NEWS SUMMARY

This week, members of both chambers of Congress are working with constituents in their home states. They will return to Washington next week.

On Tuesday, Victor Dzau, former chancellor of health affairs at Duke University, started his new role as president of the Institute of Medicine.

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House Agriculture Chairman Frank D. Lucas, R-Okla., is making clear that his party will take another run at slashing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), if it wins control of the Senate in November. Fresh off an easy win in his primary race, Lucas specifically said he’ll be looking to stop states from continuing to use heating assistance to increase food-stamp benefits, the “heat and eat” practice Republicans tried to stop in the new farm bill (PL 113-79). GOP Senate takeover could mean more cuts for SNAP. The law raised the minimum heating assistance payment that states must make annually from $1 to $10 a year — the House GOP wanted to raise the minimum to $20 — and several governors already have taken steps to meet the new requirement. Although there’s nothing illegal about what the states are doing, congressional Republicans see the higher payments as an effort to circumvent the farm bill’s intent. States “have really tried to game the system” but “may have outsmarted themselves,” Lucas said in an interview with the Oklahoma Farm Report. “Don’t be surprised,” he said, “if the nutrition programs are not revisited” next year should Republicans control both the House and Senate. Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., doesn’t think Republicans will stop at tightening up the heat-and-eat provision. She predicts they’ll also try again to restrict the use of broad-based categorical eligibility, whereby people can automatically qualify for SNAP if they receive some other form of welfare benefits. “I think categorical eligibility is at grave risk,” she said. DeLauro also is worried about GOP attempts to roll back tougher school nutrition standards, which will likely pick up steam next year when the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (PL111-296) is up for reauthorization. “There are people here who don’t think the government should be engaged in
this type of policy and they will go full bore. They will totally eviscerate those programs,” she said. *SNAP May Be Higher Priority for House Than Senate, Though:* A top Senate Republican, John Thune of South Dakota, wouldn’t be surprised to see a GOP Senate attempt some new cuts in food stamps, either through appropriations or through budget reconciliation. But he said in an interview that he doesn’t think SNAP will be a top priority for Senate Republicans. “I don’t think it’s going to be a front and center issue,” said Thune, the GOP conference chairman. “I think everybody kind of figures it got handled in the farm bill, so in order for it to get put back in play you would have an opportunity and somebody driving it, and I don’t know at this point what that would be. But you never know.”

* This is the complete news article.

**CUTTING THROUGH THE BUZZ: POLLINATOR NUMBERS ARE UP -- COMMENTARY**
By Representatives Tom Rooney and David Valadao, *Roll Call*, July 1, 2014

For some time now, the media has been issuing dire warnings of the coming “bee-pocalypse.” *Time* magazine ran a cover story titled, “A World Without Bees.” A headline in the London Telegraph proclaimed “Honey bees in US facing extinction.” CBS warned of the drastic threat to our food supply if these essential pollinators are lost. Yet reports of bees’ catastrophic demise are greatly exaggerated. Activists with an anti-pesticide agenda have noticed the issue and are using it to call for a ban on neonicotinoid insecticides — “neonics” for short — which they claim are responsible for bee health problems. The most factual science does not support these allegations. Neither do the facts on the ground. Such a ban would damage entire sectors of U.S. agriculture and do more harm than good for bees. Despite this fact, legislation was recently introduced in Congress to prohibit this critical crop protection technology.

**USDA CONTINUES FARM BILL IMPLEMENTATION WITH PROVISIONS TO HELP FARMERS MANAGE RISK**
USDA Press Release, June 30, 2014

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced continued progress in implementing provisions of the 2014 Farm Bill that provide new risk management options for farmers and ranchers. These improvements to crop insurance programs will provide better protection from weather disaster, market volatility and other risk factors to ensure farmers aren’t wiped out by events beyond their control. Vilsack also announced new support for beginning farmers that will make crop insurance more affordable and provide greater support when new farmers experience substantial losses. These announcements build on other recent USDA efforts to support beginning farmers.

**AMERICA IS RUNNING OUT OF FARM WORKERS. WILL ROBOTS STEP IN?**
By Brad Palmer, *Vox*, July 2, 2014

The United States is likely to face a serious shortage of farm labor in the years ahead —
especially as Mexico gets richer and sends fewer low-wage workers our way. So what happens then? One option is that the United States could just grow fewer crops that need lots of workers to harvest. But that seems unlikely, given all the demand for fresh produce. Another possibility is that robots could do more and more of our farming — particularly if the price of farm labor rises dramatically. Last October, the US Department of Agriculture handed out $4.5 million in grants for "robotics research."

**BIOMETICAL SCIENCES**

**COMMITTEE WILL CONTINUE 21ST CENTURY CURES EFFORTS**

On Wednesday, the Health Subcommittee will continue its efforts in the 21st Century Cures initiative with a hearing to discuss, 21st Century Cures: Modernizing Clinical Trials. Subcommittee members will examine opportunities to bring the clinical trial process into the 21st century, in order to accelerate the discovery, development, and delivery cycle of new cures and treatments...On Friday, the Health Subcommittee will hold a hearing, 21st Century Cures: Incorporating the Patient Perspective. Patient perspective is central to the 21st Century Cures initiative, which is why the subcommittee has placed a special emphasis on gathering patient input as it solicits ideas from interested parties on how to achieve its common goal of accelerating the pace of cures.

**UPCOMING PCAST MEETING**
Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Ad Hoc Group Weekly, June 27, 2014

The President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) will meet on July 11 at the National Academy of Sciences to discuss its work on antibiotic resistance and nanotechnology, among other items. Find more information at: [https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2014/06/23/2014-14582/presidents-council-of-advisors-on-science-and-technology](https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2014/06/23/2014-14582/presidents-council-of-advisors-on-science-and-technology); Find the PCAST site at: [http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ostp/pcast](http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ostp/pcast)

* This is the complete news article.

