

# Compete Connect

June 2026 Edition

## From the CEO's Desk



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

Dear Council on Competitiveness Community,

The celebration of our Council's 40th anniversary and the nation's 250th Independence Day is the right time to consider the extraordinary role innovation – encompassing imagination, insight, ingenuity, invention, and impact – has always played in America's history of prosperity and global leadership.

As we noted in our seminal report, *Innovate America*, innovation has always been deep in the nation's soul. From the country's birth, we have most fundamentally been about exploration, opportunity, and discovery, about new beginnings, about setting out for the frontier. This focus on the horizon has always reflected our collective faith in a better future.

And so, it is the right time again to reinforce why innovation is the single most important factor that will determine America's success through the 21st century.

The legacy America and its leaders bequeath to our next generations will depend on the creativity and commitment to lead a new era of prosperity at home and abroad. America's challenge is to unleash even further our innovation capacity to drive productivity and economic growth, increases in our collective standard of living, security, and leadership in global markets.

Our task? I think it is straightforward. Over the next 40 years, we must double down and optimize our entire society – in communities across the entire country – for more innovation. In this spirit of co-creation and engagement, I invite you to participate in two vital activities in the coming months:

First – our 40th Anniversary Gala (a black-tie reception and dinner on December 16) and the 2026 National Competitiveness Forum (December 17). We will host both events in the historic Willard InterContinental Washington, D.C. We will celebrate the Council's past successes; assess the state of U.S. competitiveness today – how is America doing; how are Americans doing? – and release significant policy recommendations to enhance the future of U.S., innovation-driven competitiveness. Register [here](#) to take part.

- I would also ask our community to take note of this special occasion and to consider strongly supporting the 40th Anniversary and 2026 NCF through our sponsorship opportunities.
- You can review the sponsorship brochure [here](#), and contact Council on Competitiveness EVP and COO [Chad Evans](#) to take advantage of the opportunity.

Second – the 13th edition of our “Competitiveness Conversations Across America,” takes place [July 20–21 in San Diego](#). Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla will co-host 200 leaders from across San Diego, Southern California, the nation, and 10 countries on the dynamic UC San Diego campus. Together, we will explore one of the nation's most consequential innovation ecosystems, and how it is helping shape the next economy:

- 40+ distinguished speakers
- An expansive focus on the future of the bioeconomy, energy, health, autonomous systems in space and defense, transformative computing, and more.
- Interest is strong, and space is filling quickly. Please register as soon as possible [here](#) to join us in San Diego.
- AND - in advance of the Conversation, the Council, in partnership with IFF and ANSI, will host a "Smart Regulations and Standards for Transformative Tech and Industries" Workshop on July 20 at UC San Diego. Those interested in attending should reach out directly to [Chad Evans](#).

Earlier this month, members of the Technology Leadership & Strategy Initiative (TLSI) met for the initiative's 32nd Dialogue. Lockheed Martin leaders – including TLSI Co-Chair Dr. Tahllee Baynard – hosted at their Aeronautics Company's Fort Worth headquarters. The Dialogue focused on advanced technologies, national security, and scaling innovation — and included a debate on an emerging recommendation from the Council's Board, Executive Committee and National Commission: the development of a series of Advanced Innovation & Manufacturing (AIM) Zones across the United States (more to come on this!).

I wish you all a July 4th weekend filled with celebration and reflection. Yes, we live in tumultuous times. But we, as a community, know instinctively our way forward is not to retreat or to re-trench. Our way forward is to become more open, more experimental, and to embrace the unknown. The key to our future success remains the same as it has been for 250 years: to remember who we are and to keep innovating. That is our Council's goal, and I thank you for your many contributions in helping us to fulfill our mission.

Sincerely,

Deborah L. Wince-Smith  
President & CEO

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## Council News

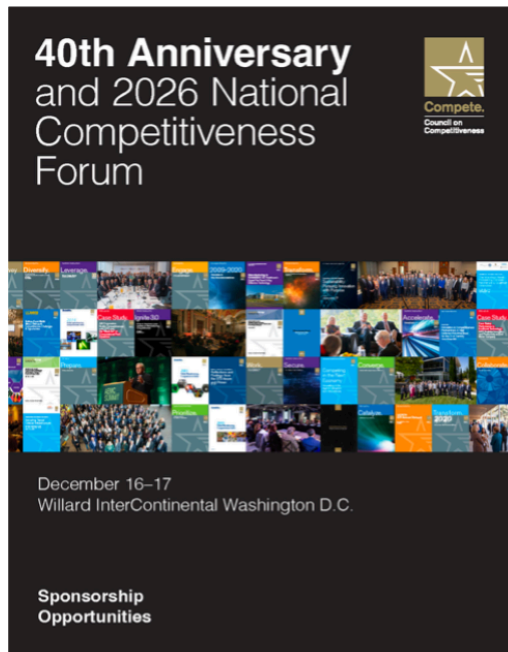
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### **40 Years of Impact: the 2026 National Competitiveness Forum - an Invitation and Path to Sponsorship**

The 40th Anniversary Gala and 2026 National Competitiveness Forum (NCF) will take place December 16–17 at the Willard InterContinental Hotel in Washington, D.C.

