NEWS SUMMARY

Members of the House of Representative worked with constituents in their home states this week. Members of the Senate remained in Washington where they addressed topics ranging from FY15 appropriations for the National Science Foundation (NSF) to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The annual appropriations process continues to move forward with appropriations hearings and negotiations expected to take their course over the rest of the year.

Congressional hearings included the following:
• June 2 Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Subcommittee on Financial and Contracting Oversight roundtable entitled “Campus Sexual Assault: The Role of Title IX;”
• June 4 Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Subcommittee on Financial Institutions and Consumer Protection hearing entitled “Student Loan Servicing: The Borrower’s Experience;” and
• June 4 Senate Budget Committee hearing entitled “Impact of Student Loan Debt on Borrowers and the Economy.”

President Obama has nominated the following individuals to his Administration:
• Mia Gutfreund Lehrer, President of Mia Lehrer & Associates, to be a member of the Commission of Fine Arts;
• Jane Hartley, Chief Executive Officer of Observatory Group, LLC, to be the Ambassador to France; and
• Kevin O’Malley, an officer in the Litigation Department at Greensfelder, Hemker and Gale in St. Louis, Missouri, to be the Ambassador to Ireland.

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AGRICULTURE

USDA ANNOUNCES FUNDING, ISSUES FEDERAL ORDER TO COMBAT PEDV
USDA Press Release, June 5, 2014

In response to the significant impact porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDv) and porcine deltacoronavirus are having on U.S. pork producers, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced $26.2 million in funding to combat these diseases. Additionally, USDA issued a Federal Order requiring the reporting of new detections of these viruses to its Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service or State animal health officials.

BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES

NIH SEEKS $4.5 BILLION TO TRY TO CRACK THE CODE OF HOW BRAINS FUNCTION

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) set an ambitious $4.5 billion price tag on its part of President Obama’s Brain Initiative on Thursday, stamping it as an effort on the scale of the Human Genome Project. The goals of the Brain Initiative were clearly grand when Mr. Obama announced it a year ago — nothing less than developing and applying new technology to crack the toughest unsolved puzzles of how the brains of humans and animals function. The hope is
to lay a foundation for future advances in the medical treatment of brain disorders. But the initiative began with $110 million budgeted for 2014, shared by three major entities: the National Science Foundation; the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency; and the NIH, which has a $40 million share...By calling for such a major commitment, to be spread over 12 years, the institutes answered concerns among neuroscientists about the initial level of funding. “This is a realistic amount of money,” said Dr. Eric R. Kandel, director of the Kavli Institute for Brain Science at Columbia University, who, like some other neuroscientists, had been skeptical of what could be accomplished with the funding committed when the initiative was announced about a year ago.

REPORTS ON THE BRAIN INITIATIVE AND THE PHYSICIAN-SCIENTIST WORKFORCE
By Sally Rockey, Rock Talk, June 4, 2014

I’ll be at the June Advisory Council to the Director (ACD) meeting this Thursday and Friday. Several updates and reports from ACD working groups are on the agenda. Two working groups will be presenting reports on the topics they were charged to explore...Tomorrow, this working group for the BRAIN initiative will present their recommendations and a scientific plan to advance innovation and technologies in the field of neuroscience. Friday, the physician-scientist workforce working group will present their report on their activities and recommendations.

NATIONAL HEALTHCARE QUALITY & DISPARITIES REPORTS

For the 11th year in a row, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) has produced the National Healthcare Quality Report and the National Healthcare Disparities Report. These reports measure trends in effectiveness of care, patient safety, timeliness of care, patient centeredness, and efficiency of care. The reports present, in chart form, the latest available findings on quality of and access to health care.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENGAGING PATIENTS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES IN ALL PHASES OF TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH TO IMPROVE HEALTH
NIH National Center for Advancing Translational Science (NCATS) News & Events, June 2, 2014

NCATS On August 21–22, 2014, Duke Translational Medicine Institute will hold the 2014 Community Engagement Conference at the Bethesda North Marriott Hotel and Conference Center in Bethesda, Md. The goal of this conference is to present and compare perspectives and examples of methods of engagement in research that include individuals, including patients and families, to community organizations and disease advocates as well as clinicians and other health professionals.

HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE ADVANCES THREE BILLS
American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Policy Alert, June 5, 2014
The House Energy and Commerce Committee's Health Subcommittee passed three bills last week. The Combating Autism Reauthorization Act (H.R. 4631) would reauthorize federal research, education, and early identification and intervention programs as well as the activities of the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee. The Improving Regulatory Transparency for New Medical Therapies Act (H.R. 4299) seeks to alter the Drug Enforcement Agency's process for scheduling new drugs approved by the Food and Drug Administration, and the Ensuring Patient Access and Effective Drug Enforcement Act (H.R. 4709) seeks to improve enforcement efforts related to prescription drug abuse.

