

## **Behavioral and Social Science Research in the Administration's FY 2009 Budget**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The message of the President's American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI), which grew out of the National Academies' *Rising Above the Gathering Storm* (RAGS) report, that reinvigorating the physical sciences and engineering are a national priority, has created difficulties for increasing funding for the behavioral and social sciences. Despite admonitions from the RAGS report, from the language in the FY 2008 appropriations report, and from Rep. Brian Baird's (D-WA) efforts on the America COMPETES Act, that the SBE sciences should not be left behind, the FY 2009 budget request suggests that is happening.

In using research to help solve the nation and the world's difficult problems, studying human and societal behavior remain a significant part of the science policy agenda. If the "World is Flat," as Thomas Friedman keeps telling us, then individual choices about where to study, live, and work will affect our Nation's economic well-being and national security.

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 Institute of Health (NIH) has increasingly recognized the importance of the relationship between health and behavior, yet these sciences have also felt the effect of flat budgets 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 FY 2009 budget include:

- NSF funding for the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE) directorate lags because of the ACI's emphasis on physical sciences and engineering.
- Recent flat funding for NIH has kept behavioral and social science budgets stagnant.
- Education research and data budget increases focus on assessment and state data systems.
- A National Academies' report's call for increases in social and behavioral research related to the military is not reflected in the FY 2009 budget, so far.

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

NSF's SBE directorate, headed by David Lightfoot, has been caught up in the Administration's priority for reinvigorating the physical sciences and engineering. Thus, for FY 2008, SBE received virtually no increase, and for FY 2009, although NSF Director Bement claims that the 8.5 percent boost is "one of the largest proposed in SBE's history," the \$18 million increase pales in comparison to the \$235 million enhancement for the Math and Physical Sciences directorate (see Table II-7).

The NSF-wide priority in Human and Social Dynamics (HSD) comes to an end in FY 2008. Once seen as a vehicle for significantly boosting the SBE budget, the program never exceeded around \$40 million per year during its existence. One consequence of HSD's completion is that the \$30 million or so that SBE contributed to it will revert to the budgets of

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the core programs. Some of these funds will become part of SBE's support for work on climate change and the environment, particularly explaining the interaction of human and natural environmental systems, which is now an inter-directorate program (SBE and Biological Sciences) called Coupled Natural and Human Systems. Another key area emerging from HSD is the enhancement of infrastructure, particularly developing international, integrated, microdata series.

The Science of Science and Innovation Program (SciSIP) will continue. One consequence of the FY 2008 limited increase is a slight scaling back of the funds available for this program initiated by the President's Science Adviser, John Marburger. SciSIP's plans for FY 2009 include support for improved and expanded science metrics, datasets, and analytical tools to assess the impacts of the nation's science and engineering enterprise.

SBE has an important role to play in the Cyber-enabled Discovery and Innovation (CDI) initiative through such topics as complexity and systems thinking in the human sciences, as well as examinations of social organizations and institutions, particularly 'virtual' ones. An emphasis on "systems models" to help explain "tipping points" is another feature of SBE's role in CDI. In the new Advanced Systems Technology (AST) initiative, SBE will expand its support of cognitive and learning sciences.

SBE will continue its funding of three large databases, the American National Election Studies, the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, and the General Social Survey. In addition, SBE maintains its support for the Time-sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (TESS), which uses the internet for survey data collection and sharing.

The increase for the Science Resource Statistics (SRS) Division would enable it to develop a pilot data collection on post-docs as well as implement a pilot of a Business Research and Development Survey as part of the next edition of *Science and Engineering Indicators*. (For more on SRS, see Chapter 20.)

#### **NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH (NIH)      ([obsr.od.nih.gov](http://obsr.od.nih.gov))**

In recognition of the critical role behavioral and social factors play in health, including the appreciation that they represent important avenues for prevention, NIH supports research in these disciplines in almost all of

its 27 institutes and centers (ICs). This research has also been well represented in several recent multi-institute initiatives such as the Strategic Plan on Obesity and minority health disparities.

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

Selected ICs	FY 2007 Actual	FY 2008 Estimate	FY 2009 Estimate
NIDA (Drug Abuse)	463.6	463.6	468.4
NICHHD (Child Health)	422.2	430.6	430.6
NIMH (Mental Health)	425.8	425.8	425.8
NCI (Cancer)	311.9	311.9	311.9
NIA (Aging)	245.4	245.9	246.1
NIAAA (Alcohol Abuse)	206.9	204.4	202.4
NHLBI (Heart, Lung, and Blood)	175.1	175.1	175.1
NIDDK (Diabetes, Digestive, Kidney)	160.7	160.7	160.7
NINDS (Neurological Disorders)	126.2	126.4	126.4
NINR (Nursing)	100.7	100.7	100.8
OD (Director's Office)	30.4	28.1	25.8
NIGMS (General Medical Sciences)	21.7	21.6	21.4
NIH Total	3,060.3	3,060.9	3,057.3

Source: NIH Office of Budget.

The Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) serves as the focal point for coordination and development of NIH policies, goals, and objectives in the behavioral and social sciences. As Director David Abrams has noted, a strong focus of the OBSSR recently released strategic plan is a “Systems Science” approach to health. In FY 2009, the Office is planning to support an initiative on the development and application of systems integrative science approaches to how multiple factors—behavioral, social, and biological—interact with each other and change over time to influence health. The proposed budget for BSSR in the Office of Director, which includes the research budget of OBSSR plus that of other OD offices, is estimated at \$25.8 million for FY 2009, down 8 percent from the FY 2008 estimate.

