# Compete Connect

## May 2025 Edition

## From the CEO's Desk

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

Dear Council Community,

As we mark the end of May, remembering the sacrifices made by so many American women and men to secure our freedoms, and turn toward summer, I am very honored to recognize a new cadre of leaders in the Council on Competitiveness – a distinguished slate of members who have accepted an invitation to join the Council's Executive Committee:

- Dr. Daniel Diermeier, Chancellor, Vanderbilt University
- Dr. Taylor Eighmy, President, The University of Texas at San Antonio
- Dr. Jeffrey Gold, President, University of Nebraska System
- The Hon. Steve Isakowitz, President and CEO, The Aerospace Corporation
- Dr. Jennifer Mnookin, Chancellor, University of Wisconsin – Madison
- Mr. Jere Morehead, President, University of Georgia
- Mr. Joshua Parker, Chairman & CEO, Ancora
- Dr. Mark Peters, President and CEO, The MITRE Corporation
- Dr. Justin Schwartz, Chancellor, University of Colorado Boulder.

Please join me in welcoming them to our Executive Committee and thanking them for their service.

May was also a significant month for the Council as we released two major statements – building on the work of our National Commission on Innovation and Competitiveness Frontiers, as well as our Technology Leadership and Strategy Initiative (TLSI). Let me brief you on both, as they are important.

- *A Renewed Call to Action*: Since World War II, the United States has built its strength on strong leadership and sustained investment in science and technology—foundations that support our economic vitality, national security, and global influence. To preserve and advance this legacy, leaders nationwide must reinforce our exceptional innovation ecosystem—a dynamic collaboration among universities, U.S. Department of Energy national laboratories, industry, and government, which, since Vannevar Bush conceived it in 1945, continues to drive our country's global competitiveness. In support of this mission, the Council on Competitiveness and 50 of its members endorsed *A Renewed Call to Action*, urging President Trump and Congress to ignite a new Golden Age of American innovation and global leadership. Please read and share the statement here.

- *Compact for America: A Call to Action for a New, Tech-Driven Industrial Base and National Innovation Ecosystem*: This major report from the Council's TLSI offers a comprehensive roadmap—including an analysis of the U.S. technology landscape and ten actionable recommendations—for modernizing the U.S. innovation economy and defense industrial base. The *Compact* is the product of over two years of insights and recommendations from 50 of the nation's leading Chief Technology Officers across industry, academia, and the national laboratories.

In May, the Council hosted in Santa Fe its third 2025 edition of the "Competitiveness Conversations Across America": A Competitiveness Conversation: Securing Innovation in New Mexico. This multi-day gathering brought together leaders from across New Mexico's growing innovation ecosystem, anchored by its two U.S. Department of Energy national laboratories. I want to thank Dr. Thom Mason, Laboratory Director of Los Alamos National Laboratory, and Dr. James Peery, Laboratory Director Emeritus of Sandia National Laboratories, for co-hosting this excellent event. Please stay tuned for our summary report from the New Mexico Competitiveness Conversation.

And we are less than a week away (June 5-6) from our next Conversation in Medford, MA, on the campus of Tufts University. There, I will join Dr. Sunil Kumar, President of Tufts University; Dr. David A. Greene, President of Colby College; Dr. Robert Johnson, President of Western New England University; and Dr. Marlene Tromp, President Designate of the University of Vermont – as well as a strong group of other Council leaders like Dr. Melissa Gilliam, President of Boston University; Dr. Mark Nemec, President of Fairfield University; Dr. Mark Peters, President and CEO of The MITRE Corporation, and Mr. Chad Holiday, Chair Emeritus of the Council – for "A Competitiveness Conversation: Growing New England's Next Generation Innovation Economy." Please join by registering here!

We also ask that you save the date — October 19-21 — for our fifth edition of the 2025 Competitiveness Conversations Across America series. This major event will take place in Pittsburgh, PA, in partnership with University of Pittsburgh Chancellor and Council Academic Vice-chair Joan Gabel and Carnegie Mellon University President Farnam Jahanian. Titled "Forging the Future: The Intersection of Health, AI, & Tech," this will be a first-of-its-kind crossover event with the Council's sister organization, the Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils (GFCC), chaired by Chad Holliday, convening leaders from around the world to understand the best

and next competitiveness practices transforming Pittsburgh.

