions will examine funding for science in these difficult economic times. The full agenda, so far, is [here](#). We hope you can join us. After October 1 the registration fee increases, so it pays to register this week!

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## Senate Appropriations Committee Marches On: CR in Trouble

On September 21, the Senate Appropriations panel, chaired by Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI), approved three more FY 2012 spending bills. Combined with the four they approved on September 15, the Senate committee has now completed all of its FY 2012 appropriations bills except for Interior-Environment. The House has still not marked up the FY 2012 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education bill at the Subcommittee level and the Transportation-HUD bill has not made it through the full Committee.

None of these bills are expected to make it individually through the regular process - House passage, Senate passage, and conference committee. Most observers still anticipate that an Omnibus Appropriations package that includes all 12 bills will get put together sometime in November. Stories below discuss the results of the Senate Committee's actions on agencies and programs that impact social/behavioral science research funding.

In the meantime, Congress continues to exhibit partisan struggling over a Continuing Resolution (CR) that needs enacting before October 1 to keep the government from shutting down at the start of FY 2012. A dispute over whether increased funding to provide disaster relief should require corresponding decreases in other funding, the Republican-controlled House says yes, the Democratic-controlled Senate says no, leads us once again to the brink.

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## CJS Panel Reduces NSF Funding Below FY 2011; Census Bureau Gets More, but Report Language Presents Major Challenges

The Senate Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) Appropriations Subcommittee, chaired by Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) marked up its FY 2012 spending bill on September 14. The full Senate Committee ratified its recommendations the following day. With an allocation higher than the House CJS panel, many supporters of the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), had expectations that the Subcommittee would provide better numbers than its House counterpart (see Update, [July 11](#) and [25](#), 2011).

The problem for the Senate panel was the necessity to add funds to programs the House Committee zeroed out. These included the James Webb Telescope, the COPS program, the State Criminal Alien Assistance program, and the NOAA Satellite program. Thus, the Subcommittee found it necessary to reduce NSF's funding by \$162 million from FY 2011 to \$6.698 billion. The House Committee had funded NSF at \$6.86 billion; the FY 2011 level (minus \$7 million from an across-the-board cut.)

The Senate report notes that it accepted NSF's priority proposals for the Research and Related Activities (R&RA) account, including the eventual ending of funding for the Science of Learning Centers. The R&RA account, which includes funding for the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE), received \$5.443 billion from the Committee for FY 2012, \$121 million below FY 2011, and \$164 million below the House Committee's recommendation. The Senate report includes language that endorses "high-risk multidisciplinary research, including investments in

advanced manufacturing, cyber infrastructure, and robotics." The Committee also expressed support for NSF's "new focus on leveraging its basic research investments to provide the greatest possibility for identifying important discoveries and cutting-edge technologies."

The Senate panel's recommendation for the Education and Human Resources Directorate (EHR) was \$829 million, about \$32 million less than the FY 2011 figure. The House Committee provided \$835 million. Despite the cut, the Senate report encourages NSF "to continue support for undergraduate science and engineering education" as well as "creating a strong science and engineering workforce for the future," which includes "attracting broader participation from all underrepresented groups in STEM fields." Still citing the 2005 *Rising Above the Gathering Storm* report, the Senate panel points out "the future of U.S. competitiveness rests on our ability to train the next generation of scientists and engineers."

### 2020 Census Should Cost Less than 2000

Although the Senate Committee provided the **Census Bureau** with \$943 million, significantly above the House Committee figure of \$855.3 million, the President had recommended \$1.024 billion for the Bureau in the second year of the decade. The Salaries and Expenses Account received \$253.3 million from the Senate panel, \$5.2 million less than FY 2011, and \$258.5 million from the House Committee. The Periodic Censuses and Programs account was allocated \$690 million, \$93 million more than the House, but \$201 million less than FY 2011, and \$62.7 million less than the President's request.

During FY 2012, the Bureau by law must conduct the Economic Census. It also expected to continue its early preparation for the 2020 Census by conducting research on alternative methodologies, planning the continuous updating of the Master Address File, and anticipating further production of data from and evaluations of the 2010 Census.

Despite the reduction, the Senate Committee Report tells the Bureau it "strongly supports the Economic Census and directs the Bureau to preserve funding when considering reductions." After the House markup the Bureau publicly threatened not to conduct the Economic Census.

With regard to the 2020 Census, the Senate panel directs the Bureau "to consider budgeting for the 2020 decennial census at a level less than the 2010 Census and to further consider spending less than the 2000 Census, not adjusting for inflation." It directs the Bureau that "within 90 days of enactment of this act, the Bureau shall provide the Committee with a report that includes a strategic and budgetary plan for achieving this goal." An analysis by Terri Ann Lowenthal, former congressional aide to the House Census Subcommittee, suggests: "The 2000 Census cost almost \$7 billion. My economist friends tell me the Senate directive would only give the Census Bureau the equivalent of \$4 billion in 2000 dollars, 43 percent less than the Census 2000 budget, to enumerate 60 million more people and 22 million more housing units than it did 20 years earlier. (The 2010 count, which battled the symptoms of a punishing recession and post-9/11 world, cost \$13 billion in current dollars.)"

The Senate committee, for FY 2012, gave the Economic and Statistics Administration, which includes funding for the **Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)**, \$95.1 million, almost \$2 million less than FY 2011 and the House allocation. The report directs the BEA to move forward on the "Everyday Economics: The American Household Program" to conduct research on disposable income levels and provide a more accurate portrayal of costs and expenditures that individuals incur.

The Senate panel provided \$40 million in core funding for the **National Institute of Justice (NIJ)**, \$1 million less than the House, and directed that \$5 million of those funds go to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) for their Office of Law Enforcement Standards to support the continuations of the development of standards and standard reference material with regard to DNA and forensics research and evaluation. The comparable allocation for FY 2011 for NIJ was slightly below \$48 million. NIJ would also receive \$3 million from the Office of Violence Against Women account.

The **Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)** was allocated \$45 million, \$1.6 million below the House, and significantly below the FY 2011 figure of \$60 million. From the Senate report's view, BJS should simply concern itself with the redesign and conduct of the National Crime Victimization Survey, since they left only \$4 million for the agency's other data collections and analyses.

Both the NIJ and BJS will also receive funds from the Committee's acceptance of the proposal to set-aside three percent of funds from the Office of Justice Programs for research and statistics.

## **NIH Cut Slightly: Lots of Report Language on Health and Behavior**

On September 16 the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education Appropriations Subcommittee, chaired by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), marked up its FY 2012 funding bill. The Subcommittee's recommendations were ratified by the full Senate Appropriations Committee on September 21.

For the **National Institutes of Health (NIH)**, the Senate Committee recommends an overall funding level of \$30.5 billion, a reduction of \$190 million and 0.6 percent below the FY 2011 funding level. An amendment offered by Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS) that would have restored the \$190 million cut was rejected by a vote of 16 to 14. The party-line vote, with Republicans voting for the amendment, provided an offset which consisted of an across-the-board cut of all other programs in the bill. Below is report language regarding the NIH in the report (S.Rept. 112-84) accompanying the appropriations bill.

The Committee expressed that it "regrets that fiscal constraints prevent a higher recommended funding level for NIH. With tight budgets likely to continue for the foreseeable future, the Committee strongly urges NIH to explore creative ways to rethink the way it allocates its funding. The alternative-continuing to nick away, little by little, at the success rate or the size of awards-will inevitably have a negative impact on young investigators, who represent the Nation's future, and on high-risk, high-reward research opportunities."

The Committee credits NIH with making significant efforts in both of these priority areas despite relatively flat budgets in recent years. In the report, the Committee noted that with the "help of the New Innovator Award and Pathway to Independence Award programs, NIH funded more new investigators in 2010 than in any year before. The Transformative Research Projects Program, meanwhile, rewards exceptionally innovative ideas. The Committee encourages NIH to continue and expand on these initiatives."