* This is the complete news article.

AAAS-AAU-APLU-FBI GROUP PUBLISHES REPORT ON PERSONNEL ISSUES IN BIOSECURITY

A group of FBI and association representatives that have been working together on biosecurity issues has published the report from the last of its five workshops, this one on personnel issues in biosecurity. Previous reports dealt with security risks of biological research in academia (2010), dual use review and oversight (2012), implementing select agent and toxin regulations (2013), and international science and security (2013). The project, “Bridging Science and Security for Biological Research,” was initiated four years ago by the FBI’s Weapons of Mass Destruction Directorate (WMD). Working with the AAAS, in collaboration with AAU and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), the WMD Directorate held a series of five workshops with the research, policy, and security communities to discuss outreach and policy issues in biosecurity. The goal was to share and summarize in a series of reports the lessons learned, challenges faced, and areas for improvement in local and national biosecurity initiatives.

* This is the complete news article.

NIH GEARS UP FOR A CLOSER LOOK AT THE HUMAN PLACENTA
By Jocelyn Kaiser, ScienceInsider, June 2, 2014

A placenta sustained you and every person ever born for 9 months, serving as your lungs and kidneys and pumping out hormones while you developed in the womb. Problems with this disk-shaped mass of tissue can contribute to everything from preterm births to diseases of middle age. Yet when a baby is born, hospitals usually throw the placenta away. "It's the least understood human organ," says Alan Guttmacher, director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) in Bethesda, Maryland. "A large part of the scientific community never thinks about the placenta at all." He and others hope to change that, however, by rallying researchers and funders, including other parts of the NIH, around an effort to better understand the underappreciated organ. At an NICHD-sponsored workshop last week, some 70 researchers laid out their ideas for what NICHD calls the Human Placenta Project,
including ways to better monitor the placenta during a pregnancy, and drugs to bolster it when it falters.

**FEDERAL BUDGET PROCESS**

**SPENDING BILLS COULD REACH SENATE FLOOR IN MID-JUNE**
By Tamar Hallerman, *CQ.com*, June 4, 2014

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid has blocked off the last two weeks of June for the consideration of fiscal 2015 appropriations bills, according to two senior Democratic aides. The staffers said the Nevada Democrat will devote the legislative weeks of June 16 and June 23 largely to voting on spending measures in the lead-up to the July 4 recess. Senate Appropriations Chairwoman Barbara A. Mikulski said it would be up to Reid to determine which bills will be brought to the floor and in what order. “I’ll leave it up to him to decide how he wants to cluster” appropriations bills, the Maryland Democrat said Tuesday. Senate Appropriations has reported two of the 12 annual spending bills so far — the Military Construction-VA and Agriculture (S 2389) measures. The panel is expected to report two more, Commerce-Justice-Science and Transportation-HUD, on Thursday. It also has plans to mark up at least one more bill by mid-June, the divisive Labor-HHS-Education title. Mikulski has said she’s interested in bundling spending bills into “minibuses” in order to save time on the floor given the limited calendar. Reid has also promised her two more weeks of floor time in July. The biggest uncertainty, at this point, is whether Reid will leave the spending bills he does bring to the floor open to amendments, a decision that will undoubtedly set the tone for any remaining appropriations debate in the chamber. Many GOP senators have hinted that their support of individual appropriations bills — and subsequently the promise of House-Senate conference negotiations — could be tied to whether Reid allows Republican amendments on the floor. In the meantime, Mikulski continues to move forward on a self-proclaimed “bodacious” schedule of marking up all 12 bills in committee by July 10 in order to have measures teed up for rapid floor consideration. Her House counterpart, Harold Rogers, R-Ky., has vowed to do the same by the July 4 recess.

* This is the complete news article.

**HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY**

**HOPES FADE FOR REWRITE THIS YEAR OF HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY**
By Carolyn Phenicie, *CQ.com*, June 2, 2014

