COSSA
Washington UPDATE

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In This Issue

End-of-Session Tactics on Payroll Tax Cut Extension Stalls Omnibus Appropriations Bill

As of the morning of December 14, the push to complete the FY 2012 appropriations process through an Omnibus bill that would include the remaining nine spending bills has stalled. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) is trying to add an extension of the payroll tax cut to the spending bills, so far without success. With the current Continuing Resolution (CR) running out on December 16, if this deadlock continues Congress will have to pass a new CR or the agencies of the government covered by the nine bills will shut down.

We delayed this edition of *Update* hoping that we could report on the FY 2012 allocations for the National Institutes of Health and other health, education, and labor agencies. We have decided to wait no more.

If and when the Congress completes action on the Omnibus, we will post the numbers on the COSSA Webpage and Facebook page.

Enjoy the holidays! Update will return on January 9, 2012.

NIH Director's Advisory Committee Examines Workforce and Diversity Issues

On December 8, the National Advisory Committee to the Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) held its 103rd meeting. The day and half meeting agenda included discussion of the agency's FY 2012 budget, reports from the ACD Biomedical Workforce Working Group and the ACD Diversity Working Group, and reorganization updates.

Director Francis Collins led off the meeting with an update of the agency's activities since its June meeting, including the status of the recruitment for three of the agency's institutes and centers. He informed those present of the selection of Chris Kaeser to succeed Jeremy Berg at the National Institute of General Medical Sciences. Kaeser, a cell biologist from MIT, was selected by Collins in October and is scheduled to join the NIH staff in April 2012. NIGMS deputy director Judith Greenberg is serving as Acting Director in the interim. Collins also shared his optimism regarding the recruitment of a director for the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute which is currently being led by deputy director Susan Shurin. The NIH is also seeking a permanent director for the agency's Center for Scientific Review which is currently being led by Richard Nakamura, former deputy director and scientific director of the National Institutes of Mental Health. Collins is also looking for directors for three of the offices within the Office of Director: the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management--Lawrence N. Self retired after 10 years and Sheila Stokes is Acting Director; the Office of Disease Prevention; and the Office of Research on Women's Health currently led by deputy director Janine Clayton--Vivian Pinn retired in October. He also noted that the agency had hoped to identify people for the newly created National Center for Translational Science (NCATS) which is waiting official recognition by Congress. Given the delay in the agency's appropriation and approval from the Congress to stand up the office, the deadline for the position has been extended and Collins hope to offer the position as soon as he is allowed to do so.

Pat White, NIH Associate Director for Legislative Policy and Analysis, provided the Committee a status report of the NIH's FY 2012 appropriation. Providing a bit of NIH appropriations history, White noted that in the last 40 years the NIH has only begun the fiscal year with an appropriations five times. In 34 of those 40 years, the agency has operated under a continuing resolution (CR), short term legislation to fund the government. In 25 of those 34 years, NIH was initially funded under a CR followed by an appropriation. FY 2011, White highlighted, was the first and only time the NIH has operated for a full year under a CR.

The failure of the Super Committee and the resulting across-the-board cuts, means the NIH could be looking at a 7 -9 percent cut in FY 2013, White explained. It is his opinion that the "consequences" of such cuts "are so grave" Congress will work to makes the sequestration unnecessary. In his report, White also highlighted the introduction of two bills that, if passed, could affect the agency's peer review process- H.R. 3124, the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) and H.R. 3433, Grants Transparency (GRANT) Act of 2011. H.R. 3433 introduced by Representative James Lankeford (R-OK) would require federal agencies to establish an extensive set of additional transparency measures. It would also involve the setting of requirements for merit-based selection procedures.

H.R. 3124, introduced by Representative William Clay (D-MO), would require more stringent disclosure by amending FACA to require appointments to federal agency advisory committees to be made without regard to political affiliation or activity, unless otherwise required by federal statute. It directs the head of an agency, prior to appointing members to an advisory committee, to give interested persons an opportunity to suggest potential committee members. Among other things, the bill would require each agency head to make available on the agency's Internet site specified information about each of the agency's advisory committees and their activities and to designate an Advisory Committee Management Officer to be responsible for the establishment, management, and supervision of the agency's advisory committees.

White noted that the NIH reviews more than 80,000 grants and funds 10,000 grants a year. Disclosure on a public website could prove highly problematic. It is an issue that the NIH has raised with the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Management and Budget, and the White House.

