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165 University Presidents Call on Congress and President Obama to Close Innovation Deficit

University Community Launches National Effort to Urge Washington to Restore Investments in Research and Education That Ensure America's Role as Innovation Leader, Power the Economy, Create Jobs

Washington, DC – Deeply concerned about major federal budget cuts to research and higher education at a time when other nations are steadily increasing investments in those areas, 165 university presidents and chancellors today called on leaders in Washington to close what they call the “innovation deficit.” In an open letter to President Obama and Congress published as an advertisement in *Politico*, the university leaders wrote that closing the innovation deficit – the widening gap between needed and actual investments in research and education – must be a national imperative.

Hunter R. Rawlings III, President of the [Association of American Universities \(AAU\)](#), and Peter McPherson, President of the [Association of Public and Land-grant Universities \(APLU\)](#), whose organizations coordinated the letter, joined the university presidents and chancellors in signing it. The higher education leaders, whose schools are members of AAU and APLU, noted that investments in those areas lead to the types of innovation and new technologies that power the nation's economy, create jobs, improve health, and strengthen national security, ensuring that the U.S. maintains its role as global leader.

“Throughout our history, this nation has kept the promise of a better tomorrow to each generation,” the presidents and chancellors wrote. “This has been possible because of our economic prosperity based in large part on America's role as global innovation leader. Failing to deal with the innovation deficit will pass to future generations the burdens of lost leadership in innovation, economic decline, and limited job opportunities. We call upon you to reject unsound budget cuts and recommit to strong and sustained investments in research and education. Only then can we ensure that our nation's promise of a better tomorrow endures.”

Economists agree that more than half of U.S. economic growth since World War II is a consequence of technological innovation, much of which results from federally-funded scientific research conducted at U.S. universities. Such groundbreaking research, the university leaders noted, has led to life-saving vaccines, lasers, MRI, touchscreens, GPS, the Internet, and many other advances that have improved lives and generated entire new sectors of our economy.

The university leaders pointed out that over the past two decades, China, Singapore, and South Korea have dramatically increased their investments in research and higher education, having seen the enormous benefits such investments have had for the U.S. economy. The rate of growth of U.S. research and development investments has been outstripped by those of China, Singapore, and South Korea by two to four times during that period.

The university leaders' initiative comes as Congress faces critical budget decisions in the coming months. Annual funding bills, the debt limit, and measures to eliminate or modify the deep across-the-board spending cuts forced by sequestration could all be taken up this fall. While the legislative path for those measures remains unclear, the presidents and chancellors noted that investments in research and higher education can and should be sustained regardless of overall funding levels because they would be key sources of long-term economic growth and fiscal stability.

“Because the innovation deficit undermines economic growth it harms our nation’s overall fiscal health, worsening long-term budget deficits and debt,” the university leaders wrote. “Investments in research and education are not inconsistent with long-term deficit reduction; they are vital to it.”

The open letter, including a list of all of its signers, as well as additional information can be found on www.innovationdeficit.org.

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