**21ST CENTURY CURES EXPLORES DIGITAL HEALTH, SEEKS FEEDBACK**
AAMC Ad Hoc Group Weekly, June 27, 2014

The House Energy and Commerce Committee held a June 24 roundtable discussion on Digital Health Care. Hosted under the auspices of the committee’s 21st Century Cures Initiative, the roundtable featured representatives from agencies, academic institutions, providers, patient groups, and industry. Participants discussed the potential for new digital technologies, more robust electronic health records, and the vast amounts of data being generated by genomic and
other research to transform the health care system. The committee recently released a white paper, entitled “Leveraging Technology to Advance the Discovery, Development, and Delivery of Better Treatments and Cures,” asking what Congress can do to improve the entire digital health care landscape. Input and feedback on the white paper can be submitted to the committee through July 22. Find more information on the roundtable and the white paper at: http://energycommerce.house.gov/cures

* This is the complete news article.

MORE ON THE PHYSICIAN-ScientIST WORKFORCE
By Sally Rockey, Rock Talk, June 30, 2014

A major report on the Physician-Scientist Workforce was presented and discussed at the most recent Advisory Council to the Director meeting. It was a highly anticipated follow-up to the Biomedical Workforce report from a couple years earlier. I want to follow-up my earlier post with a closer look at some key points presented by the Physician-Scientist Workforce (PSW) working group. The PSW working group was asked to analyze the physician-scientist biomedical workforce, which is defined as scientists with professional degrees who have training in clinical care, and who are engaged in independent biomedical research – for example, MDs, MD-PhDs, nurse-scientists, dentist-scientists and vet-scientists. The working group was also asked to make recommendations for physician-scientist research training.

NIH: RESEARCH ON CHRONIC OVERLAPPING PAIN CONDITIONS
COSSA Washington Update, June 30, 2014

Chronic pain is a major public health challenge and affects approximately 100 million Americans and exacts large, economic, social, and personal costs. As such, it needs to be addressed at multiple levels including the generation of new scientific knowledge to enhance the understanding of these conditions...The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has released a funding opportunity announcement, Research on Chronic Overlapping Pain Conditions (PA-14-244) to encourage epidemiological, clinical, and translational research that will increase the understanding of the natural history, prevalence, biological mechanisms, psychological variables, and clinical risk factors responsible for the presence of multiple pain conditions in people with pain.

NIH EXPANDS PROGRAM TO CRACK MEDICAL MYSTERIES
By Kelly Servick, ScienceInsider, July 1, 2014

An effort at the U.S. NIH to diagnose mysterious diseases is undergoing a major expansion. Representatives of the Undiagnosed Diseases Program, administered by NIH’s National Human Genome Research Institute, announced today that six medical centers will join the program, forming a network of clinical sites to investigate intractable cases from patients around the country. The program aims to offer patients a long-awaited diagnosis—and sometimes
treatment—while building up data for scientists studying the genetic basis of rare diseases. The new sites—Baylor College of Medicine; the Harvard teaching hospitals (Boston Children's, Brigham and Women's, and Massachusetts General); Duke University; Stanford University; the University of California, Los Angeles; and Vanderbilt University Medical Center—will each receive a 4-year grant of roughly $7.2 million to participate.

NOTICE OF INTENT TO PUBLISH A FUNDING OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT FOR ANALYSES TO DETERMINE DIAGNOSTIC CUT-POINTS FOR OLDER ADULTS WITH LOW MUSCLE MASS OR STRENGTH
NIH Notice, July 2, 2014

The National Institute on Aging intends to promote a new initiative by publishing a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) to solicit applications for support of analyses of existing data (or data whose collection will be completed within one year of the FOA publication date) from older populations with high prevalence of mobility disability, low muscle mass and low muscle strength. The purpose is to develop and evaluate cut-points based on analyses of relations of mobility disability to muscle mass and strength. These analyses should extend and expand upon cut-points for low muscle mass and low muscle strength and related analyses published to date. This Notice is being provided to allow potential applicants sufficient time to plan and coordinate research collaborations and resources. The FOA is expected to be published in Summer 2014 with an expected application due date in Fall 2014.

NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF NEURODEVELOPMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF SUBSTANCE USE
NIH Request for Information (RFI), July 2, 2014

Preclinical research suggests that substance use affects the developing brain in profound and lasting ways, and cross-sectional comparisons of magnetic resonance imaging data in humans indicate that substance use correlates with structural and functional brain abnormalities. However, no large prospective cohort study has been conducted to comprehensively assess the effects of substance use on human brain development and the resulting consequences. As substance-use policy in the United States continues to evolve, there is growing concern about increased access to and permissiveness around substance use, particularly marijuana and emerging tobacco products among youth. Therefore, the need to understand the effects of substance use on the human brain becomes more urgent than ever before. Fortunately, advances in neuroimaging provide an enormous capacity to better understand normal and atypical human brain development. The NIH is exploring optimal ways to configure a large longitudinal cohort study to prospectively examine the effects of substance use on the human brain during early adolescence into young adulthood.