The Committee also notes that the creation of the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) "proposed by the administration and endorsed in the Committee recommendation, is an even more far-reaching example of how NIH can refocus its mission in a difficult fiscal environment." The bill creates NCATS, abolishes the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR), and redistributes existing NCRR programs throughout other Institutes and Centers (ICs). The Committee provides \$20 million for the new Cures Acceleration Network, and notes that all of the changes involved in this restructuring are budget neutral. It also notes that it expects that NCATS will complement, not compete with, the efforts of the private sector.

Despite welcoming the creation of NCATS, the Committee expressed its disappointment with the way the administration requested it. "The President's proposed budget for fiscal year 2012 included a vague description of NCATS but did not formally request funding for the restructuring or provide any details about which components of NIH would be consolidated into the new Center. The failure to do so caused unnecessary uncertainty about the proposal and contributed to the impression that it was being rushed. Lessons learned with NCATS should guide NIH as it considers another proposed restructuring, one that would involve consolidating the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), and components of other ICs into a new Institute (currently being referred to as the National Institute of Substance Use and Addiction

Disorders) devoted to research on substance use, abuse and addiction. The Committee understands that NIH plans to adopt a more deliberate approach in evaluating the need for this Institute. The Committee strongly recommends that if the administration ultimately decides to seek such a restructuring, it should provide sufficient details in a formal budget request to Congress." (See Update, [June 27, 2011](#).)

NCATS is encouraged by the Committee to include staff expertise and resources to manage research on the translation of behavioral interventions into communities. The Committee is encouraged by the success of the Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA) consortium and strongly recommends full funding of the program, consistent with professional judgment, as it nears full implementation. As the CTSA program transitions to NCATS, the Committee urges the NIH Director to maintain the current focus on the full spectrum of translational research. The inclusion of patient centered outcomes research, community engagement, training, dissemination science, and behavioral research is extremely important to the translation and application of basic science discoveries and success of the CTSA's, according to the report.

The Committee expressed its support for the new mobile health initiative by the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR). Accordingly, the Committee encourages NIH to continue its support of the NIH Basic Behavioral and Social Science Opportunity Network [OppNet] and requests an update on the network's progress in the fiscal year 2013 congressional budget justification.

For the NIH Office of the Director (OD) the Committee recommendation includes \$1.4 billion. The budget request for FY 2012 is \$1.3 billion; the comparable level for FY 2011 is \$1.2 billion. The recommended increase for OD over the FY 2011 level is the result of several changes connected to the planned elimination of NCRR. The OD will now house the Comparative Medicine Program, including the National Primate Research Centers; shared and high-end instrumentation; Science Education Partnership Awards; and selected other programs that are currently administered by NCRR.

For the National Children's Study, the Committee provides up to \$189 million for continuation.

The Committee provided \$537.8 million for the NIH Common Fund. The budget request is \$556.0 million, the FY 2011 level is \$543 million, to support smoking cessation, the prevention and detection of diabetes, and maternal and child health. The Committee also encourages OBSSR to engage in discussions with the Department of State and USAID to evaluate and consider global initiatives in these areas.

### **Concern Over Racial Distribution of NIH Grants**

The Committee noted that it is "deeply disturbed" by the recent study which found that between 2000 and 2006, black scientists were much less likely to win approval of R01 grants than white scientists, even after controlling for the education level of the applicants and the academic institution where they work (See Update, [September 12, 2011](#)). It is also concerned that "the disproportionately low number of black researchers who applied for a grant [is] just 1.5 percent of all applicants." In addition, the study raises questions about the effectiveness of NIH's graduate and postgraduate training, as black researchers do not seem to benefit from this training as much as white researchers do. The Committee notes that NIH itself funded this study and that the agency appears to be responding with significant actions designed to redress the disparities. Ultimately, however, NIH will be judged on whether the disparities are reduced. The Committee requests an update on this issue in the FY 2013 congressional budget justification.

The report noted that the Committee has for many years encouraged a stronger emphasis on pain research at NIH. Accordingly, the Committee noted its "great interest" in the recent Institute of Medicine (IOM) report "Relieving Pain in America: A Blueprint for Transforming Prevention, Care, Education, and Research," mandated by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and funded by NIH (See Update, [July 11, 2011](#)). NIH took a first step toward addressing these questions in a



systematic way by creating the NIH Pain Consortium in 2003. Eight years later, the IOM asserts, that NIH must do more. Although every Institute and Center deals in some way with pain, none of them "owns" this critical area of research. If that is to be responsibility of the Pain Consortium rather than an individual IC, then the consortium needs more resources, more staffing and a more elevated status within NIH. The IOM report concludes that "there needs to be a transformation in how pain research is conducted and that the Pain Consortium should take an even more proactive role in effecting that transformation." In addition, the IOM report recommends that the consortium should hold "more frequent, regular, structured and productive meetings" and improve the process for reviewing grant proposals related to pain, and that NIH should consider the possibility of identifying a lead IC on pain. The Committee requests a response to the IOM recommendations in the FY 2013 congressional budget justification.

### **NCI Praised for Communication and Decision Making Research**

The Senate report commended the National Cancer Institute (NCI) for its efforts to understand how the ability to comprehend and use numerical information affects health decision making, as low numerical skills may not only distort perception of risks and impair risk communication, but may also impede treatment. NCI is also commended for its efforts to determine how well state-of-the-art cancer care is actually delivered. The Committee notes that: "Ongoing health services data collection and surveillance programs represent an important contribution to cancer surveillance and the efforts to understand and improve clinical and community practices. NCI is strongly urged to maintain support for ongoing activities that advance cancer prevention and early detection research, including data collection infrastructure that can contribute to measuring the delivery and outcome of services, and comparative effectiveness research."

The Committee recognized that the Jackson Heart Study in Jackson, Mississippi, is the largest investigation of cardiovascular disease in the African-American population. It acknowledges the continued need for comprehensive research to address this health disparity and the important implications for such research to all persons threatened by cardiovascular disease. The Committee urges continued focus in addressing cardiovascular disease in African-Americans at the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) and the National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD). NHLBI is further encouraged to continue its research on how psychosocial factors, such as social support, may affect the course of prevention and treatment of, and recovery from, cardiovascular illness or events.

The Committee noted that it awaits the imminent release of the National Sleep Disorders Research Plan by the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research, which will articulate priorities and opportunities NIH-wide for addressing the challenge of sleep disorders and circadian disturbances. It is concerned by the growing body of knowledge demonstrating linkages between sleep disorders and a number of health conditions; including obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease, and the impact of sleep disturbances on safety at the workplace and in transportation. The report encourages more collaboration among ICs regarding sleep research and accelerated efforts in sleep research training.

The Committee continued to place a high priority on research related to heart disease, stroke and other forms of cardiovascular disease and remains concerned that NIH still spends less than eight percent of its budget on these diseases. The Committee strongly urges NHLBI to significantly enhance its investment and further stimulate interest in multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary basic, clinical, translational, and prevention cardiovascular disease research, including its risk factors, using all appropriate mechanisms. In addition, the Committee urges the prompt implementation of priority initiatives outlined in its Division of Cardiovascular Diseases [Strategic Plan](#). NHLBI is also encouraged to increase its attention to the impact of cardiovascular disease on ethnic minorities such as Native Hawaiians and Asians.

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) is encouraged to strengthen collaborations with other institutes regarding research on the links between diabetes and depression. "The Committee recognizes the success of the NIDDK-funded Diabetes Prevention

Program, a clinical research trial which found that modest weight loss through dietary changes and increased physical activity could prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes significantly. The Committee urges NIDDK to support further diabetes research that will build upon past successes, improve prevention and treatment, and close in on a cure."

The Committee applauded the leadership of the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) in the development of the OppNet collaboration on basic behavioral and social science research, and it encourages NIGMS to maintain its commitment to that trans-NIH initiative. The Committee also commends NIGMS's program of research on the efficacy of interventions to promote research careers, such as its studies on effective mentoring and career transitions. As part of the restructuring and elimination of NCRR, the Institutional Development Awards [IDeA] program is being transferred to NIGMS. The Committee recognizes the importance of the Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence and the IDeA Networks of Biomedical Research Excellence programs, which are essential components to the overall success of the IDeA program. It notes that the focus of IDeA should continue to be on improving the necessary infrastructure and strengthening the biomedical research capacity and capability of research institutions within the IDeA States.