Join leaders from industry, academia, labor, and the national laboratory enterprise as we mark 40 years of impact and look ahead to the priorities shaping U.S. competitiveness. The NCF will bring together Council Members and distinguished guests from around the country and the world. Please consider taking part. [Register here for the 40th Anniversary and 2026 NCF.](#)

#### **Interested in Sponsoring?**



Sponsorship opportunities are available and remain a critical source of support for the Council's annual work. The 2026 sponsorship brochure is available [here](#), and sponsorship inquiries may be directed to [Chad Evans](#).

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**Time Is Running Out to Register for the San Diego Edition of "Competitiveness Conversations Across America"**

## San Diego: Building the Next Economy's Strategic Innovation Stack—Compute, AI, Energy, Bio, Autonomy, and Security

UC San Diego



July 21, 2026  
La Jolla, CA

Photo credits: Erik Jepsen, University of California San Diego

Join us on July 21 for [A Competitiveness Conversation: San Diego — Building the Next Economy's Strategic Innovation Stack](#) as we explore how the region became a premier innovation ecosystem — and what others can learn from it. Space is limited, so reserve your complimentary spot today.

Learn more about the distinguished speakers and view the full agenda on the Conversation's [landing page](#). Capacity is filling quickly, so reserve your complimentary spot today.

[Register for the San Diego Conversation here.](#)

## Council President and CEO Outlines How “America’s Heartland Is Fueling the Next Generation Bioeconomy”



What does it take for the United States to lead the next-generation bioeconomy? In Nebraska, Council on Competitiveness Executive Committee member and University of Nebraska System President Jeffrey P. Gold, M.D., and leaders across the state are helping answer that question by showing how research, agriculture, industry, and entrepreneurship are aligning to build a powerful innovation ecosystem in America's Heartland.

In her latest Forbes.com article, Council President and CEO Deborah L. Wince-Smith explores why Nebraska's model matters for U.S. competitiveness, and what it reveals about scaling the bioeconomy for the future. Read Deborah's latest article [here](#).

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## Council Community News

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### Donde Plowman and UT Launch Quantum Accelerator for Tennessee's Future



Photo credit: University of Tennessee, Knoxville

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, led by UT Chancellor Donde Plowman, a member of the Council on Competitiveness Executive Committee, launched the Knoxville Quantum Accelerator (K-Quantum) designed to strengthen East Tennessee's position as a national hub for quantum technologies, workforce development, and commercialization. K-Quantum brings together partners including Oak Ridge National Laboratory (led by National Commissioner Stephen Streiffer), TVA, CGI, and IonQ to advance Tennessee's growing quantum ecosystem. The initiative supports the state's \$43 million Tennessee Quantum Initiative and will drive investments in new research infrastructure, talent development, and startup creation — further positioning Tennessee as a leader in the next generation of computing, advanced manufacturing, and innovation-driven economic growth. Read the release on the University of Tennessee, Knoxville's website [here](#).

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### Quantinuum IPO Marks Major Milestone for Quantum Computing



Quantinuum, the quantum computing company led by President and CEO Rajeeb Hazra, a Council on Competitiveness Executive Committee member, debuted on the Nasdaq after raising \$1.68 billion in one of the largest quantum computing IPOs to date, valuing the company at approximately

Additionally, Sandia National Laboratories and Quantinuum are partnering to develop Helios — Quantinuum's largest and most reliable quantum computer to date. The collaboration, published in the scientific journal *Nature*, advances the U.S. Department of Energy's goal of building fault-tolerant quantum systems capable of solving complex real-world problems. [Read more on Sandia's website.](#)

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## Competitiveness News

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### **Trump Administration Issues Executive Order to Accelerate U.S. Quantum Leadership**

On June 22, President Trump issued a new Executive Order aimed at strengthening U.S. leadership in quantum information science and technology, directing a whole-of-government push to accelerate quantum computing, sensing, networking, manufacturing, workforce development, and commercialization. The order calls for an updated National Quantum Strategy; a new effort to develop a quantum computer capable of enabling major scientific discovery; expanded support for quantum sensors, networks, and domestic supply chains; new workforce initiatives; and closer coordination with allies to secure trusted quantum ecosystems and protect critical technologies. Read Executive Order 14411 [here](#).

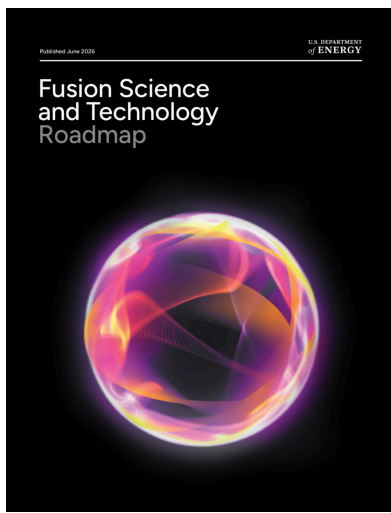
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### **NIST Launches Quantum Manufacturing Engineering Center**

NIST and SRI International are joining forces to stand up the Quantum Manufacturing Engineering Center (QMEC), a new public-private partnership aimed at scaling U.S. quantum manufacturing. NIST has committed \$20 million to target a critical gap in the national quantum industrial base: engineering and manufacturing barriers that prevent quantum components and systems from reaching commercial scale. The goal is to advance U.S. leadership in quantum sensing, communications, encryption, computing, and biomedicine. Read more on the NIST website [here](#).