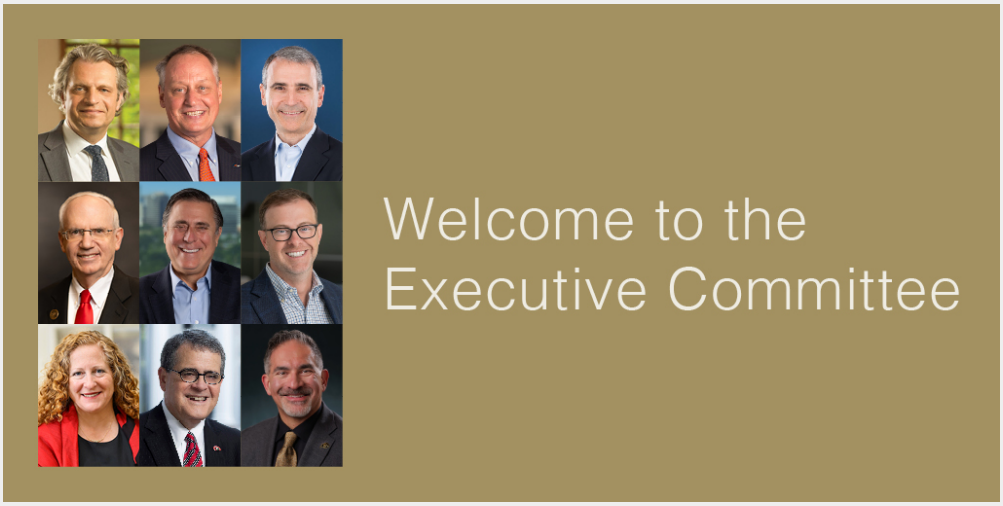
The Council's other initiatives are also gearing up for an exciting second half of the year – more to come soon. But I would like to flag again that the Council is in active preparation of a very high-level and exciting delegation to Australia, July 21-25 – to explore and define elements of a strategic partnership with peer private and public sector leaders across Melbourne, Canberra, and Sydney. If you – or senior leaders in your organization – have any interest in enhancing this critical, bilateral relationship, I strongly urge you to join us. Contact Council EVP and COO Chad Evans to learn more.

Please also find us on LinkedIn and X, as we are consistently highlighting great content from our National Commission, Competitiveness Conversations Across America, and other Council initiatives.

Thank you for your continued support of the Council. Sincerely,

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

## The Council's Executive Committee is Growing




The Council on Competitiveness is honored to welcome these new members to its Executive Committee. Each has committed considerable energy and insight in support of the Council's mission over the years, and we look forward to the new ideas and initiatives they will help forge in the future.

Our nine new Executive Committee Members are:

- Dr. Daniel Diermeier, Chancellor, Vanderbilt University
- Dr. Taylor Eighmy, President, The University of Texas at San Antonio
- Dr. Jeffrey Gold, President, University of Nebraska System
- The Hon. Steve Isakowitz, President and CEO, The Aerospace Corporation
- Dr. Jennifer Mnookin, Chancellor, University of Wisconsin – Madison
- Mr. Jere Morehead, President, University of Georgia
- Mr. Joshua Parker, Chairman & CEO, Ancora
- Dr. Mark Peters, President and CEO, The MITRE Corporation
- Dr. Justin Schwartz, Chancellor, University of Colorado Boulder

Find the bios of our new Executive Committee Membershere.

## Forbes.com

### Council President and CEO Deborah Wince-Smith Calls for a New "Win-Win" Energy Agenda to Power the United States


Photo Credit: Getty Images/Forbes.com

The United States' affordable, abundant, and reliable energy is the lifeblood of its economy—and one of the cornerstones of its economic competitiveness, enabling the country to seize the opportunities presented by transport electrification, artificial intelligence, and the resurgence of domestic manufacturing. In her latest Forbes.com article, Wince-Smith advocates for an energy approach that leverages all forms of energy, including next-generation development and deployment of fusion, to build the energy abundance the United States needs to thrive. Read her article here.

## Council News

### *A Renewed Call to Action* for Congress and the Trump Administration


The Council and 50 of its members—including CEOs, university presidents, and a range of leaders from business, labor, nonprofits, and the nation's top academic and research institutions—are calling on President Trump and Members of Congress to back A Renewed Call to Action to ignite a Golden Age of American innovation. We are grateful for the support of our endorsers and encourage everyone in the Council community to help amplify A Renewed Call to Action. [Read the full statement here.]

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## Technology Leadership and Strategy Initiative (TLSI) Unveils its Landmark *Compact for America*


The Technology Leadership and Strategy Initiative's *Compact for America* includes 10 recommendations across four pillars, all aimed at boosting U.S. scientific progress, technological innovation, and strengthening the defense industrial base and economy.

This week, the Technology Leadership & Strategy Initiative (TLSI) released its long-awaited *Compact for America: A Call to Action for a New Tech-Driven Industrial Base and National Innovation Ecosystem* report. Created by the TLSI's 50-member, multi-sector chief technology officers over the course of two years, its ten recommendations offer a roadmap for fostering the technologies and resulting innovations necessary for dramatically increasing U.S. productivity, prosperity, and security. [Read and download the report here.]