Ideas abound on how Congress could overhaul interest rates on student loans, or give the green light to novel methods for accrediting college programs that serve non-traditional students. But there appears little to no chance that Congress will tackle those issues as part of a federal higher education reauthorization passed before a deadline at the end of the session, advocates
say. Although there are few major repercussions if Congress does not reauthorize the measure by its deadline, not doing so leaves members – particularly retiring Democratic education stalwarts Sen. Tom Harkin and Rep. George Miller – with few, if any, avenues to effect any change at the nation's colleges and universities. “I don’t think anybody really holds out a lot of hope that much is going to get done this year,” said Sally Stroup, executive vice president for government relations at the Association of Private Sector Colleges and Universities, which represents for-profit colleges. “Election years really throw everything off.” Inaction won’t mean money will immediately stop flowing to colleges and universities. The Higher Education Act (PL 110-315), which was last comprehensively reauthorized in 2008, governs federal higher education assistance to both students and institutions. If Congress does not act by the close of this session, that assistance, which in fiscal 2013 amounted to $137.6 billion to 15 million students and $2.3 billion to colleges, would be automatically extended through the end of fiscal 2015 under the General Education Provisions Act (PL 90-247), according to the Congressional Research Service. If progress were to be made, negotiators would first have to come to agreements on broad issues within the political parties and then try to find consensus between the chambers, said Sarah A. Flanagan, vice president of government relations and policy at the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, which represents private non-profit schools. Once that’s accomplished, it would take a huge amount of time to draft a bill with such breadth, she said. “It’s hard to imagine, just by the sheer amount of drafting, that even if you had agreement on a vision, that you could pull of something of this size,” she said. “It’s the clock that starts to become insurmountable.” One higher education advocate, speaking on background, said that although higher education watchers originally expected a partisan bill from House leaders that could make it through committee and a more bipartisan approach from Senate leaders, they’re now expecting little but messaging measures from both chambers. And the likelihood of a House markup is waning. If the messaging bills track with themes that arose during hearings, the House Republicans’ bill would focus on deregulation while the Senate Democrats’ legislation would focus on affordability and student loan refinancing. And this reauthorization – at least if conducted in the way some members seek – may take longer than ever. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee ranking Republican Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, a former secretary of education and college president, has argued that higher education is over-regulated. He says legislators should clear the decks of old, outdated regulations rather than simply adding new regulations on top of existing ones. Alexander, with the backing of fellow Republican Richard M. Burr and Democrats Barbara A. Mikulski and Michael Bennet, this fall convened a task force of college presidents to study existing regulations and make recommendations to the committee on streamlining. The group, which is getting administrative support from the American Council on Education, will meet throughout the year with the hopes of making final recommendations in late 2014 or early 2015. Officially, the House Education and the Workforce Committee has wrapped up its series of hearings on a higher education reauthorization, while the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee is still in the midst of holding its own discussions. Senate HELP Chairman Harkin, of Iowa, told a group of college accreditors that – if a bipartisan compromise could be reached – his committee could perhaps advance a bill by June. Given ideal circumstances, it could see floor time either in the fall before the midterm elections or during a lame duck session after the November contests. And history does not present an optimistic precedent: When Congress last reauthorized the law, it was five years overdue and only made small changes to a few programs. Ultimately, advocates see draft bills from committee leaders
released before the August recess as the best-case scenario, Flanagan said. *Something Old, Something New:* Higher education lobbyists predicted that a variety of issues, ranging from newer ones like how to accredit novel higher education programs to older ones like federal student loan interest rates, will emerge as points of contention. Although Congress last summer seemingly arrived at a permanent solution for student loan rates – pegging them to the 10-year Treasury note – some Democrats at the time said they wanted to use the higher education reauthorization to revisit the issue. “We always come back to interest rates,” Stroup said. Accreditation will also be an issue as colleges experiment with new ways of conferring degrees. That could include everything from offering open online courses to giving credit for military or life experience to allowing students to advance through coursework at their own pace as they prove mastery of concepts. Under the current system, regional, national and program-specific accrediting groups review colleges or individual programs, and federal financial aid eligibility is contingent on passage of those reviews. Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, has proposed allowing states to accredit nearly any type of institution – colleges, nonprofit groups, for-profit businesses and apprenticeship programs – to offer higher education credits that could be funded with federal financial aid. Although the higher education groups all lobby for colleges and share concerns, each has its own particular niche concerns in the higher education rewrite. Public schools, for example, are concerned about any language that would call for cost containment or punish schools for raising tuition. Tuition increases there are largely dependent on state appropriations, over which the schools have no control, the group said. Community colleges, meanwhile, would like the federal government to change the way it measures graduation rates. Currently, graduation rates measure on-time completion at 150 percent of the normal time for a degree, and thus three years for an associate’s degree or six years for a bachelor’s, said David Baime, senior vice president for government relations and research at the American Association of Community Colleges. Those statistics don’t track students who transfer to other schools and complete degrees there – as many students at community colleges do – nor do they consider that many community college students are older working adults with families who take more time to complete their degrees. For-profit schools, meanwhile, are focused on a key regulation that limits the amount of profit they can make from federal financial aid. The so-called “90/10 rule” mandates that at least 10 percent of a school’s profits come from sources other than financial aid given under Title IV of the Higher Education Act – Pell Grants and loans, but not military or veterans’ education benefits. Senate Democrats, led in particular by Harkin and Sen. Richard J. Durbin, D-Ill., have pushed to increase the ratio to require that schools receive 85 percent of their funding from non-federal sources and to include military education benefits in that calculation, which would end what the senators have called inappropriately aggressive marketing toward veterans. That rule is not practical for for-profit schools that keep costs down, Stroup said. If students are fully eligible for federal aid that covers all their costs of attendance, “you have no way to force people to use their own money to pay to come to an institution.” And, of course, congressional negotiators will have to deal with the current higher education elephant, the “gainful employment” rule. The proposed regulation would revoke career training programs’ eligibility for federal financial aid if their graduates exceeded certain thresholds on student loan defaults or payments as compared to income.