The Biomedical Workforce

NIH Office of Extramural Research (OER) director Sally Rockey and Shirley Tilghman, Princeton University President and chair of the Biomedical Workforce Working Group, provided an update for the committee. NIH established the Working Group to provide advice about NIH's training programs, particularly the question of the number of trainees and the quality of their training appropriate for the current circumstances and needs of biomedical research.

Rockey reviewed the Group's charge which includes developing a model for a sustainable and diverse biomedical research workforce that can inform decisions about training of the optimal number of people for the appropriate types of positions that will advance science and promote health. Based on these analyses with input from the extramural research community, the Committee will make recommendations for actions that NIH should take. There is also a modeling subcommittee led by Bruce Weinberg, Ohio State University, and Donna Ginther, Kansas State.

The Working Group has held a number of meetings in an attempt to meet their summer deadline. According to Rockey, the Working Group most likely will not be able to develop a comprehensive model. The Group is taking a two-tiered approach that includes descriptive analyses and a conceptual framework. Going forward, the framework will be populated with information on each career stage and transition. They will link to data on each career stage and transition to build a comprehensive resource upon which recommendations will be based. If nothing else comes out of this, Rockey remarked, NIH will have more information on the biomedical workforce that has ever been put into one place. There have been analyses of pieces of the workforce throughout the last 25 years, but never the holistic look that the Working Group is trying to attempt, she told the panel.

The two basic frameworks are: 1) the Ph.D. Biomedical Research Workforce and 2) the M.D. & M.D./Ph.D. Biomedical Research Workforce. The two models are similar but the Working Group wants to treat them as two different conceptual frameworks even though they are paying a significant amount of attention to the Ph.D. model given that the NIH workforce is 70 percent Ph.Ds.

Regarding graduate students, a major issue is the balance between supply and demand, including the number of domestic and foreign trained Ph.D. students. The Working Group is looking at characteristics of Ph.D. training including: the length of the Ph.D. training period, recommendations for changes in the Ph.D. curriculum, and training for multiple career paths including bench and non-bench science. It is also examining the ratio of Ph.D. students on training grants to those supported by research grants. The analyses will include examination of Ph.D. training and analysis of doctoral-level degrees conferred by U.S. institutions (information on numbers of students, time to degree and degrees awarded broken out by citizenship/visa status, race and ethnicity, and gender). There will also be an analysis of NIH support for students. The Working Group is working with the Diversity Working Group. Rockey noted that they have been able to collect much information from the National Science Foundation (NSF), including the Survey of

Earned Doctorates, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

For postdoctoral fellows, the issues are similar: the balance between supply, including the number of domestic and foreign trained postdoctoral fellows, and demand; the ratio of postdoctoral fellows on training grants to those supported by research grants; length of training; and the number and fate of foreign postdoctoral fellows and how that affects the size of the workforce and career prospects of trainees. The Group's analyses will examine: Ph.D. students planning to do postdoctoral work; numbers of postdoctoral fellows by citizenship/visa status and by source of support; numbers of U.S. Ph.D.s and M.D.s in postdoctoral positions at various times after their degree; NIH support for postdoctoral fellows; and information about foreign postdoctoral fellows derived from the data.

The issues the group is examining about career paths include: possibilities for professional/staff scientists positions and the level of training required for such positions; issues related to the attractiveness of biomedical research careers (e.g., salary, working conditions, availability of research funding); the effect of changes in NIH policies on investigators, grantee, institutions and the broader research enterprise; diversity of the workforce; and the multi career paths taken by biomedically trained workforce and the decision points leading to those careers. Analyses include examination of: the NIH support for new investigators; employment trends of biomedical workforce, mainly in academics and medical school settings, with some information about industry and government; additional analysis of recent industry trends; aging of the workforce- retirement rates; unintended consequences of current NIH policies; and salary sources - the "soft money" question.

Rockey shared some of the responses the NIH received in response to its Request for Information. These included: encourage career development programs that integrate multiple career pathways; revise training grant review policies so that non-academic career choices for former trainees are not considered training failures; review and modify family friendly policies; and encourage more structured mentoring experiences and develop career/mentorship plans and guidelines.

