

## **Behavioral and Social Science Research in the Administration's FY 2008 Budget**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The President's American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI) with its emphasis on doubling support for physical sciences, engineering, and mathematics has made increases for behavioral and social science research funding less robust. In this age of interdisciplinary research efforts to help solve the nation's and the world's difficult problems, the behavioral and social sciences are still making their contributions, but with less attention to their funding needs.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) remains a major source of support for these sciences, in some disciplines supplying over 90 percent of basic research funds. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has increasingly recognized the importance of the relationship between health and behavior and funding for behavioral initiatives such as obesity and health disparities remain, although the rising tide of doubling is over and these sciences have also felt the effect of flat budget over the past few years.

The Department of Education (ED) provides support for the research and data collections that implement federal, state, and local education policy. The Department of Defense (DOD) has recognized the need to conduct research on social and behavioral aspects of running a war and other military activities. Behavioral and social research also receives support at other mission agencies such as the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Justice, and Labor, as well as the Federal Aviation Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, and NASA. In addition, the federal statistical

agencies, such as the U.S. Census Bureau, are important for providing funding for data collections used by social/behavioral scientists.

Highlights of the FYF 2008 budget include:

- Responding to presidential science adviser John Marburger's challenge, NSF's Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE) has enhanced an initiative in the Science of Science and Innovation Policy.
- NIH will continue a key focus on the relationships among Genes, Social Behavior, and the Environment
- ED proposes a new longitudinal survey to follow students from 8<sup>th</sup> grade through high school and beyond.
- After Congress restored funding in FY 2007, the Administration once again proposes to end the National Children's Study.

**NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION (NSF): SOCIAL, BEHAVIORAL, AND ECONOMIC SCIENCES DIRECTORATE (SBE) ([www.nsf.gov/sbe](http://www.nsf.gov/sbe))**

SBE, led by David Lightfoot, fared well in FY 2007, receiving a \$13 million boost, but the request for FY 2008, only an \$8 million increase, reflects the perception by some that these sciences are not contributors to American competitiveness (see Table II-7). In 2006 the two research divisions welcomed new leaders: Ed Hackett for the Social and Economic Sciences Division (SES); and Sandra Schneider for the Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences division (BCS).

The SBE increase for FY 2007 has allowed a boost for the Science of Science and Innovation Policy (SSIP) initiative that presidential science adviser John Marburger proposed two years ago. This initiative will develop an evidence-based platform from which policymakers and researchers may assess the impacts of the Nation's science and engineering enterprise.

In addition, SBE continues to coordinate the NSF priority area in Human and Social Dynamics (HSD). HSD continues to focus on how humans acting as individuals, in groups, organizations, societies, and institutions, influence and are affected by changes in social and physical environments.

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SBE is participating in the International Polar Year (IPY) by supporting interdisciplinary and international research on human adaptation and change within polar environments focusing on human-environment interactions. The General Social Survey, supported by SBE for many years, provided a vehicle for IPY-specific questions in 2006 asking Americans about their knowledge of the Polar Regions. The continuation of Documenting Endangered Languages will also form part of this activity.

The BCS Division proposes in FY 2008 to increase its support for research on cognitive and behavioral processes associated with physical systems, brains, and human intelligence, including research on language, learning, social processes, cognition, and higher-order perception.

The Science Resources Statistics division (SRS), led by Lynda Carlson, collects and disseminates information about the scientific and engineering enterprise including the training of the next generation of scientists and engineers. It conducts ongoing, cyclical surveys, reports, and projects, including the *Survey of Graduates Students and Postdoctorates in Science and Engineering* and the *Science and Engineering Indicators*. SRS also has a major role in collecting data for the SSIP initiative. (For more on SRS, see Chapter 20.)

NSF continues to allocate funding to two cohorts of Science and Learning Centers. For FY 2008, the program will support synergistic activities among the Centers to maximize benefits from the research and training.

Other opportunities for SBE scientists occur in NSF's other agency-wide initiatives. Aside from IPY, these include: the Nanotechnology Initiative, which would continue a multidisciplinary effort to address the environmental, health, and safety impacts of nanomaterials as well as their social and ethical implications (for more on this effort, see Chapter 23); and NSF's proposed increased investment in ocean research, which would try to understand how human activity interacts with the oceans so that they remain clean, healthy, productive and stable. The Office of Cyberinfrastructure has also encouraged the participation of SBE scientists in their efforts.

**NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH (NIH) (obsr.od.nih.gov)**

The Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR), led by David Abrams, is in the Office of the NIH Director. OBSSR, which celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2006, coordinates research initiatives that are relevant to multiple NIH institutes and centers (ICs). OBSSR will work with the ICs to initiate two new programs: 1) Behavioral and Social Science Contributions to Understanding and Reducing Health Disparities; and 2) Genes, Behavior, and the Social Environment.

In the individual ICs the behavioral and social and science research (BSSR) portfolio is eroding in response to three years of minimal increases for the NIH. The no-growth outlook continues in estimates based on the President's FY 2008 budget. According to the NIH Office of Budget (see Table 1 below), BSSR research funding from FY 2006 to FY 2007 fell by \$8.5 million or 0.3 percent, and is estimated to decrease further from FY 2007 to FY 2008 (0.4 percent or \$11.7 million), if the Congress accedes to the President's proposed funding levels.

**Table 1.** Behavioral Research and Social Science Research (in millions)  
Selected NIH Sponsors

Participating ICs	FY 2006 Actual	FY 2007 Estimate	FY 2008 Proposed
NIDA (Drug Abuse)	454.9	454.0	454.5
NIMH (Mental Health)	437.5	436.4	436.8
NICHD (Child Health)	418.9	418.9	414.7
NCI (Cancer)	305.5	305.5	305.5
NIA (Aging)	268.2	268.3	268.6
NIAAA (Alcohol Abuse)	203.1	202.6	202.8
NHLBI (Heart, Lung, and Blood)	137.3	137.3	137.7
NINR (Nursing)	102.0	102.2	102.2
NIDDK (Diabetes, Digestive, Kidney)	144.3	144.3	144.3
NINDS (Neurological Disorders)	128.3	128.1	126.7
NIGMS (General Medical Sciences)	20.4	20.2	20.1
NIH Total	3,001.4	2,993.0	2,981.3

Source: NIH Office of Budget.

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Behavioral and social sciences research is well integrated in most NIH institutes and centers, though not all, and has been well represented in several recent multi-institute initiatives such as the Strategic Plan on Obesity and initiatives on minority health disparities. There has been a significant reduction in BSSR supported by the NIH Roadmap. The Roadmap, funded via a Common Fund, has grown from \$240 million in FY 2005 to a proposed \$486 million in FY 2008. However, BSSR funding would remain unchanged at slightly more than \$1 million.

In FY 2006, the National Institute on Aging renewed the Health and Retirement Study (HRS), the nation's leading resource for data on the combined health and economic conditions of Americans over age 50. Now in its 14th year, HRS continues to follow more than 20,000 people in two-year intervals so that policymakers can address the scientific and policy challenges posed by the nation's aging population. The study will include additional key constructs in cognitive aging, such as executive functioning, reasoning, and speed of processing.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) plans to add a new direction to alcohol studies by applying a lifespan perspective—the consideration of how the emergence and progression of drinking behavior is influenced by multiple changes (in biology, psychology, and exposure to social and environmental inputs) over a person's lifetime. The Institute believes that such a perspective will provide knowledge that will, through early identification and intervention, significantly contribute to the ability to decrease the prevalence of alcoholism and other alcohol-related disorders, along with the treatment of these disorders.

Recognizing the role of the social environment in drug abuse, the National Institute on Drug Abuse plans to support the development of tools designed to assess the impact of social environmental variables on decision making and drug abuse risk by looking at social settings, parenting, education, neighborhoods and public policies.

The National Children's Study, a large, longitudinal study of environmental effects on children's health, has again received no funding in the budget request. Congress saved the study in FY 2007, moving it from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development into the Office of the Director, and will probably save it again in FY 2008.

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**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SCIENCES**  
([www.ed.gov/offices/IES](http://www.ed.gov/offices/IES))

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) is the federal government's principal agency for conducting research on education. Its four Centers, the National Center for Education Research (NCER), the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE/RA), and the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) comprise the central structure for the agency. (For more on IES and the Department of Education, see Chapter 4.)

IES-funded research, \$594.3 million requested for FY 2008, has become a crucial component of the nation's overall education research portfolio. The continued federal focus on improving education results, combined with identification and implementation of research-based programs, is fundamental to No Child Left Behind (NCLB). This, and similar legislation mandating research-based education programs, makes building the research infrastructure imperative if the department is to have the capacity to direct policy and wisely use increasingly scarce education resources.