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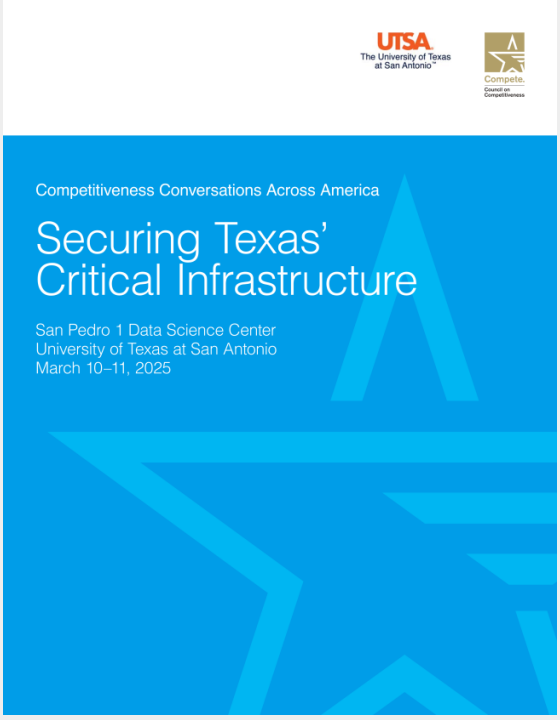
## Latest Regional "Best and Next Practices" and Critical Innovation Insights Emerge from the San Antonio Edition of the Competitiveness Conversations Across America

The summary report from the [San Antonio] edition of our [Competitiveness




Conversations Across America series is now available. This report recaps the speakers, panels, and key insights from the discussions focused on accelerating innovation, building the workforce of the future, enhancing collaboration across sectors, and securing vital systems — from the electric grid to financial infrastructure. You can find individual session summaries on our landing page, or read all the critical insights in the full report here.

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## New Mexico's Innovation Leaders Position the State as an AI, Energy, Quantum, and Space Powerhouse at 2025's 3rd Competitiveness Conversation


Photo Credit: Los Alamos National Laboratory and Sandia National Laboratories

The third in our 2025 series of Competitiveness Conversations Across America took place May 5-6 in Santa Fe, NM. Council on Competitiveness President and CEO Deborah Wince-Smith, Los Alamos National Laboratory Director Thom Mason, and Sandia National Laboratories Director Emeritus James Peery hosted this two-day exploration of how innovators in the Land of Enchantment are meeting the pressing challenges and opportunities that will drive New Mexico's prominence as a leader in energy, AI, cybersecurity, space, and other innovation-driven sectors that underpin U.S. national security.

A full summary report of the Conversation is coming soon, highlighting key learnings and lessons that the rest of the country can take from the New Mexico experience. In advance of that, we share here a background snapshot on the state of play in the New Mexico innovation economy, as well as three key takeaways from the Conversation:

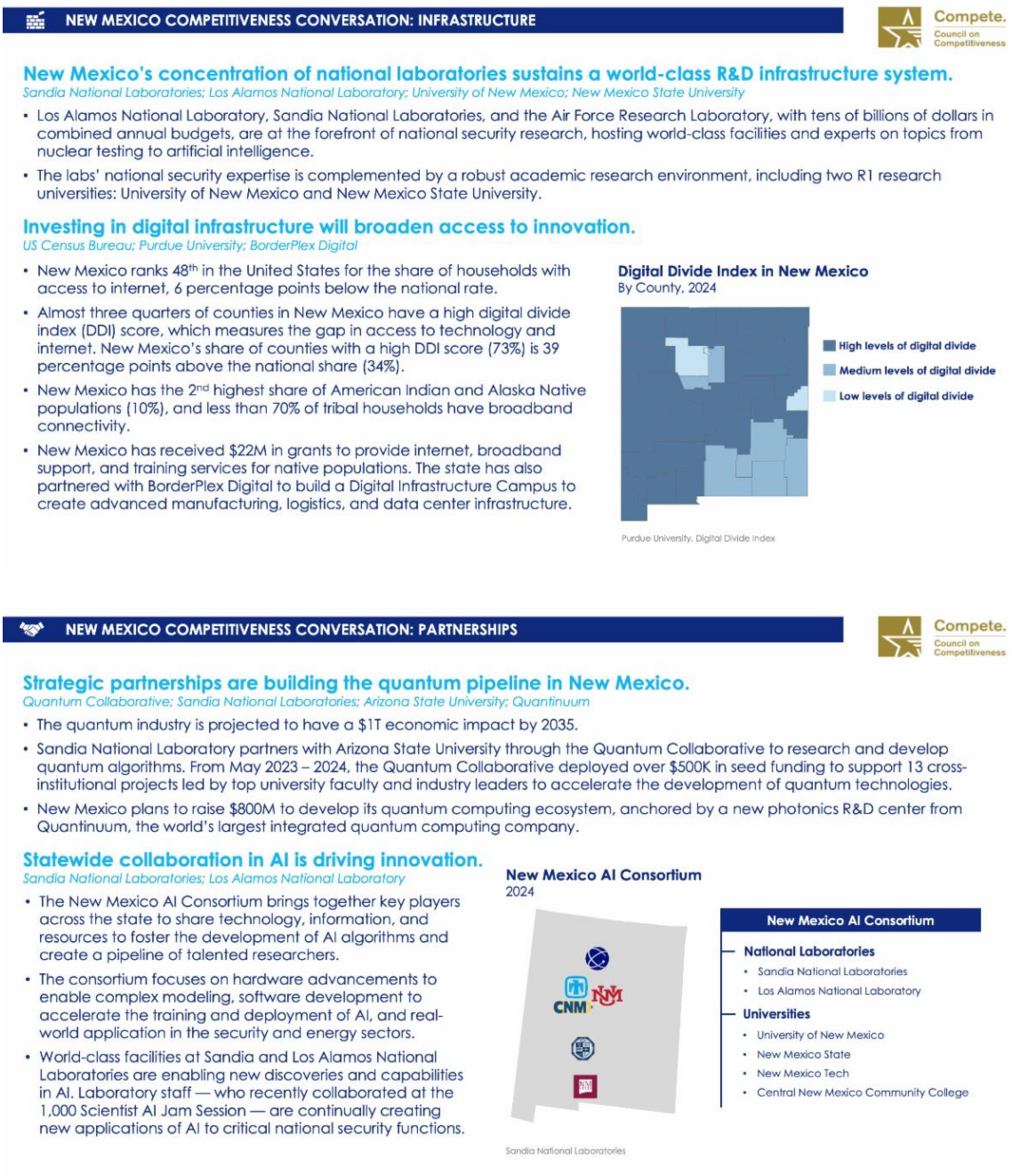


Image Credit: Keybridge Research

And three key takeaways from the Conversation:

1. New Mexico's U.S. Department of Energy national laboratories — Los Alamos and Sandia — are critical drivers of innovation that make the state a quantum powerhouse, but they cannot alone deliver economic growth. To fully realize the potential of its quantum innovation ecosystem, New Mexico must invest in commercialization, support startups, and build connective infrastructure and talent pool—efforts that require bold, state-level leadership to complement the labs' nationally focused missions.
2. Artificial intelligence is rapidly evolving from a tool to a collaborator — transforming not only how research is conducted but also how knowledge is generated, work is performed, and students learn. To harness this potential, institutions must foster AI literacy, integrate interdisciplinary perspectives, and build public trust through transparent, ethical implementation. But the transformative power of AI presents risks, too, and intentional governance and widespread access are key factors in helping ensure it is a tool of progress.
3. New Mexico's sovereign wealth fund must be transformed from a passive reserve into a strategic engine for long-term innovation and inclusive economic

growth. With the second largest sovereign wealth fund of any state, New Mexico has a remarkable opportunity to invest in its future. Rather than treating it as a rainy-day fund, leaders are developing strategies to deploy forward-looking investments into education, workforce development, and commercialization capacity, which will benefit the state and the country for decades to come.

Be on the lookout for more findings, insights, and best and "next" practices in the New Mexico Conversation Summary Report.

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### Brian Moynihan Highlights the Continuing Value of the United States's Universities Amid Changes in Higher Education

Photo Credit: Bank of America

Speaking to *Barron's* this month, Council on Competitiveness Chair, Bank of America Chair and CEO, and Brown University Chancellor Brian Moynihan described how critical universities are to the success of the United States. While acknowledging the need for universities to balance competing national visions for their place in society, Moynihan was nonetheless firm that the research done by universities is a cornerstone of the U.S. economy, saying, "America owes a debt to these universities and these universities owe a debt to America." Read the full article here.

