

### **APA's Science Directorate Advocacy Priorities**

The APA Science Directorate's Government Relations Office (SGRO) serves as a liaison between psychological science and the federal government's legislative and executive branches. In addition to training psychologists to better advocate for their own research and engage in the policy-making process, SGRO staff work with Congress and federal agencies to further three broad goals:

- increase federal funding for psychological research;
- ensure that results of relevant research are incorporated into legislation and policy decisions; and
- strengthen the scientific infrastructure (e.g., through protecting the peer review process and making sure that the regulation of science is fair and transparent).

SGRO tracks and advocates for federal investments in psychological research across multiple agencies, including: the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and National Aeronautics and Space Administration, as well as the Departments of Education, Defense, Transportation, Commerce, Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs.

The following are examples of SGRO's current advocacy initiatives that fall within the three overall priority areas:

#### **Leading Coalition Efforts for Child Development Research**

SGRO is taking a lead in advocating for a 6.6 percent increase for research at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) in Fiscal Year 2009. In coalition with other health groups, SGRO has submitted appropriations testimony, met with Congressional appropriations committee staff, and sponsored a Congressional briefing to highlight the cutting edge research the institute funds in intellectual and developmental disabilities. Lobbying efforts for NIH biomedical and behavioral research support will continue throughout the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress.

#### **Bringing the Concerns of Psychological Science to the Table As NIH Modifies its Peer Review Process**

The fairness and transparency of peer review systems is of major importance to the support and maintenance of psychological science. For the past year, staff and committees of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have carefully examined the two-tiered peer review system through which NIH rates and ranks grant applications. During 2007, NIH working groups collected input and ideas for enhancing the peer review system from all stakeholder communities, and in June, 2008, an implementation plan for various modifications to the important system was released. At each step along the way, SGRO has ensured that psychology is at the table. APA has sought feedback from its member scientists to bring into the NIH discussions, and been present during meetings, conference calls and webcasts to bring the latest information to psychologists.

### **Briefing Congress on Psychology's Central Role in Combating Substance Use Disorders**

On behalf of the Friends of NIDA (National Institute on Drug Abuse) coalition, SGRO works to elevate the profile of substance abuse research on Capitol Hill via an educational briefing series. Over the past four years, the coalition has held over ten briefings covering a range of topics including the genetics of drug abuse, the treatment of tobacco dependence, comorbidity, blending research and practice, prevention science, prescription drug abuse, methamphetamine addiction, HIV/AIDS, and the treatment of offenders in the criminal justice system. All of the briefings have highlighted the importance of psychological science in NIDA's research portfolio by pairing APA psychologists with the NIDA Director, Dr. Nora Volkow.

### **Increasing Behavioral Research Funding at the National Institute of Justice**

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is the research, development, and evaluation arm of the Department of Justice. It funds research in a range of scientific disciplines, including behavioral and social science research aimed at identifying evidence-based solutions for reducing crime and increasing public safety. NIJ's funding was cut dramatically last year and the Administration has proposed flat funding for Fiscal Year 2009. SGRO submitted testimony urging Congress to reverse this trend of budgetary neglect, and also is working with Senate Judiciary Committee staff regarding language in the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act that would strengthen the peer review process and define and promote the use of evidence-based practices within the Department of Justice.

### **Highlighting Psychological Research in Support of National Defense Needs**

For decades, psychologists have played vital roles within the Department of Defense (DoD), as providers of clinical services to military personnel and their families, and as scientific researchers investigating mission-targeted issues ranging from airplane cockpit design to distance learning. SGRO advocates on behalf of psychological research sponsored by DoD and echoes recommendations made in the new National Research Council report on *Human Behavior in Military Contexts* (2008) calling for a doubling of the current budgets for basic and applied behavioral and social science research "across the U.S. military research agencies."

### **Boosting Behavioral Research at NASA**

The NASA research budget has gone down steadily over the last 20 years, especially in the areas of human performance and aviation safety, forcing NASA centers to cut jobs and university grants. Space exploration is expanding at about the same rate, and longer space missions place increasing demands on psychological health and performance in space. SGRO advocates for increased behavioral research funding at NASA to enable psychological scientists to meet these challenges head on, through computational systems that can improve

human decision-making and allow humans to function in extremely challenging environments, such as space flight.