

Behavioral and Social Sciences Research in the FY 2003 Budget

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INTRODUCTION

The National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Education (ED) are the primary funders of behavioral and social science. Lesser, but subdisciplinarily important, support comes from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The federal government is the primary overall funder of both basic and applied behavioral and social science research.

Here are highlights of the 2003 budget year:

- After a disappointing FY 2002, in which it received a smaller increase than any of the other research directorates, the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE) in NSF has been designated a “priority area.” The proposed increase of \$26.2 million, or 16 percent, includes \$10 million in “seed” funding for the priority.
- In the Department of Education, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) would receive a 43.7 percent increase for Research and Dissemination. It is hoped the

completion of the reauthorization of the primary federal education research program will usher in significant yearly increases for OERI.

- Like funding for other disciplines, behavioral and social science research at NIH is estimated to increase by about 15 percent in FY 2003. NIH is touting results of an important clinical trial, the Diabetes Prevention Program funded by the National Institute for Diabetes, Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), which found that a behavioral dietary and exercise intervention was more effective than medication in preventing the development of diabetes in at-risk patients.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH (NIH)

The amount of behavioral and social sciences research (BSSR) funded extramurally appears to be growing steadily at NIH, fueled by NIH's record growth, and increasing acceptance of these sciences as tools to address the agency's public health mission. This research, which was painstakingly defined as required by the NIH Revitalization Act of 1993, is funded by nearly all of the institutes and centers at NIH. Information on the amount of BSSR funded by each institute and center is collected by the NIH Budget Office as part of what is informally called "the disease list" (a multi-page list of diseases, conditions, etc. for which NIH is required to report its research expenditures to Congress). Table 1 contains a partial list of NIH funding for behavioral and social sciences research.

Table 1. NIH funding of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (partial list) (in millions)

Institute	FY 00 Actual	FY01 Act.	FY 02 Est.	FY 03 Est.
NIMH (Mental Health)	\$316.6	\$358.7	\$406.1	\$440.1
NIDA (Drug Abuse)	300.2	342.8	387.4	421.8
NCI (Cancer)	205.0	238.2	275.3	324.7
NICHD (Child Health)	193.5	222.1	252.7	275.4
NIA (Aging)	163.3	194.8	221.3	239.9
NIAAA (Alcoholism)	150.3	163.7	175.9	184.7

Source: NIH Office of the Director, Office of Budget (March 2002)

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As a percentage of the NIH budget, however, research in the behavioral and social sciences is not keeping pace with overall NIH growth. NIH estimates of BSSR spending for the previous three fiscal years have shown BSSR funding hovering at approximately 10 percent of the total NIH budget. The estimate for FY 2003 is \$2.58 billion, or 9.4 percent of the Administration's requested \$27.3 billion total NIH budget (see Table II-9 for details of the NIH budget).

Efforts to improve the quality of NIH's data on behavioral and social science research have met with limited success, but reporting errors or omissions persist. For example, no BSSR spending is reported by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), which funds research on such behavioral interventions as relaxation techniques and pain management. NCCAM reports such research as "health and behavior research," a separate rubric. At least one institute did not include its behavioral research on animals as part of the BSSR total. So the \$2.58 billion estimate could be low. Not surprisingly, the estimate seems high to behavioral and social scientists who compete for funding.

The Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) in the Office of the NIH Director received a 15 percent budget increase in FY 2002, and is now funded at \$23.7 million (up from \$20.64 million in FY 2001). The Administration's request for OBSSR is \$25.8 million in FY 2003, an eight percent increase. New initiatives and activities planned by OBSSR include:

- Developing program activities to implement the suggestions from a FY 2002 planning meeting with the National Human Genome Research Institute, to spur research on environmentally induced gene expression;
- Launching an initiative to increase extramural research to illuminate the pathways through which education affects health; and
- Continuing to collaborate with the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) to explore development of a medical school curriculum for behavioral and social sciences.

The budget of OBSSR includes \$10 million to fund five centers that support research on mind-body interactions and health. The centers conduct research on ways in which attitudes, values and stress affect physical and mental health, and ways in which beliefs, attitudes, and values affecting health are developed, maintained, and changed. FY 2003 would be the final year of those grants.

The director of OBSSR, Raynard Kington, MD, PhD, is a physician-health economist who is serving simultaneously as Acting Director of the National Institute for Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) during its search for a permanent director. (For more information on the overall NIH budget, see Chapter 8.)

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION (NSF)

The designation of the social, behavioral and economic sciences (SBE) as a “priority area” in the FY 2003 budget is the remnant of the “SBE Initiative” discussed during the past two years. Strongly promoted by NSF Director Rita Colwell and the Assistant Director for SBE, Norman Bradburn, the “priority area” will begin in FY 2003 with proposed seed funding of \$10 million extra. The plans are that this would be a down payment on more significant increases in the future.

With Congress under pressure to balance the scientific portfolio between the large increases for health research and the perceived neglect of the physical sciences and engineering, the SBE directorate suffered in FY 2002. It received the smallest increase of any of the research directorates: 3.3 percent. With its \$27 million proposed boost in FY 03, the SBE Directorate would receive the largest increase of any research directorate (see Table II-7 for details of SBE and NSF funding). About one-third of the increase is scheduled for the Science Resources Statistics (SRS) Division to provide for the once-per-decade incorporation of the results of the decennial census to redesign the samples and surveys used to collect data on the science and engineering workforce. (See Chapter 21 for more information on SRS.)