* This is the complete news article.
RACIAL GAPS IN ATTAINMENT WIDEN, AS STATE SUPPORT FOR HIGHER ED FALLS

The Education Department’s National Center for Education Statistics released on Thursday its enormous annual report on the state of education in the United States. “The Condition of Education 2014” is based on 42 national indicators, from preschool enrollment to degree attainment to labor-force participation. The report doesn’t draw any conclusions, but it provides an abundance of data on all levels of education.

DISUNITED FRONT

Hardly anybody in higher education seems to like the Obama administration’s proposed ratings system. But college leaders are certainly not united in their views about the appropriate role for the federal government in holding institutions accountable. In the eight months since the president first announced his ratings idea, colleges of all sorts have questioned -- if not blasted -- the proposal. Private colleges have strongly urged the administration to reconsider its plan and are rallying members of Congress to stop it. The president’s own former homeland security secretary, Janet Napolitano, now the president of the University of California system, has criticized the ratings proposal. For-profit colleges, whose more immediate concerns lie with the administration’s gainful employment regulations, have also criticized the plan. And community colleges have said they’re concerned a ratings system could curtail access to higher education for underprivileged populations.

OBAMA ADMINISTRATION JOINS THE COLLEGE RANKINGS GAME
By Harmeet Kaur, *USA Today*, June 3, 2014

In an effort to make college more affordable, the White House will soon join the ranks of *U.S. News & World Report*, *Barron’s* and *Forbes* in developing standardized information about colleges. By fall 2015 the Department of Education plans to develop and institute a rating system that evaluates college performance to help students decide which colleges may be a good fit.

IDENTIFYING THE ONLINE STUDENT

In 2012, most students preferred to do their online study at an institution in their home state. Undergraduate students at historically black colleges and universities were more likely to complete part of their education online than were students in general. These and other data points are now available for analysis from the National Center for Education Statistics, which on Monday released the clearest breakdown of students enrolled in distance education courses in the United States to date.
**IMMIGRATION**

**OBAMA EXTENDS DEFERRED IMMIGRATION PROGRAM**
By Justin Sink, *The Hill*, June 5, 2014

Children who entered the country illegally but received a two-year work permit under an executive action can now renew their deferred action status for an additional two-year term, the Department of Homeland Security announced Thursday. More than half a million individuals who were illegally brought to the U.S. as children have taken advantage of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program ordered by President Obama, which exempts participants from deportation proceedings.

**INNOVATION**

**THE FIRST-EVER WHITE HOUSE MAKER FAIRE: CELEBRATING A NATION OF MAKERS**
The White House Blog, June 4, 2014

Like OK Go, the President is fired up about hosting the first-ever White House Maker Faire, where he will celebrate America’s students and entrepreneurs who are inventing the future by using new tools and techniques to make just about anything in local communities and classrooms...That’s why on June 18, the President is hosting the first-ever White House Maker Faire, which will feature Makers, innovators, and entrepreneurs of all ages who are using cutting-edge tools to bring their ideas to life. These projects will delight and amaze us, and some may very well create industries and jobs of the future. The Administration also wants to ensure that we make the most of these opportunities. We are working with companies, mayors, colleges, libraries, museums, and many others that are striving to answer the President’s call to support a generation of Americans who are “makers of things, not just consumers of things.” In addition to the Makers who will be at the White House, we want June 18 to be a nationwide Day of Making when communities across America share and celebrate their involvement in this movement. On Twitter, we’ll be using #NationOfMakers and encourage you to use it as well, to share all the amazing work going on around the country and to connect with other Makers like you.

**PARTNERSHIPS FOR INNOVATION: ACCELERATING INNOVATION RESEARCH- TECHNOLOGY TRANSLATION (PFI: AIR-TT)**
NSF Program Solicitation, June 4, 2014

The NSF Partnerships for Innovation (PFI) program within the Division of Industrial Innovation and Partnerships is an umbrella for two complementary subprograms, Accelerating Innovation Research (AIR) and Building Innovation Capacity. Overall, the PFI program offers opportunities to connect new knowledge to societal benefit through translational research efforts and/or
partnerships that encourage, enhance and accelerate innovation and entrepreneurship. The subject of this solicitation is PFI: AIR-Technology Translation (PFI: AIR-TT). The PFI: AIR-TT solicitation serves as an early opportunity to move previously NSF-funded research results with promising commercial potential along the path toward commercialization. Projects are supported to demonstrate proof-of-concept, prototype, or scale-up while engaging faculty and students in entrepreneurial/innovative thinking.

