

The Federation of Behavioral, Psychological, & Cognitive Sciences

Executive Director's Annual Report 2003

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This year has marked further development of the Federation as an organization with great energy and enthusiasm to “advocate, educate and communicate” the best interests of the behavioral, psychological and cognitive science community. This year we welcomed the expertise of three individuals to serve in these roles on the Executive Committee: President - Howard Egeth (Johns Hopkins University); Vice President - Thomas Wallsten (University of Maryland); and At Large Member - Bruce Overmier (University of Minnesota), all of whom will serve a three-year term of office. We continue to rely on our strengths and refine our unique contributions to advocacy efforts in Washington DC. Our focus is always on promoting our sciences at the federal level through programming and/or in building relationships with key policy makers and agency officials. Informing constituent societies of our progress is a critical component of our work.

Recruitment of New Societies

Federation societies continue to be the heart and blood of the organization. Their commitment is strong and greatly appreciated, and their needs give us direction and focus. It is axiomatic to say that all of what we do in Washington is aimed at addressing our individual societies' needs. The composition of society membership in the Federation plays a strong role as we plan each year's work, and, as societies enter the Federation for the first time, we assess how to ensure that our work is inclusive of their particular needs as well. This requires ongoing dialogue as well as careful monitoring of society issues, and we believe our dedication to making these relationship work is one of our strengths.

We are currently comprised of 16 permanent societies (and approximately 75 affiliates) and have welcomed two new, one-year trial-member societies into the fold, bringing us to 18 for 2003. Those new societies are the Cognitive Development Society (CDS) and the Society for Behavioral Neuroendocrinology (SBN); both will decide whether to renew as full member societies in 2004. It is our great pleasure to have these new societies with us and we hope they will become permanent fixtures of the Federation.

Our Vice President, Thomas Wallsten, has assumed leadership of our recruitment efforts. He has developed recruitment materials and designed a plan to attract new societies. His work is being conducted in close collaboration with our President, Howard Egeth, and this project is evolving into an impressive initiative. Members of the Executive Committee have also been called to assist, and the response has been strong.

Member Communications

Federation News

We continue to send out an e-newsletter through our Federation News listserv quite regularly, almost weekly. This year, some Council representatives have sent a sample of these newsletters to their society's listservs, giving their members an opportunity to examine the content and encouraging them to subscribe in order to receive their own copy directly. We have seen a significant increase in membership to the newsletter this past year, much of which is directly attributable to members being informed of its

existence. Additionally, Council representatives occasionally send us articles about important news and events relevant to their societies that we, in turn, publish in the newsletter.

Federation Talk

As a result of our annual meeting last year, we developed a restricted listserv called "FederationTalk." Council representatives and our Executive Committee are the sole members of the list, which we use for the distribution of information that may not be appropriate for public discussion. This listserv can also be used as a medium for discussion and dialogue among the Council and Executive Board members.

In addition to these more formal, or regulated, sources of communication, a more informal "open door" policy is in place for society members to contact us directly on any matter. Many calls and emails are handled each day and we feel this "personal touch" with the Washington office continues to be a major benefit to the societies which we serve. Many of our societies could not afford to have a presence in DC but, as a conglomerate, representation is possible. We value and encourage this communication.

Funding Sources and Initiatives

Event Sponsorship

A new event sponsorship brochure was developed, setting costs for societies and associations that wish to co-sponsor events with the Federation. Federation societies that wish to co-sponsor events are given a significant price break; since societies already support our efforts, we ask for the minimum amount necessary to help cover expenditures. Non-Federation organizations are required to contribute approximately twice as much as member organizations to co-sponsor events with us. Please note that the first Federation society to take advantage of this programming was the Association for Behavior Analysis (details provided below in the section called "Programming Events.") Other Federation societies are now in the process of discussing possible future programming with us.