COLLABORATIVE TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH CONSORTIUM TO DEVELOP T4 TRANSLATION OF EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS
NIH RFI, July 2, 2014
The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) is considering creating a research
consortium to evaluate methods for increasing the uptake and application of evidence-based
interventions for heart, lung and blood diseases and sleep disorders. This RFI seeks advice from
experts in translating and disseminating evidence-based interventions into clinical practice (T4 Translation) on the design of an effective and practical Research Network that would be "disease agnostic." The objective is to provide an expert infrastructure platform for research on translation related to a variety of diseases and conditions within the mission of the NHLBI. Individuals, institutions and organizations with experience in translation and implementation science and clinical trials networks are invited to submit comments

CONGRESSIONAL EARMARK POLICY

EARMARKS AREN’T COMING BACK, BOEHNER VOWS IN NEW VIDEO
By Matt Fuller, Roll Call, July 1, 2014

Speaker John A. Boehner’s office is out with a new video slamming Senate Democrats and
pledging that as long as the Ohio Republican is speaker, “there will be no earmarks.” In the
video, which uses a score befitting an NFL Films promo, Boehner says the American people have
entrusted House Republicans to do things differently. “So when it comes to earmarks, we’ve
kept our promise,” he says in footage ripped from his weekly news conference on May 22...“As
long as I’m speaker, there will be no earmarks,” he says, as the video ends with the horns
reaching a crashing crescendo and an advertisement for speaker.gov stretching across the
screen.

EXPORT CONTROLS

EXPORT CONTROL REFORM: ADMINISTRATION PUBLISHES CHANGES TO REGULATIONS
CONTROLLING EXPORTS OF MILITARY ELECTRONICS
U.S. State Department Press Release, June 30, 2014

The U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of Commerce published regulations today
that streamline U.S. export controls on certain military electronics by shifting less sensitive
equipment, parts, and components from Category XI of the Department’s U.S. Munitions List to
the Department of Commerce’s Commerce Control List. These changes, which are part of the
President’s Export Control Reform Initiative, enhance our national security by increasing
interoperability with our close allies and partners. These changes also reduce incentives for
purchasers to deliberately avoid U.S.-origin parts and components. As a result of these changes,
the United States will have greater visibility on arms transfers and end-uses of concern,
including human rights abuses. The changes will take effect on December 30, 2014.
MIKULSKI FACES TOUGH CHOICE ON ‘UGLY STEPSISTER’ SPENDING BILLS
By Tamar Hallerman, CQ.com, July 1, 2014

Appropriations Chairwoman Barbara A. Mikulski has been stymied so far in her efforts to push spending bills through the Senate floor, and now she has to decide whether to proceed with marking up the four remaining nondefense spending measures, all of them partisan flashpoints heating up in a rancorous election season. The Maryland Democrat last week announced a mid-July markup date for the massive $489.6 billion measure that funds the Pentagon, but made no promises about the quartet of spending bills she recently dubbed the “ugly stepsisters” — Labor-HHS-Education, Energy-Water, Financial Services and Interior-Environment. “When we come back, we’re going to see what additional things we can move in addition to Defense,” Mikulski told Senate appropriators last week, referring to the July Fourth recess. The four “stepsisters” together encompass nearly one-fourth of the fiscal 2015 discretionary budget, funding a large chunk of the nation’s social programs, as well as water infrastructure grants and the national parks. Their tendency to attract amendments related to abortion, the 2010 health care law (PL 111-148, PL 111-152) and financial sector and environmental regulations, though, have made them perennial points of contention in Congress. None of them has reached the Senate floor in years — some since the mid-2000s. With a crucial election on the horizon and a three-bill “minibus” (HR 4660) already pulled from the Senate floor, Mikulski must decide whether the four bills are even worth pushing through committee ahead of November. Richard C. Shelby of Alabama, ranking Republican on Senate Appropriations, tied the fate of the four nondefense measures to whether leaders could find a path forward on the minibus, which could help renew momentum for the fiscal 2015 appropriations process. “It’s up in the air. We’ll see what happens on the floor,” Shelby told reporters last week. Markups ‘Postponed:’ The events of the last month do not bode well for the four nondefense bills. Mikulski puntet full-committee markups for three titles in as many weeks after it became apparent GOP members would offer amendments that could expose the panel’s politically vulnerable Democrats to tough votes. “I do view these as postponements,” Mikulski told appropriators last week. Three bills were approved in subcommittee with bipartisan support — Energy-Water, Labor-HHS-Education and Financial Services. But if they don’t advance beyond the subcommittee level, the committee won’t release the draft text or report language, keeping the details of those measures under wraps, except for brief summaries released at the subcommittee level. The committee’s Republican members said they have not heard any updates from Mikulski on the state of those bills, and some said they were not optimistic that the measures will ever see a full committee markup. “My best guess is that it won’t get marked up,” Mike Johanns, R-Neb., said of the Financial Services bill he helps oversee as ranking member of that appropriations subcommittee. “I am worried because we’ve seen this play out before,” said Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, ranking Republican on the Interior-Environment subcommittee. In the Interior-Environment “budget there’s a lot of things that generate a level of interest and controversy, but we’ve got to plow through it.” Path in the House Unclear:” The prospects for two of those nondefense titles also appear murky across the Capitol. House appropriators have marked up 10 of the 12 annual spending bills, but Labor-HHS-Education and Interior-Environment are still outstanding. House Appropriations Chairman Harold Rogers, R-Ky., said last week he still plans...
to mark up all dozen spending bills, but neither sub- nor full-committee markups have been scheduled. Both measures have proven to be heavy lifts in the chamber in the years since Republicans took over the House. Interior-Environment, in particular, has prompted so many contentious amendments at the committee level that leaders have shelved the bill. House appropriators, meanwhile, have not marked up Labor-HHS-Education at any level beyond the subcommittee in the years that the GOP has taken over. The pessimism surrounding some of the nondefense measures has grown so large in recent weeks that some senior appropriators are starting to acknowledge that a continuing resolution will likely be necessary. “I don’t know if we’ll pass any bills. I’d like to see us pass some of them before we go home for August, but if we don’t it looks like we might be headed for a CR until November 15 or something like that and then come back, but who knows,” said Shelby.