### **Population Longitudinal Surveys ADDHealth, PSID, NLSY Child Supplement Praised**

The *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) is recognized for its investment in population-representative longitudinal studies, such as the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, the National Longitudinal Study of Youth Child Supplement and Panel Study of Income Dynamics which has yielded groundbreaking scientific research and served as a model for making publicly funded research data widely available, spurring cost-effective research in numerous disciplines and across multiple institutions. The Committee urges NICHD to continue investing in these large-scale population data sets and to sustain support for critical research infrastructure for demographic and behavioral population science.

The Committee also recognized NICHD for its contribution in establishing the scientific foundation of the development of reading, math and science skills that are critical to maintaining the Nation's competitiveness in math and science achievement. NIH/NICHD is also commended for appointing a blue-ribbon panel to evaluate rehabilitation research at the National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research [NCMRR] and across all of NIH. The Committee requests a copy of the panel's report when it is available. The panel is urged to identify gaps in the field of rehabilitation research and recommend which ICs or other Federal agencies should be responsible for addressing them. The Committee encourages NIH, through the leadership of NCMRR, to further clarify a consistent definition of rehabilitation across all institutes and centers and to seek ways to delineate between physical, cognitive, mental and substance abuse rehabilitation when characterizing NIH-supported research. Finally, the Committee encourages NCMRR to explore the broader social, emotional and behavioral context of rehabilitation, including effective interventions to increase social participation and reintegrate individuals with disabilities into their communities.

Regarding the National Institute of Aging, the Committee praised the Institute's leadership role in the "OppNet initiative, which will build a collective body of knowledge about the nature of behavioral systems, deepen the understanding of basic mechanisms of behavioral processes and emphasize the relevance of basic behavioral science research throughout NIH's mission." NIA is commended for prioritizing support of the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) and for its successful collaboration and co-funding agreements for the HRS with the Social Security Administration (See Update, [March 7, 2011](#)). The Committee commends NIA's initiative in developing comparable international surveys, particularly in countries that have aged faster than the United States. It anticipates important research advances regarding gene-environment interactions once the genome-wide array study of the HRS sample is fully implemented. The Committee encourages the Institute to maintain its important emphasis on life course studies, which focus on how transitions among family and other relationships may affect health, healthcare and aging.

The Committee applauded the NIAAA's continued focus on underage alcohol use and college binge drinking research. It urges NIAAA to continue research to evaluate campus-based programs that

seek to reduce drinking and related problems among college students using both individual and environmental approaches, including mandated intervention and/or treatment and community partnerships that involve heavy publicity and highly visible enforcement. The Committee recognizes the critical role of psychological research in understanding drinking behavior and in developing behaviorally-based interventions as well as the demonstrated effectiveness of those interventions alone or in combination with pharmacotherapy.

Regarding NIDA, the Committee expressed concern that the Institute has reduced funding for activities that help State substance abuse agencies infuse into the Nation's publicly funded substance abuse system the knowledge gained by NIDA's research. In particular, the Committee is concerned that NIDA reduced funds for its Blending Initiative, which supported a dialogue between NIDA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA), and State substance abuse agencies on "research to practice" and "practice to research" activities. NIDA is urged to allocate funding to re-engage State substance abuse agencies on this issue.

NIDA is also encouraged to continue its work in the area of education "to inform people of all ages of the detriment to society that drug abuse causes in terms of pronounced effects on health and the extensive expense to the economy of the Nation." The Institute is commended for its successful efforts to coordinate and support research with the Department of Veterans Affairs and other NIH institutes on substance abuse and associated problems among U.S. military personnel, veterans and their families. According to the report, many military personnel need help confronting war-related problems including traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and substance abuse, including tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.

Additionally, NIDA is urged to concentrate its effort to reverse the recent increase in experimentation in substance abuse by teenagers. This effort will require innovative approaches in the education, prevention and treatment arenas. The Committee recognizes the value of the translational research funded by NIDA, which includes preventive and treatment modalities directed toward a decrease in drug experimentation and most importantly the development of treatments for the diseases of drug dependence.

### **NIMH Commended for its Support of Work on Behavioral Changes and HIV/AIDS**

The National Institute of Mental Health's (NIMH) "critical work in developing behavioral interventions to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS across multiple populations as well as addressing co-morbid mental and substance abuse disorders" is commended by the Committee. The Committee recognizes that new research is needed to ensure the long-term maintenance of behavior changes as HIV/AIDS has become a chronic disease. Behavioral research aimed at reducing the likelihood of HIV infection should include structural, environmental and socioeconomic variables to ensure that research-based interventions can be evaluated as appropriate for racial and ethnic minority populations.

The Committee praised the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine's (NCCAM) support of research on the cognitive and emotional effects of mindfulness meditation, and it encourages the Center to collaborate with other institutes and centers to explore additional behavioral interventions.

The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) is urged by the Committee to expand, intensify and support ongoing research and other activities with respect to pre-diabetes and diabetes, particularly type 2 diabetes, in minority populations, including research to identify clinical, socioeconomic, geographical, cultural and organizational factors that contribute to diabetes in such populations. The Committee encourages the Institute to support research on behavior and obesity, among other research. The NIH, through NIMHD and the National Diabetes Education Program, is asked by the Committee to mentor health professionals to be more involved in weight counseling, obesity research and nutrition; provide for the participation of minority health professionals in diabetes focused research programs; and encourage increased minority representation in diabetes-focused health fields.



With regard to obesity, the Committee strongly advised NIH to continue to support research to identify and reduce health disparities, including studies focusing on populations at disproportionate risk for obesity and its accompanying health consequences such as, but not limited to, cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. To effectively address the problem of obesity and its health consequences, the Committee requests that NIMHD intensify its investment in obesity research and review the benefits of establishing a Comprehensive Center of Excellence for Obesity Research and Prevention. Further, the "Committee urges NIH to develop a trans-NIH strategy for obesity research that is coordinated and has a significant health disparity obesity research focus coordinated through NIMHD." Studies should focus on regions with populations at disproportionate risk for obesity and its health consequences, in particular populations most affected-racial and ethnic minorities, low-income populations and rural populations-and include regional analysis. The Committee requests NIH to participate in a trans-HHS working group that sets measurable objectives based on scientific data and information that leverages the appropriate HHS agencies like the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in order to improve dissemination and implementation of scientific information to clinicians and community organizations to aggressively improve obesity rates in health disparate populations.

Finally, in its report the Committee expressed its continued support for the Fogarty International Center's efforts to foster long term research and training partnerships between U.S. research institutions and those in developing countries.

For the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** the Committee provided \$6.2 billion of which \$5.8 billion is in discretionary budget authority and an additional \$367.4 million via transfers available under section 241 of the Public Health Service (PHS) Act. The recommendation also assumes \$30 million in balances from Public Law 111-32 in accordance with the budget request, and \$55.4 million in mandatory funds under the terms of the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA). The President's budget request for FY 2012 was \$6.4 billion including \$490.5 million in transfers available under section 241 of the PHS Act, and \$30 million in balances from Public Law 111-32 and \$55.4 million in EEOICPA mandatory funds. Additionally, the Committee included statutory language transferring \$848 million in mandatory funds to CDC from the Prevention and Public Health (PPH) Fund. The FY 2011 comparable level was \$610.9 million and the budget request for FY 2012 was \$752.5 million.

The Committee allocated \$777.9 million for the CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. This is an increase above the FY 2011 funding level of \$773.9 million and the FY 2012 budget request of \$725.2 million. In addition, the Committee recommended \$487 million in mandatory funding to be transferred from the PPH Fund, which compares to \$300.9 million in FY 2011 and \$460.3 in the FY 2012 budget request.