Diversity Working Group Report

Introducing the co-chairs of the ACD Diversity Working Group, Collins noted that it is fair to say that the biomedical workforce is not representative and has not been despite the efforts by the NIH and others over the past 30 plus years. African-Americans, Hispanics, American Indians, Native Alaskans, and Native Hawaiians remain "woefully underrepresented" in the workforce. The reasons for this, said Collins, include an educational pipeline in the natural and physical sciences without much diversity.

He pointed to the study published in SCIENCE Magazine in August of a NIH-commissioned paper from Donna Ginther et. al, with former NIH Deputy Director Raynard Kington, as the senior author as part of an ongoing set of studies the NIH has been conducting to understand the challenges to diversity of the research workforce. Distressed by the paper's conclusions, Collins wanted a high-level group focused on diversity and asked ACD member Reed Tuckson, Executive Vice President and Chief of Medical Affairs, UnitedHealth Group, John Ruffin, Director of the National Institute for Minority Health and Health Disparities, and Larry Tabak, NIH Deputy Director, to co-chair an ACD working group on diversity, (see Update, September 12, 2011).

Tuckson noted that the issue is a complex area filled with "land mines." He emphasized that the "committee is not an affirmative action committee." It is one focused on "how to make sure America has access to the best and the brightest talent to do the research." He reported that the Committee had modified its mission and charge to:

1. Examine the recently published observation by Ginther, et.al. and other available data, which describe the success rates of minority and majority applicants for extramural NIH research projects, and the success of minority investigators within the NIH intramural research program.
2. Identify the reasons for the differential success rates observed including the potential effects of an insufficient number of minority biomedical researchers and the potential presence of a

culture of unconscious bias in the grant award process among other causative factors.
3. Recommend both immediate and long-term strategies applicable to the NIH intramural and extramural programs that address identified barriers across five key transition points in the development of a Ph.D. or clinician scientist's career:
    1. Entry into graduate or professional degree programs preparatory for biomedical research careers.
    2. The transition from graduate students to a post-doctoral research fellowship.
    3. The transition from a post-doctoral position to the first employment or identification as an independent scientist.
    4. The award of the first independent research grant from NIH or equivalent in a non-academic setting.
    5. Establishment of an independent research program and emergence as a nationally recognized senior investigator in the field.

The Working Group is charged with producing interim recommendations by December 2011 and final recommendations by June 2012. It is working in coordination with the ACD Biomedical Workforce Working Group, the NIH Diversity Task Force, and the NIH Women in Biomedical Research Careers Working Group.

What the Working Group has learned so far from its meetings and teleconferences, Tuckson related, is that the analysis in Ginther and her colleagues' paper has been confirmed. There is more to learn, said Tuckson, as his committee expects to produce a final report with actionable items in June 2012.

The Working Group is also exploring solutions that include: a relationship with the Institute of Medicine and other stakeholders to develop a mentoring program, institutional mentoring, the provision of clearer messages by NIH leadership regarding support for programs such as the Research Centers in Minority Institutions (RCMI), Minority Access to Research Careers (MARC), and Minority Biomedical Research Support (MBRS).

In addition, Tuckson reported, the Group is exploring the possible role of bias. This involves learning more about institutional bias as well as further data analysis and more about the possible role of individual bias both conscious and unconscious. He reported that Working Group member Dana Yasu Takagi, Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, is an expert in exploring the causes of bias. The Working Group also intends to work the Women in Biomedical Research Careers Working Group to explore the possible relationship between bias towards women and bias towards underrepresented minorities. The Working Group further intends to conduct a workshop to discuss experiments on the peer review system.

Mary Bohman New Head of Economic Research Service

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced that Mary Bohman has been appointed as the new Administrator of the Economic Research Service (ERS). She replaces Kitty Smith, who left ERS in July. Bohman served as Acting Administrator since then.

Bohman joined ERS in 1997 and has served as Director of the Resource and Rural Economics Division and Deputy Director for Research for the agency's Market and Trade Economics Division. She also led that division's Europe, Africa, and Middle East branch.

During her tenure at ERS she also served at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and at the office of the Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services. Before coming to Washington, DC, Bohman was on the faculty at the University of British Columbia.

She is a member of the Agriculture and Applied Economics Association, the Association of

Environmental and Resources Economics, and the Wye Group on Statistics on Rural Developments and Agricultural Household Income. She has published numerous studies for ERS and co-coordinated with Ann Carlson, the report "Science for the 21st Century," produced for OSTP's National Science and Technology Council in 2004. She has also published articles in agricultural science journals.