PATENT BLAME GAME CONTINUES: LEAHY AND REID
By Alex Byers and Erin Mershon, Politico’s Morning Tech, June 6, 2014

For the first time since his patent bill stalled, Senate Judiciary Chairman Patrick Leahy put the blame squarely on the shoulders of Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid - joining Republicans who had previously accused Reid of holding up the measure. "One of the problems we had is that Harry Reid said he wouldn't take up the bill on the floor," Leahy said in an interview in the Capitol this week. To pick the measure back up, "we'd have to have to get Senator Reid to say there's something he'd take up on the floor," he said.

* This is the complete news article.

INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

BILL SEEKS TO SECURE FOOD AID LOCAL SOURCING
By Jenny Hopkinson, Politico’s Morning Agriculture, June 5, 2014

"A new bipartisan Senate bill that would allow the U.S. Agency for International Development [USAID] to choose where it sources the food aid it sends out could accomplish what a change in the 2014 farm bill has not yet been able to," reports Pro Agriculture’s Bill Tomson. "The Food For Peace Act of 2014, a bill introduced Tuesday by Sens. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) and Chris Coons (D-Del.), would allow USAID to choose how to dispatch food aid in the manner the agency sees fit. According to the bill’s authors, it would "free up as much as $440 million annually through greater efficiencies in delivering aid, allowing the U.S. to reach an estimated seven to nine million more people, in a shorter time period." "The bill gives hope to foreign aid advocates who are disappointed that the House and Senate Appropriations Committee chose not to fund a provision in the 2014 farm bill that would allow the USAID to buy a small portion of the foreign food aid it donates - $80 million worth - in regions that are close to troubled spots around the world. The United States spends roughly $2 billion each year on international food aid."

* This is the complete news article.

LIBRARIES
LAWMAKERS URGE E-RATE UPDATE
By Maggie Severns, Politico’s Morning Education, June 2, 2014

A bipartisan group of nearly 50 lawmakers will send a letter to [Federal Communication Commission] FCC Commissioner Tom Wheeler and the rest of the commission later today that prescribes several fixes to the E-Rate program. "Technology has dramatically changed since the E-rate program was established 18 years ago, and the funding priorities must reflect the changing nature of the Internet, so that our classrooms and students have access to today's technology," write members of the New Democrat Coalition and several Republicans. Among their proposals: Focus the program on broadband services. Ensure that schools and libraries are paying for the best services at the lowest price. Increase transparency and accountability for the program. Simplify the application process. Ensure that program rules result in stability. The FCC is expected take up much-anticipated consideration of the program in the coming months and issue new rules in time for the new school year.

* This is the complete news article.

PHYSICAL SCIENCES & ENGINEERING

CYBERSECURITY EDUCATION EAGERS - PUSHING THE DIMENSIONS OF THE DOMAIN
NSF Dear Colleague, May 29, 2014

The NSF is announcing its intention to fund a small number of Early Concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGERs) to encourage advances in cybersecurity education, an area supported by the Foundation’s Secure and Trustworthy Cyberspace (SaTC) (see solicitation NSF 13-578: http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2013/nsf13578/nsf13578.htm) and CyberCorps®: Scholarship for Service (see solicitation NSF 14-510: http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2014/nsf14510/nsf14510.htm) programs. EAGER is a mechanism for supporting exploratory work in its early stages on untested, but potentially transformative, research ideas or approaches. This work may be considered especially “high risk - high payoff” in the sense that it, for example, involves radically different approaches, applies new expertise, or engages novel disciplinary or interdisciplinary perspectives. In particular, with this Dear Colleague Letter, we wish to alert you that we are interested in using the EAGER mechanism to encourage new collaborations between the cybersecurity research and computing education research communities. The proposed research should fit the Cybersecurity Education perspective within the SaTC solicitation.

NASA INVITES UNIVERSITIES TO SUBMIT INNOVATIVE EARLY-STAGE TECHNOLOGY PROPOSALS
NASA News Release, June 4, 2014

NASA is seeking proposals from universities to advance the agency's plans for exploration to deep space and Mars. The Early Stage Innovations NASA Research Announcement calls for innovative space technology proposals that could benefit the space program, other government
agencies and the greater aerospace community...NASA's Space Technology Mission Directorate expects to make approximately 12 awards this fall, with total award amounts of up to $500,000. Research and development efforts will take place over two to three years. Researchers will investigate transformative space technologies in areas such as advanced thermal protection materials modeling, computational materials, in situ utilization of asteroid materials, mobile robotic surface probe concepts for planetary exploration, kinetic penetrators for icy planetary moons, and advanced technology habitat system designs for continued human exploration of space. Only accredited U.S. universities may submit proposals under this solicitation. Notices of intent to submit proposals to the Early Stage Innovations Appendix of NASA's Research Announcement, Space Technology Research, Development, Demonstration, and Infusion 2014 (SpaceTech-REDDI-2014), are due June 24. The deadline for submitting final proposals is July 21.