Current Grants/ Sponsorships

The Foundation for Child Development (FCD) awarded us a \$20,000 grant to conduct a series of briefings addressing the various applications of psychological research to policy. The terms of this grant were successfully completed in June 2003. (Specific topics of this, and all supported events, are indicated below.) We are awaiting a decision on another grant from the FCD to cover 2004.

Office of Naval Research will conclude its payment to us this year for a grant that sponsored programming on technology and education. (This grant preceded my term as Executive Director and we are glad to have seen it through to its conclusion.)

National Cancer Institute is partnering with us on a forum event titled, "Decision Making: Making Good Decisions Under Conditions of Uncertainty." They have committed funding of up to \$5,000 for NCI-funded speakers on the program. This event is scheduled for the day before our annual meeting in the hope that council representatives will be able to attend and participate in one of our educational workshops. Also, *Human Factors and Ergonomics Society* donated a gift of \$500 to this event.

The Association for Behavior Analysis sponsored a congressional briefing/FORM combination event in the spring of 2003 titled "Translating Basic Research into Application." This was the first time that a Federation society took the initiative to pay extra funds (in this case, \$5,500) in order to participate directly in the design of programming with us.

Grant Seeking

The bulk of Federation funding comes from society dues payments. We were pleased that virtually all societies paid their dues at the start of the year, as we had requested, enabling us to better plan for the year ahead. A major effort this year has addressed increasing our funds from *non-dues* sources and it is an initiative that will doubtless continue for many years. (We are ever hopeful of avoiding a dues increase, yet inflation takes its toll and additional money must be reliably obtained from somewhere.) One of the difficulties we have encountered this year is the prohibition many grantees have against awarding funding to 501(c)(6) organizations. We have found several groups that will accept grant applications from groups with the Federation's tax status and have matched their interests with ours:

- *The Josiah Macy Foundation:* The foundation's interests focus on improving health sciences education in ways that will "better the health of the public." A new initiative being discussed by NIH's behavioral science community is the addition of a health psychology or behavioral medicine component to the medical school curriculum. We are in the process of submitting a letter of intent to the foundation for sponsorship for a FORM on the pros and cons of the inclusion of a new, behavioral medicine component in the medical school curriculums. We would work with the Josiah Macy Foundation and with NIH on this FORM.
- *The Ford Foundation:* One of the foundation's goals is the advancement of human achievement, which they address through a variety of program areas. One of these areas is the "Knowledge, Creativity, and Freedom Program" which, among other topics, promotes education research and reform, in grades K-12. We are in the process of submitting a letter of intent proposing two topic areas that could be addressed and promoted through educational briefings on Capitol Hill: 1) The need for universal pre-school, and 2) Ways to improve childhood literacy in low SES homes.

Advocacy & Educational Activities

Advocacy is the most fluid and, at times, the most exciting thing that we do. While some aspects of it are somewhat routine, such as attending coalition meetings to keep abreast of the latest developments on particular topics, sometimes an issue takes on a kind of life of its own with immediate concerns and fast action required. For example, as this report is being finalized, we are in the throes of the issue regarding the 157 researchers whose work was targeted by the Traditional Values Coalition as inappropriate for NIH funding (research involving sexuality, AIDS, drugs and the like). Our web page provides information on our efforts and is being updated very regularly to reflect constant changes in the situation. (Needless to say, it is difficult to write a comprehensive report for 2003 until 2003 is actually over.)

Coalitions

Participation in the work of coalitions in Washington is an important way for us to strengthen our cause as well as to stay abreast of relevant political issues. Coalitions meet regularly, invite key speakers to coalition-only meetings to present information and listen to our concerns, and advance issues that benefit research-oriented academicians in the country.