According to the Committee, "America's poor health is plaguing our country and taking a severe toll on our economy. One-half of all American adults have at least one chronic illness; such diseases account for nearly 70 percent of all U.S. deaths and cost the Nation approximately \$1.8 billion per year." It noted that many chronic diseases are preventable, "so there is an urgent need to reduce their prevalence, both for the sake of the people affected by them and for the Nation's economy."

The Committee indicated that CDC administers numerous programs intended to prevent chronic diseases, but the funding structure for these programs evolved over the years in ways that were not well coordinated. In many States, the missions for several of these programs overlap. The report notes that the President's budget for FY 2012 proposed consolidating 27 programs in the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. The Committee, meanwhile, has been particularly interested in streamlining CDC's obesity-related programs. In FY 2011, the Committee proposed consolidating the Diabetes; Heart Disease and Stroke; Arthritis; School Health; and Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity programs, all of which include a goal of reducing obesity. However, given budget constraints, the Committee suggests that it does not recommend a consolidation in FY 2012 because it may make it impossible to achieve consolidation without cutting funding to numerous States.

The Committee applauded CDC's development of the National Institute Partner and Sexual Violence Surveillance System to monitor State and national trends and to inform public policies and prevention strategies. The Committee urged more research on the psychological impact of violence against women in order to increase and improve evidence-based interventions to support the recovery of women from the trauma of violence.

The Committee noted that it remains supportive of efforts to reduce youth violence through evidence-based prevention strategies. The Committee indicated that the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Programs (OJJDP) at the Department of Justice conducts a comprehensive suite of prevention programs aimed at youth in high-risk categories and exhibiting high-risk behaviors. The Committee urges CDC to continue providing technical assistance to OJJDP with the data gained from the National Violent Death Reporting System and other surveillance activities.

For the **Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)** the Senate Committee appropriated \$372 million (flat funding), \$6 million higher than the President's FY 2012 request. Additionally, the Committee provided \$12 million from the Prevention and Public Health Fund for AHRQ's "Prevention/Care Management" portfolio-\$5 million for Clinical Preventive Services Research, and \$7 million for the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (total funding for the USPSTF is \$11.3 million, consistent with FY 2011 levels).

AHRQ will also receive an additional \$24 million through the new mandatory transfer from the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Fund to support dissemination and training activities. With supplemental funding from these mandatory Funds, AHRQ's budget would be \$408 million in FY 2012 under the Senate's spending bill.

The Committee provided \$238.7 million for AHRQ's research on health costs, quality and outcomes (HCQO). The comparable funding level for FY 2011 is \$245.7 million; the President's budget request for FY 2012 is \$232.6 million. The Committee recommended that AHRQ received \$12 million in mandatory funds from the PPH Fund. Within the total for HCQO, the Committee provided \$19.6 million for patient-centered outcomes research, also known as comparative effectiveness research [CER]. The recommendation provides sufficient resources to maintain existing grants and contracts at AHRQ but does not include funding for new research. The Committee did not fund new CER research activity in recognition that the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute, created by the Affordable Care Act, will be responsible for managing and prioritizing CER.

The Committee expressed deep concerned about declines in the number of, and funding for, training grants for the next generation of researchers and urged AHRQ to provide greater support to pre- and post-doctoral training grants and fellowships to ensure that America stays competitive in the global research market.

The Committee included \$5 million in transfers from the PPH Fund to continue to build the evidence base regarding clinical preventive services. The Committee continued to express support for investigator-initiated research. Within the Crosscutting Activities Related to Quality, Effectiveness and Efficiency Research portfolio, the Committee provided \$43.4 million, the same as that for FY 2011, for investigator-initiated research.

The Committee encouraged AHRQ to seek opportunities to collaborate with Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) and the National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research (NCMRR) within the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute for Child Health and Human Development [NICHD]. The Committee expressed its belief such a partnership should advance potential opportunities to conduct comparative investigations of rehabilitation interventions with other healthcare treatment approaches.

The Senate Committee rejected the Administration's request to subsume the **Javits Fellowship Program** into the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) program and maintained it as a separate account to fund graduate students in the social sciences, humanities, and arts. The funding level was the same as FY 2011, \$8.1 million. The Senate agreed with the Administration and abolished funding for the **Thurgood Marshall Legal Opportunity** program, saving \$3 million.

The Senate accepted the Administration's continued attempt to reduce funding for the **Title VI and Fulbright-Hays** international education and foreign language program. The recommended funding level for FY 2012 is the same as FY 2011, \$75.7 million.

For the research, dissemination, statistics, and assessment programs of the **Institute of Education Sciences (IES)**, the Senate panel allocated about the same amounts as in the final FY 2011 funding bill, rejecting the Administration's attempts to beef up these programs. The research and dissemination account received \$199.8 million; the statistics account a slight \$1 million increase to \$109.3 million; the regional labs \$57.5 million, Statewide Data Systems, \$42.2 million; and Assessment \$138.6 million.

The **Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)** received \$611.2 million, \$1 million less than FY 2011, and a \$35.8 million reduction from the President's request.

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## NIH Deputy Director Addresses Joint NIDA/NIAAA Advisory Council Meeting: Merging of Institutes Discussed

On September 12, National Institutes of Health (NIH) Deputy Director Lawrence Tabak addressed a joint meeting of the advisory councils of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). Tabak updated the councils on the activities related to the proposed creation of a Substance Use, Abuse and Addiction (SUAA) institute. He also discussed the recent NIH-commissioned study on NIH diversity recently published in *Science* (See Update, [September 12, 2011](#)).

He reported that the NIH has established a timeline and is in the process of launching efforts to develop a scientific strategic plan along with the structure for the proposed institute. NIH is developing the strategic plan and will release it for public comment in the fall. Tabak warned that the strategic planning exercise will not revisit the issue of whether there will be a new institute. Additionally, NIH expects that the recommendations of both groups will go to director Francis Collins for incorporation in the FY 2014 budget request. Pending approval from Congress, in October 2013, NIH would establish the "National Institute of Substance and Addiction Disorders." The new name is just a placeholder that responds to the concerns that have been expressed with the use of the acronym "SUAA."

Responding to a question regarding the role of the advisory councils, Tabak explained that there will be coordination with the relevant Council of the Institutes and Centers that would the creation of the new institute would impact to provide a preview of the plans so that they may weigh in prior to public release.

A videocast of the meeting is available [here](#).

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## NICHD Council Discusses the Institute's Draft Vision Statement

At the September 22, meeting of the National Advisory Child Health and Human Development Council, *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Director Alan Guttmacher presented concepts from the Institute's draft Vision statement. Guttmacher reviewed the purpose of the Visioning process, noting that it is "to identify the most promising scientific opportunities of the next ten years across NICHD's mission," and "to set an

ambitious agenda that inspires the NICHD, its partners, and the research community to achieve critical scientific goals and improve health."

The goals include involving the NICHD's external communities, fostering communication and collaboration, adding early-stage investigators and other new stakeholders to the conversation, producing a publication worthy of a leading scientific journal and catalyzing creative and ambitious thinking and discussion. He reminded the Council that the Vision "is about scientific opportunity, not organizational issues or funding mechanisms." Guttmacher emphasized that the Vision is about ways that NICHD and its partners can advance science and health. He announced that based on the Science, the NICHD will begin a strategic planning process from 2011 to 2012 in which the NICHD staff and the Institute's advisory councils would determine how NICHD "can best help achieve this Scientific Vision."

Guttmacher reviewed the wide range of disciplines and professional backgrounds that have been involved in the Visioning activity: 1,670 people nominated to participate in at least one of the ten Vision meetings, 700 people attended the meetings from 39 states and six foreign countries, these attendees represented a total of 229 institutions and organizations. In addition, he noted that NICHD had received 200 comments in response to Vision documents from many individuals and organizations, including the American Psychological Association and the Population Association of America.

### **Final Scientific Theme Areas**

Guttmacher reported eight final scientific theme areas emerged from the process: reproduction; pregnancy; developmental biology; early origins of health, disease, growth, and development; behavior and cognition; plasticity and rehabilitation; population dynamics; and the conduct of science. The final themes represent a collapse of several of the original ten themes and included two themes that were not part of the initial themes, including population dynamics and the conduct of science.