* This is the complete news article.

**HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY**

**DUNCAN ON RATINGS AND DEBT**

Like many of his predecessors, Education Secretary Arne Duncan is known mostly as a K-12 person; that’s his background and clearly his passion, and much of the department’s work is in what happens to students before they get to college. And not surprisingly, as a result, his public speeches and statements tend to veer toward K-12 (and increasingly early education) more than higher education.

**ED DEPT. OFFICIAL: RATINGS ON TRACK FOR FALL RELEASE**

The senior Department of Education official overseeing the development of the Obama administration’s college ratings system confirmed on Wednesday that the department was on track to publish a draft proposal by this fall. Another department official earlier this week had cast doubt on that timeline during remarks at a financial aid administrators’ conference, suggesting that it might not get done by the end of this year, according to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. But Under Secretary of Education Ted Mitchell said Wednesday afternoon that the department was still on track to produce a draft ratings system later this year. “We want to get something out -- a first draft -- for people to look at in the fall,” he told reporters. “I’m still operating on a rough draft for fall.”

* This is the complete news article.

**EDUCATION DEPARTMENT UPDATES COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY LISTS**
As part of the Obama Administration's efforts to keep college within reach for all Americans and encourage institutions to make the costs of college more transparent, the U.S. Department of Education today updated college costs lists on its College Affordability and Transparency Center.

**MOST EXPENSIVE COLLEGES**

The U.S. Department of Education on Monday released its rankings of the most and least expensive colleges in the country -- an annual ritual that some lawmakers are eyeing for elimination in the coming reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. As has been the case in previous years, many well-known institutions appear on this year's list, which ranks the top 5 percent of the most expensive colleges based on tuition and the average net price students pay after receiving financial aid.

**IMMIGRATION**

**OBAMA’S IMMIGRATION PIVOT**
By Edward-Isaac Dovere and Carrie Budoff Brown, *Politico*, July 1, 2014

The White House’s immigration reform ceasefire is over. President Barack Obama came to the Rose Garden Monday to lay out the case: he gave House Speaker John Boehner “space” to convince his members...Obama was one of the few people holding onto hope that a deal could squeak through Congress by the August recess. But even that evaporated when House Republicans reacted to Majority Leader Eric Cantor’s surprise primary loss by moving firmly — and finally — away from immigration reform, and he began a crackdown on the influx of Central American children crossing the southern border, threatening to put him in opposition to immigration reform advocates.

**OUTLOOK FOR IMMIGRATION REFORM DIMS AGAIN**
By Erin Mershon, *Politico’s Morning Tech*, July 1, 2014

Hopes of an immigration overhaul this year - for the few optimists left among the tech crowd - faded yesterday with a concession from President Barack Obama that congressional efforts had failed. He vowed to take administrative actions in its place, a series of smaller steps such as ones earlier this year that gave spouses of H-1B workers the opportunity to work in the U.S. and removed barriers to some groups of high-skilled workers. The president said he conversed with House Speaker John Boehner last week and was told the House leader would not bring an immigration bill to the floor this year. The announcement is a blow to groups like FWD.us, which recently dished out $250,000 for ad spots targeting House Republicans. Even the most positive tech advocates admitted reform appeared dim - at least anytime soon. "Certainly, it doesn’t look good and it’s the first time I’ve said that," said Emily Lam of the Silicon Valley
Leadership Group. The question now is what, if anything, tech stands to gain from executive actions.

* This is the complete news article.

**INNOVATION**

**SENATORS INTRODUCE TRANSFER ACT TO STRENGTHEN RESEARCH COMMERCIALIZATION**

*Association of American Universities (AAU) Weekly Wrap-Up, June 27, 2014*

On June 26, Senators Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Daniel Coats (R-IN) introduced the TRANSFER Act (S. 2551), a bill that would establish the “Innovative Approaches to Technology Transfer Grant Program” to improve or accelerate the commercialization of federally funded research being conducted at universities, federal laboratories, and other non-profit research organizations. Under the legislation, federal funds could be used to support proof of concept work, technology maturation activities, technical validation, technical assistance to licensees, outreach to small business, and other efforts to facilitate translation of early-stage technology to market viability. The bill would allow institutions of higher education, technology transfer organizations, federal laboratories, public or private non-profit entities, or consortia of any of these types of organizations to apply for grants. The program would be funded through a small set-aside (.05 percent in 2015, .1 percent in 2016 and 2017) of federal agency extramural research or R&D budgets, to be drawn from the STTR expenditure requirements for each agency. Representatives Derek Kilmer (D-WA) and Chris Collins (R-NY) originally introduced the TRANSFER Act in the House (H.R. 2981), in August 2013. AAU, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, and other organizations sent a letter of support for the Kilmer-Collins bill. The House-passed National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 4435), which passed the House on May 22, includes the TRANSFER Act language.

* This is the complete news article.

**HOUSE ENERGY AND COMMERCE SUBCOMMITTEE BAD FAITH DEMAND LETTER LEGISLATION**

*Association of Public and Land-grant Universities Congressional and governmental Affairs News, June 27, 2014*

Representative Lee Terry (R-NE), Chair of the Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade Subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, has developed draft legislation targeted on misleading and fraudulent patent demand letters. The bill is expected to be introduced in the very near future and marked up by the Subcommittee in mid-July. The Subcommittee held two hearings on the subject this spring and there have been extensive talks with both sides as the Committee works to develop balanced legislation. The university associations have been supporting these negotiations by establishing common positions with others representing patent owners. The current draft bill would be a straightforward remedy for fraudulent behavior employing Federal Trade Commission (FTC) unfair trade enforcement
rather than modifying the patent code. The bill would establish that engaging in a “pattern or practice” of sending patent demand letters is an unfair or deceptive act or practice under the FTC Act if those communications contain any of a specific list of false or misleading statements or fail to include a set of required disclosures. Since university demand letters are not misleading and already contain these disclosures, it seems this bill is drafted in a way that would not unfairly penalize universities. The bill would authorize the FTC to seek civil penalties for a violation of these provisions. The bill includes a federal preemption of any state laws or regulations relating to the transmission or contents of patent demand letters, a provision the university associations support.