The Creation of a New Coalition: With enthusiasm, we are in the process of creating a new coalition in Washington called *Friends of the National Institute of Mental Health* (FoNIMH), which we plan to co-chair with another association. We are organizing a list of societies to serve on our steering committee and selecting a co-chair. Jill Egeth, our Public Policy Analyst, will serve as the official Federation co-chair to the coalition. The plans for the creation of FoNIMH received a favorable response from NIMH leadership. It was a surprise to discover no such coalition existed; the only one in operation for NIMH relates to the delivery of mental health services, not research. Our membership receives grant support

from NIMH, and as we are always seeking ways to increase research funding in the behavioral sciences, the development of a research-oriented NIMH coalition presented itself as an important opportunity. We expect to offer programming that highlights important research being done in our sciences, write letters and testimony, and meet with congressional offices to garner support for NIMH budget increases.

Continuing Our Work With Coalitions: We actively participate in these coalitions: Friends of the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (FNICHHD), Consortium of Social Science Associations, Coalition for the National Science Foundation (COSSA-NSF), the Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF), and the Coalition for the Advancement of Health Through Behavioral and Social Science Research (CAHT-BSSR). We participate in meetings of the National Institutes of Health Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research Coordinating Committee (OBSSRCC) and regularly attend advisory council meetings of several institutes such as the National Institute of Mental Health, National Institute of Drug Abuse, and the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. With respect to the Office of the President of the United States, we meet regularly with the Office of Science and Technology Policy and attend the semi-annual meeting of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology.

New Membership in Coalitions: This past year we have begun working with three additional coalitions:

1. Coalition for National Security Research (CNSR)
2. Coalition for the Environmental Protection Agency's Science and Technology Funding (CEPAST).
3. The Collaboration Committee for Health Promotion First

One of the reasons we are able to remain active in such a large and diverse set of coalitions is that there are two of us in Washington who can share the work. Jill Egeth is our Public Policy Analyst and tends to align more with the groups related to health sciences whereas I participate more in the basic science groups that typically also include the physical and life sciences. The division of labor has worked well from the start and having two PhDs in the office is a strength for our cause.

Letter Writing

The writing of issue-oriented letters to relevant decision-makers is a key component to good advocacy work. Presenting our views and "weighing in" for the behavioral and social sciences is so necessary in a world where every interest group tries to influence policy. Letter writing typically entails a significant amount of background work and then leads to continued follow up. We develop and nurture relationships with various federal employees and others in town in order to enhance our analyses of situations as they arise. We also take time to acknowledge, with gratitude, those in power advocating for research issues we embrace. We sign the Federation name onto numerous letters that arise from our coalition work and from contacts in other venues. In addition, we take our turn at preparing letters addressing issues of particular import to us. In sum, these are the topics we addressed, copies of which are included in this report as addenda. We've provided links to each letter:

▪ *National Science Foundation and funding for the Children's Research Initiative (CRI)*

In December 2002, we were made aware of a potential funding issue that could impact NSF's Directorate of Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE). Lobbyists supporting the Children's Research Initiative, funded through SBE, were requesting a doubling of the CRI budget. While the Federation supported the developmental psychology work that falls under the auspices of CRI, doubling the CRI budget would have resulted in the elimination of other NSF behavioral research programs. In our letters, we successfully requested that CRI receive a smaller funding increase that would not detract from the funding of other SBE programs.

- *Preservation of Scientific Integrity*

Early in 2003, we began to receive reports concerning the removal of scientifically-valid information from various government-sponsored websites, specifically, the removal of a fact sheet about condoms from the Centers for Disease Control site and the replacement of a National Cancer Institute abortion/breast cancer fact sheet with less accurate information. The Federation's letter addressed the importance of maintaining scientific integrity on government websites and not allowing political ideology to interfere with the distribution public health information. In response to a national outcry, the National Cancer Institute convened a meeting of experts and decided to reinstate the original fact sheet.

