



Compete Connect

July 2025 Edition

From the CEO's Desk



Deborah L. Wince-Smith
President and CEO
Council on Competitiveness

Dear Council on Competitiveness Community,

In a rapidly changing world, the United States must innovate at speed and scale—turning discoveries into commercial impact to sustain economic competitiveness, raise the standard of living, and strengthen national security.

Pillar 5 of the Council's [*Competing in the Next Economy: Innovating in the Age of Disruption and Discontinuity*](#) report offers a strategic framework for accelerating the transition of innovation into the marketplace. Pillar 5, titled [*Accelerating 10x Technology Development and Deployment at Speed and Scale*](#), focuses on increasing the velocity of the complex, non-linear interplay between imagination, insight, ingenuity, invention, and impact. I explored this topic more fully in my Forbes.com piece, "Revving Up the U.S. Technology Engine," and I hope you will read and share the [article here](#).

In the spirit of working to accelerate innovation and advance U.S. competitiveness, the Council is excited to share a robust lineup of key events in

the months ahead. We are preparing for two major events this September, followed by gatherings in October, November, and December:

- **September 8** — University Leadership Forum Strategy Meeting, hosted at Gallup World Headquarters in Washington, DC.
- **September 17–18** — Fall Executive Committee and National Commissioners Meeting, hosted at Primient's state-of-the-art bioprocessing facility in Lafayette, IN, focused on unleashing the U.S. bioeconomy and preparing for the Council's 40th Anniversary in 2026.
- **October 19–21** — "Forging the Future: The Intersection of Health, AI, and Technology," a first-of-its-kind joint event of the Council on Competitiveness and the Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils (GFCC), in partnership with the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University. Hosted at the University of Pittsburgh, this gathering will unite the Council's Competitiveness Conversations Across America with the GFCC's Global Innovation Summit—creating a dynamic platform to explore the convergence of health, technology, and innovation. ([Register here.](#))
- **November 4** — 32nd Technology Leadership & Strategy Initiative (TLSI) Dialogue, hosted at Lockheed Martin's F-35 facility in Fort Worth, TX.
- **December 15–16** — 2025 National Competitiveness Forum, hosted at the Salamander Hotel in Washington, DC. ([Register here.](#))

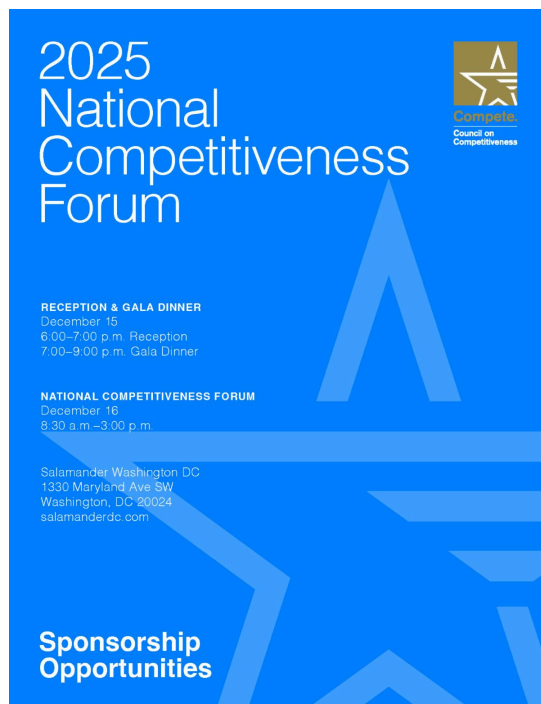
To learn more about how you can participate in any upcoming Council event, please contact Council on Competitiveness Executive Vice President and COO [Chad Evans](#).

On behalf of the entire Council team, thank you for your ongoing engagement and support of the Council, and for the essential work you do in advancing U.S. innovation and competitiveness.