* This is the complete news article.

**PATENT REFORMERS CAMPAIGNING AGAINST JOHNSON'S POTENTIAL PTO NOD**
By Erin Mershon, *Politico’s Morning Tech*, July 1, 2014

Johnson and Johnson VP Phil Johnson hasn't yet been officially nominated as Director of the Patent and Trademark Office, but that hasn't stopped the pro-reform community from launching a campaign against his expected nomination. Several reformers told us they're actively expressing their concern to the appropriate White House folks - and, MT hears from a Hill aide, several senators who worked for patent reform this year are also pushing back against his appointment. Johnson is respected among representatives for major patent holding companies, but to others, he's seen as a ringleader for the effort to keep the status quo when it comes to the patent system. The Main Street Patent Coalition, for one, called him 'one of the most prominent opponents of reform' in a statement. And CCIA says he's 'not clearly committed to advancing the Administration's long held position that the patent system needs reform.' Two reform advocates told us that the campaign against Johnson had delayed a nomination planned for earlier this month. The White House didn't comment.

* This is the complete news article.

**MIXED MARKS FOR PATENT OFFICE**

President Barack Obama still hasn't named a new [U.S. Patent and Trademark Office] USPTO chief, but for now, the agency is the subject of new criticism because of its backlog. The inspector general of the Commerce Department, which keeps watch over USPTO, issued a new report this week that found it's struggling to make its way through Consumer Examination applications, or RCEs. (For the uninitiated, the IG explains: 'RCEs are patent applications resubmitted for consideration after an examiner has previously closed the review, such as by making a second and final rejection of the inventor's claims.') In sum, PTO found a recent increase in the RCE backlog - from 17,700 in October 2009 to 111,300 in March 2013. The uptick stems from the fact there are 'more rejected applications, and applicants are more willing to pursue an RCE after a final rejection than in the past,' according to the IG. Moreover, PTO had policies that 'incentivized examiners to focus on new applications rather than RCEs,' the
INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

INFORMATION ON THE U.S.-AFRICA LEADERS SUMMIT
USAID Press Release, July 2, 2014

As announced by the White House, President Obama will host the U.S. - Africa Leaders Summit in Washington, D.C. on Tuesday, August 5 and Wednesday, August 6, 2014. This historic summit, the first of its kind, will bring leaders from across the African continent to the nation's capital and further strengthen ties with one of the world's most dynamic and fastest-growing regions. The theme of the Summit is investing in the next generation. Building on the progress made since President Obama's trip to Africa last summer, the Summit will advance the focus on trade and investment in Africa, and highlight America’s commitment to Africa’s security, its democratic development, and elevate the ideas of young people.

AMERICAN CITIZEN COLLEGE STUDENTS CAN APPLY JULY 2 - 22, 2014 FOR VIRTUAL STUDENT FOREIGN SERVICE EINTERNSHIPS
U.S. State Department Press Release, June 30, 2014

The Virtual Student Foreign Service (VSFS) is a unique opportunity allowing U.S. citizen undergraduate and graduate students to engage in citizen diplomacy through virtual internships (eInternships) with federal government agencies. VSFS enables students to work remotely to support the work of the U.S. Government around the world. Applications will be accepted July 2 – 22, 2014, for 321 extraordinarily interesting projects with the U.S. Department of State, USAID, and 11 other agencies, available through USAJobs.gov.

INTERNET POLICY

NET NEUTRALITY HITS THE ROAD
By Erin Mershon, Politico's Morning Tech, July 1, 2014

For weeks, comments from around the country have been pouring into Washington about the Federal Communication’s Commission’s (FCC's) proposed new open Internet rules, but for the most part, the conversation has played out inside the Beltway. That’s set to change today as Senate Judiciary Chairman Patrick Leahy convenes a field hearing on the issue in Vermont -- the first time the upper chamber's tackled the issue since Chairman Tom Wheeler pitched new rules earlier this year. Expect Leahy, for one, to push against prioritization deals. He introduced legislation last month that would ban pay-to-play deals, and he published an op-ed last night.
advocating for stronger rules, too (that's here: http://huff.to/1o1D79u). Former Commissioner Michael Copps will be on hand to testify today - and he'll also be pushing back against rules that would allow prioritization, advocating instead for reclassification under Title II. Expect a few light jabs at the present commission during his testimony, as well. 'Traveling outside of the Washington, D.C. Beltway to hear from citizens who must live with the policies those of us in Washington create is essential...I wish the present FCC would do the same on this issue,' he'll say.

* This is the complete news article.

WHEELER: 'THERE PROBABLY SHOULD BE SOME PRIORITIES'
By Erin Mershon, Politico’s Morning Tech, July 1, 2014

'A 911 call is probably more important than a Netflix video,' the FCC Chairman said during a forum in Albuquerque last night. Leaders in Silicon Valley recently told him "you have to keep the Internet open, but you have to keep it flexible so that innovation can take place, and you don't thwart the kind of innovation we're doing," he said during the forum sponsored by the Media Literacy Project and the Digital Justice Coalition of New Mexico in collaboration with the Center for Media Justice and Free Press. New Mexico State Sen. Jacob Candelaria wasn't so sure Wheeler's proposal that would allow for differential pricing would do the trick. "A lot of the people in our community have a gut reaction that is uncomfortable when we start talking about creating an Internet where priority is given because I think the immediate fear is that that priority is going to be based on socio-economic status. It's going to be based on geography," he said. "Unfortunately those two things are synonymous with race."