**NASA SHOULD MAINTAIN LONG-TERM FOCUS ON MARS AS “HORIZON GOAL” FOR HUMAN SPACE EXPLORATION; A SUSTAINED NATIONAL COMMITMENT WILL BE NEEDED, REPORT SAYS**

National Academies Press Release, June 4, 2014

Arguing for a continuation of the nation’s human space exploration program, a new congressionally mandated report from the National Research Council concludes that the expense of human spaceflight and the dangers to the astronauts involved can be justified only by the goal of putting humans on other worlds. The report recommends that the nation pursue a disciplined “pathway” approach that encompasses executing a specific sequence of intermediate accomplishments and destinations leading to the “horizon goal” of putting humans on Mars. The success of this approach would require a steadfast commitment to a consensus goal, international collaboration, and a budget that increases by more than the rate of inflation.

**YOU EVER TRIED GOING MAD WITHOUT POWER? IT'S BORING. NO ONE Listens TO YOU**

By Alex Guillén, *Politico’s Morning Energy*, June 4, 2014

[Environmental Protection Agency] EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy sat down for a Reddit "Ask Me Anything" session yesterday. Here are the highlights:

- **On West Virginia:** "We'll be working closely with folks in West Virginia to make sure they understand what their goal is and the full range of options available. EPA cares about the health and economy of every community in this country."
- **On nuclear:** "When it comes to nuclear, we know there are some questions, but there's no denying that it's carbon free and will be part of the energy mix. On the issue of waste, it's been a long standing challenge and one that needs a long term solution. Folks across the Administration are working on it."
- **On allegedly low fines:** "I don't agree that our fines are low. We work very hard to make sure that it doesn't pay to pollute in this country."
- **The fun stuff:** Asked about her thoughts on "The Simpsons Movie," McCarthy answered: "I sure hope I'm a better EPA Administrator than Russ Cargill," she said, referring to the
fictional EPA chief who orders Springfield enclosed in a glass dome. "But seriously, Marge is my favorite. Love the hair." McCarthy also referred a question on the zombie apocalypse to the CDC, and revealed she is a Marvin Gaye fan.

* This is the complete news article.

**RESEARCH FUNDING**

**NSF DODGES MOST HOUSE AMENDMENTS, CENSUS BUREAU NOT SO LUCKY**

The NSF has withstood a freewheeling assault on its 2015 budget by the U.S. House of Representatives. But the Census Bureau took it on the chin. Last night, legislators completed 2 days of debate on a $51 billion spending bill that covers those two agencies and many others, including NASA and the National Institute of Standards and Technology. And when the dust had settled, lawmakers had pared only $10 million from the $237 million increase allocated NSF in a bill drafted by Representative Frank Wolf, R-Va.

**U.S. SENATE PANEL GIVES NSF A SMALL BOOST**

A U.S. Senate spending panel has met the president's 2015 request for the NSF -- and that's depressing news for the agency. This morning, the panel approved a $51.2 billion spending bill covering NSF, NASA, and the Department of Commerce. But unlike its counterpart in the House of Representatives, the panel stuck to the 1.1% increase for NSF, to $7.255 billion, that the White House had proposed. Last week, the House approved a 3.2% increase, adding $153 million to the president's request for a total of $7.408 billion.

**RESEARCH POLICY**

**WHERE'S FRANCE CÓRDOVA? IN THE WASHINGTON HOT SEAT**

“Can you find Dr. Córdova?” asks a brightly colored cartoon poster slapped on bulletin boards and elevators throughout two buildings housing the NSF in Arlington, Virginia. A picture taken from a Where's Waldo? children's book has a mug shot of France Córdova, the agency's new director, neatly hidden in a corner. Below is a message inviting employees to say “hello” to their new boss as she made an inaugural round of meet and greets earlier this month... For the past year, Smith—whose panel oversees NSF—has been vocally criticizing the agency for making “wasteful” grants and is pushing a controversial bill that would make substantive changes to NSF's policies (see p. 960). Córdova has arrived just as her agency is under political siege and
academic researchers are rallying to its defense. Figuring out how to keep NSF from being permanently scarred by the controversy is certainly Córdova's biggest and most pressing challenge.