NCER, which provides funding for the eight authorized National Research and Development Centers (NRDCs) as well as the *What Works Clearinghouse*, the National Library of Education, the Education Research Information Clearinghouse, and field-initiated studies, would receive the same funding in FY 2008, \$162.6 million, as it did in FY 2007, and down from \$164.2 million in FY 2005.

The current research on reading comprehension, mathematics and science education, teacher quality, and cognition and learning in the classroom, connected to NCLB, would receive additional funds for new awards.

Research and Development Center funding would remain problematic. Each NRDC focuses on a broad education topic of national importance. The IES authorization mandates at least eight NRDCs. Each center has been granted a relatively small award of \$2 million per year for five years. Currently funded centers conduct research on Rural Education; Low Achieving Schools; Choice and Innovation; Assessment, Standards and Accountability; English Language Learners; Education Policy; Early

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Childhood Education; and Postsecondary Education. There is one additional NRDC not funded through IES which conducts research on Gifted and Talented Education. These new NRDCs are project oriented as opposed to the previous NRDCs which carried on long term, comprehensive and interdisciplinary research. The new funding amounts provide only approximately one-half the amount received by the preceding NRDCs.

NCES is the primary data source for education programs nationwide and has established large longitudinal data bases on vital issues as well as information archives on specific programs and populations. It also provides international comparative measures of education achievement. In FY 2008, NCES's budget would increase from \$90.2 million to \$119.0 million. The additional funding would support a longitudinal study that would begin with an eighth-grade cohort and follow it through high school and the transition to postsecondary education and work. The bulk of the funds would be used to support programs to improve state data bases. (For more on NCES, see Chapter 20.)

The proposed budget will continue to support the ten Regional Educational Laboratories, providing \$65.5 million in FY 2008, the same as in FY 2007. Regional Labs provide a critical link in the research-to-practice continuum, carry out research, initiate technology networks and publications, and provide consultation to schools to identify and implement effective practices. Regional governing boards representing the communities they serve guide the labs, thus ensuring activities are targeted to the educational needs of each region.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which provides an ongoing national assessment of student progress, would increase \$23.5 million to \$116.6 million. The increase would expand activities that support the Administration's initiatives on secondary education, including gearing up for national assessments. This would include in reading and mathematics at the 12<sup>th</sup> grade level by 2009.

Research in Special Education would once again receive level funding of \$71.8 million. NCSER would continue current research aimed improving special education and early intervention services for infants, toddlers and children with disabilities. New projects would focus on autism and infants and toddlers with disabilities. The Special Education Studies and Evaluations program would also receive level funding at \$9.9 million. Its

focus is on assessing the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) within the states.

The proposed FY 2008 IES budget more than doubles funding for the development and implementation of Statewide Data Systems, going from \$24.6 million in FY 2007 to \$49.2 million. The requested funds would be used to support competitive grants to the states for the design and implementation of systems that would collect individual student data on a longitudinal basis as a central component of effective policy making.

#### **DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD)**

Driven by its mission focus, DOD supports a \$79.0 billion R&D enterprise, most of which funds weapons development programs. Within the overall R&D account, DOD's basic and applied research portfolio includes support for behavioral, cognitive and social sciences. The majority of this research is funded through intramural and extramural programs within the Army Research Institute (ARI) and Army Research Laboratory (ARL); the Office of Naval Research (ONR); the Air Force Office of Scientific Research (AFOSR) and the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL). These military service laboratories conduct and sponsor basic ("6.1"), applied/exploratory development ("6.2") and advanced development ("6.3") research in the human systems area. All of the services fund research in the broad categories of personnel, training and leader development; warfighter protection, sustainment and physical performance; and system interfaces and cognitive processing. In addition, there are additional, smaller human systems research programs funded through the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the Marine Corps, and the Special Operations Command.

Within the overall S&T accounts it is unclear at press time how human-centered, behavioral research programs specifically would fare in each of the military laboratories and defense-wide agencies, though it is likely that many would face steep cuts, given the reductions in the overall defense research budgets (see Chapter 5 for DOD details). This is particularly disappointing in light of the recent Defense Science Board (DSB) report, which identified mapping the "human terrain" and developing models from the social and behavioral sciences for better understanding "individuals, groups, societies and nations" as critical DOD research priorities.