Bohman has a B.S. from the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown and a Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from the University of California, Davis.

Committee on Law and Justice Meeting Hears Laub, Focuses on Possible New Projects

The National Academies' Committee on Law and Justice (CLAJ) met on November 30, 2011, to hear National Institute of Justice (NIJ) director John Laub discuss the agency's situation and to ponder new projects. The meeting also marked the final one for Chairman James Q. Wilson, currently Senior Fellow at the Clough Center for the Study of Constitutional Democracy at Boston College, who will rotate off the committee after six years at its helm. He will be replaced as Chairman in 2012 by John Jay College of Criminal Justice President and former NIJ Director Jeremy Travis.

Laub's remarks reiterated many of the same themes he discussed at the COSSA 30th Anniversary Colloquium (see Update, November 10, 2011). Again focusing on strengthening NIJ's science in a tough environment, Laub talked about partnerships with other agencies within the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) as well as other science agencies in the federal government, such as the National Science Foundation and the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

With the FY 2012 appropriations for the Department of Justice settled (see Update, November 21, 2011), Laub noted that although NIJ's base budget remains a disappointment, Congress' acceptance of a two percent set-aside from OJP program funds for research and statistics will likely provide an additional $25 million for NIJ and the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Laub also announced, and the Committee expressed considerable interest in, the further explorations within the Department of Justice (DOJ) to codify NIJ's independence from political interference. Although Laub indicated that the current leadership of DOJ and OJP has not interfered, there is concern about the future, especially if there is a change in administrations.

The NIJ director also touched on the pilot project to re-define peer review at the agency. In an article in the *October 2011 NIJ Report* (http://www.nij.gov/nij/journals/268/welcome.htm), Thomas Feucht, NIJ Senior Adviser, and Phyllis Newton, head of the Office of Research and Evaluation at NIJ, outline the process. According to the article, starting in the review cycle for FY 2012, the agency will establish a total of five Scientific Review Panels (SRP) in the following topic categories: Criminal Justice Systems, Violence and Victimization, Science and Technology, and two panels on Forensics. Each panel will consist of 12 scientists and six practitioners.

The review process will have four steps:

1) NIJ staff will screen proposals to ascertain the meeting of the "basic minimum requirements" in the solicitation;
2) Three members of the SRP will read, evaluate, and write narratives assessing the technical merit of the proposal;
3) All members of the SRP will participate in a "consensus review" in a meeting and score the proposals; and
4) NIJ staff will review the panel's work and make recommendations to the Director, who has the final decision-making authority.

New Studies: High Rates of Incarceration, Commercial Sex Trafficking of Minors

The Committee discussed a number of suggested new studies. NIJ has already agreed to partially fund a study on the "Causes and Consequences of High Rates of Incarceration" that will examine the scientific evidence that already exists on the topic and propose a research agenda for the future.

In addition, the National Academies' Board on Children, Youth and Families has agreed to establish a panel on "Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States." This committee will review what is known about the scope and severity of domestic sexual exploitation of those women and girls under age 18. The panel expects to produce a comprehensive literature review, convene two workshops, and conduct a series of site visits as part of their fact-finding efforts. CLAJ will likely co-sponsor the project.

Other topics considered included: data needs for policy research on white-collar crime on which the Committee held a workshop in June 2011 (see Update, June 13, 2011); market incentives for improving cybersecurity; a new look at understanding crime trends; and research on the etiology and criminal justice processing of terrorism. On this last one, COSSA Board Member Gary LaFree, Director of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Center of Excellence on Terrorism and the Response to Terrorism housed at the University of Maryland, explained that DHS is not particularly interested in the law enforcement aspects of the problem and that CLAJ should fill the gap.

EU Proposes Horizon 2020 to Fund Research and Innovation: Includes Significant Emphasis on Societal Challenges

The European Union (EU) has proposed to spend 80 million Euros during the rest of this decade to fund research and innovation projects. The effort's focus will be "societal challenges." According to the EU, this challenge-based approach will bring together resources and knowledge across different fields, technologies and disciplines, including social sciences and the humanities.