* This is the complete news article.

LEAHY'S NET NEUTRALITY ROADSHOW
By Erin Mershon, Politico’s Morning Tech, July 2, 2014

Witnesses at yesterday's net neutrality hearing in Vermont took advantage of the many miles between them and FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler and panned his open Internet proposal. Senate Judiciary Chairman Patrick Leahy, who called for the meeting, said Wheeler's plan was "contrary to every single principle that I felt the Internet was based on." State librarian Martha Reid predicted an Internet where "information is available to only those who have deep pockets," and Cabot Orton, the proprietor of the Vermont County Store, said he didn't want to "imagine an America with two Internets," which might put small businesses "out of shop for good."

* This is the complete news article.

LIBRARIES
ED GROUPS PAN E-RATE REPORT
By Caitlin Emma, Politico's Morning Education, July 2, 2014

Education groups slammed a new FCC report breaking down how states stand to gain from the E-Rate plan Chairman Wheeler put forth last month, calling the report misleading. "After spending this week talking to numerous rural educators, it is clear that the low amounts of per capita funding the chairman proposes to provide rural schools and libraries for Wi-Fi broadband is inadequate for their needs," said Brian Lewis, who heads the International Society for Technology in Education. "These statewide percentages mask these on the ground realities. The chairman needs to protect rural communities in a final E-Rate order." Ed Companies Push Back On Net Neutrality, Too: Those aren't the only criticisms education folks are throwing at Wheeler. Four online education companies (Codeacademy, CodeCombat, Open Curriculum and General Assembly) all blasted the open Internet proposal, saying in a statement it would allow for-profit schools to 'squelch competition and stifle innovation from up-and-comers providing affordable, quality education and job-training to millions.'

* This is the complete news article.

PHYSICAL SCIENCES & ENGINEERING

CALL FOR COMMENTS: A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE MATERIALS GENOME INITIATIVE
National Institute of Standards & Technology (NIST) Tech Beat, June 27, 2014

The federal government is looking for public comment on a draft strategic plan for the Obama administration's Materials Genome Initiative (MGI). The draft MGI Strategic Plan lays out a multi-year program to address four key challenges to the MGI vision for doing materials research. Launched by President Obama in 2011, the MGI is a program that links government research agencies with industry and academic institutions in an effort to establish a new paradigm for creating advanced materials that meet the needs of a broad range of industries, from defense, aerospace, transportation and telecommunications to nano- and biotechnology. A central goal of the MGI is to halve the time required to move new advanced materials from laboratory discovery to commercial use. The main emphasis of the MGI is to replace the standard trial-and-error approach to the design of new high-performance materials—alloys, composites, nanostructured materials—with a rational design approach based on multidisciplinary research, theory, computer models and vast data sets.

DOE LABS COMMISSION TO MEET
American Association for the Advancement of Science Policy Alert, July 3, 2014

The Commission to Review the Effectiveness of the National Energy Laboratories, established to advise the Secretary of Energy, will have its first meeting on July 18 in Washington, DC. The meeting is open to the public; information on how to participate or otherwise give input to the committee can be found in the Federal Register notice.
TOP JOBS VACANT AS NOMINEES LANGUISH IN CONFIRMATION LIMBO
By Robin Bravender, E&E Reporter, July 1, 2014

Richard Engler has been in nomination purgatory for a long time. Since late 2012, he's been President Obama's nominee for a chemical safety watchdog panel. He's had his finances and personal life scrutinized and been grilled by the White House, the FBI and Senate Republicans. He's got a transition plan ready in case he gets uprooted from his job in New Jersey and he's prepared to move to Washington, D.C., without much notice at any time, should he finally win Senate confirmation. "The uncertainty has almost become part of daily life," Engler said. He's not alone. Engler is one of a spate of Obama nominees living in limbo. Across the government, there are more than 200 posts awaiting Senate confirmation -- including some like Engler who have been waiting for years, according to White House data. That includes more than two dozen key nominees for high-ranking energy and environmental gigs. For presidential nominees, the long delays are frustrating as they face uncertainty about when -- or if -- they'll ultimately get the jobs. Some leave their previous positions or divest in stocks to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest, and many have been stalled for reasons that have less to do with them than with broader partisan fights over the Obama administration's policies. As government agencies await new leaders, the widespread vacancies can create uncertainty about agency management and the future of key policies as the clock ticks down on Obama's second term. For now, that means there are no Senate-confirmed bosses to oversee EPA's air program, the Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service, or the Energy Department's Office of Science. At the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board -- an agency that's been plagued by management problems and consistently lagged on issuing important reports about serious chemical accidents -- two of the board's five seats are currently filled (Greenwire, June 19). Engler and another nominee are still awaiting confirmation, and Sen. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) has issued a procedural "hold" on the two nominees, further complicating their appointments. "Given the urgency of the chemical safety issue, the agency really needs to be fully staffed," Engler said. Other would-be top officials have been waiting even longer. Ken Kopocis, the administration's pick to be U.S. EPA's next water chief, was nominated more than three years ago in June 2011. The former Capitol Hill staffer is liked on both sides of the aisle,

