

A Note from the Editor: *Major Changes at FIPSE*
page 2

In Memoriam: *Virginia B. Smith and Carolyn D. Forman*
page 2

FIPSE Facts
page 3

Nurturing Innovation: Profiles of Former FIPSE Projects That Grew
page 5

FIPSE's International Programs on the Move
page 6

Just the FAQs: *The FIPSE Database*
page 7

FIPSE Project Web Sites That Caught Our Eye
page 8

UPCOMING DEADLINES

As we went to press, the Department of Education was operating under a Continuing Resolution. As soon as we have more information about grant competitions, that information will appear in the "What's New" box on the FIPSE homepage located at www.ed.gov/fipse.

Increasing Access to Quality Learning Through Peer Feedback in Online Discussions

FIPSE is often asked to give an example of a project that was not only well-designed and administered but was also effectively evaluated. **Purdue University's 2006 Comprehensive Grant** directed by Project Director Jennifer Richardson and Project Co-Director Peggy Ertmer is an exemplary project. The goal of the project is to prepare students for today's electronically interconnected workplace by promoting student learning, critical thinking, and self-direction in selected disciplines through the use of online class discussions augmented by a peer feedback strategy.

In this project content-based online discussions are used to augment in-class coverage of topics and focus students on the application, synthesis, and evaluation of subject matter information in order to solve problems relevant to the discipline. Peer feedback is employed as a way to improve the overall quality of the online discussions, and so lead to greater student learning, while reducing the demands on the instructor to provide individualized feedback to students. The peer feedback strategy includes use of an electronic tool modeled after the kinds of Web-based feedback systems used by online retailers (e.g. Amazon.com).

The project directors collected baseline data on achievement, critical thinking, and self-directed learning from students in two targeted courses

(large undergraduate lecture courses in Engineering and Education) during the spring of 2007, prior to the integration of online discussions and peer feedback. Fall 2007 saw the integration of the online discussions as a formal part of each course, the first condition that project staff members looked at in accordance with the project's research design.

In the spring of 2008, a pilot test using peer feedback within online discussions was implemented in the same courses. Half of the course sections had online discussion with peer feedback and half had online discussions without peer feedback, allowing for comparisons of the effects of the peer feedback. Quantitative data collection included measures of student achievement, critical thinking, and self-directed learning. Qualitative measures, including interviews and surveys, were also employed to examine students' and instructors' perceptions of the efficacy and value of the peer feedback strategy, the use of online discussions to prepare students to work on projects in virtual teams, and suggestions for improvement for the peer feedback tool and strategy.

The learning outcomes from 196 students enrolled in the fall of 2008 undergraduate educational technology course required of all teacher education majors are analyzed and

▶ *continued on page 4*



Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education

U.S. Department of Education
6th floor
1990 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006-8544

Phone: 202-502-7500
Fax: 202-502-7877
E-mail: fipse@ed.gov

A Note From the Editor



*Susan Lehmann
Education Research
Analyst, FIPSE*

Dear FIPSE Alumni and Friends:

FIPSE has a great number of important changes to announce. First, the FIPSE staff is extremely pleased to announce that Ralph Hines has been appointed Director of

FIPSE after having held the post of Acting Director for some time. Frank Frankfort, who many of you know from FIPSE's Special Focus International Programs, has moved along with the four programs to a renamed and restructured International and Foreign Language Education (IFLE) Division. (For more about the reorganization see the related story in this newsletter.) FIPSE is also preparing to say farewell to Donald Fischer who has been with FIPSE since 1996 and with the Department of Education since 1973. Don retires at the end of December. In addition to all his duties as a program officer and sometime Comprehensive Program coordinator, Don has been FIPSE's database coordinator, contracting officer's representative, Web liaison, FIPSE Board contact person, sometime Comprehensive Program Annual Meeting organizer, and to a large extent FIPSE's institutional memory.