Warm regards,

Deborah L. Wince-Smith
President & CEO
Council on Competitiveness

Upcoming Council Events

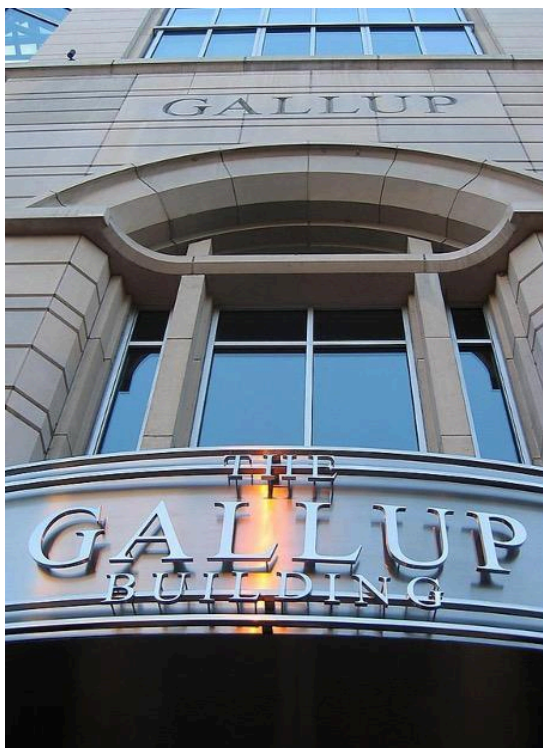


Register Now

**Sponsorship Opportunities
Now Available**

Join the Council on Competitiveness and national leaders from industry, academia, national laboratories, labor unions, and government for the Council's annual Gala Dinner on December 15 and the 2025 National Competitiveness Forum (NCF) on December 16 at the Salamander Hotel in Washington, DC. ([NCF registration is now open.](#))

NCF sponsorships are also available, so please do not miss the opportunity to sponsor the premier event on the annual competitiveness calendar. Generous benefits are available to sponsors, which you can learn more about in the [sponsorship brochure here.](#)



University Leadership Forum Strategy Meeting

Developing a Path Forward for U.S. Higher Education

September 8, 2025

Gallup World Headquarters

The Gallup Building, F Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

The Council on Competitiveness' University Leadership Forum will convene in person on September 8 at the Gallup World Headquarters in Washington, DC. In partnership with Gallup and Deloitte, this session will spotlight the latest research on the state of higher education, as well as explore the development of a "Compact on the Future of Higher Education" and a higher-education dashboard. For details, please contact Council on Competitiveness Executive Vice President and COO [Chad Evans](#).



Summer/Fall Executive Committee and National Commissioners Meeting — The Future of the U.S. Bioeconomy

September 17-18, 2025

Primient

3300 US Hwy 52 S
Lafayette, IN 47905



The Council's National Commissioners and Executive Committee Members will convene at Primient's state-of-the-art bio facility — among the most innovative plants for producing food and industrial ingredients from plant-based, renewable sources in the world — in Lafayette, IN. This senior-level meeting will provide an

opportunity to not only review the Council's robust 2025 policy activities and begin planning for 2026 (the Council's 40th anniversary year), but also shape the next major policy priority for the "National Commission on Innovation and Competitiveness Frontiers:" writing the next chapter of the U.S. bioeconomy. If interested, please contact Council EVP and COO [Chad Evans](#).

YOU'RE INVITED

FORGING THE FUTURE
THE INTERSECTION
OF HEALTH, AI & TECH

Join top minds from Pittsburgh and globally that are driving the future of health, AI, and tech.

**OCT. 19-21, 2025 | UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
 PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA**

 **REGISTER FOR THE SUMMIT**
GFCC-COC-25.PITT.EDU/REGISTRATION

More information, including a schedule of events and where to stay, is available online:
GFCC-COC-25.PITT.EDU

SUMMIT PARTNERS    

Join the Council on Competitiveness, the Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils (GFCC), the University of Pittsburgh, and Carnegie Mellon University October 19-21 in Pittsburgh, PA, for a first-of-its-kind crossover event between the [Competitiveness Conversations Across America](#) and the GFCC's Global Innovation Summit. "Forging the Future: The Intersection of Health, AI, & Tech" will convene innovators from across Pennsylvania, the United States, and the world to understand the challenges and opportunities that arise when emerging technologies co-mingle and co-create new inventions, innovations, and industries of the future. Plan to join us to explore the distinctive innovation ecosystem emerging in Pittsburgh, and be on the lookout for more information as we approach this groundbreaking event.