Below are the concepts presented by Guttmacher specifically pertaining to the social and behavioral science and generally to the conduct of science.

#### **Behavior**

- Delineate how genetic factors interact with environmental factors to influence behavior
- Detail how the epigenome and gene expression change in response to behavior-changing events
- Develop robust biomarkers (e.g. DNA, proteins, metabolites) of later behavior
- Identify/develop better animal models of human behavior
- Identify the effects of new technologies on child and adolescent behavior
- Understand the effects of interventions in critical periods of development; e.g., the influence on later behaviors of use of neonatal incubators or of incarceration of adolescents
- Determine how interventions (e.g., atypical antipsychotics, methylphenidate) change neuronal structure and function
- Identify predictors of resiliency in both individuals and communities
- Better integrate behavioral research into the work of other disciplines

#### **Cognition**

- Elucidate mechanisms of cognition at the molecular, cellular, and brain systems levels
- Ascertain the mechanisms underlying the development of learning and cognitive disorders
- Characterize normal cognitive trajectories across the lifespan
  - Determine how new technologies affect cognition and could be used as therapeutic interventions
  - Identify sex differences, if any, in cognition and delineate the mechanisms underlying

them

## **Behavior/Cognition Bold Ideas**

- Fully understand the neurological basis for five behavioral or cognitive disorders
- Identify 5,000 generic variants that influence specific behaviors or cognitive traits
- Identify the causes of autism spectrum disorders, and use that knowledge to develop effective intervention
- Explore the value to the individual, family, and society of differing abilities

## **Population Dynamics**

- **The Modern Family** - Understand the implications for the life and health of the mother, father, child, family, and society of such factors as: Extremes in maternal and paternal age; Family formation and structure; Urbanization; Migration; New technologies; and Changing societal demographics
- **Special Populations** - Explore populations with distinctive genetic backgrounds and Explore populations with distinctive environmental experience

### **Population Dynamics Bold Idea**

- Develop more effective health care, housing, employment, and social options that plan for the increasing longevity of those with intellectual, developmental, and/or physical differences

## **The Conduct of Science**

- **Compelling Science**
  - NICHD's areas of research have witnessed historic accomplishments over many decades
  - In recent years, however, some areas have not taken full advantage of dramatic advances in biomedical science
  - We now have great opportunities to accelerate progress in our mission areas and to foster collaboration across our many scientific and public communities
  - Our science must be so compelling as to attract the best and brightest researcher
- **Transdisciplinary Science**
  - Standardize ontology, nomenclature, and data standards across disciplines
  - Use transdisciplinary "incubators" to identify scientific opportunities
  - Adopt IT-based strategies to link researchers in different disciplines
  - Publish and publicize success stories and dos and don'ts for transdisciplinary research
  - Expand open access data sets and analysis methods
  - Improve reward and de-risk transdisciplinary research at commitment, execution, and career impact stages
- **Culture of Science**
  - Incorporate qualitative and quantitative assessment of quality of life (specifically including sexual and reproductive function) in a wider range of biomedical studies
  - Reevaluate existing diagnostic tools with an evidence based approach
  - Develop social networking approaches for collaborative research efforts
  - Involve tech-savvy individuals in brainstorming about use of information technology to



- **Data Acquisition**

- Conduct longitudinal analysis of anticipated health subjects and at-risk cohorts to correlate markers of health to specific exposures and both to later health, including
  - Leverage existing data sets; also, re-examine them to include additional outcomes
  - Link fetal and early childhood phenotypes back to paternal/maternal exposures and genetic factors, and forward to phenotypes evolving across the life span
  - Develop toolkits and multidisciplinary rapid-response teams to allow researchers to collect exposure and outcome data in the event of "natural experiments"
  - Exploit technologies developed in other fields (e.g., global information systems) to measure environmental exposures

- **Biorepositories**

- Develop broad, diverse repositories with expanded sample types and careful phenotyping, starting in pregnancy, including healthy individuals
- Identify/create biological tissue repositories for studying bio-accumulating compounds with long half-lives
- Appropriately utilize available long-standing newborn screening samples in research

- **Data Analysis and Sharing**

- Decrease barriers to accessing data from prior studies
- Develop population and data-based methodologies applicable to specialized populations and to diverse populations
- Create epidemiologic tools to evaluate connections of genetics, biology, and environmental exposures (toxins); e.g., gestome and exposome
- Focus on bioinformatics and computational biology
  - Develop user friendly, integrative tools
  - Make information across multiple disciplines and biological scales easily and widely available
  - Create and employ technologies for information storage and dissemination
  - Develop multi-institution bioinformatics cores

- **Other Tools**

- Further develop molecular imaging, microscopy, biosensors, biomanipulators, nucleic acid sequencing
- Make widely available "-omic" (genome, epigenome, transcriptome, metabolome, microbiome, exposome, etc.) libraries that go across the lifestyle
- Use mathematical modeling to predict life-course changes
- Develop and use broader range of model organisms

- **Clinical Trials**

- Consolidate currently available information from clinical trials and make it easily accessible to researchers, clinicians, and the public
- Identify clinical strategies for low-resource settings
- Fully analyze existing and preclinical research before entering into clinical trials

- **Implementation Science**
  - Incorporate analyses of economic impacts on health care in implementation science
  - Evaluate why interventions fail
  - Promote and develop effective research strategies to translate research into evidence-based health care practices
  
- **Public Involvement**
  - Redesign privacy and confidentiality rules and regulations to address the real needs of both participants and researchers so that research maximally advances the public good
  - Diffuse more effectively to the entire population that which is already known
  - Engage communities in the search/surveillance of emerging exposures
  
- **Training**
  - Increase graduate students' exposure to physiology, pathophysiology, and behavioral sciences
  - Increase inter-disciplinary fluency, especially including biocomputatio
  
- **Workforce**
  - Build global infrastructure of mentored partnerships to increase research capacity
  - Utilize research on diseases affecting underrepresented communities to help recruit and retain a more diverse biomedical workforce
  - Recruit and support a diverse workforce across all stages of career development

### **The Conduct of Science Bold Ideas**

- Develop biorepositories that capture the diversity of the U.S. population
- Utilize research participants as a pool of diverse individuals from which to recruit future scientists
- Make our area of science so compelling that they attract the best and brightest researchers

Guttmacher stressed that the process is not at an end with his presentation to the Council and emphasized that the Institute wants "the conversations with staff, Council and its many communities of researchers and advocates to continue as long as the scientific opportunities do." For more information and/or to view the videocast of the meeting see:

<http://www.nichd.nih.gov/vision/>.

## **Census Director Appoints New Members and Chair to Scientific Advisory Committee**

U.S. Census Bureau Director Robert Groves has named ten new members and a chairwoman to the Census Bureau's Scientific Advisory Committee, which provides advice on the design and implementation of Census Bureau programs. The committee meets twice a year to address policy, research and technical issues relating to a full range of Census Bureau programs and activities, including communications, decennial, demographic, economic, field operations, geographic, information technology and statistics.

Groves also announced that Guillermina Jasso, a sociology professor at New York University and former member of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate's Advisory Committee, will chair the committee. Jasso was the founding director of the Methods Workshop at New York University, the founding director of the Theory Workshop at the University of Iowa (1988-1991), and co-founder of the Life Course Center at the University of Minnesota.

The other new members, who serve three-year terms are:

Barbara Anderson is a professor of sociology and population studies at the University of Michigan. The former faculty member at Yale and Brown universities has published articles on effects of an interviewer's race in surveys and on issues of data quality.

Joshua Angrist is an economics professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has taught at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and at Harvard.

Daniel Atkins is associate vice president for research cyberinfrastructure at the University of Michigan. An electrical and computer engineering professor, Atkins' pioneering work in parallel computer architecture and high-speed computer arithmetic is widely used in modern processor chips. He was also the first head of NSF's Office of Cyberinfrastructure.