The societal challenges emphasized for funding would include:

- Health, demographic change and wellbeing;
- Food security, sustainable agriculture, marine and maritime research, and the bio-economy;
- Secure, clean and efficient energy;
- Smart, green and integrated transport;
- Inclusive, innovative and secure societies;
- Climate action, resource efficiency and raw materials.

Horizon 2020 proposes to provide close to 32 million Euros to help address major concerns shared by all Europeans such as climate change, developing sustainable transport and mobility, making renewable energy more affordable, ensuring food safety and security, and coping with an aging population.

In addition, the EU would spend close to $25 million Euros to provide a boost to top-level research in Europe, including an increase in funding of 77 percent for the European Research Council (ERC). This multi-national agency encourages "high-quality research through c**ompetitive funding and supports investigator-initiated frontier research across all fields of research, on the basis of scientific excellence."**

The proposal now needs adoption by the EU's member nations. If this can be done by the end of 2013, the first calls for research proposals should come by January 2014.

For more information about Horizon 2020 go to:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020/index_en.cfm?pg=home.

GAO Examines Higher Ed Outcomes Across Different Types of Institutions

Responding to a request from key members of Congress, including Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA), Sen. Mike Enzi (R-WY), Rep. John Kline (R-MN), and Rep. George Miller (D-CA), the Senate and House Chairs and Ranking Members of the committees responsible for authorizing higher education programs, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) has produced a study trying to compare student outcomes at For-Profit, Non-Profit, and Public colleges.

The interest in this topic is related to the federal government's spending $132 billion in the 2009-2010 school year in grants and loans for students to attend postsecondary education. This compares to spending of $49 billion in the 2001-2002 school year.

In conducting the study, GAO relied on the published literature that met the following criteria: focused on the U.S. student population; used at least some data collected in 2000 or later; addressed at least one of the following student outcomes: graduation rates, earnings, employment outcomes, student loan debt, and default rates; compared outcomes of for-profit schools with outcomes of nonprofit and/or public schools; and contained original analysis controlling for at least one student characteristic (e.g., race, gender, and age).

GAO identified 32 studies that met these screening criteria. However, after a rigorous review of the research methodology, including the research design; objectives; data source; analyses conducted; and any applicable data-related or methodological limitations, it excluded 21 studies due to methodological limitations and retained 11 for the analyses. The retained studies used data from: the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, which tracks a nationally representative sample of first-time students for six years; the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), which collects detailed annual data on enrollment, graduation, and school characteristics from all schools that participate in federal student aid programs; the National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey (NPSAS), which collects detailed information on financial aid and student debt for a large, nationally representative sample of students; and the National Student Loan Data System, which is the Department of Education's central database for federal student aid loans and grants.

GAO told the Members of Congress: "Because few direct measures are available, indirect outcome measures, such as graduation and student loan default rates, are often used. Although no single outcome can be used to fully measure something as complex as educational quality, looking at multiple outcome measures (e.g., graduation rates, pass rates on licensing exams, employment outcomes, and student loan default rates) can shed light on the quality of education provided by schools."

Another factor to consider, GAO reminded the lawmakers that "for-profit schools enroll a higher proportion of low-income, minority, and nontraditional students who face challenges that can affect their educational outcomes." A consequence, GAO noted, is that "student outcomes at different types of schools can be associated with differences in student characteristics, as well as school type."

In their examination, of what it admits, is "a limited research base," GAO concluded that "for-profit school students had higher graduation rates for certificate programs, similar graduation rates for associate's degree programs, and lower graduation rates for bachelor's degree programs than students at nonprofit and public schools."

Again, based on a small group of studies, GAO informed Congress that "students who started at for-profit schools had similar annual earnings, but higher rates of unemployment compared to students who started at nonprofit and public schools." In addition, "studies show that a higher proportion of bachelor's degree recipients from for-profit schools took out student loans and that they generally had higher total student loan debt than bachelor's degree recipients from nonprofit and public schools." Finally, there is some evidence that "for-profit schools have higher default rates than 4-year public schools, but the results are mixed when comparing for-profit schools to other types of schools."

Using passage of licensing exams as an outcome measure, GAO found "on 9 of the 10 licensing exams we reviewed, graduates of for-profit schools generally had lower pass rates over the 2008-2010 period."

The full report, including presentation slides, is available at:
http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d12143.pdf.

