



COSSA

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In This Issue

FEATURED NEWS

[Outcome of Midterm Elections May Not Offer Clarity over FY 2015 Endgame](#)

COSSA IN ACTION

[COSSA Weighs in on National Children's Study Framework](#)

FEDERAL AGENCY & ADMINISTRATION NEWS

[NSF's SBE Directorate Seeks to Fill Numerous Leadership Posts](#)

[Census Bureau Seeks Comment on Proposed Elimination of ACS Questions](#)

[NIH Makes Awards to Enhance Diversity of the Scientific Workforce](#)

[OHRP Solicits Comments on Draft Guidance on Risk Disclosure in Research Evaluating Standards of Care](#)

[CDC Requests Nominations for Board of Scientific Counselors, Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response](#)

[SACHRP Considers Consent in Low-Risk Online Studies](#)

[NIMH Creates New Unit to Support Its Research Domain Criteria Initiative](#)

PUBLICATIONS & COMMUNITY EVENTS

[National Science Board Launches New STEM Education Resource](#)

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

[NIH: 2015 NIH Director's Early Independence Awards](#)

EVENTS CALENDAR

FEATURED ARTICLE

Outcome of Midterm Elections May Not Offer Clarity over FY 2015 Endgame

The remaining weeks of 2014 could see an effort to pass a sweeping omnibus appropriations bill for fiscal year (FY) 2015, should the Republicans gain control of the Senate after the midterm Congressional elections tomorrow. Even though the Democrats would still control the Senate until January, Republican leaders have stated that under such a scenario they would work during the lame duck session to pass an omnibus, allowing the 114th Congress to start in January with a clean slate. However, such a feat has proven impossible in recent history. For example, the FY 2014 appropriations process was not completed until January of this year, and the stalemate over the FY 2013 appropriations bills led to the 16-day federal government shutdown; the FY 2013 appropriations process finally concluded six months into the fiscal year.

The federal government is currently operating under a continuing resolution (CR) until December 11 (see the [September 22, 2014 COSSA Washington Update](#)). Though the midterm elections will take place tomorrow, given the closeness of a handful of key Senate races that could result in runoffs, it may not be immediately clear which party will control the Senate in 2015. It also leaves the outlook for completion of the FY 2015 appropriations bills unclear.

COSSA IN ACTION

COSSA Weighs in on National Children's Study Framework

On October 26, COSSA sent a [letter](#) to the National Children's Study (NCS) Working Group, a subgroup of the National Institutes of Health Advisory Council to the Director, outlining concerns with the NCS framework and raising other issues for consideration as the working group progresses with its review of the program. As the letter states, "the NCS has the potential to become an invaluable resource, yielding new insights into the complex linkages between social, genetic, and environmental factors and how these factors interact to influence health, growth and development across the life course. To ensure the study produces meaningful data, the NCS study design is paramount." COSSA believes that the "benefits associated with drawing a representative sample in the NCS far outweigh its incremental costs."

The Working Group is charged with "evaluating whether the NCS is feasible, as currently outlined, especially in light of increasing and significant budget constraints." If the Working Group thinks that it is feasible, it is asked to assess "how NIH can move forward to implement necessary changes," including some of those outlined in the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report (see [Update, June 30, 2014](#)). Conversely, if it feels that the study is not feasible, the Working Group is asked to identify "whether there are new methods to answer key research questions that are most important to pediatric health today that capitalize on research and technology advances developed in the intervening years since the inception of the study."

Keep up on COSSA in the news [here](#).

FEDERAL AGENCY & ADMINISTRATION NEWS

NSF's SBE Directorate Seeks to Fill Numerous Leadership Posts

The Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) Directorate of the National Science Foundation (NSF) is seeking interested applicants for several leadership posts, including directors for two SBE divisions. The open positions include:

- [Division Director, Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences](#) (BCS), closes December 12
- [Division Director, Social and Economic Sciences](#) (SES), closes December 12
- [Program Director in the Economics Program](#) (SES), closes December 29

In addition, NSF recently announced that Joanne Tornow, SBE Deputy Assistant Director, will leave SBE in December to lead the NSF Office of Information and Resource Management (OIRM). A search will commence for a new SBE Deputy Assistant Director. In the meantime, Clifford Gabriel, most recently the acting head of OIRM, will serve as Acting Deputy Assistant Director for SBE.

Census Bureau Seeks Comment on Proposed Elimination of ACS Questions

On October 31, the U.S. Census Bureau within the Department of Commerce issued a request for public comment related to the 2014 Content Review of the American Community Survey (ACS). According to the [Federal Register Notice](#), the 2014 review "is the most comprehensive effort ever undertaken by the Census Bureau to review content on the survey, seeking to understand which federal programs use the information collected by each question, the justification for each question, and assess how the Census Bureau might reduce respondent burden." The review looked at the ACS's 72 questions and proposed removal of seven from the annual questionnaire. Among the seven questions slated for elimination is the question on "Undergraduate Field of Degree." This potential move raises concerns for many in the social and behavioral sciences community, as well as the National Science Foundation's National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, which uses the data collected via the "field of degree" question in its efforts to measure and track the U.S. science and engineering workforce.