Lawrence Bobo is a professor of social sciences at Harvard University. He has also taught in the sociology departments at the University of Wisconsin, UCLA and Stanford University. In June 2011, Bobo was a featured speaker at the National Institute of Justice's Annual Conference (see Update, [June 27, 2011](#)).

Noel Cressie is a professor of statistics at Ohio State University, where he directs the program in spatial and environmental statistics.

Jack Dangermond is founder and president of Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), a privately held geographic information systems software company, in Redlands, CA. He is also a former member of the COSSA Board of Directors.

Irma Elo is a professor of sociology, research associate and former director of the Population Studies Center at the University of Pennsylvania. She is a member of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Population Sciences' Subcommittee and a former chairman of the Board of Scientific Counselors of the National Center for Health Statistics.

Robert Hummer is a professor in the Department of Sociology and Population Research Center at the University of Texas. He is a social demographer whose work focuses on racial/ethnic, immigrant/native, socioeconomic and religious differences in health and mortality in the United States.

Sharon Lohr is professor of statistics professor at Arizona State University. Her research focuses on survey sampling, as well as the design of experiments and applications of statistics in the social sciences and education. She is an elected member of the International Statistical Institute and a fellow of the American Statistical Association.

Sally Morton is professor of biostatistics at the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public Health. Previously she was vice president for statistics and epidemiology at RTI International, and head of the RAND Corporation's statistics group. She is a past president of the American Statistical Association and former member of the Committee on National Statistics.

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**Advancing Discovery: The Role of National Institutes of Health (NIH)  
Research in Fighting Diabetes**

On September 15th a luncheon briefing organized by the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research and co-sponsored by COSSA entitled "Advancing Discovery: The Role of National Institutes of Health (NIH) Research in Fighting Diabetes" was held on Capitol Hill. Speaking at the event were Griffin P. Rodgers, director of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) at NIH, Rena R. Wing, director of the Weight Control and Diabetes Research Center at the Miriam Hospital and Professor of Psychiatry and Human Behavior at Brown, and Anastasia Albanese-O'Neil, American Diabetes Association Volunteer and mother of a child with Type-1 Diabetes.



Left to right: Anastasia Albanese-O'Neil, Griffin P. Rodgers and Rena R. Wing ©2011 Lloyd Wolf / [www.lloydwolf.com](http://www.lloydwolf.com) / courtesy APA

Rodgers discussed NIDDK's integrated research programs and informed the standing room only audience that: approximately two-thirds of U.S. adults are overweight; one-third of adults are obese, costing \$147 billion annually. Regarding Type 2 diabetes, the director reported that there are 25.8 million cases (8.3 percent of the population); the cases of type 2 diabetes are increasing in the young, costing the nation \$174 billion annually. He noted that there are 23 million cases of chronic kidney diseases, with the major causes being diabetes and

hypertension. According to the director obesity "fuels" multiple medical problems, including: stroke, pulmonary disease (abnormal function, obstructive sleep apnea), pancreatitis, nonalcoholic fatty liver diseases, gall bladder disease, cancer (breast, uterus, cervix, prostate, kidney, colon, esophagus, pancreases, liver), skin, gout, cataracts, coronary heart disease, hypertension, gynecologic abnormalities, osteoarthritis, and phlebitis). Rodgers also pointed to the strategic planning for research being done in this area by the Institute and the rest of NIH and highlighted the strategic plans for "[NIH Obesity Research](#)" and the "[Advancing and Emerging Opportunities in Diabetes Research](#)."

Wing provided a more expansive description of before and after the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) briefly discussed by the director who described the DPP as "collaborative and transformative." Currently, 79 million Americans have impaired fasting glucose or pre-diabetes and are at very high risk of developing diabetes. The DPP examined whether their change of developing diabetes could be reduced by intensive lifestyle intervention, Metformin (a drug used to treat diabetes) or placebo. More than 3,000 individuals were recruited and randomly assigned to one of these three conditions. The lifestyle modification lowered risk by 58 percent via a modest weight loss, from exercise and reduced fat and caloric intake compared to Metformin.

She discussed the profound knowledge that has been gained over the course of many years of research that now allows for a whole new range of research projects built on this solid foundation, such as the DPP. These new projects hold in them the opportunity for treatment to grow by leaps and bounds, and could not have been done successfully without many years of prior intervention research. These studies include the ongoing Look AHEAD, a multicenter trial funded by NIDDK with support from other institutes and the Center for Disease Control (CDC). Look AHEAD followed 5000

individuals age 45-76 with type 2 diabetes randomly assigned to Intensive Lifestyle Intervention or Diabetes Support and Education for an average of 13.5 years. This study and many others are incredibly ambitious and much stands to be gained from them, Wing explained to the congressional audience.

### Keeping Weight Lost Off

Noting that most successful dieters regain the weight lost, Wing shared the key characteristics of the individuals who are part to the National Weight Control Registry ([NCWR](#)) she co-chairs with James Hill, University of Colorado and a former COSSA congressional seminar [speaker](#). NCWR is the largest prospective investigation of long-term successful weight loss maintenance. These strategies include a low calorie/low fat diet, high levels of physical activity, television viewing, and daily self-weighing. The question was could these approaches be taught to others who have recently lost weight. Supported by the NIH and NIDDK, she tested the efficacy of a face-to-face and an internet intervention versus a newsletter control group in preventing weight gain over 18 months in a trial, called the "STOP REGAIN." Unlike other obesity studies, which focus on how to lose weight, the "STOP Regain" trial was designed to test methods of how to maintain weight loss - regardless of the method used to lose the weight. She reported that the program was most successful when delivered in face-to-face meetings, although the Internet also proved a viable way to help participants maintain their weight loss.

Wing noted that community-based group DPP is now delivered at a YMCA and the intervention has had an impact on clinical practice. She noted that Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recently proposed reimbursing primary care practitioners for behavior modification and weight-loss counseling among older, highly obese Medicare patients.

Closing her remarks, she reiterated that NIDDK research funding has "clearly had an important impact on lifestyle interventions for treatment of obesity and prevention of type 2 diabetes." Given epidemic of obesity/diabetes and the associated health care costs, it is critical to maintain adequate funding for basic, clinical and translational research on these issues. "It is particularly important to adequately support the next generation of researchers so they can continue the process of discovery and implementation," Wing concluded.

Albanese-O'Neill brought the perspective of a parent to the event, describing her family's struggle with Type 1 diabetes and all that they have to done to help the research process. Her family has participated in numerous ongoing studies all of which would have been impossible without NIDDK support. The CDC predicts that one in three Americans will have diabetes by 2050. Research projects like those funded by NIDDK are the keys to attacking this problem head on, she stressed.

For more information on this event, including presentation slides, please go [here](#).

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## AERA, NAE Session: Evaluating Teachers Still Difficult Task

On September 14, the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and The National Academy of Education (NAE) held a Capitol Hill Briefing on "Getting Teacher Evaluation Right: A Challenge for Policy Makers."

There is a general consensus that evidence of a teacher's contributions to student learning should be a component of teacher evaluation systems, but not the sole determination of a teacher's effectiveness. Furthermore, as they are currently administered, teacher evaluations in most school districts do little to help administrators determine who is an effective teacher or do not help teachers improve their instruction.



Value Added Models (VAMs) which involve looking at gains in student test scores from one year to the next are now promoted as a tool to help improve teacher evaluation and demonstrate their effects on student learning. But many researchers and teachers believe using VAMs as a measure of teacher effectiveness has a number of problems including: VAMs of teacher effectiveness are highly unstable; teachers' value added ratings are significantly affected by differences in the students who are assigned to them; and value added ratings cannot disentangle the many influences on student progress.

As Jesse Rothstein of the University of California, Berkeley pointed out, VAMs are intended to distinguish effective from ineffective teachers. However, under the VAMs' system many teachers have been deemed effective for one class but ineffective for others. A teacher's measured effectiveness also differs significantly when different tests are used, even when these are within the same content area.