**FDP/COGR WHITE PAPER ON THE UNIFORM GUIDANCE**
Council on Governmental Relations (COGR), June 4, 2014

On April 14, 2014, COGR participated in an [Federal Demonstration Partnership] FDP-sponsored meeting where university representatives presented "University Perspectives" to federal agency representatives on key issues from the Uniform Guidance. Click [here](#) for a final version of the White Paper.

* This is the complete news article.

**NSF COUNSEL LASHES OUT AT SCIENTISTS ASKING ABOUT PROTECTIONS FOR ROTATORS**

The NSF top lawyer has rebuked a group of U.S. scientists who asked for an explanation of its policies governing temporary workers. The response appears to have widened a rift between that community and NSF over a program designed to keep the agency on the cutting edge of research.

**VIEWS OF SCIENCE CLASH IN DEBATE OVER NSF BILL**

Does the NSF need a minor tuneup or a major overhaul? How lawmakers in Congress answer that question could have an impact on U.S. science that extends far beyond the $7 billion agency. Congressional scrutiny of one of the federal government's most important engines of innovation reached a new intensity last week as the science committee of the U.S. House of Representatives wrangled over the extent to which NSF's practices need to be altered. The battleground was a controversial proposal called the Frontiers in Innovation, Research, Science, and Technology (FIRST) Act.

**SEXUAL ASSAULT POLICY**

**SENATOR MCCASKILL PLANS LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE RESPONSE TO CAMPUS SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., used a roundtable discussion of sexual violence on campuses Monday to announce that she planned to propose legislation to improve colleges' response to
the issue, which has drawn attention in recent months from the White House, the Education and Justice Departments, and student victims and their advocates across the country.

**THE PRESENTATION WITHHELD FROM A SENATOR**
By Michael Stratford, *Inside Higher Ed, June 4, 2014*

Over the objections of Sen. Claire McCaskill, the American Council on Education (ACE) has been keeping secret the advice it gave members about complying with the lawmaker’s sexual assault survey. But after rebuffing several requests in recent weeks by the Missouri Democrat for a copy of the webinar it sponsored for colleges, the group sent it to McCaskill on Tuesday night... The presentation, prepared by a Washington law firm but sponsored by the ACE, did not instruct colleges to not respond to the survey. But the slides portray Congressional surveys such as McCaskill’s as laden with risk for their recipients.

**WHY COLLEGES ARE ON THE HOOK FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT**
By Robin Wilson, *The Chronicle of Higher Education, June 6, 2014*

When Congress passed the gender-equity law known as Title IX more than 40 years ago, no one expected it to make colleges responsible for handling sexual assault. Title IX was enacted in 1972 without controversy or even much debate, a "stealth law" aimed at helping women get through the doors of higher education, says Bernice R. Sandler, a longtime activist who is now a senior fellow at the Women’s Research and Education Institute. But the law is now being interpreted to require colleges to investigate and resolve students’ reports of rape, determining whether their classmates are responsible for assault and, if so, what the punishment should be. That is the case whether or not an alleged victim decides to report the incident to the police.

**SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**BIG BATTLE OVER 15 LITTLE WORDS**
By Jeffrey Mervis, *ScienceInsider, June 4, 2014*

Representative Lamar Smith (R–TX) took to the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives last week to amend a 2015 spending bill covering the NSF. Smith has long complained about NSF’s “frivolous” grants in the social sciences. And now, as chair of the House science committee, he stood before his colleagues to propose “a small but important step ... to assure that NSF-funded research is, in fact, in the national interest.” Smith said his 15-word amendment, co-authored by Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R–VA), would cancel a 6%, $15.3 million increase requested by the Obama administration for NSF’s social, behavioral, and economic sciences directorate and move the money into four other NSF research directorates that Smith feels are more deserving. The reshuffling of funds will “encourage the NSF to apply higher standards when awarding its grants,” Smith argued during a brief debate on 29 May on his amendment. By a narrow margin of 208 to 201, the House agreed with him. The fate of the House spending bill—which
appropriates $51.2 billion across several agencies—is uncertain. The Senate must pass its own version and then reconcile the differences in a conference that probably won’t happen until after the November elections.

**SYMBOLIC SLAP AT SOCIAL SCIENCES**

The U.S. House of Representatives early Friday morning approved an increase in overall funding for research at the NSF but also endorsed an effort to pare social science studies that the agency funds...While this year's vote did include a symbolic attack on the social sciences and some anti-social science rhetoric, the measure didn't go as far as an appropriations bill last year that ended up banning the NSF from support political science work that didn't meet very narrow criteria.

**METHODOLOGY, MEASUREMENT, AND STATISTICS**
NSF Program Solicitation, June 5, 2014

The Methodology, Measurement, and Statistics (MMS) Program is an interdisciplinary program in the Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences that supports the development of innovative, analytical, and statistical methods and models for those sciences. MMS seeks proposals that are methodologically innovative, grounded in theory, and have potential utility for multiple fields within the social and behavioral sciences. As part of its larger portfolio, the MMS Program partners with a consortium of federal statistical agencies to support research proposals that further the development of new and innovative approaches to surveys and to the analysis of survey data.