* This is the complete news article.
but he's become a lightning rod for attacks on the Obama administration's water policies, and it's unclear whether he'll ever win the Senate's blessing (Greenwire, May 9). He's one of six EPA nominees awaiting Senate confirmation. Nine other nominees are awaiting confirmation for top Energy Department posts, and the White House is on the hunt for a new deputy secretary after Daniel Poneman recently announced he'll be stepping down. Three top Interior picks are awaiting Senate confirmation. The confirmation process isn't for the faint of heart. "I wouldn't wish it on anyone, quite frankly," said Bob Abbey, director of the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management during Obama's first term. Abbey recalled poring over boxes of old tax returns to respond to extensive financial questions. The administration looked into his relatives and their employment histories, asked about the clients he'd had in the private sector and even asked questions about sexual encounters, he said. "It's tedious, it's time-consuming. It delves into a lot of personal information," he said. The delays, coupled with the invasiveness of the confirmation process, mean some qualified candidates might not be anxious to sign up for administration jobs. "When one looks at how much time is left within this particular administration, I think it would create a challenge to get someone to commit to now be nominated for a position that requires Senate confirmation," Abbey said. So much for the 'nuclear option': Frustrated by a backlog in confirmations, Senate Democrats late last year invoked the so-called nuclear option, changing Senate rules to make it harder for the GOP to block nominees. Under the rules change, agency nominees would no longer need 60 votes to overcome filibusters. Instead, they would require a simple majority vote for confirmation. Theoretically, that paved the way for the administration to plow ahead with nomination votes despite Republican opposition. But some confirmations have still been sluggish as the administration has focused on moving judicial nominees, and Senate rules still require a significant chunk of time to consider each nominee. That could be overcome with GOP cooperation, but Republicans were incensed by the rules change and are often taking advantage of the remaining procedural hurdles. "Everyone just assumed once this was changed that the backlog would be broken, but it still takes time to process each and every one of these nominees," said Jim Manley, a former longtime aide to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) who now works at QGA Public Affairs. Last week, before heading home for the holiday, the Senate approved a batch of nominees, including two Interior officials and one White House energy nominee. Vincent Logan -- picked in September 2012 -- was confirmed for Interior's Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians. Esther Puakela Kia'a'ina was confirmed as Interior's assistant secretary for insular areas after she was nominated last September. Jo Emily Handselman was also confirmed as associate director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy -- nearly a year after she was nominated. Here's a look at some of the energy and environmental nominations still pending:

**EPA**

- Victoria Wassmer to be chief financial officer. First announced September 2013. Cleared committee February 2014.
- Tom Burke to be assistant administrator for the Office of Research and Development. First announced November 2013. Cleared committee February 2014.
- Janet McCabe to be assistant administrator for air. First announced December 2013. Pending in committee.
• Ann Dunkin to be assistant administrator for environmental information. First announced January 2014. Pending in committee.
• Jane Nishida to be assistant administrator for international affairs. First announced April 2014. Pending in committee.

DOE
• Christopher Smith to be assistant secretary for fossil energy. First announced September 2013. Cleared committee December 2013 and January 2014.
• Jonathan Elkind to be assistant secretary for international affairs. First announced October 2013. Cleared committee January 2014.
• Joseph Hezir to be chief financial officer. First announced October 2013. Cleared committee January 2014.
• Madelyn Creedon to be principal deputy administrator for the National Nuclear Security Administration. First announced November 2013. Cleared committee January 2014.
• Mark Kastner to be director of the Office of Science. First announced November 2013. Cleared committee January 2014.
• Franklin Orr to be undersecretary of science. First announced November 2013. Cleared committee January 2014.
• Monica Regalbuto to be assistant secretary for environmental management. First announced March 2014. Cleared Energy and Natural Resources and Armed Services committees June 2014.

Interior
• Rhea Suh to be assistant secretary for fish and wildlife. First announced October 2013. Cleared Environment and Public Works Committee on February 2014 and ENR Committee on March 2014.
• Estevan Lopez to be commissioner of reclamation. First announced March 2014. Cleared committee June 2014.

Chemical Safety Board
• Richard Engler to be a board member. First announced December 2012. Cleared committee June 2013 and February 2014.
• Manuel Ehrlich to be a board member. First announced January 2014. Pending in committee.

White House, FERC, DOJ
• Robert Simon to be associate director for energy and environment at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. First announced July 2013. Cleared committee November 2013 and January 2014.
• Cheryl LaFleur to be a FERC commissioner. First announced May 2014. Cleared
• John Cruden to be assistant attorney general for the Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division. First announced December 2013. Cleared committee March 2014.

* This is the complete news article.

**RESEARCH POLICY**

**AS U.S. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL INVESTMENTS SHRINK, DEFENSE DEPARTMENT NEEDS BETTER STRATEGY FOR MONITORING AND LEVERAGING GLOBAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

The National Academies Press, June 30, 2014

To remain globally competitive in science and technology (S&T), the U.S. Department of Defense should develop an implementable strategy to improve its awareness of the global S&T landscape and identify opportunities for collaboration, says a new report from the National Research Council. The department also should lower some barriers to global engagement that currently exist, such as restrictions on travel by DOD personnel to international conferences. If DOD does not monitor and leverage advances taking place in other countries, it runs the risk of losing technological competency, with severe implications for U.S. economic and national security, the report says.

**FURTHERING AMERICA’S RESEARCH ENTERPRISE**

The National Academies Press, June 27, 2014

Scientific research has enabled America to remain at the forefront of global competition for commercially viable technologies and other innovations. For more than 65 years, the United States has led the world in science and technology. Discoveries from scientific research have extended our understanding of the physical and natural world, the cosmos, society, and of humans -- their minds, bodies, and economic and other social interactions. Through these discoveries, science has enabled longer and healthier lives, provided for a better-educated citizenry, enhanced the national economy, and strengthened America's position in the global economy.