VAMs require that students are randomly assigned to teachers, however, this rarely happens. A teacher may have a greater number of students experiencing out of school problems, may have greater high-needs students or may have a class of advanced and gifted students. These factors can create both misestimates of a teacher's effectiveness and disincentives for teachers to want to teach the students who have the greatest needs, such as English language learners and special education students, or students who have been deemed to already maxed in their learning, such as gifted students.

Also, it is impossible for VAMs to fully separate out the influences of a student's other teachers on their reported learning. No single teacher accounts for all of a student's learning. Prior teachers have lasting effects, for good or ill, on student's later learning, and current teachers also interact to produce student's knowledge and skills.

Linda Darling-Hammond of Stanford University, asserted that VAMs alone are not an adequate measure of how effective a teacher is or a good measure of what a student is actually learning, "we need multiple measures of practice of what teachers are doing and multiple measures of learning for kids."

Current research suggests that the use of VAMs for high stakes evaluations. However, the use of value-added methods can help to validate measures that are productive for teacher evaluation. These tools are most effective when embedded in systems that support evaluation by ensuring that evaluators are trained, evaluation and feedback are frequent, and mentoring and professional development are available.

For more information go to AERA's website [www.aera.net/Default.aspx?id=12856](http://www.aera.net/Default.aspx?id=12856)

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## Brookings Panel Examines Latest Poverty Numbers

According to the Census Bureau report released on September 13, nearly one in six Americans, 46.2 million people, were living in poverty in 2010. That figure represents an increase of 2.6 million people from the 2009 Census poverty report. The official poverty rate for 2010 was 15.1 percent up from 14.3 percent in 2009.

The Brookings Institution's Center on Children and Families held a briefing on the day of the report's release to discuss the findings. Isabel Sawhill senior fellow at Brookings, reacting to the report said, "the numbers are pretty grim and they are going to get worse."

Over the last couple of years with the rapid rise of poverty and an increase in food insecurity Americans are increasingly turning to food stamps. Forty five million people, including one in four children, relied on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), more commonly known as food stamps, an increase of 64 percent since January 2008.

"With income down, poverty up, health insurance coverage down or flat, the news on economic well being in the U.S. is not good," said Brookings Senior Fellow Ron Haskins.

However, the economic downturn has not affected all regions of the U.S. equally. Regionally, the South was the poorest area of the country, with a poverty rate of 15.7 percent, an increase from 14.3 percent in 2008. The West had a poverty rate of 14.8 percent, the Midwest rate was 13.3 percent and the Northeast rate was 12.2 percent. Also, household income fell in every region of the country from 2007 to 2010. Yet, it affected the Northeast, with a 3.1 percent decline, much less than other regions like the South and West at 6.3 percent 6.7 percent respectively. The Midwest was hammered the most of any of the regions with a decline of 8.4 percent. Despite the drop over the last few years, the Northeast fared better in 2010. It was the only region that did not see a statistically significant drop in median household income in 2010.

Last year was particularly bad for minorities. Blacks experienced the highest poverty rate, 27.4 percent, up from 25.8 percent in 2009, and Hispanics rose to 26.6 percent from 25.3 percent. For whites the poverty rate held fairly steady at 9.9 percent, up marginally from 9.4 percent in 2009. The news wasn't any better for women with more than 40 percent of households headed by women living in poverty. Haskins one of the architects of 1996 welfare reform stated that, "until we do something about female headed households we will not be able to fix poverty."

As a result of the number of women living in poverty the number of children in poverty has risen dramatically. Between 2009 and 2010, the poverty rate increased for children under age 18 from 20.7 percent to 22.0 percent or 16.4 million children. The numbers are even worse for minority children with the Census Bureau reporting the rate of black children living in poverty at nearly 40 percent, and for Hispanic children nearly a third live in poverty. The rate for white children was reported at slightly above 12 percent.

Katharine Abraham, a member of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, in her appearance at the Brookings session touted the administration's efforts to stimulate the economy and save jobs through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) and the newly proposed American Jobs Act. According to the administration, ARRA saved four million people from poverty and helped employ 2.5 million more people. Abraham acknowledged the pace for job growth needs acceleration and asserted that the American Job Act will help save jobs and reduce poverty through among other things tax cuts to businesses, cutting employee payroll taxes, and extending unemployment insurance. Sawhill estimates that the President's job bill will prevent three million people from slipping into poverty. According to her estimates, the bill would save or create an estimated 1.5 million jobs, and through the extension of unemployment insurance and lower payroll taxes for employers would help another 1.5 million employees.

While the current Census poverty measure is flawed and the Administration continues its efforts to develop alternative measures, it remains the best consistent long-term gauge of poverty in America. The data may overstate the poverty rate by failing to count benefits such as earned income tax credits and food stamps, but it also fails to account for the rise in cost of housing, medical care and energy. Next year the federal government will issue an alternate calculation that will take into account non-cash benefits, such as food stamps and after tax income and also account for regional differences in the cost of living.

For more information on the Census Bureau's 2010 poverty data go to:  
[www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty).

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## Farm Foundation Briefing Focuses on Agricultural Data

On September 13, the Farm Foundation held a Forum on *Data Collection on Agriculture in a Time of Fiscal Constraints*. Speakers included John Hays of the Farm Credit Council, Scott Irwin, Laurence

J. Norton Chair of Agricultural Marketing in the College of Agricultural and Consumer Sciences at the University of Illinois, Tom Wegner, Director of Economics and Dairy Policy for Land O'Lakes, Inc. and Robert Young, chief economist of the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF.)

Irwin discussed the two kinds of agriculture data: current market data, such as animal and crop reports, and policy relevant data, such as trade barriers and statistics on farmer demographics. Current market data helps reduce uncertainty as farmers decide what and how much to grow, and in this time of incredible uncertainty, there is a tremendous need for this data. It can sometimes be harder to see the impact of policy data since it is not immediate, but it helps legislators make intelligent decisions. Both types of data are invaluable to our food system.

Hays discussed the importance of data in everyday decisions and reliance on the Agriculture Census conducted by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) every five years. The sudden loss of data and, thus, the ability to compare areas and analyze risk, would be a huge problem according to Hays. Even a delay in receiving data creates large issues for people. He noted that reducing sample sizes to reduce costs could be a feasible option, but repeatedly underlined that numerous agencies rely on USDA's data outputs for their inputs.

Wegner lauded the merits of public collected data noting that it is independent, reliable and easily available to help in long range planning across the supply chain. He warned that volatility would be unavoidable without data and that, while farmers are happy to answer USDA surveys, they would have far less incentive to speak to private companies if responsibility for data gathering was shifted to them. As an alternative to USDA giving up the pursuit of data, he pointed out that the process could become more efficient by partnering with more Universities and Co-Ops.

Young's talk carried the ominous message that, while times have been hard before and the government has looked for ways to cut costs, this era seems incredibly different and real change is coming. Business models are going to be almost unrecognizable in the future according to Young, and NASS is going to have to make tough decisions to function in the new reality.

The audience aimed numerous questions at the possibility of private data collection, but the answer remained the same-private data would somehow have to remain totally unbiased to function in the same way, a difficult proposition. The basic conclusion was that data is a public good that should be supported by the taxpayers.

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## Senators Seek New Way to Fund Agricultural Research

Senate Agriculture Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and John Thune, (R-SD) have proposed amending the tax code to provide another source of research funding for public universities, land-grant universities and other public agricultural entities. Senate appropriators recently revealed a plan to provide more money in FY 2012 for agriculture research than the House appropriators (See Update, [September 12, 2011](#)), but the proposed funding still represents a sizeable spending cut in an area vital to the United States' competitiveness in the agriculture market.

The two Senators, who are also members of the Finance Committee, proposed legislation to allow universities to create charitable, tax-exempt agricultural research organizations modeled on medical research organizations that already exist under the tax code. While the two can push for the bill in the tax-writing panel, the uncertainty that surrounds the work of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction makes it unclear whether individual committees will tackle tax code changes this session or leave it to this Super Committee.