Register Now



The Councils' Technology Leadership & Strategy Initiative (TLSI) will convene for its Fall Dialogue on November 4 at Lockheed Martin's F-35 research and production facility in Fort Worth, TX. The agenda for this in-person gathering is being developed, which will bring TLSI members together with senior policy and industry leaders to explore cutting-edge innovation strategies and national competitiveness priorities. If interested, please contact Council EVP and COO [Chad Evans](#).

Council News

Council EVP and COO Chad Evans Led the Inaugural Global Innovation Study Trip for the GFCC in Lisbon



Photo Credit: Universidade Catolica Portuguesa

Left to Right: Mr. Chad Evans, EVP & COO, Council on Competitiveness – and – Board Treasurer, GFCC; Prof. Miguel Athayde Marques, Vice President, Universidade Catolica Portuguesa; Dr. Mike Caine, Pro Vice-Chancellor Research & Enterprise, Aston University, UK; and Prof. Filipe Santos, Dean of the Catolica Lisbon School of Business and Economics.

Council EVP & COO — and GFCC Board Treasurer — Chad Evans led the inaugural “Study Trip” for the Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils. This kick-off of a larger initiative took place in Lisbon, July 8-11, 2025, hosted by Universidade Catolica Portuguesa and its President, Prof. Isabel Capelo Gil. Focusing on “Innovation Ecosystems, Universities, and Cities in a Global Context,” the trip afforded GFCC members incredible insights into the fever pitch growth underpinning Europe’s “innovation capital.” Evans helped kick off the event with UCP’s Vice-President, Prof. Miguel Athayde Marques; Dr. Mike Caine, Pro Vice-Chancellor Research & Enterprise, Aston University, UK; and Prof. Filipe Santos, Dean of the Catolica Lisbon School of Business and Economics. In addition, Evans presented to the gathering the initial findings from the Council’s multi-year [“Competitiveness Conversations Across America.”](#)

With this effort successfully launched, the GFCC and its members — including Council on Competitiveness members — are exploring the possibility to host future study trips, with discussions already underway with the University of California, San Diego, the Universiti Teknologi Petronas, University of Auckland and the Technical University of Auckland.



Photo Credit: Universidade Catolica Portuguesa

Mr. Chad Evans, EVP & COO, Council on Competitiveness – and – Board Treasurer, GFCC, presented to the gathering the initial findings from the Council's multi-year "Competitiveness Conversations Across America" series.

Competitiveness News

Senate Panel Signals Support to Restore National Science Foundation Grants



Photo Credit: Manuel Balce Ceneta / AP Photo

Scientists affected by the termination of more than 1,600 National Science Foundation (NSF) grants earlier this year received a hopeful sign as the Senate Committee on Appropriation agreed to work toward restoring NSF grant funding. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) is collaborating with Republican leaders to revise her previously defeated amendment aimed at reinstating most canceled grants. The bill includes nearly \$9 billion for NSF—close to the current funding level—and will be voted on by the full Senate in the coming weeks.

Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), chair of the full Appropriations Committee and a [featured speaker](#) at our recent [Competitiveness Conversation: “Growing New England’s Next Generation Innovation Economy,”](#) expressed her support, stating: “I share the senator’s concerns about the apparent arbitrary nature of these grant terminations and would like to work with you to expand the grounds for exclusion.” [Explore the Senate panel’s discussion here.](#)

Council Community News

Gallup Finds Rising Public Confidence in U.S. Universities, Tied to Innovation and Economic Opportunity

Americans' Beliefs in the Personal and Societal Benefits of Higher Education

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree that higher education leads to each of the following outcomes in the United States.