In response to five years with sub-inflationary increases for the NIH, the BSSR portfolio is holding steady in some ICs, but eroding in others. Based on the President’s FY 2009 budget, the NIH estimates that BSSR would fall slightly, about \$3.6 million, or less than one percent, after holding steady from FY 2007 to 2008 (see Table 1).

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Information in Table 1 on the amount of BSSR funded by each institute and center is collected by the NIH Budget Office. NIH estimates that about 10.5 percent of its budget would support behavioral and social science research (BSSR) in FY 2009.

The Administration has again proposed elimination of the National Children's Study (NCS) in FY 2009. The NCS is a large, longitudinal study of environmental effects on children's health. Congress has saved the study from previous Administration attempts to zero fund it.

#### **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 (NCSEER), comprise the central operational structure of the agency.

A significant increase of 20 percent has been requested to fund the IES—a change from \$546.1 million in FY 2008 to \$658.2 million for FY 2009. The largest portion of this increase, \$52 million, would provide funding to encourage additional statewide data systems. The continued federal focus on improving education results, combined with identification and implementation of research-based programs, is fundamental to the administration's hallmark education legislation, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). This, and similar legislation mandating scientifically-based education programs, makes enhancing the research infrastructure imperative if the department is to have the capacity to direct policy and wisely use increasingly scarce education resources.

Funding for IES' Research, Development, and Dissemination line provides for the eight authorized National Research and Development Centers (NRDCs), as well as the *What Works Clearinghouse*, the Education Resources Information Center, and special competitions. These activities would receive \$167.2 million in FY 2009, up from \$159.7 million. The current research on reading comprehension, mathematics and science education, teacher quality, and cognition and learning in the classroom would receive additional funds for new awards.

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 childhood education; and postsecondary education. There is one additional NRDC not funded through IES which conducts research on gifted and talented education. The new funds provide only approximately one-half the amount received by the preceding generation of NRDCs.

NCES is the primary data source for education systems and policy makers across the nation and has established large longitudinal data bases on vital issues regarding students, schools, and school personnel. It also provides international comparative measures of educational achievement. NCES's budget fell to \$88.5 million in FY 2008. However, the FY 2009 budget request is \$104 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 (see Chapter 20 for more on NCES).

The proposed IES budget would continue to support the ten Regional Educational Laboratories, providing \$67.5 million in FY 2009. This amount is essentially the same as the \$65.5 million made available in FY 2008, with the additional funds dedicated to an evaluation of the Regional Labs. These 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 served guide the labs, thus ensuring activities are targeted to the educational needs of each region.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which measures and reports on the status and trends of student learning over time, would receive an increase of \$34.0 million to \$130.1 million in FY 2009. The proposed increase would expand activities that support the Administration's initiatives on secondary education, including gearing up for new national assessments in geography, U.S. history, and writing, and including all states in reading and mathematics assessments at the 12<sup>th</sup> grade level by 2011.

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NCSER would once again receive level-funding of \$70.6 million, down slightly from \$71.8 in FY 2007. NCSER would continue current research aimed at 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 \$9.5 million. Its focus is on assessing the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) within the states.

The FY 2009 IES budget more than doubles funding for the development and implementation of Statewide Data Systems, from \$48.3 million in FY 2008 to \$100 million in FY 2009. The requested funds would expand the number of states developing longitudinal data bases from the present 27, and extend current K-12 data systems to include postsecondary and workforce information (see Chapter 4 for more on IES).

#### **DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD) AND DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY (DHS)**

A new National Academies report, *Human Behavior in Military Contexts*, calls for doubling the current budgets for basic and applied behavioral and social science research “across the U.S. military research agencies.” It called for enhanced research in six areas: intercultural competence; teams in complex environments; technology-based training; nonverbal behavior; emotion; and behavioral neurophysiology.

DOD’s basic and applied research portfolio includes support for behavioral, cognitive and social science. 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. The NAS report indicates that the DOD behavioral and social science budget for FY 2007 was \$37.6 million, the lowest level in four years.

In its FY 2009 budget request for DOD, the Administration included a 4 percent increase for basic research over FY 2008, bringing basic research (“6.1”) funding to \$1.7 billion. When current-year earmarks in the basic research portfolio are removed, that increase grows to a remarkable 16 percent. Navy and Air Force basic research would see particularly large increases in basic research support. More typical of previous Administration budgets, however, the overall S&T account, would fall in FY 2009 to \$11.7 billion from its congressionally appropriated level of \$13.2 billion in FY 2008. DARPA would get an 11 percent increase over FY 2008 for a total of \$3.3 billion in the Administration’s FY 2009 budget. Within these overall numbers, it is unclear at press time how behavioral and social science research would fare in each of the military laboratories and defense-wide agencies under the President’s request.

The Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) request for its Science and Technology (S&T) Directorate for FY 2009 is \$868.8 million. The directorate includes a Human Factors division to apply social and behavioral science research to improve detection, analysis, and understanding of the threats posed by individuals, groups, and radical movements. In the FY 2008 budget proposal DHS asked for \$12.6 million; Congress provided the division \$14.2 million, although \$7.5 million was earmarked for an Institute for Homeland Security Solutions housed at the Research Triangle Institute in North Carolina. The Institute will partner with universities and other entities “to focus on developing near-term technological solutions to practical, real world problems that have broad applications.”

The S&T directorate also includes a University Programs account. This provides support for the research Centers of Excellence and the Scholarship and Fellowship programs. On February 26, 2008, DHS announced five new Centers of Excellence to join the already-existing eight. Unfortunately, the FY 2009 budget request seeks less money for more Centers: \$43.8 million compared to \$49.3 million in FY 2008 appropriation. Thus, Centers such as START (the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism at the University of Maryland), the one that mainly focuses on the social and behavioral sciences, again face the prospect of cutbacks (see Chapter 11 for more on DHS).