



AEA Committee on Government Relations' ANNOUNCEMENTS

DECEMBER 11, 2013

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 5

The Committee on Government Relations is a subcommittee of the American Economic Association charged with representing the interests of the economics profession in Washington DC and other locations around the country without taking a position on questions of economic policy or on any partisan matter.

COSSA Colloquium

On November 4th at the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) Colloquium on Social and Behavioral Science and Public Policy

- Senator Elizabeth Warren vigorously defended social and behavioral research from the targeted budget cuts proposed by some members of Congress. Go to <http://www.cossa.org/annualmtg/2013/SenatorElizabethWarrenCOSSA2013-11-4.pdf> for a transcript of her keynote address.
- Census Director John Thompson discussed the societal, technological and scientific changes facing the Census Bureau ahead of the 2020 Census. Go to <http://www.cossa.org/annualmtg/2013/ThompsonCOSSA2013.pdf> for his talk.
- Acting NSF Director Cora Marrett addressed the impact sequestration and the ongoing uncertainty over appropriations has had on NSF. See <http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs177/1102766514430/archive/1115619728279.html#LETTER.BLOCK50> for her remarks.
- National Institutes of Health (NIH) Principal Deputy Director Lawrence highlighted new NIH initiatives in the following areas: large data and informatics; the reproducibility and transparency of research findings; the biomedical workforce; and the NIH review and award process. For his talk go to <http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs177/1102766514430/archive/1115619728279.html#LETTER.BLOCK52>.

The Press and SBE

At the Colloquium D'Vera Cohn, Pew Research Center; Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed, and Mike McAuliff, Huffington Post discussed the press and the social sciences. Cohn suggested that social scientist who would like to participate in public debates take advantage of the more numerous platforms online, write in plainer English, and accept "good enough" over perfect, particularly on time-sensitive topics. Jaschik discussed the reasons why mainstream media outlets often treat the results of research in the physical and biomedical sciences as groundbreaking news, while this is generally not the case with social science findings. McAuliff suggested that social scientists think about search terms and search optimization to make their research easier to find and emphasized the importance of building relationships and establishing trust with reporters. For more suggestions go to <http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs177/1102766514430/archive/1115619728279.html#LETTER.BLOCK57>.

New AHRQ Priorities

Richard Kronick, the new Director of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), proposed a realigned AHRQ mission and agency priorities at a [recent talk](#) to the Friends of AHRQ. According to Kronick, the new mission statement places more emphasis on AHRQ's status as a research agency. The four agency priorities going forward are:

1. Producing evidence to improve health care quality, including research mandated by the Affordable Care Act (ACA) into improving the methodology, training, and dissemination of Patient-Centered Outcomes Research (PCOR);
2. Accelerating patient safety improvements in hospitals, reducing harm associated with obstetrical care, supporting medical liability reform, and accelerating patient safety improvements in nursing homes;
3. Increasing health care accessibility by evaluating ACA coverage expansions. This work will give the HHS Secretary and Congress evidence to make informed decisions. This evaluation will cover topics like determining the effects of expanded coverage, whether people have a usual source of care, how they utilize health services, what happens to their health and financial stability, what impact coverage has on labor markets, and what enrollment strategies are most and least effective;
4. Improving health care affordability, efficiency, and transparency. This covers work to improve the data, measures, and reporting strategies needed to convey information on health care cost and quality.

NSF Portfolio Framework

NSF is adopting what it calls a "portfolio approach" to awarding research grants in response to criticisms by the House leadership of its transparency, accountability and priorities. According to a memo to NSF staff by NSF acting director Cora Marrett, the portfolio approach would "communicate individual investment decisions in the context of broader research portfolio objectives." NSF will enlist its program officers to "articulate the content and opportunities" of their program's portfolio of awards and "provide grant abstracts that clearly explain to the public the project's significance and funding justification." NSF's Division Directors will regularly review the development of the portfolios of individual and cross-cutting programs to ensure that they address both review criteria-- intellectual merit and broader impacts-- and align with directorate and agency priorities. The Directorate leaders will articulate the substance, goals, and priorities of the combined research portfolios they oversee. The Office of the Director becomes responsible for establishing NSF's directions and goals and conducts an agency-wide management review to confirm that "investment decisions promote and align with NSF's mission and investment priorities."

AEA Registry for RCTs

The AEA launched a new site to register randomized control trials (RCTs). The AEA encourages all investigators to register new and existing RCTs. The site is available at <https://www.socialscienceregistry.org>.

Health, U.S. 2012 Website

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) released its interactive website for [Health, United States 2012: In Brief](#). The website allows users to take the data from the Health, U.S. report and create customized charts and tables.

GAO Report on Rising NIH Indirect Costs

In a recent report (<http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/658088.pdf>) the General Accounting Office (GAO) recommended that NIH assess the impact of growth in indirect costs on its mission, including, as necessary, planning for how to deal with potential future increases in indirect costs that could limit the amount of funding available for total research.