Putting Disadvantaged Men Back to Work

On December 5, the Brookings Institution's Center on Children and Families (CCF) briefing Restoring Work by Poor Fathers addressed the status and prospects of young disadvantaged men. Even before the Great Recession there had been a long-term decline in the percentage of adult males who had jobs. In 1972, 76.1 percent of males age twenty to twenty-four worked, but by 2007, that figure had declined nearly six percent to 71.7 percent. The decline was even worse for young black males. In 1972, 70.4 percent of black men between the ages twenty and twenty-four were working, but in 2007, that percentage had fallen 16 percent to 59.1 percent.

Tim Smeeding, director of the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of the Wisconsin-Madison, indicated that the Great Recession has been and still is especially damaging for undereducated young adult men under age 30. The problem is only going to get worse, he suggested, as males are now less likely than females to graduate from high school and to enter and graduate from college.

All of the panelists believe the nation is in a crisis regarding the development and economic productivity of young males. However, there is good news. Evidence shows that, with proper funding and implementation, we can help reduce the problems that afflict disadvantaged young males. The bad news is in today's economic climate that help is far away.

Lawrence Mead, professor at New York University, and Ron Haskins, senior fellow at Brookings, co-authored the CCF brief. According to their report, two million low-skilled men are already obligated to work, yet are not doing so. These are men who owe unpaid child support and ex-offenders on parole. Mead and Haskins argue that the best hope to solve this male employment problem is to accelerate the expansion of work programs for men.

What they call for is a "welfare reform for men" work program. Saying that higher wages alone won't produce more work, they believe what is needed is a combination of benefits like wage subsidies coupled with better work enforcement. They assert that unskilled unemployed men, like welfare mothers, need to earn more than the unaided labor market will give them. These work programs, similar to the ones for mothers on welfare, would directly require these men to work. Support and enforcement for the work programs would come from systems that already have authority over many non-working men-the child support and criminal justice systems.

Mead and Haskins call on the federal government to support the efforts being made by existing work programs, including conducting more evaluations and allowing the states to receive federal matching funds for child support work programs. They acknowledge that the costs associated with creating these programs are estimated at $1-$5 billion a year, which would be difficult to find in this political and economic climate. They assert however, that the cost for the programs would be recouped in the form of higher child support collections and reduced incarceration.

Ronald Mincy, Director of the Center for Research on Fathers, Children, and Family Well-Being at Columbia University and a former COSSA Seminar speaker, concluded that while we may need to impose work requirements, we also need to help enable men. "This is not just a black men problem; this is a problem for all low-income men without education," Mincy declared.

Briefing on Premature Births Includes Focus on Behavior Change in Pregnant Women and Doctors

On November 30, the March of Dimes held a congressional briefing on *Preventing Prematurity: Progress and Pitfalls*. The event was co-sponsored by the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses, American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine. The event examined how government and institutional policies can affect the rate of premature births in our nation-a leading cause of infant mortality.

Dr. Jennifer L. Howse, President of the March of Dimes, began the briefing by declaring that prematurity is "common, costly and serious." At present, one in eight births in the US is premature at a cost of $20 billion. The March of Dimes has declared a goal of 9.6 percent prematurity by 2020 and issues an annual report card ranking states' progress. At present, Vermont is the only state to have received an "A." Rates actually got worse every year for almost 35 years until they hit a peak of 12.8% in 2006. They have been in declining ever since.

Dr. Louis J. Muglia, Edward Claiborne Stahlman Professor of Pediatrics and Vice Chair for Research Affairs in Pediatrics at Vanderbilt University, spoke about the high number of unknowns involved in what causes premature birth. He particularly spoke about the great number of behavioral modifications that have been tried, including bed rest for expecting mothers and decreasing negative habits like smoking. He also noted that, while we understand a great many contributing factors like these behaviors, we do not understand the underlying pathway of prematurity.

Dr. Elliott Main, Chairman and Chief of Obstetrics at the California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco, began by describing a rise in births at the 37-38 week mark. This increase is likely due to medical decisions-elective births that, while early, are believed to be safe. Main declared that this is out of date, and that we need to limit elective births to the 39 week mark. This would require a drastic change in medical practice, he suggested. Main noted that doctors are often resistant to changes in practice and outlined a four point system for producing change that includes: direct doctor-to-doctor communication, defined quality measures, aligning incentives, and improving data systems.

For more information on the March of Dimes and its initiative to reduce the number of premature births, visit their website here.