## Competitiveness News

### Federal Funding for Science and Research Cut to Lowest Level in Decades

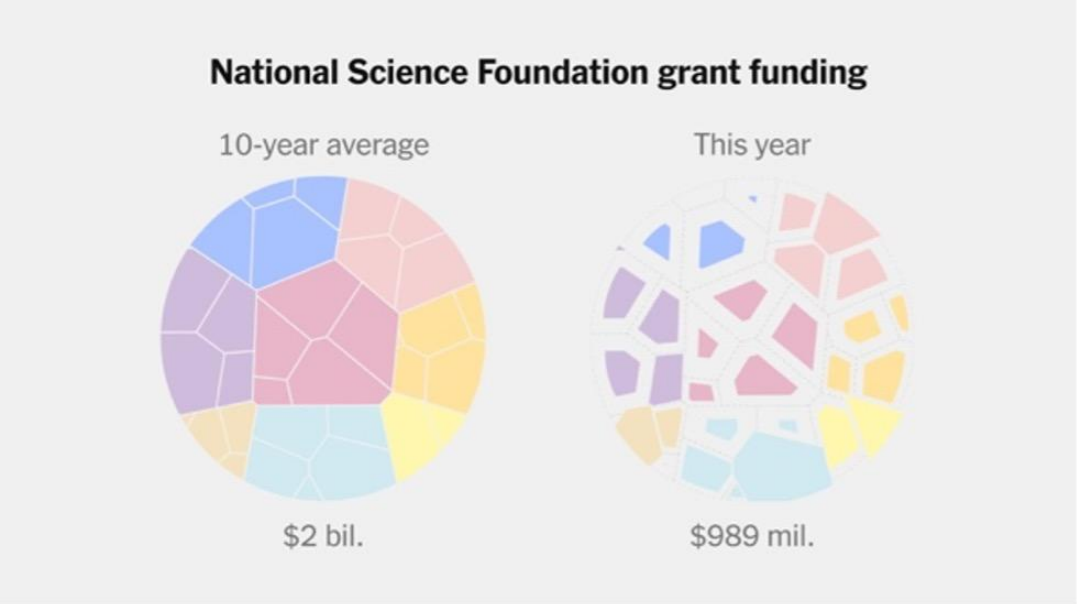


Image Credit: *The New York Times*

A recent *New York Times* article highlights the sharp cuts in federal science and research funding, with National Science Foundation grants falling from an average of $2 billion annually between 2015 and 2024 to a proposed $989 million in 2025. The drawdown in funding cuts across all sectors and, according to Council on Competitiveness President and CEO Deborah Wince-Smith in the article, puts at risk the very curiosity-driven research that historically lays the foundation for private sector investments and innovative breakthroughs. [Read the full article here.]

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## Council on Competitiveness President and CEO and GFCC Founder and President Deborah Wince-Smith Strengthens the GFCC's Partnership with Eastern Europe's Emerging Innovation Economies


Photo Credit: Mario Shumanov
From left to right: Dimitar Tsotsorkov, Chairman, Supervisory Board, Asarel-Medet; Deborah L. Wince-Smith, President and CEO, Council on Competitiveness and President, Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils; Kalin Peshov, Chairman, Management Board, Glavbolgarstroy Holding (GBS)


Photo Credit: Mario Shumanov

In May, the Hon. Deborah Wince-Smith, acting in her capacity as the Founder and President of the Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils (GFCC), expanded the GFCC's collaboration with Eastern Europe's emerging economies during a trip to Bulgaria and Romania. She joined Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister Tomislav Donchev to sign a Memorandum of Understanding between the GFCC and the newly created Bulgarian Advisory Council on Competitiveness (ACC), which called for growing partnerships to drive competitiveness, prosperity, and sustainable economic development in Bulgaria and globally.

## Council Community News

### Council Leaders to Share Insights Into the Power of Partnerships to Advance Investment and Innovation at the National Academy of Inventors Annual Conference


Image Credit: National Academy of Inventors

Council Members are set to play a major role at the 14th Annual Conference of the National Academy of Inventors in Atlanta, GA, June 23-26. Council Member, new

Executive Committee Member, and University of Georgia President Jere Morehead; and Council Member and Emory University President Greg Fenves will serve as the institutional hosts for this year's gathering of innovators. Council Members MITRE Corporation President and CEO Mark Peters and University of Maryland, College Park President Darryll Pines, TLSI Member and Colorado School of Mines Vice President for Research and Technology Transfer Walter Copan, and Council on Competitiveness Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Chad Evans will also join the panel "Government, University, and Industry Partnerships," exploring how academia, government, and industry can better turn research into real-world impact. Learn more here.

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## Quantinuum Inks $1 Billion Deal With Qatar-Based Al Rabban Capital

U.S.-based quantum firm Quantinuum has finalized a $1 billion joint venture with Qatar based Al Rabban Capital in what Quantum Insider notes "may be the largest single deal in the quantum computing sector to date." Highlighted by President Trump during his Qatar visit, the deal will see the two firms partner to build next-generation quantum computing capabilities and a robust quantum workforce in both the United States and Qatar. Council on Competitiveness Member and Quantinuum President and CEO Dr. Rajeeb Hazra said, "This Joint Venture demonstrates [The United States's and Qatar's] shared vision to lead in transformative technologies." Read more here.

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## Eli Lilly and Company and Purdue University to Pursue $250 Million Pharmaceutical Research Partnership

Photo Credit: Purdue University/Kelsey Lefever
From left to right: Eli Lilly and Company Chair and CEO David Ricks and Purdue University President Mung Chiang

On May 9, Purdue University and Eli Lilly and Company announced a $250 million expansion of their longstanding biopharmaceutical research partnership, focusing on AI-driven drug discovery, workforce development, and regulatory innovation. The leaders of both organizations, each Council on Competitiveness Members and National Commissioners, expressed excitement for this new chapter of collaboration: Purdue University President Mung Chiang called it, "potentially the largest single university-industry research agreement in American history," while Eli Lilly Chair and CEO David Ricks said he looks forward to, "pioneering new methods

of delivering next-generation medicines to advance human health." Read more here.