▶ *continued on page 3*

In Memoriam



Dr. Virginia B. Smith passed away on August 27, 2010 at age 87. A visionary leader, Dr. Smith lay the groundwork for FIPSE's operating philosophy and principles during her tenure as FIPSE's first director from 1972 to 1977. She was president emerita of both Vassar

and Mills Colleges and a noted thinker and leader in American education. According to her **obituary in the New York Times**, "As president of Vassar, in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., from 1977 to 1986, Ms. Smith led a \$100 million fund-raising drive, recruited students from community colleges, increased the endowment, raised faculty salaries and reinforced the college's commitment to minorities."

Dr. Smith earned bachelor's, master's and law degrees from the University of Washington. She taught economics at what are now the University of Puget Sound and Seattle Pacific University. In 1952, she joined the Institute of Industrial Relations at the University of California, Berkeley, where she was an instructor and director of public programs. In 1965, Dr. Smith became one of the first women in senior leadership in the University of California System when she became assistant vice president. Two years later she joined the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education as a researcher and later became its associate director. The commission made recommendations that continue to be influential, including ones on how to better categorize colleges and universities.

In 1975, during her tenure at FIPSE, Dr. Smith was named by *Change* magazine as among the 44 most important leaders in higher education in the United States. She left FIPSE in 1977 to become president of Vassar, a position she held until she retired in 1986. She came out of retirement for a year to serve as interim president of Mills College in 1990 when campus protest broke out over the trustees' decision to take the college co-ed. The trustees subsequently reversed that decision, an act which Dr. Smith applauded.

In the *New York Times*, Terry W. Hartle, senior vice president of the American Council on Education, which represents 2,000 colleges and universities, said of Dr. Smith, "At a time when many educators assumed that high-quality education and widespread access to it were mutually exclusive, she devoted her career on and off the campus to proving them wrong ... It was the combination of things she did, her leadership in every position she held." She will continue to be remembered in higher education circles for **The Virginia B. Smith Innovative Leadership Award**. The award, given annually by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, was established in 1999 as an endowed award to encourage leadership and innovation in American higher education.

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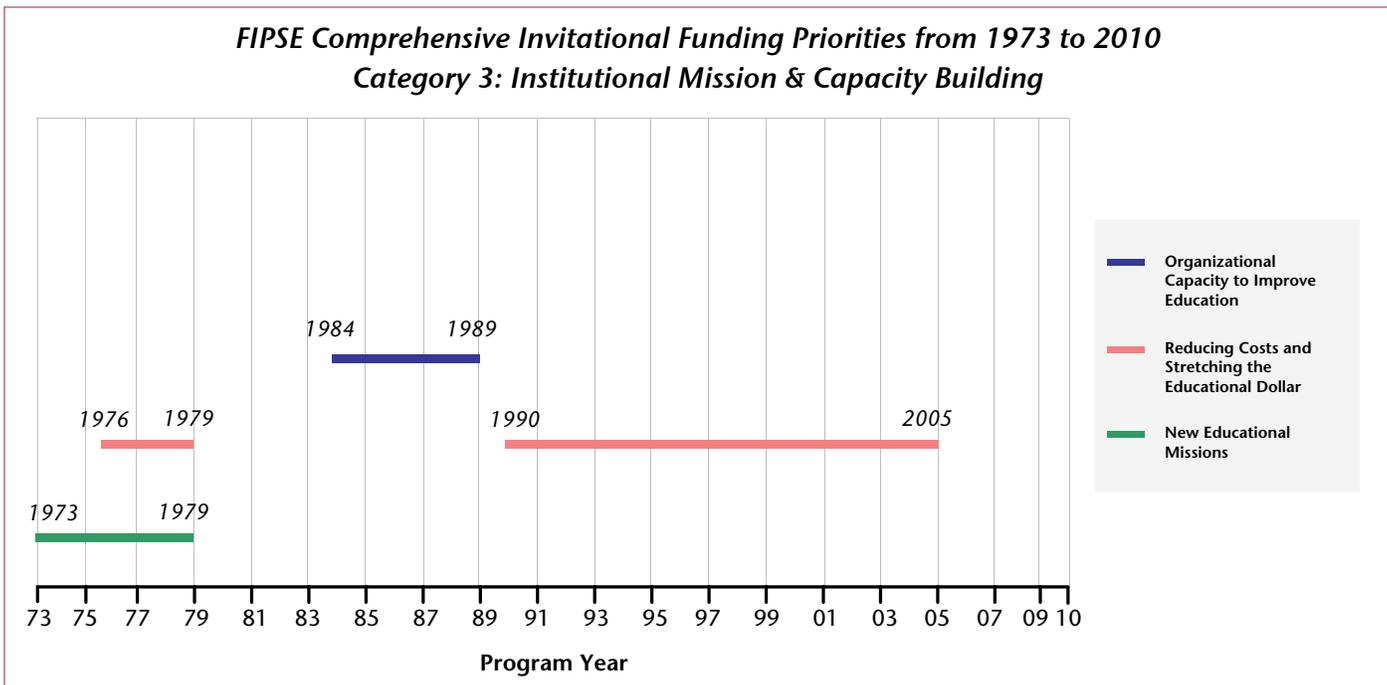
FIPSE FACTS