**FACILITATING RESEARCH AT PRIMARILY UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTIONS**

National Science Foundation (NSF) Program Solicitation, July 2, 2014

The Research in Undergraduate Institutions (RUI) and Research Opportunity Awards (ROA) funding opportunities support research by faculty members at predominantly undergraduate institutions (PUIs). RUI proposals support PUI faculty in research that engages them in their professional field(s), builds capacity for research at their home institution, and supports the
integration of research and undergraduate education. ROAs similarly support PUI faculty research, but these awards typically allow faculty to work as visiting scientists at research-intensive organizations where they collaborate with other NSF-supported investigators. Eligible PUIs are accredited colleges and universities (including two-year community colleges) that award Associate's degrees, Bachelor's degrees, and/or Master's degrees in NSF-supported fields, but have awarded 20 or fewer Ph.D./D.Sci. degrees in all NSF-supported fields during the combined previous two academic years. All NSF directorates may support RUI and ROA funding activities.

**SEXUAL ASSAULT POLICY**

**U.S. ADDS 12 INSTITUTIONS TO TITLE IX INVESTIGATION LIST**  
Inside Higher Ed, July 2, 2014

The Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights has added a dozen more colleges and universities to its growing list of institutions being investigated for their handling of sexual assault cases. The additions bring the total number of colleges included on the list to 67. While the list does not contain specific details about the cases, all of the most recent additions are cases opened on or after May 5.

**IN SEXUAL-MISCONDUCT POLICIES, DIFFICULTY ARISES IN DEFINING 'YES'**  

Twenty years ago, the "No Means No" campaign, created by a group of Canadian college students to raise awareness about sexual assault, pretty much encompassed the limits of the discussion. Since then, however, ideas about consent have grown more complicated, forcing colleges and students alike to grapple with a tougher issue: Although "no" always means no, "yes" is often murky. In short, defining consent is difficult.

**SEX OFFENSE STATISTICS SHOW U.S. COLLEGE REPORTS ARE RISING**  

Penn State University tallied the nation's highest number of reports of forcible sex offenses on campus in 2012 — 56 — a total that university officials attribute in part to the Jerry Sandusky sex abuse scandal. The University of Michigan at Ann Arbor recorded the second-highest total, 34, followed by Harvard University (31), Indiana University-Bloomington (27), Stanford University (26) and Emory University (26), according to a Washington Post analysis of federal campus crime data.

**SOCIAL SCIENCES**
The National Academies' Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) Panel on Measuring Social and Civic Engagement and Social Cohesion in Surveys has released its final report, Civic Engagement and Social Cohesion: Measuring the Dimensions of Social Capital to Inform Policy. Ken Prewitt, Columbia University and former COSSA President, chaired the panel. The report "provides working definitions of key terms; advises on the feasibility and specifications of indicators relevant to analyses of social, economic, and health domains; and assesses the strength of the evidence regarding the relationship between these indicators and observed trends in crime, employment, and resilience to shocks such as natural disasters. It weighs the relative merits of surveys, administrative records, and non-government data sources, and considers the appropriate role of the federal statistical system, making recommendations to improve the measurement of civic health through government surveys and identifying priority areas for research, development, and implementation." It is available to read and download for free on the National Academies Press website; print copies will be available shortly.

* This is the complete news article.

**STUDENT AID**

**NEW RESEARCH POINTS TO GAPS IN STUDENT-LOAN COUNSELING**

Each year a larger share of new graduates leave four-year colleges with student-loan debt, and the average balance of those who borrowed is higher, too. Student-loan default rates are on the rise. With those trends in motion, questions of how well students understand their debt have taken on new urgency. Students who borrow through the federal loan programs are required to go through entrance and exit loan counseling. But there hasn’t been much evidence on how well that system works.

**STUDENT-AID LEADERS CALL FOR ALTERNATIVES TO OBAMA’S COLLEGE-RATING SYSTEM**

The departing chair of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators offered his alternative on Monday to President Obama’s forthcoming college-rating system, calling for a system based on "social responsibility." In a session of the association's annual conference here, Craig Munier, director of financial aid at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, detailed a system that would recognize colleges that are doing a good job of educating low-income students and would shame those that aren’t.

**STUDENT LOAN INTEREST RATES INCREASING**
By Kimberly Hefling, Associated Press, July 1, 2014

Interest rates go up today for students taking out new federal loans. This hike is relatively minimal but could foreshadow more increases to come. The change stems from a high-profile, bipartisan deal brokered last year by Congress and signed by President Barack Obama that ties the rates to the financial markets. Interest rates go from 3.86 percent to 4.66 percent on undergraduate Stafford loans. Graduate student loans go from 5.41 percent to 6.21 percent. Interest rates on Plus loans for parents go from 6.41 percent to 7.21 percent.

CRITICS ASSAIL GOVERNMENT’S RESPONSE TO STUDENT-AID FRAUD

Two years ago, in the wake of an alarming report from its inspector general on fraud in federal student-aid programs, the U.S. Education Department announced that it would write new rules to protect taxpayer dollars from abuse. But when a negotiating panel met in Washington this year to craft new "program integrity" rules, the subject of fraud barely came up. The department offered only one proposal to deal with fraud, and it quickly abandoned the idea after colleges criticized the plan.

NACUBO, ACE RELEASE Q&A ON DOD TUITION ASSISTANCE MOU
AAU Council on Federal Relations Update, July 2, 2014

Last month, the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) summarized the main elements and requirements of the Department of Defense’s 2014 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for institutions of higher education that wish to participate in the Department’s tuition assistance program. Colleges and universities that plan to do so are required to sign the MOU by July 23, regardless of any previously signed MOU.

* This is the complete news article.