## University of Colorado Boulder Chancellor Justin Schwartz Makes the Case for Federally Funded University Research

Photo Credit: University of Colorado Boulder

In a recent *Forbes.com* article, Council Executive Committee Member and University of Colorado Chancellor Justin Schwartz highlighted how federally funded university research has driven U.S. innovation leadership. As global competitors like China, Japan, and Germany work to close the gap, Schwartz argued, "By supporting and investing in these hubs for innovation, we can ensure America remains a leader in discovery and prosperity for generations to come." Read the full article here.

## University of South Florida President Rhea Law Aims for $1 Billion of Research Grants by 2030


Photo Credit: Florida Trend Magazine

In a recent *Florida Trend* interview, University of South Florida President Rhea Law – a Council Member and National Commissioner – discussed USF's growing role as

a leader in innovation, particularly through its newly established Bellini College of Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity and Computing—one of the first of its kind nationally. With $738 million in research grants in 2024, Law has set a bold goal of reaching $1 billion by 2030, while at the same time continuing to deliver affordability to students. [Watch the full interview here.]

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## Deloitte Releases Its 2025 Higher Education Trends

Deloitte. Insights

# 2025 Higher Education Trends

*A look at the challenges and opportunities shaping America's higher education sector*

ARTICLE • 30-MIN READ • 07 APRIL 2025 • Deloitte Center for Government Insights

The past year saw extraordinary events across American higher education. These events have been highly visible and have significantly impacted public perception of the sector, prompting action on Capitol Hill as well as in many board rooms across the nation. The presidential election ushered in a new administration with a reform agenda aimed at reshaping many aspects of the public sector, including higher education. We are already seeing shifts in how instruction and research are funded, the standards for accreditation, how endowments are taxed, and other policy and regulatory changes with far-reaching implications for colleges and universities.

Trust in higher education continues to decline, as evidenced by the latest Gallup data (figure 1).[1] Concerns about the value of a degree, politicization, rising tuition costs, and perceived misalignment with workforce needs are contributing to the erosion of public confidence in US higher education.[2] In response, the National Education Foundation has initiated discussions on how the sector can rebuild trust. Sectorwide and institution-led initiatives aimed at restoring confidence in higher education are underway, with a focus on transparency, accountability, and community engagement —anchored firmly in student success.[3]

Image Credit: Deloitte

Set against a decline in public confidence in the nation's university system, Deloitte has released the 2025 edition of its annual *Higher Education Trends* report. Deloitte identified financial headwinds, views on the value of a four-year degree and workforce needs, and the rise of collaborative university systems as just some of the ways higher education is evolving today and urged universities to embrace change to continue fulfilling their missions. [Read the full report here.]

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## New NIST Report Highlights the Impact of China's Manufacturing Innovation Centers