■ % Agree ■ % Neither agree nor disagree ■ % Disagree

Greater innovation, including new scientific, medical and technological discoveries



Better jobs, promotions and career advancements



Higher household incomes



A more knowledgeable population



A competitive advantage for the U.S. over other countries



More entrepreneurship and business creation



Increased compassion for, and tolerance of, others



% Agree is the combined percentage who say they strongly, somewhat or slightly agree; % Disagree is the combined percentage who say they strongly, somewhat or slightly disagree.

Lumina Foundation-Gallup Confidence in Higher Education survey, June 2-15, 2025

GALLUP

Photo Credit: Gallup

Public trust in U.S. higher education is on the rise, according to new Gallup research, with 42 percent of Americans expressing confidence in colleges and universities — up from 36 percent in recent years. Confidence grew across key demographics, including college graduates, non-degree holders, and both major political parties. Americans cited the quality of U.S. education, its role in fostering innovation, and its economic benefits as primary reasons for this renewed trust. Notably, 75 percent of respondents believe that higher education drives innovation and discovery, while 69 percent say it leads to better jobs and career advancement. Despite lingering concerns about costs and politicization, the majority of Americans view universities as essential to national prosperity and global competitiveness.

[Explore Gallup's study here.](#)

American Federation of Teachers and OpenAI Launch National Academy to Empower 400,000 Teachers with AI Tools



Photo Credit: American Federation of Teachers

Council Executive Committee Member and American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten

OpenAI has partnered with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), led by Council Executive Committee Member Randi Weingarten, to launch the National Academy for AI Instruction — a bold, five-year initiative to help 400,000 K–12 educators shape the future of AI in classrooms. Backed by \$10 million in funding and in-kind support from OpenAI, the Academy will serve as a national hub for training, curriculum development, and equitable access to AI tools — starting with a campus in New York City. By prioritizing teacher leadership and hands-on fluency, the academy aims to ensure AI becomes a trusted classroom ally — not a replacement for real teaching. [Learn more about this initiative here.](#)

The University of Texas at Dallas and Argonne National Laboratory Sign MOU to Advance Battery Innovation Through BEACONS



Photo Credit: [LinkedIn, Thomas A. Campbell](#)

Left to Right: Joseph Pancrazio, VPR, The University of Texas at Dallas; Council National Laboratory Partner Paul K. Kearns, Lab Director, Argonne National Laboratory

University of Texas at Dallas — under the leadership of Council Member President Richard C. Benson — joined Argonne National Laboratory in signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to advance domestic battery innovation through the newly launched BEACONS initiative — the Battery-Energy Advanced Commercialization and Operational Networked Scaling hub.

Funded by the Department of Defense, BEACONS aims to accelerate the commercialization of cutting-edge battery technologies for national security and economic competitiveness. The initiative is co-led by Dr. Thomas A. Campbell, Co-Founder of LEAP Manufacturing and a Council Senior Fellow, who also serves as a Co-Principal Investigator for the project.

“This partnership creates a robust pipeline from discovery to deployment — one that will drive energy resilience, manufacturing strength, and national security,” said Dr. Campbell.

[Learn more about BEACONS here.](#)

Argonne National Laboratory Advances Scientific Discovery with Aurora Exascale Supercomputer



Photo Credit: Argonne National Laboratory

Argonne National Laboratory recently celebrated the launch of Aurora, one of the world's most powerful exascale supercomputers. Designed to accelerate scientific breakthroughs, Aurora combines high-performance computing, AI, and advanced simulation to address complex challenges across energy, medicine, materials science, aerospace, and national security. Developed in collaboration with Intel and HPE, Aurora is available to researchers nationwide, enabling faster, more accurate insights that drive innovation. "Aurora is more than a technological achievement — it is a strategic national asset," said Argonne Laboratory Director Paul Kearns. "By harnessing the power of exascale computing and AI, our new system gives researchers across the country a critical tool for tackling big questions in energy, medicine and materials." [Learn more about Aurora.](#)