NSF's Law and Social Sciences Program Seeks Proposals from Law School Social Scientists

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has issued a Dear Colleague letter from Myron Gutmann, Assistant Director for the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE) directorate, that seeks "to enhance the support of scholarship within the Law School academy" by encouraging proposals from that social science constituency.

Specifically, a new solicitation from the SBE's Law and Social Sciences (LSS) program invites proposals from social scientists in law schools that will "generate innovative research for understanding complex phenomena concerning law, and to promote interactions across the Social Science and Law School academies."

According to the solicitation, the LSS program considers proposals that address social scientific studies of law and law-like systems of rules. The program is inherently interdisciplinary and multi-methodological. Successful proposals describe research that advances scientific theory and understanding of the connections between law or legal processes and human behavior. Social scientific studies of law often approach law as dynamic, made in multiple arenas, and with the participation of multiple actors. Fields of study include many disciplines, and often address problems including, though not limited to:

1. Crime, Violence and Punishment
2. Economic Issues
3. Governance
4. Legal Decision making
5. Legal Mobilization and Conceptions of Justice
6. Litigation and the Legal Profession

LSS provides the following modes of support:

1. Standard Research Grants and Grants for Collaborative Research
2. Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants
3. Interdisciplinary Postdoctoral Fellowships
4. Workshop and Conference Proposals

Possible applicants are encouraged to contact the LSS program officers: Christian Meissner, cmeissne@nsf.gov or 703/292-7808; Susan Sterett, ssterett@nsf.gov or 703/292-7808; Allison Smith, asmith@nsf.gov or 703/292-7094.

The proposal deadlines are: **January 24, 2012 and July 16, 2012.**

The full solicitation is at:
http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=504727&org=SES&from=home.

New Opportunity to Enhance NSF-Census Research Coordination Network

A joint funding opportunity supported by NSF and the U.S. Bureau of the Census has issued a solicitation to add to the Research Coordination Network (RCN) that established a set of research nodes conducting interdisciplinary research and educational activities on methodological questions of interest and significance to the broader research community and to the Federal Statistical System, particularly the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

NSF and the Census Bureau expect these networks to advance both fundamental and applied knowledge as well as further the education of current and future generations of researchers in research skills of relevance to the statistical measurement of economic units, households, and persons and their behaviors.

In FY 2011, NSF made eight awards in response to an earlier solicitation. A list of those awards is available at:

http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=503587&org=SES&from=home

The new funding opportunity asks for proposals to establish a coordination body for these earlier funded projects. Coordinating responsibilities must include, but are not necessarily limited to the following:

- Facilitate communication, information sharing, and collaboration among researchers within the network.

- Facilitate interactions with relevant members of the community outside of the network.
- Organize the biannual meetings of the research network leaders as specified in the NCRN Program Solicitation.
- Facilitate node interactions with staff from the U.S. Census Bureau and other relevant Federal Statistical System agencies.
- Host and maintain a website for public dissemination of research findings.

The deadline for the proposal, to be submitted to the Methodology, Measurement, and Statistics program (MMS), is **March 1, 2012.**

The MMS program intends to make one award with a maximum budget of $750,000.

For further information contact Cheryl Eavey, ceavey@nsf.gov or 703/292-7269.

IIASA Seeks Young Scientists for 2012 Summer Program

The International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) located outside Vienna, Austria, is soliciting applications for its Young Scientists Summer Program (YSSP). IIASA is an international institution, supported by the U.S. and 17 other member nations, engaged in scientific research aimed at providing policy insight on issues of regional and global importance.

The Young Scientists Summer Program is open to advanced graduate students who are in fields compatible with ongoing research at IIASA. For 2012 those program areas are:

- Energy
- Transitions to New Technologies
- Advanced Systems Analysis
- Ecosystem Services and Management
- Mitigation of Air Pollution and Greenhouse Gases
- Evolution and Ecology
- World Population
- Risk Policy and Vulnerability
- Water
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The Fellows work alongside 50 or so contemporary young scientists from more than 20 nations, and senior scientists from around the world. Selected Fellows will receive funding to cover travel to IIASA and a modest living allowance.

The application form and other information is available at http://www.iiasa.ac.at/yssp./register.
The deadline is **January 16, 2012.**

For more information contact Tanja Huber, IIASA's YSSP Coordinator, at huber@iiasa.ac.at.

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