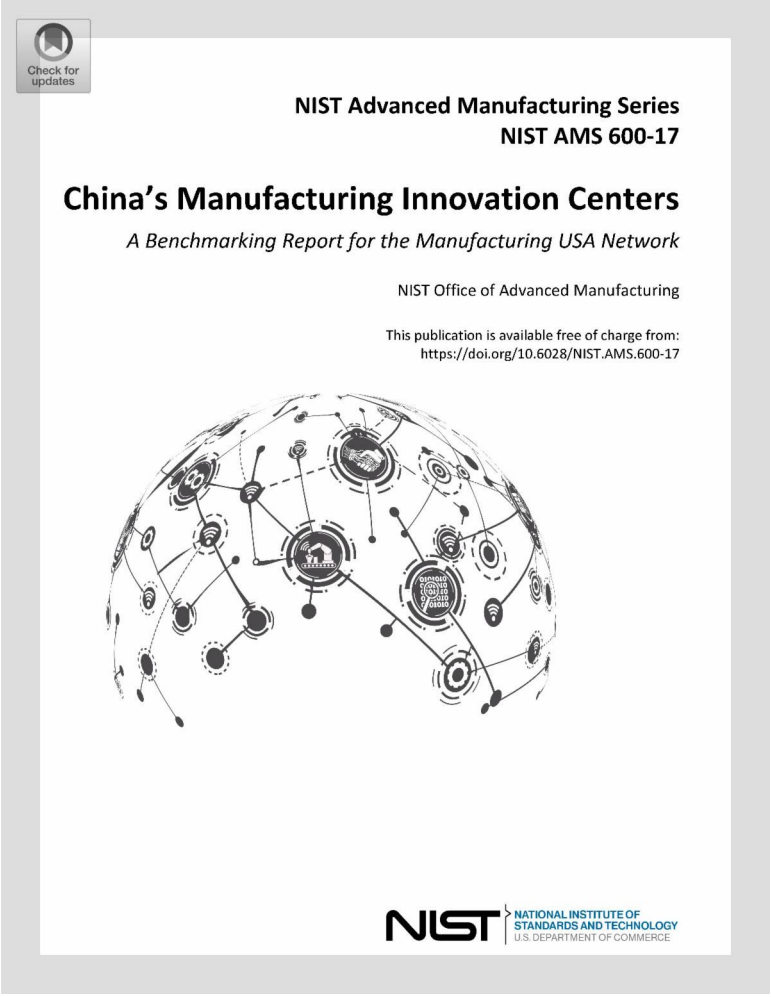


Image Credit: National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)

A new report from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) examines the rise of China's Manufacturing Innovation Centers (MICs), launched alongside its "Made in China 2025" initiative as a direct response to the U.S. Manufacturing USA institutes. These centers are central to China's strategy to control ten key technology sectors, including aerospace, electric vehicles, and biopharmaceuticals. With 33 MICs already operating and a goal of 40 by the end of 2024, they have helped China expand its advanced manufacturing lead—posing a direct challenge to U.S. technological leadership. Read the full report here.

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## First Small Modular Reactor in the G7 to be Deployed in Ontario

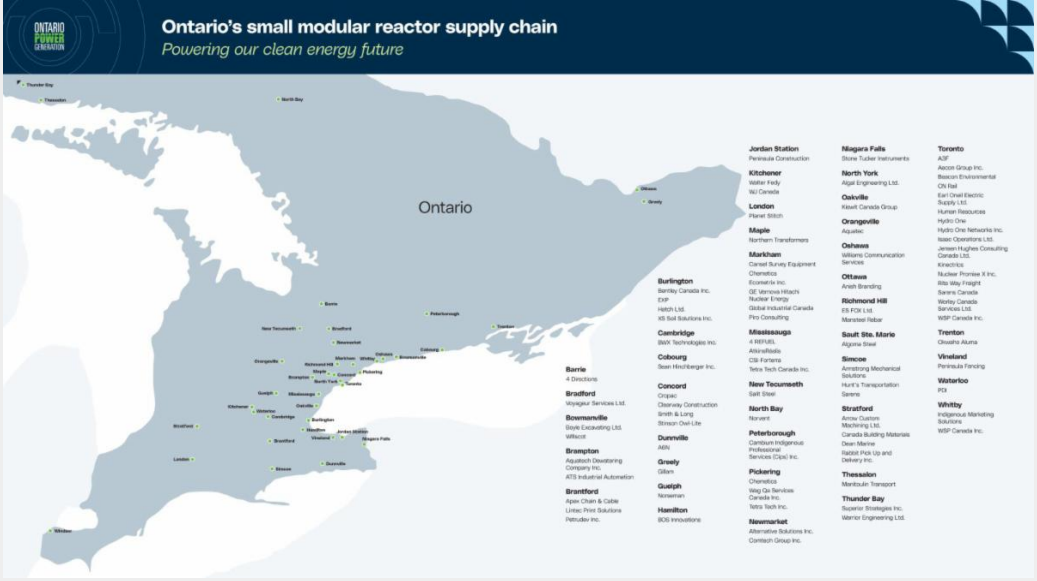


Image Credit: Ontario Power Generation (OPG)

The first small modular reactor (SMR) deployed in the "Group of 7" advanced economies will begin construction in Ontario, Canada in May. With electricity demand in the province expected to grow by 75 percent, the four planned reactors, built by U.S. based GE Vernova, will supply enough power for 300,000 homes, create 18,000 jobs, and will add $38.5 billion to Canada's economy over the next 65 years. Read the full story here.

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## Letter from Former National Science Foundation Directors and National Science Board Chairs to Congress Calls for Expanded National Science Foundation Budget

In a letter to the ranking members of the House and Senate Subcommittees on Commerce, Justice, and Science, six former National Science Foundation (NSF) Directors and seven former National Science Board (NSB) Chairs called for a significant expansion of the NSF budget to meet the nation's innovation needs. Citing the letter from President Trump to White House Office of Science and Technology Policy Director Michael Kratsios, they argued that ushering in a "Golden Age of American Innovation" requires a historic federal investment in fundamental research and education. Read the full letter here.

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## Study from the Institute for Macroeconomic and Policy Analysis Suggests Cutting Federal Research Expenditure Would Hurt the United States's Long-Term Economic Outlook

A new report from the Institute for Macroeconomic & Policy Analysis at American University suggests that cuts to federal scientific research expenditures could have stark negative consequences for U.S. prosperity. A 25 percent decrease in the federal R&D spend would lead to 3.8 percent lower GDP in the long run, comparable to the effects of the Great Recession, while a 50 percent decrease would make the average American $10,000 poorer. A 25 and 50 percent cut would also result in 4.3 and 8.6 percent lower federal revenues, respectively, reducing any savings. Read the full report here.