U.S. DOE Laboratory Directors Convene at Argonne for AI x Nuclear Energy Executive Summit



Photo Credit: [LinkedIn](#)

Argonne National Laboratory — in collaboration with Idaho and Oak Ridge National Laboratories — brought together top officials from government, tech, and energy for the AI x Nuclear Energy Executive Summit, held July 17–18. The event explored how advanced nuclear energy can meet the rising power demands of artificial intelligence, while AI itself unlocks new efficiencies in nuclear plant design, reactor deployment, and regulatory review.

U.S. Secretary of Energy Chris Wright, who was a speaker, made the case “to power AI and to power our world, the most promising source, alongside our backbone hydrocarbon system, is nuclear.”

[Discover the AI x Nuclear Energy Executive Summit.](#)

Council Member John C. Wagner Urges Swift Nuclear Regulatory Reform to Secure America's Energy Future



Photo Credit: Idaho National Laboratory

Council member Dr. John C. Wagner, Director of Idaho National Laboratory, is calling for urgent reforms to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to accelerate deployment of advanced reactors. In a recent Washington Times op-ed, he highlights how outdated regulations delay clean energy, hinder innovation, and put U.S. leadership at risk. His proposed changes aim to streamline licensing without compromising safety — ensuring America meets rising energy demands and global competition. [Engage with the full commentary.](#)

MITRE Releases New White Paper: *Breaking Barriers to Accelerate Defense Acquisition with Allies and Partners*

BREAKING BARRIERS TO ACCELERATE ACQUISITION WITH ALLIES AND PARTNERS

Photo Credit: MITRE

MITRE, which is led by Council Executive Committee Member Dr. Mark Peters, has published a new white paper titled *Breaking Barriers: Accelerate Defense Acquisition with Allies and Partners*. This report builds directly on the findings from the recent [Breaking Barriers in Defense Acquisition Summit](#) which convened leaders from government, industry, and research to rethink how the United States acquires national security capabilities. MITRE's new paper identifies key challenges such as fragmented acquisition processes, limited interoperability with allies, and slow adoption of emerging technologies. It recommends actionable steps including streamlining policy frameworks, enhancing collaborative development with international partners, and leveraging digital tools to accelerate program delivery. [Read the full paper here.](#)

Northeastern University Partners with Anthropic to Launch AI Tool 'Claude' for Critical Thinking