In the Social and Economic Sciences Division, half of the \$10 million seed money would support studies on decision-making under uncertainty, as part of the Administration’s climate change research program. Other priorities for the Division, whose new director Richard Lempert arrives in June from the University of Michigan, include

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support for research on terrorism and its aftermath, human capital, democratization, and funding for new inquiries into the sources of scientific discovery and technological innovations and how they diffuse through organizations and society.

The Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences Division will continue to emphasize funding for cognitive neuroscience, human origins, geographic information and spatial social science, the Children's Research Initiative, and research on human-environmental interactions.

The Education and Human Resources Directorate (EHR) would receive \$908.1 million in the proposed budget, a boost of 3.8 percent. The Administration has once again asked for \$200 million for Math and Science Partnerships and hopes to receive sufficient funding from Congress to increase graduate stipends. (For more on EHR, see Chapter 5.)

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (ED)

Today, with increased interest in the federal role in education and growing awareness of education as the foundation of economic growth and military security, educational research is broadly recognized as a necessary function of the federal government. The Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), in the U.S. Department of Education, serves as the major federal educational research agency, providing research and data collection. OERI is currently in the process of reauthorization, which may result in significant program changes and funding increases. The Administration budget assumes a reauthorization that would follow its proposals for a reorganized OERI.

To support core educational research programs within OERI, a funding increase of \$53.2 million or 43.7 percent over FY 2002 has been requested for research and dissemination. \$20 million would be provided to investigate how children who have broken the reading code comprehend what they are reading. Providing randomized trials of existing preschool curricula would be funded at \$15 million and another \$10 million would be used to identify conditions that encourage the use of evidence-based research in decision-making by practitioners. The reading code funding would be awarded by a panel, specifically formed for this purpose, based on a model developed by RAND.

The Interagency Education Research Initiative (IERI), which combines the efforts of the Department of Education (ED), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), would be continued at \$20 million to fund large-scale implementation of promising educational practices and technologies. This program is an outgrowth of the initial study of best practices for schools and classrooms and examination of different instructional approaches. An additional \$6.3 million would fund another round of awards for the interagency initiative for research between ED and the NICHD on the development of English-language literacy competencies among children whose first language is not English.

The Regional Educational Labs' funding would be frozen at \$67.5 million. Field-initiated studies would receive \$6 million to explore new research ideas from the field and develop future research capacity. This would be in addition to the \$11.3 million available for continuation of current studies. The National Center on Education Statistics (NCES) would receive an additional \$10 million over the \$85 million it received last year for the international assessment program, the Schools and Staffing Survey, the Study of Faculty and Students, and the Early Childhood Longitudinal studies. This increase would also support new technologies and improved training, data development and analysis, and methodological studies producing information more useful for consumers. (For more on NCES, please see Chapter 21).

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) would be decreased \$16.7 million from FY 2002, reflecting an estimate of lower costs in the second year of implementing the biennial State-Level reading and mathematics assessments at grades 4 and 8. These assessments are required by the No Child Left Behind Act, included in the Administration Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization legislation, recently passed by Congress. None of these funds would be available for implementation of the tests.

Funding for the Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers, Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science consortia, and the Regional Technology in Education Consortia, which support technical assistance and dissemination to states, school districts, and schools, would be eliminated under the Administration's proposal. (For more information on Department of Education programs, please see Chapter 5.)

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD)

DOD funding for behavioral and social science is modest when compared to the cost that goes into developing even a single weapon system. It is also relatively modest compared to funding provided by NIH and NSF. But DOD's support is crucially important for a number of subdisciplines in the behavioral and social sciences. DOD support, for example, built the field of judgment and decision making research. While NSF now also provides funding for this work through its Decision Risk and Management Sciences program, the major source of support for the field remains DOD. The same may be said of non-medical research in cognitive neuroscience. Navy and Air Force funding for this work has had significant positive impact on the growth of the field. Some areas of sociology such as those dealing with the nature of leadership and its influences on group formation and group dynamics are also kept afloat through DOD funding. Moreover, some of the most innovative and important advances in education and training research have occurred because of the practical need in the military to quickly train raw recruits to work skillfully in highly demanding and highly technological environments.

Thus, rises and falls in the DOD budget for behavioral and social science have disproportionate impacts on a number of fields. For over a decade, military support for behavioral and social science has been slowly dwindling. The rate of decline threatened to increase beginning in the current fiscal year because of an Air Force decision to concentrate its resources on developing capabilities in space while playing down the aeronautical side of its development portfolio. The threatened decline has not yet materialized for the behavioral and social sciences, however.

Proposed budgets for the subaccounts that fund behavioral and social science research in DOD were not available at press time. The expectation of those who administer the research programs in the Army Research Institute, Air Force Office of Scientific Research, Office of Naval Research and Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) is that their overall funding will not be cut and may be revised slightly upward.

(For information on DOD R&D, please see Chapter 6.)