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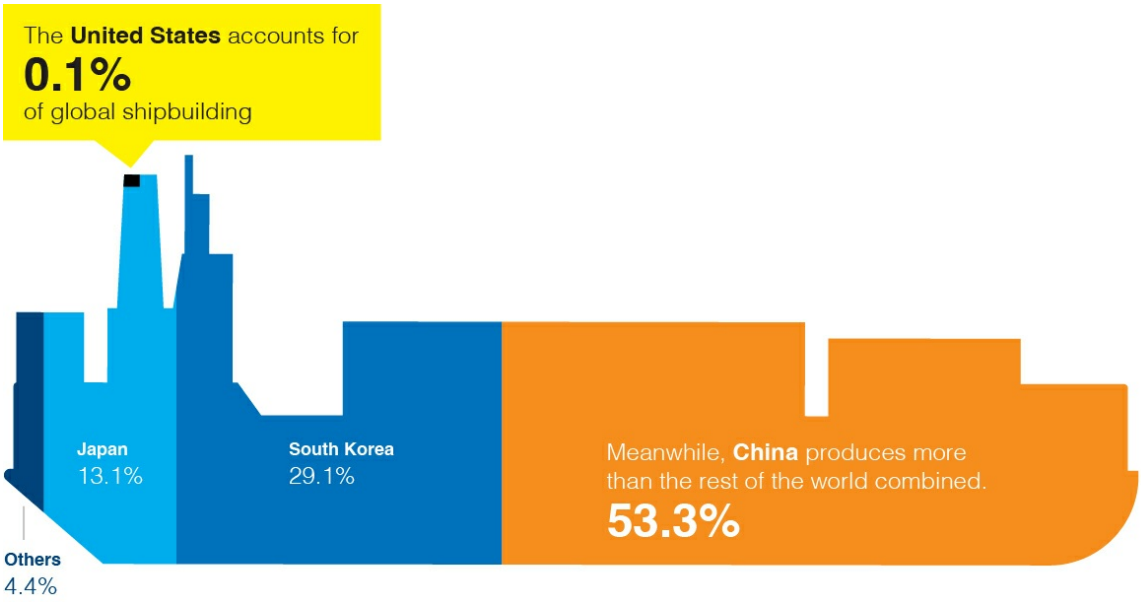
## Chinese Shipbuilding Leaves the Rest of the World in its Wake




Data Source: Center for Strategic and International Studies

Seagoing trade is one of the cornerstones of our modern, globalized economy. More than 70 percent of the world's trade by value is shipped by ocean, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and the volume of goods traded has grown from 6 billion tons in 2000 to nearly 13 billion tons today, according to UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Forty percent of U.S. trade, representing 18 percent of U.S. GDP, was moved by ocean in 2021 according to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics. To import and export goods beyond North America, the United States must have access to a reliable supply of oceangoing cargo vessels.

However, the United States today has almost zero global presence in the critical shipbuilding industry – having lost its manufacturing lead to Asia – and particularly China. A Center for Strategic and International Studies report estimates the United States controls barely one-tenth of one percent of global shipbuilding capacity.

The lack of domestic shipbuilding capacity has significant security implications. China's 175 major shipyards give it the capacity to expand its naval fleet — already the world's largest with 370 hulls — to 435 ships by 2030, according to the Department of Defense's annual report to Congress. The United States, operating just seven comparable shipyards, aspires to increase its fleet from 297 to 381 ships in the coming decades — but a January Congressional Budget Office report on the proposed expansion cites shipyard capacity as a factor with the potential to limit the rate of this buildout.

To overcome these challenges, President Trump issued an Executive Order on "Restoring America's Maritime Dominance," directing federal agencies to produce a Maritime Action Plan to bolster the maritime industrial base through federal investment and incentives for shipyards, expanded workforce training programs, and engagement with allies Japan and South Korea with strong shipbuilding supply chains.

On June 5-6, the Council on Competitiveness, in partnership with four New England universities, will dive into the future of the U.S. maritime economy at the New

England Competitiveness Conversation in Medford, MA. Learn more and register on the Conversation's Landing Page.


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 arrive when emerging technologies co-mingle and co-create new inventions, innovations, and industries of the future. Both events will be a chance to explore the distinctive innovation ecosystem emerging in Pittsburgh. As University of Pittsburgh Chancellor and Council on Competitiveness Academic Vice-chair Joan Gabel notes, "What sets Pittsburgh apart is the density of collaboration — across research, industry and health care — that's already happening here." Be on the lookout for more information as we approach this groundbreaking event. Learn more here.