Comprehensive Program Invitational Priorities in Historical Perspective

FIPSE’s flagship program is the Comprehensive Program. As FIPSE heads towards its 40th anniversary in 2012, we thought it would be interesting to look at where we have been. In this issue we present a review of the invitational funding

priorities that FIPSE has used in the area of institutional mission and capacity building between 1973 and 2010. Though applicants have never been obligated to address invitational priorities in their applications, and they receive no

additional points from reviewers for doing so, a look at the invitational priorities over time gives a sense of the educational trends that were considered important by FIPSE staff, Department of Education officials, Congress, and the field. ■



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As we have begun reassigning all his duties we have come to realize how much we depended on him. We will miss him dearly and wish him all the best in his retirement.

In light of all the changes to FIPSE and in preparation for the Comprehensive Program Project Directors’ Meeting, we have been updating many of our Web pages. There is information you need to know about FIPSE competitive priorities on the revised **Welcome and Overview Page**. Some of the evaluation requirements and expectations have also changed, so please take the time to review the revised documents on the **Evaluation Resources** page. The **FIPSE Google Maps** and **Grants in Action** pages have also recently been updated by Christopher McCormick of our staff. Lastly, but perhaps most

importantly, the FIPSE grant database is now permanently located at the following address: <http://fipsedatabase.ed.gov>. Holders of Congressionally-directed Grants should go to their new Web address: <http://directedgrants.ed.gov>.

As always, please feel free to send us your suggestions and requests for items that would interest you as a former or current FIPSE grantee, former FIPSE employee, or interested reader from the higher education community. Please also feel free to forward this newsletter to colleagues. ■

Best,
Dr. Susan Lehmann, *Education Research Analyst, FIPSE*
susan.lehmann@ed.gov

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WEB SITES REFERENCED IN THIS ARTICLE:

2006 FIPSE Project

<http://fipsedatabase.ed.gov/grantshow.cfm?grantNumber=P116B060421>

Project Web site

<http://www.edci.purdue.edu/fipse/index.htm>

Project Publications and Presentations

<http://www.edci.purdue.edu/fipse/research.htm>

Internet in Higher Education Article

http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6W4X-4XJG5S1-7&_user=3806212&_coverDate=01%2F31%2F2010&_rdoc=1&_fmt=high&_orig=search&_origin=search&_sort=d&_docanchor=&view=c&_searchStrId=1573850520&_rerunOrigin=google&_acct=C000061430&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=3806212&md5=da35b048d4ba7d1db9b166176d3b8ac7&searchtype=a

Journal of Educational Computing Research Article

<http://baywood.metapress.com/app/home/issue.asp?referrer=parent&backto=journal,3,169;linkingpublicationresults,1:300321,1>

available online in Jennifer C. Richardson and Phil Ice's "**Investigating Students' Level of Critical Thinking Across Instructional Strategies in Online Discussions**" which appeared in a 2010 issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Internet in Higher Education* 13, 52-59.

The peer feedback strategy and tool were fully implemented in the fall of 2008 in three disciplines (Engineering, Education, and English courses). Spring 2009 saw the addition of two more discipline areas: Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences (SLHS) and Veterinary Medicine. Two additional courses/ disciplines (Educational Psychology and English as a Second Language) were added in the fall of 2009, allowing for collection of important comparison data.