More information can be found in the [Federal Register Notice](#). Comments are due December 30, 2014.

NIH Makes Awards to Enhance Diversity of the Scientific Workforce

On October 22, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced the awarding nearly \$31 million in FY 2014 to enhance diversity in the biomedical research workforce. The awards are part of a five-year program and will "support more than 50 awardees and partnering institutions in establishing a national consortium to develop, implement, and evaluate approaches to encourage individuals to start and stay in biomedical research careers." Twelve of the awards will be supported by the NIH Common Fund and all of the NIH 27 institutes and centers and will be part of three initiatives that form the [Enhancing the Diversity of the NIH-funded Workforce](#) program.

[Read on](#) for more details.

OHRP Solicits Comments on Draft Guidance on Risk Disclosure in

Research Evaluating Standards of Care

The Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) has issued [draft guidance](#) on "Disclosing Reasonably Foreseeable Risks in Research Evaluating Standards of Care." As more and more comparative effectiveness research is conducted to evaluate different treatments commonly used by medical practitioners ("standards of care"), the guidance is an attempt to assist researchers in determining how to disclose potential risks of the different treatments they are studying.

[Read on](#) for more details of the draft guidance and how to submit comments.

CDC Requests Nominations for Board of Scientific Counselors, Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response

The [Board of Scientific Counselors](#) (BSC) for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response (OPHPR) is seeking nominations for new members for terms beginning in October 2015. The Board provides guidance to CDC and OPHPR leadership, conducts peer review of scientific programs, and monitors the overall strategic direction and focus of the Office. According to the [notice in the Federal Register](#), "Nominees will be selected based on expertise in the fields relevant to the issues addressed by the divisions within the coordinating office, including: business, crisis leadership, emergency response and management, engineering, epidemiology, health policy and management, informatics, laboratory science, medicine, mental and behavioral health, public health law, public health practice, risk communication, and social science."

Nominations must include the candidate's CV and at least one letter of recommendation from a person not employed by the Department of Health and Human Services. The deadline for applications is January 16, 2015. More information is available in the [Federal Register](#).

SACHRP Considers Consent in Low-Risk Online Studies

At its [meeting on October 30](#), the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Human Research Protections (SACHRP) heard a presentation from B.R. Simon Rosser, University of Minnesota School of Public Health, on "The Evolution of Consent in Low-Risk Studies: Lessons from Online Survey Research." He suggested that SACHRP rethink how researchers handle informed consent for low-risk studies conducted over the internet.

[Read on](#) for more details.

NIMH Creates New Unit to Support Its Research Domain Criteria Initiative

On October 31, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) announced the creation of a new unit designed to reframe mental health research by facilitating communication among scientists, clinicians, and the public. The new unit was established to support the development of the institute's Research Domain Criteria (RDoC) initiative.

According to NIMH, RDoC "attempts to bring the power of modern research approaches in genetics, neuroscience, and behavioral problems of mental illness, studied independently from the classification systems by which patients are currently grouped." The aim is to accelerate the pace

of research that translates basic science into clinical settings "by understanding the multilayered systems that contribute to mental function."

[Read on](#) for more details.

PUBLICATIONS & COMMUNITY EVENTS

National Science Board Launches New STEM Education Resource

On October 28, the National Science Board released a new online resource, STEM Education Resource, where the public can access data on the STEM workforce, including college degrees in STEM fields and jobs in science-related occupations. The interactive tool provides data points, graphics, maps, and other resources to allow users to learn about national trends in STEM, connecting them to the data in the [2014 Science and Engineering Indicators](#) produced by the National Science Board.

Check out the tool [here](#).

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

NIH: 2015 NIH Director's Early Independence Awards

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Common Fund recently released its FY 2015 NIH Director's Early Independence Awards (EIA) funding opportunity announcement ([RFA-RM-14-004](#)). The NIH Common Fund supports cross-cutting programs that are expected to have exceptionally high impact. These initiatives invite investigators to develop bold, innovative, and often risky approaches to address problems that may seem intractable or to seize new opportunities that offer the potential for rapid progress.

The EIA initiative is designed to allow exceptional junior scientists to accelerate their transition to an independent research career by "skipping" the traditional postdoctoral training. Candidates must be within one year of completing their terminal degree or clinical residency at the time of application. Institutions may submit up to two applications. Letters of intent are due December 30, 2014. Applications are due January 30, 2015.

EVENTS CALENDAR

[The City: 2014 Behavioral and Social Science Summit](#), Stanford University, November 8, 2014

[Webinar: Producing Government Data with Statistical Confidentiality Controls](#), American Statistical Association Privacy and Confidentiality Committee, December 17, 2014

A list of COSSA members' annual meetings can be found on the COSSA [website](#).

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American Economic Association
American Educational Research Association
American Historical Association
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Society for Social Work and Research
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Society of Behavioral Medicine
Southern Political Science Association
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Southwestern Social Science Association

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Institute for Social Science Research, University of Massachusetts
Institute for Women's Policy Research
NORC at the University of Chicago
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The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) is an advocacy organization promoting attention to and federal support for the social and behavioral sciences.

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