- *Nomination of SACHRP Ex-Officio Members*

In 2002, the Federation nominated several people to serve on the new Secretary's Advisory Committee on Human Research Protections (SACHRP). One of our nominees, Celia Fisher, was selected and is now a committee member. In March 2003, when the Department of Health and Human Services began selecting ex-officio SACHRP members, we sent a letter to recommending that at least one of these ex-officio members represent the behavioral sciences.

- *"Thank You" to Representatives Defending NIH Peer Review*

During the summer of 2003, one of our biggest advocacy issues was the defense of NIH's peer review system. Threatened by a House amendment attempting to rescind funding from several NIH-sponsored studies deemed "a waste of money", the NIH peer review system came under public attack on several cable news networks. We sent "thank-you" letters to Representatives Barney Frank and Anthony Weiner, who each appeared on television defending the peer review system.

- *Outsourcing at NIH*

The Office of Management and Budget and the Department of Health and Human Services are in the process of implementing "Circular A-76", a plan to outsource certain federal jobs to private sector contractors. This plan is already being put into action at NIH, causing the scientific community to wonder if Scientific Review Administrator and Health Scientist Administrator positions would be contracted out to the private sector. Since these positions are integral to the grants management process and are filled by skilled, trained PhDs, we sent a letter stating that HAS and SRA positions should *not* be subject to outsourcing.

- *Letter of nomination for NIMH Basic Science Working Group*

During the September 2003 meeting of the NIMH Advisory Council, the formation of a working group chartered to examine the role of basic behavioral, cognitive, molecular, and cellular research was announced. At this stage, there are two working groups, one focused solely on the behavioral and cognitive areas and its goals will be to articulate the role of those basic sciences to the mission of NIMH and to develop guidelines for prioritizing basic research needs. The scientific community was invited to nominate representatives to serve on the committee, and we submitted seven nominations for working group membership.

- *Letter of nomination for NIH-Wide Behavioral Science Working Group*

In response to an October 2003 announcement of the creation of an NIH-wide Basic Research Steering Committee chartered to assess NIH's basic behavioral research portfolio and identify potential areas of opportunity, the Federation nominated four researchers for group membership.

- *Press release on the NIH "hit list" of researchers conducting studies on sexual behavior*

In July 2003, we began tracking a potential threat to the NIH peer-review system. In July, several Congressmen in the House began questioning the "usefulness" of several NIH-funded studies on human sexuality. In October, this threat was expanded to 157 researchers studying HIV transmission,

substance use, and sexual behavior. Over a one-week time frame, we learned that the conservative Traditional Values Coalition (TVC) put together a list of 157 NIH-funded researchers, many of them in the behavioral sciences, which they submitted to Republican members of a House committee. The list was then accidentally given to NIH officials when NIH asked for the list of studies Congress was planning on scrutinizing. Although this story may have started out with a misunderstanding, it reignited smoldering fears within the research community. Given the events of this summer, when NIH peer review was first questioned, it seems very possible that more than ten studies will be examined for merit later on this year. We wrote a press release that we sent to the "Politics and Science" website, run by Rep. Henry Waxman's office. The release was a public statement from the Federation, stating our support of the NIH peer review system and the need to prevent ideology from influencing science.

▪ *Letter to the Department of Education Secretary Rod Paige*

In December 2003, member society AERA asked us to consider an issue relevant to education research. In an effort to improve the quality of the nation's education research, the Department of Education proposed a priority in the Federal Register for studies implementing experimental design, stating that, "Evaluation methods using an experimental design are best for determining project effectiveness." Since the Federation believes that each study's needs should be individually determined, we sent comments to the Department of Education in response to the Federal Register notice, asking the Department instead consider implementing the Institute of Education Standards (IES) standards for education research.

In addition to these more formal communications, we also took advantage of more informal ways to present our opinion on our members' behalf. For example, sometimes policy documents are considered with time available for comment from organizations. One such example arose this year when the Department of Agriculture was considering making changes to the Animal Welfare Act to require researchers to keep medical records on each animal in the laboratory. They accepted email reactions and we stated that the changes would create more paper work for the researchers and was redundant with other regulations already in place. (Re: Docket 97-033-1, Federal Register.)