The project directors facilitated a "Technology-Mediated Feedback" conference strand at Purdue University in April 2009 that brought together researchers working on related projects from other institutions. The conference resulted in multiple connections and a special issue devoted to technology-mediated feedback in the *Journal of Educational Computing Research* published in the fall of 2010. Additional findings on student learning from the FIPSE Comprehensive project appear in "**Peer Feedback in a Large Undergraduate Blended Course: Perceptions of Value and Learning**" contained in that issue: 43(1), 67-88. Several additional **conference presentations** can be downloaded from the **project's Web site**. One of the reasons that this is an exemplary FIPSE project is that the data on student learning are timely and readily available to the public. Another reason is that the presentations and publications set the findings from the

FIPSE-funded project in the context of ongoing work being done by major scholars in the field.

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Though Purdue's grant is winding down, the project team continues to refine training materials to facilitate dissemination of the peer feedback approach in online discussions more broadly. Materials being developed include recommendations for use of the peer feedback tool for instructors, video tutorials for the set-up and implementation of the tool within online discussions, and guidelines for participation in online discussions and use of the peer feedback tool for students. These will also be available on the project's Web site. For those lucky enough to be attending the 5th International Conference on Design Principles and Practices in Rome, Italy in February of 2011, look for a presentation by the grantees entitled "Designing effective question prompts to facilitate critical thinking in online discussions." ■

Nurturing Innovation: Profiles of Former FIPSE Projects that Grew



SELECTED WEB SITES REFERENCED IN THIS ARTICLE:

1999 FIPSE LAAP Grant

<https://fipsedatabase.ed.gov/fipse/grantshow.cfm?grantNumber=P339B990640>

2005 Congressionally-directed Grant

<http://fipsedatabase.ed.gov/fipse/grantshow.cfm?grantNumber=P116Z050043>

2007 FIPSE Comprehensive Grant

<http://fipsedatabase.ed.gov/fipse/grantshow.cfm?grantNumber=P116B070167>

2010 FIPSE Comprehensive Grant

<http://fipsedatabase.ed.gov/fipse/grantshow.cfm?grantNumber=P116B100152>

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The **WebAIM (Keeping Web Accessibility In Mind) Project** was started in 1999 as a first-round FIPSE Learning Anytime Anywhere Partnerships (LAAP) grant to Utah State University. Funded for four years with George Mason University, Blackboard Inc., and the Teaching Learning and Technology affiliate of the American Association of Higher Education as significant partners, **WebAIM** produced some of the first practitioner-based training materials to help Web developers create designs and content that were universally accessible, including to those with disabilities. Moreover, this project funded the development of the first system-change model for postsecondary education to use so that educators could transform their digital space into one that would be inclusive of all individuals. As project director Cyndi Rowland recalls, “By the end of the project we had had incredible success but had also uncovered a problem so deep, it continues to this day.”

The initial FIPSE-funded effort has been sustained for over a decade now by multiple funding methods, including the commercialization of products, a fee-for-services component (many postsecondary institutions and high-profile industry groups come to WebAIM for training and services), additional competitive grants including a both a **2007** and **2010** Comprehensive Program grant to Utah State University, and a **2005 Congressionally-directed**

grant that established the **National Center on Disability and Access to Education**.

The work is highly regarded and continues to have broad impact nationally and internationally. The WebAIM staff were invited to sit on the **United States Access Board’s refresh of Section 508**. A recent search of “web accessibility” on Google returned WebAIM as number four in over 12.9 million results. According to Rowland, “In the past year alone, the WebAIM website has had over 1.5 million page views of content. One of our popular free tools – **WAVE** – is used to generate over 60 thousand reports of accessibility a month (a conservative estimate since we can only count our website visitors, not the downloaded versions that are added to the Firefox toolbar).”