**STUDENT AID**

**SENATE DEMOCRATS GO BACK TO STUDENT LOANS IN POPULIST PUSH**
By Peter Schroeder, *The Hill*, June 4, 2014

Senate Democrats are preparing a populist push next week, when they bring up legislation that would enable borrowers to refinance their student loans. The bill would help the pocketbooks of those Americans struggling with some portion of the $1.2 trillion in outstanding student loans by letting them take advantage of lower interest rates. But Democrats on Wednesday were also quick to broaden the debate ahead of the midterm election. Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), the lead sponsor on the bill, repeatedly said at a Wednesday press conference that the bill represented a debate about values.

**SENATE DEMOCRATS SAY COLLEGE STUDENTS 'SMOTHERED' BY DEBT LOAD**
By Carolyn Phenicie, *CQ.com*, June 4, 2014
Senate Democrats on Wednesday continued their push for a student loan refinancing measure, one in a series of messaging bills they’re highlighting ahead of the midterm elections. “Our students are just getting smothered with these costs and these bills,” Ron Wyden, D-Ore., said at a Budget Committee hearing, to be followed by an afternoon news conference on student loan debt. “This is taking an enormous toll, in effect putting students and young people in shackles,” said Wyden, who leads the Finance panel and is a member of the Budget panel.

Senators are expected to soon vote on a proposal (S 2292) from Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., that would allow borrowers to refinance their old loans at the current lower interest rates. The measure is highly unlikely to be taken up by the House but would be key for helping get out the vote in Democratic campaigns. The refinancing bill would be paid for by increasing taxes on millionaires — the so-called Buffett Tax, a reference to investor Warren Buffett, who’s said he pays a lower tax rate than his secretary. The tax is a non-starter for Republicans. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) Wednesday afternoon estimated that about half of all outstanding federal loans, which amount to $460 billion, and private loans, at $60 billion, would be refinanced under the bill. Spending on student loans would increase by $55.6 billion in fiscal 2015, and total deficits would rise for the first few years after enactment, when most students would apply for refinancing, CBO said. But ultimately deficits would decline by $22 billion from fiscal 2015 to 2024, CBO said. Seven in 10 students who graduated in the class of 2012 had debt at an average of $29,400 each, according to a report by the Project on Student Debt. Sen. Patty Murray of Washington, the chairwoman of the Budget Committee and a member of Senate Democratic leadership, emphasized the impact of total student loan debt — which by some estimates is more than $1 trillion — on the broader economy. “Historically, young Americans have been a source of economic activity,” but large student loan debt prevents them from saving up for a down payment on a home or receiving a mortgage or obtaining the necessary loans to start a new business, she said. Student loan debt may also limit students’ career paths, said Rohit Chopra, a hearing witness and student loan ombudsman at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. New medical school graduates are pursuing jobs in primary care fields — which pay less than specialist jobs — at decreased rates, and veterinary school graduates, whose debt averages over $150,000, are unlikely to be able to make a living in dairy medicine or livestock management in rural areas, he added. The impact is being felt even by high school students who believe college is now out of reach, said Jeff Merkley, D-Ore.

“The feeling [is] that there is not a path in which they have an opportunity to thrive and pursue their potential, which then affects their behavior in high school as to how hard they’re going to work to make that path possible,” Merkley said. Although the issue of student debt is designed to appeal to young people, members of the caucus later this afternoon will emphasize its particular effect on another key Democratic voting bloc: women. The White House also jumped in on the issue. President Barack Obama has long supported making college more accessible and affordable and supports the Senate bill, spokesman Josh Earnest said. There will be an event on student loans at the White House on Monday, he added. **Rising College Costs:** Republicans, meanwhile, emphasized the need to address rising costs, which they said are the primary sources of this debt. If college costs had risen at the rate of inflation, a four-year degree should cost about $7,000, but it instead averages about $17,000, about two and-a-half times the rate of inflation, said Ron Johnson, R-Wis. “I guess the question I’m asking is why. What’s so different about what colleges and universities spend their money on?” Johnson said. He noted that the dramatic rise in costs coincided with increased federal spending on higher
education. “Cause and effect, I’ll leave that for the reader to judge,” he said. The Republicans’ witness, Richard Vetter, an economics professor at Ohio University and adjunct scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, said that although there are many reasons for the rise in tuition, the most relevant is the “explosive growth” in federal aid. “Any significant successful solution to the problem of rising college costs will work only if you radically change the nature and magnitude of federal financing,” he said.

* This is the complete news article.