Summary of Programming Events (*all proceedings are on the website*)

- November 15, 2002 FORM: *"Improving the Relationship Between Science and the Media"*
This event occurred during our annual meeting last year and was the final event for 2002. The focus of the discussion was the state of the relationship between behavioral scientists and media and ways to improve the quality of that relationship. On the website are tips gleaned from the presentations on effective communication with the media about research projects.
- March 7, 2003 Congressional Briefing: *"Special Education and Neighborhoods: Does Social Context Affect Placement?"* The Federation, in conjunction with the Foundation for Child Development, hosted this science briefing relevant to the pending reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Congressional staff heard presentations on recent research findings on the relationship between neighborhood type and placement in special education classes. Our congressional host was Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.
- April 10 & 11, 2003: Combination Event: FORM (*"Translating Basic Research into Application"*) followed by a Congressional Briefing (*"Using Science as a Basis for Behavior Change"*). The Federation co-sponsored these events with one of its member societies, the

Association for Behavior Analysis. Both programs related to an important funding initiative at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) designed to facilitate the application of basic research. Our congressional sponsor was Representative Rush Holt.

- May 22, 2003: Reception sponsored by 18 organizations (including ours) for the new Directors of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), and the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). They received an official welcome on Capitol Hill from Members of Congress and various scientific and advocacy organizations. Drs. Thomas Insel (NIMH), Tink-Kai Li (NIAAA) and Nora Volkow (NIDA) each addressed the 150 guests, expressing their thanks for the reception and describing their visions for each of the three institutes.
- June 6, 2003: The Federation, in conjunction with the Foundation for Child Development, hosted a Science and Public Policy briefing (*"How Are Our Children Doing? Results from the Child Well-Being Index"*) on Capitol Hill on the Child Well-Being Index (CWI). One of the authors of the Index, Kenneth Land, presented information on the history of the Index and on trends in childhood outcomes between the 1970s and the present. Our congressional sponsor was Representative Grace Napolitano.
- June 17, 2003: Capitol Hill Exhibition and Reception: The Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF) held its annual congressional poster exhibition and reception. CNSF, a group of 70 scientific, engineering, and professional societies, universities, and corporations that work together to promote the NSF research portfolio, hosts this yearly reception in order to highlight the importance of NSF-funded research to this nation's future. As a member of CNSF, the Federation was able to sponsor two psychologists to represent the behavioral sciences at the exhibition. Barbara Landau, PhD (Johns Hopkins) and Jim Hoffman, PhD (University of Delaware) presented their work on "Specialization in Spatial Cognition". Landau and Hoffman collaborate on an NSF-funded study of Williams Syndrome, a rare genetic disorder resulting in mild mental retardation and an unusual pattern of strengths and weaknesses in cognitive abilities. Their poster depicted a variety of spatial deficits and pinpointed areas of the brain that are responsible for performing these spatial tasks.
- November 21, 2003: FORM on *"Decision-Making: Making Good Decisions Under Conditions of Uncertainty"* was held in conjunction with the Federation annual meeting. One discussion panels focused on decision-making in extreme circumstances, another on the use of decision support tools in medicine, and a third on funding for this type of research. The proceedings and summary will be expanded in the 2004 annual report.

Awards

This year, the Federation nominated David Dinges, PhD, for the Decade of Behavior Research Award. This award celebrates behavioral science researchers whose work has had a demonstrable influence on American policy. Dr. Dinges' work on the links between sleep, health, and performance led, among other things, to the creation of laws regulating the number of hours truckers may spend on the road without sleeping. Dr. Dinges was selected by the Decade of Behavior Advisory Council to receive the Research Award. He will present his research findings at a congressional briefing sponsored by the Decade of Behavior and the Federation later this year.