What WAVE does is to aid people in the Web accessibility evaluation process. Rather than providing a complex technical report, WAVE shows the original Web page with embedded icons and indicators that reveal the accessibility of that page. If you are creating an online teaching tool for your students, you can use WAVE to see if your materials will be accessible to people with disabilities. The Web site offers other useful documents, such as a **brief overview of cognitive Web accessibility** containing a checklist of items to implement to ensure that your Web content is accessible to users with cognitive or learning disabilities as

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well as more general **guidelines for education professionals.**

The Web site contains numerous **articles** covering a wide variety of topics including: The User's Perspective; HTML Accessibility; Rich Media Accessibility; Evaluation, Testing, and Tools; Standards and Laws; and Policy, Coordination, and Training. The site also contains links to **resources, an e-mail discussion list, a newsletter, and a blog.** Cyndi Rowland concludes, "I know two things: WebAIM and the National Center on Disability and Access to Education have had enormous impact, and FIPSE started it all."

WEB SITES, cont'd

WebAIM

<http://webaim.org/>

WAVE

<http://wave.webaim.org/>

Cognitive Web Accessibility

<http://webaim.org/articles/evaluatingcognitive/>

Guidelines for Education Professionals

<http://webaim.org/solutions/education/>

National Center on Disability and Access to Education:

<http://www.ncdae.org/>

U.S. Access Board

<http://www.access-board.gov/508.htm>



FIPSE's International Programs on the Move

The four international programs which were started by FIPSE as Special Focus competitions have now moved over to the International and Foreign Language Education (IFLE) Division. All open grants awarded under these programs have been re-assigned to IFLE program officers as follows:

- European Union-United States Atlantis Program – **Frank Frankfort, Tanyelle Richardson, or Christine Corey**
- North American Mobility in Higher Education Program – **Amy Wilson or Jessica Barrett Simpson**
- US-Brazil Higher Education Consortia Program – **Michelle Guilfoil or Carly Borgmeier**
- U.S.-Russia Program – **Peter Baker**

Current grantees will continue to file their reports in the FIPSE database where they will be reviewed by IFLE program officers. FIPSE will no longer offer evaluation support to these grantees. The public can still access information about those grants by viewing the public side of the FIPSE database.

Future grant competitions for these programs will be announced by IFLE and will not appear in FIPSE program announcements or the *FIPSE Update*. Colleagues who are interested in applying specifically to one of those four programs should contact IFLE staff or visit the **IFLE Web site** for more information about upcoming grant competitions.

Individual projects with an international theme will still be eligible to apply to the FIPSE Comprehensive Program under the Comprehensive Program's guidelines. Keep in mind that innovation is a selection criterion in rating Comprehensive Program proposals. All award monies would have to benefit the U.S. institution, students, and faculty. ■

► *In Memoriam, continued from page 2*



Carolyn D. Forman passed away on July 27, 2010 in St. Paul, Minnesota at age 50. "Cari"

was a FIPSE Program Officer from 1992 until 1998. Her analytic

skills and in-depth staff reviews of proposals are still remembered by staff, as is her wonderful spirit. Cari graduated cum laude from Williams College and was elected to the Phi Beta Kappa. She did special studies in China and Italy. She earned her Doctorate of Laws from Stanford University and her

JUST THE FAQs: *The FIPSE Database*

How can the public learn about FIPSE's funded projects?

The **FIPSE Database** containing abstracts, project-designed Web sites, funding levels, start and end dates, project director and partner institution contact information, and institutional special designations is available to the public at the following address: <http://fipsedatabase.ed.gov/>. On the home page you can conduct a search for a particular grant by number or conduct a keyword search of titles, abstracts, or contact information.

By clicking on the "More Search Options" link you will find expanded keyword searching functions enabling you to search a group of words or phrases and exclude words from a search. There are drop-down menus enabling you to do a search with several parameters, including: FIPSE program name, subject, institution, state, zip code, congressional district, original funding year, organization type, institution type, special designations, and active status at a certain date in time.

Does the database contain information about all grants ever awarded or managed by FIPSE?

The database contains information on both competitively awarded grants and Congressionally-directed grants (earmarks). If you are searching for projects that were selected on the basis of a competitive grant competition, you will want to

exclude Congressionally-directed grants, which begin with a P116Z number. Please keep in mind that this database was begun eight years ago and for that reason project information about awards made prior to 1994 is often incomplete.