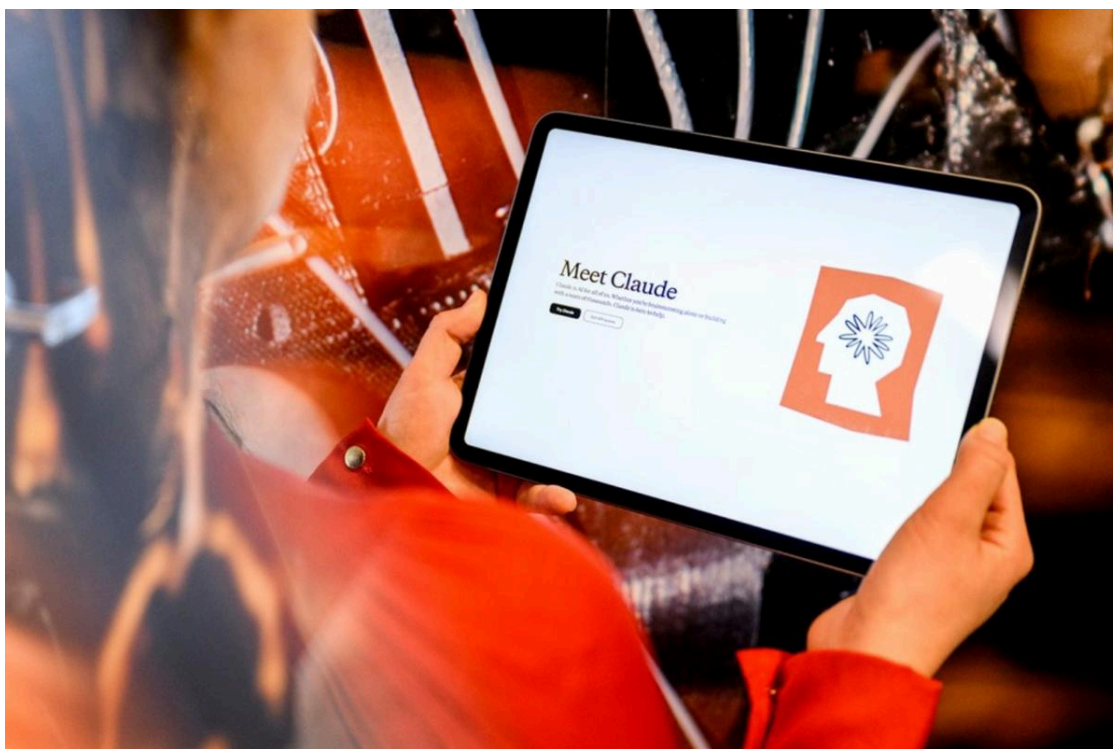


Photo Credit: Matthew Modoono/Northeastern University

Northeastern University has partnered with Anthropic to introduce Claude for Education, an AI tool designed to enhance critical thinking among students. Unlike traditional AI assistants, Claude employs a Socratic questioning approach, guiding students through reflective prompts to deepen their reasoning skills.

This initiative aligns with Northeastern University President and Council Member Joseph E. Aoun's vision for integrating AI into higher education, as outlined in his book *Robot-Proof: Higher Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*. Claude will be accessible to approximately 50,000 students, faculty, and staff across Northeastern's 13 global campuses. [Explore this technological innovation.](#)

University of Colorado Boulder and PepsiCo Eliminate Single-Use Plastics to Advance Campus Sustainability



Photo Credit: CU Boulder Today

University of Colorado Boulder and PepsiCo Beverages are setting a bold example in sustainability with a new 10-year agreement that eliminates all single-use plastics from campus beverage services. This pioneering initiative marks a first-of-its-kind commitment by PepsiCo with a university partner — fully replacing plastic packaging with aluminum and glass containers. The agreement requires all third-party vendors on campus to comply and comes at no additional cost to CU Boulder. Council's Executive Committee Member and CU Boulder Chancellor Justin Schwartz noted, "This contract is a bold step forward in our commitment to environmental stewardship. By eliminating single-use plastics, we're not only responding to the values of our campus community—we're strengthening our legacy as one of the most sustainable campuses in the country." [Learn more about this initiative here.](#)

TLSI Member Massimo Ruzzene Warns Federal Cuts Threaten Colorado's Research and Innovation Economy



Photo Credit: University of Colorado Boulder

Dr. Massimo Ruzzene, TLSI member and Senior Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation at the University of Colorado Boulder, is educating the public and policymakers on how sweeping federal research funding cuts are threatening Colorado's innovation ecosystem. In a recent interview with *The Conversation*, Dr. Ruzzene outlines the cascading effects of canceled and frozen grants — totaling \$30 million this year alone at CU Boulder — on everything from cancer research to quantum technologies and aerospace missions. With additional cuts looming, Dr. Ruzzene warns that the United States risks ceding its leadership in critical technologies like quantum computing. His message: sustained investment in university research is essential to both local prosperity and national competitiveness. [See the full conversation here.](#)

Dr. Matt Hulver Champions University Innovation to Secure U.S. Competitiveness



Photo Credit: University of Oklahoma

In their recent piece *From Gatekeepers to Growers*, Dr. Matthew W. Hulver, Vice President for Research and Partnerships, University of Oklahoma, and Dr. Carol Silva, Senior Associate Vice President for Research and Partnerships, University of Oklahoma, argue that America's long-term competitiveness depends not just on discovery, but on the ability to translate research into real-world solutions. Many

United States universities, they contend, remain constrained by outdated IP-focused models that delay industry engagement and hinder commercialization — weakening their contribution to national innovation.