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### **DOE Releases Fusion Science & Technology Roadmap to Accelerate Commercial Fusion Energy**



The U.S. Department of Energy has released its *Fusion Science & Technology (S&T) Roadmap*, a national strategy aimed at accelerating the development and commercialization of fusion energy by the mid-2030s. Developed with input from more than 800 researchers, engineers, and industry stakeholders, the roadmap identifies critical science and technology priorities and outlines the public infrastructure needed to support private-sector scale-up. See the *Fusion S&T Roadmap* [here](#).

Photo credit: DOE

### New AI Economic Indicators Track Technology's Real-World Impact

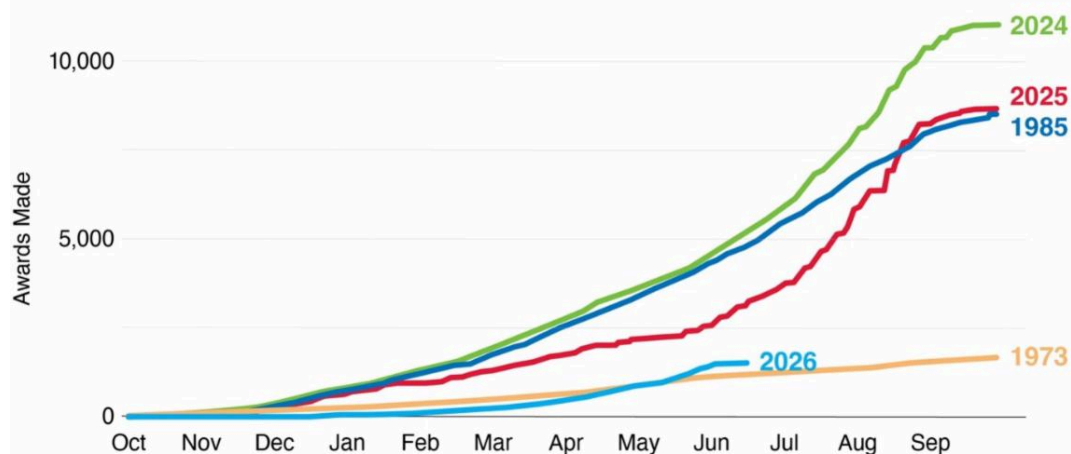
The [Stanford Digital Economy Lab](#) released *the AI Economic Indicators*, a new initiative designed to provide timely, data-driven insights into AI's economic impact. Bringing together data from government agencies, researchers, and private companies, the project tracks key measures such as employment and wages, productivity and economic growth, consumer benefits, changing workforce skill requirements, and the adoption of AI across industries.

## Council Insight

### New Analysis Warns of Historic Contraction in U.S. Scientific Research Funding

#### Cumulative NSF Awards Made by Day of Fiscal Year

Source: National Science Foundation.



[Source: Grant Witness](#)

A new analysis of National Science Foundation (NSF) grant awards and funding trends raises concerns about the future of the U.S. research enterprise. The data

indicate the NSF is on pace for its lowest level of research grantmaking in more than 50 years, with both the number of awards and the total dollars committed to new scientific research falling to levels not seen since the 1970s and 1980s. Adjusted for inflation and population growth, federal investment in scientific discovery is approaching historic lows.

The Council on Competitiveness has long championed the need for sustained investment in basic and applied research as the foundation of America's innovation leadership. From breakthroughs in artificial intelligence and biotechnology to advanced manufacturing, energy, and national security, tomorrow's industries depend on today's scientific discoveries. As global competitors accelerate investments in research and innovation, maintaining U.S. leadership will require renewed commitment to the nation's science and technology enterprise.

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## New to Our Community

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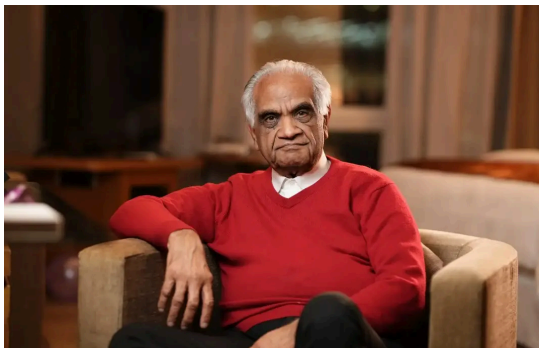


**Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz**  
Chancellor  
University of California Merced

Dr. Muñoz joins the Council as a Member.

*Photo credit: University of California Merced*

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**Dr. Ram Charan**  
Global Business Advisor and Bestselling  
Author

Dr. Charan joins the Council as a Distinguished Fellow.

*Photo credit: Ram Charan*



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