Can the public find grant applications, annual and final reports, or evaluation reports in the database?

At this time grant applications, annual and final reports, and evaluation reports are not made available to the public via this database. Over the next few years FIPSE does plan to add some evaluation data to the public side of this database. To learn more, please go to **FIPSE's Evaluation Resource** page and read about FIPSE's *Project Effectiveness Evidence for the Public (PEEP)*.

What options do I have if I can't locate grants on a given topic?

Searchable subject terms are added to the FIPSE database on an as-needed basis when requested. Generally several weeks lead time is needed to add in permanent searchable subject terms because each new term requires reviewing and re-classifying hundreds of grant abstracts. Requests to add in new search terms should be sent to susan.lehmann@ed.gov, but please keep in mind that these requests will be processed time-permitting. ■

► *In Memoriam, continued from page 6*

Masters in Taxation from New York University's School of Law. Before joining FIPSE, Cari had a successful law practice at the Rosenman Colin firm in New York City. Over the years she was also involved in the Capital Children's Museum and the Options Public Charter School in Washington, D.C. When she returned to St. Paul, she worked with the Center for Social Change at

the Humphrey Institute. Tributes in honor of Cari may be left at the following Web site: <http://www.legacy.com/guestbook/twincities/guestbook.aspx?n=carolyn-forman&pid=144347482&cid=gbsrchres>. The family asked that interested friends donate to the Cammack Marshall Fund for Children, P.O. Box 14325, St. Paul, MN, 55114. ■



FIPSE PROJECT WEB SITES THAT CAUGHT OUR EYE

<http://www.chabotbookstore.com/SiteText.aspx?id=2542>

Chabot-Las Positas Community College District's Web site for Special Focus Competition: College Course Materials Rental Initiative grant P116Y090045 "**Chabot College Textbook Rental Program**" stands out among the FIPSE-funded textbook rental sites because it provides obvious links to both a project impact survey and their evaluation report, a textbook rental price comparison, total dollars saved broken out by course, and separate sheets on "What faculty need to know" and "What students need to know" about textbook rental.

<http://www.openaccesstextbooks.org/>

Tallahassee Community College's Web site for Special Focus Competition: College Course Materials Rental Initiative grant P116Y090040 "**Fulfilling the Promise of Open Textbooks – Developing a Model for Success**" has a wealth of information about the

adoption and authoring of open textbooks. The site recently sponsored a Webinar entitled "Can we write textbooks the way we write scholarship," posted an article on whether podcasts help students learn, and posted a report on handheld E-book readers and scholarship. The site also has a link to the **Top 50 Open Access Educational Projects**.

<http://telelearning.dcccd.edu/Courseware/Pages/Freeware.aspx>

The LeCroy Center for Educational Telecommunications of **Dallas County Community College District** is exploring the concept of open courseware via its Special Focus Competition: College Course Materials Rental Initiative grant P116Y090020 "**The Texas Freeware Project**". Through its Dallas TeleLearning operation, the LeCroy Center invites selected higher education institutions to participate in the Freeware project. Visit the site to find out how to participate and to see what courses are currently being offered. ■

FIPSE's Mission

The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) is a unit of the Higher Education Programs located within the Office of Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education. **FIPSE's mandate** is to "improve postsecondary educational opportunities" across a broad range of concerns. Although a small program, FIPSE has established a record of promoting meaningful and lasting solutions to various, often newly emerging, problems and of promoting the highest quality education for all learners. Through its primary vehicle, the Comprehensive Program grant competition, FIPSE seeks to support the implementation of innovative educational reform ideas, to evaluate how well they work, and to share the lessons learned with the larger education community.

FIPSE defines postsecondary education broadly. Its applicants include a wide variety of nonprofit agencies and institutions offering education after high school, such as colleges and universities (public and private, two or four year, undergraduate and graduate), technical and business schools, testing agencies, professional associations, employers and unions, state and local education agencies, student organizations, cultural institutions, and community groups. FIPSE supports new as well as established organizations, but it cannot award grants to for-profits or unaffiliated individuals. ■

Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education

U.S. Department of Education, 6th floor
1990 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006-8544