Beverly Durgan, Agriculture Budget Chairwoman for the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), applauded the legislation, noting that it provides "great opportunities and is probably long overdue. It will broaden the type of research that can be done and supported." She also took the time to suggest, however, that she hoped this did not signal a future decrease in

## ERS Holds Annual Conference on Research Issues Related to Food and Nutrition

On September 22, The Economic Research Service (ERS) held the Food Assistance & Nutrition Research Conference at the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU.) This annual conference identifies emerging research issues related to domestic food and nutrition assistance programs administered by USDA.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also formerly known as food stamps, takes up a huge chunk of USDA's budget and, fittingly, took up a large chunk of the conference. A panel was held on Emerging Issues and Research Priorities and another on Recent Findings on SNAP.

Speakers on Emerging Issues included: Joel Berg, New York City Coalition Against Hunger and Center for American Progress; Pamela Loprest, Urban Institute; Lisa Shelton, House Committee on Agriculture; and Anita Singh, USDA Food and Nutrition Service. Berg noted that ERS data is never altered or slanted for policy-it represents noble and invaluable research. He called for more research on the confluence between SNAP and soup-kitchen-type establishments that routinely are forced to turn half of its patrons away. He also called for detailed economic analysis on how much money is lost on the 1/3 of people who qualify for SNAP benefits but do not use them (for every one dollar of SNAP benefits, we generate 1.8 dollars in economic activity.) Loprest focused on the recent spike in SNAP enrollments that has occurred despite the supposed recovery. Singh focused her concerns on SNAP modernization and technology issues as well as nutrition assistance in farmers' markets. Shelton's talk aimed at relating just how uncertain legislators are at this point. While the preparation for the next Farm Bill should be underway, the Super Committee's actions will determine everything going forward. At present, the Agriculture Committees are in a holding pattern. She also noted that the only way to change policy is with rock hard scientific evidence.

New findings on SNAP focused on reasons behind the huge upswing that has been seen in program utilization, the difference between SNAP utilization and Unemployment Insurance Utilization, and ARRA SNAP provisions. Mark Nord of ERS, discussing findings on ARRA funds, noted that benefits were upped a minimum of 13.6 percent with an average increase projected at 19 percent, eligibility was expanded for jobless adults without children, and additional administration costs were supported. These changes stimulated the economy, saved and created jobs, stabilized state agencies responsible for SNAP administration, and raised the amount of money SNAP beneficiaries were spending on food. According to Nord, ARRA funds were an amazing success-both food spending and food security rose.

Child Nutrition and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) were also the focus on panel on emerging issues and research priorities. Eric Steiner of the Senate Agriculture Committee attempted to illustrate the current legislative atmosphere of nutrition programs stating that all remains fairly bipartisan when it comes to the nutrition world. One possibility for future examination will be streamlining the 15 separate nutrition programs created over time and cutting administration costs. He also noted that Congress is looking at ways to cut the \$1 billion error rate in benefits for the National School Lunch Program. While he noted that no cuts have been proposed for WIC or school meals, the Senate Agriculture Committee's Ranking Member, Sen. Pat Roberts (R-KS) instructed him to "leave no stone unturned" when looking for savings opportunities. Heather Hartline-Grafton of the Food Research Action Center laid out a broad spectrum of research opportunities including low-income and food-insecure children, food service training approaches, school policies for children without money for food on any given day, effective models for providing meals when schools are unexpectedly closed, the decline in WIC participation and more. Art Burger of Burger, Carroll, and Associates focused his attention on WIC and electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards. He noted that the delay in creating a uniform system has tremendously harmed the program. Finally, Jay Hirschman of USDA's Food Nutrition Service discussed upcoming reports and changes such as the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) discontinuation of the Pediatric and Pregnancy Nutrition

Surveillance System (PedNSS) and the Pregnancy Nutrition Surveillance System (PNSS.) The 2011 calendar year will be the final year that data are collected for these projects.

The final panel addressed recent findings on program access and outcomes. Discussed were small changes that influence children's food selection in a positive way, changes in WIC food packages, the food costs of making school lunches healthier and participation in USDA's food assistance programs over the business cycle. While David Just of Cornell University noted that small changes like making the salad bar more accessible can drastically improve the choices students make, Constance Newman of ERS noted that Congress only provided six extra cents per meal for implementing new nutrition standards, while the real increase is likely to be about 15-18 cents.

For more information on this conference, please visit

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/ConferenceCenter/FANRP/FANRSept2011/index.htm>

## NSF Seeks Proposals to Transform Education through Cyberlearning

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has announced its new solicitation for the *Cyberlearning: Transforming Education* program.

According to NSF, the program would integrate advances in technology with advances in what is known about how people learn to better understand how people learn with technology and how technology can be used productively to help people learn, through individual use and/or through collaborations mediated by technology; better use technology for collecting, analyzing, sharing, and managing data to shed light on learning, promoting learning, and designing learning environments; and design new technologies for these purposes, and advance understanding of how to use those technologies and integrate them into learning environments so that their potential is fulfilled.

Of particular interest are technological advances that allow more personalized learning experiences, draw in and promote learning among those in populations not served well by current educational practices, allow access to learning resources anytime and anywhere, and provide new ways of assessing capabilities. NSF expects that Cyberlearning research will shed light on how technology can enable new forms of educational practice and that broad implementation of its findings will result in a more actively-engaged and productive citizenry and workforce.

Proposed research and innovations must be grounded in theories of and literatures on learning and learning with technology. Cyberlearning projects must therefore include both research and development components. A significant amount of effort in all projects should go into iterative refinement of the design, implementation, or use of a technological innovation based on systematic analysis of formative data. Except in the case of some exploratory projects, formative analysis of the technological innovation should be carried out in one or more of the real-world contexts for which the technology is targeted. The research component of each project should be carried out in the context of using the technology and should advance understanding of learning with technology or learning in technology-rich environments. Projects should take into account both theoretical and practical issues, focusing on new directions while, at the same time, taking into account a future in which research outcomes inform implementations on broader and larger scales.

Cyberlearning awards will be made in three research categories, each focusing on a different stage of research and development: Exploratory (EXP), Design and Implementation (DIP), and Integration and Deployment (INDP). The Cyberlearning program will also support small Capacity-Building Projects (CAP) and a Cyberlearning Resource Center (CRC).

The EXP projects will explore the feasibility of a technological innovation and to shed light on the answers to fundamental research questions related to learning with technology. The research team will share a vision that takes into account what is known about how people learn, learning in the targeted domain, use of technology for such learning, and challenges to technology use. NSF



expects to have \$550,000 for projects of two to three years. **The due date is December 15, 2011.**

The DIP projects will ascertain the potential of ideas, develop guidelines for use of an innovation, and answer research questions about learning with technology. The teams will have the vision as the EXP projects as well as completed work equivalent to one or more Cyberlearning EXP projects. The funding is \$1.35 million over four to five years. **The due date is January 12, 2012.**

The INDP projects will integrate or extend the use of one or more technologically-sophisticated efforts that have already shown promise and answer a variety of research questions related to learning with technology. The funding is \$2.5 million over five years. **Letters of intent are due May 14, 2012 and full proposals on July 16, 2012.**

**CAP** projects involve partnership building and community building, including conferences, workshops, and short courses. The funding will vary and **proposals are due by March 16, 2012.**

NSF expects to award one Cyberlearning Resource Center that will have responsibility for promoting collaboration among grantees; national dissemination of program findings, technologies, models, materials, and best practices; providing collaborative assessment, evaluation, and technical assistance to Cyberlearning projects; helping to bridge the gap between research and practice; creating a national presence for Cyberlearning; helping the disparate Cyberlearning research and development communities coordinate their efforts in a way that builds capacity; and providing infrastructure (technological and social) for supporting these efforts. The Resource Center will also conduct comprehensive evaluation of program effectiveness. The funding will start at up to \$500,000 in the first year and up to \$1 million in subsequent years up to five years. **The due date for proposals is February 15, 2012.**

For the full solicitation go to: <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2011/nsf11587/nsf11587.pdf>.

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