Dr. Hulver and Dr. Silva call for universities to evolve into agile innovation ecosystems — fostering early industry collaboration, streamlining licensing, and supporting entrepreneurship among faculty and students. By embedding innovation as a shared institutional priority, universities can accelerate technology transfer, drive regional economic growth, and help secure the United States' competitive leadership in the global economy. [Read this insightful article here.](#)

Council Fellow Jerry Haar Highlights Mountain States' Innovation Leadership



Photo Credit: [LinkedIn](#)

Expanding on the insights from the [Council's Competitiveness Conversation in Boulder](#), Council Senior Fellow Jerry Haar details how the Mountain States are driving economic growth and innovation for the nation. With nearly \$600 billion in GDP and strengths in semiconductors, clean energy, and quantum technology, the region is outperforming national averages across important competitiveness factors. Dr. Haar also made the case that it is essential for the Mountain States — and all regions — to develop a strong workforce to support future industries, strengthen both regional and national collaborations, leverage investments in advanced research and technology, improve infrastructure, and foster the growth of new businesses and entrepreneurs. [Check out his insightful article here.](#)

Council Insight

China Supplies Seventy Percent of U.S. Rare Earth Imports as Australia Expands Role

Data Source: U.S. Geological Survey

According to the latest data from the U.S. Geological Survey, 70 percent of U.S. rare earth element (REE) imports in 2024 came from China—down from over 80 percent a decade ago. While this decline signals incremental progress in diversifying supply chains, China's overwhelming dominance remains a strategic vulnerability. Rare earths are essential to defense systems, renewable energy technologies, electric vehicles, and semiconductors—sectors foundational to both national security and economic competitiveness.

To mitigate this risk, the United States is actively seeking alternative, non-Chinese sources of critical minerals. Australia, with abundant reserves of neodymium, dysprosium, praseodymium, and other key inputs, is emerging as a linchpin in U.S. efforts to reshape its global rare earths supply chain.

Bilateral initiatives like the U.S.–Australia Strategic Critical Minerals Partnership, coupled with more than \$1 billion in joint investments in Australian extraction and processing projects, are strengthening economic and geopolitical ties. Lynas Rare Earths, which operates the largest rare earths processing facility outside China, exemplifies Australia’s central role in this emerging strategic partnership.

For U.S. policymakers and industry leaders, the takeaway is clear: reducing reliance on Chinese rare earths is a strategic imperative. Deepening collaboration with trusted allies like Australia, investing in domestic processing infrastructure, and building resilient, diversified supply chains must be top priorities to ensure long-term security, innovation capacity, and industrial leadership.

Fellows Insight

Commercial Space Operations – the Business of Low-Earth Orbit (LEO) and Beyond



“If we are to continue to improve the conditions for life on Earth, we must learn to live, eat, sleep, and build in space.”

Dr. David B. Williams
Director, Global University
and Industry Partnerships
Starlab and George Washington
Carver Science Park
Professor, Materials Science
and Engineering
The Ohio State University

In the Council on Competitiveness’s July *Fellows Insight*, Dr. David B. Williams — Council Senior Fellow and Director of Global University Research and Industry Partnerships for the Starlab–George Washington Carver Science Park at The Ohio State University — explores how rising commercial investment in space will drive breakthrough materials, economic growth, and a next-generation tech workforce. He argues that space-based innovation will open powerful new frontiers for U.S. manufacturers to enhance U.S. competitiveness, unlocking fresh opportunities for entrepreneurs to launch businesses, technologies, and entirely new markets once unimaginable.

[Read Dr. Williams' full Insight here.](#)

New to the Community



Photo Credit: Sustainea

Mr. Gustavo Gindler Sergi
CEO Sustainea

Mr. Sergi joins as a General Member.



Photo credit: Columbia University

Ms. Claire Shipman

Acting President Columbia University

Ms. Shipman joins as a General Member.

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