

Compete Connect

October 2025 Edition

From the CEO's Desk



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

Dear Council on Competitiveness
Community,

We are less than two months out from the Council's premier annual gathering — our 2025 Gala Dinner and National Competitiveness Forum (NCF) — which is coming together as a truly extraordinary event. *I am excited to share more soon about the agenda — and special guests.*

This year's NCF will bring together our community of members, policymakers, and global competitiveness leaders in Washington, DC, for a vibrant celebration of the Council's 2025 achievements — *for which there are many!* — a forward-looking exploration of 2026, and a tribute to a slate of visionary leaders who have helped to define and shape U.S. competitiveness.

Our agenda includes dynamic sessions and keynotes covering the future of the bioeconomy; strategies for expanding the U.S. talent pipeline; driving U.S. leadership in AI, quantum, and supercomputing; addressing the energy challenges — and opportunities — shaping the next economy; and much more. If you have not registered, be sure to do so now and join us to shape the next era of U.S. competitiveness. Visit the [2025 NCF landing page here](#). ***And please do consider sponsoring — joining your peers in helping the Council execute such pathbreaking events and programs.***

Reflecting on Council highlights from October, the latest edition in our leadership series of Competitiveness Conversations Across America — “*Forging the Future: The Intersection of Health, AI, and Technology*” in Pittsburgh — was a highly substantive success. Chancellor Joan Gabel, University of Pittsburgh and Academic Vice-Chair of the Council on Competitiveness, hosted the Conversation on her campus — alongside myself, Council Chair Emeritus Chad Holliday, and Carnegie Mellon University President Farnam Jahanian. Distinguishing the three-day program was a crossover with our sister organization's annual global innovation summit. This Conversation, winding down our 2025 editions, convened high-level leaders from government, academia, industry, and labor — from across the United States and 20+ nations — to explore the nexus of AI, health, and technology.

Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro delivered a powerful keynote documenting the factors that drive Pittsburgh's incredible innovation engine, while both Senator Dave McCormick and John Fetterman provided perspectives from the Hill. We also curated and executed an incredible slate of leadership panels engaging voices from across Pittsburgh, the nation, and the world; and experienced immersive tours to gain firsthand insight into Pittsburgh's rapidly expanding innovation ecosystem. I want to extend a special thank you to our Academic Vice-Chair, Chancellor Gabel, for her hospitality in welcoming over 200 leaders from more than 20 countries, creating a global stage for collaboration and discovery.

As we move toward December's NCF, I encourage you to engage fully in the Council's extraordinary community. In the newsletter that follows, you will find more details on upcoming events, opportunities to connect, and ways to advance innovation and competitiveness together.

Thank you for your continued partnership and commitment to shaping the next era of U.S. and global competitiveness.

Sincerely,

Council News

Join the Council for the 2025 Gala Dinner & National Competitiveness Forum



Join leaders from industry, academia, labor, the U.S. research enterprise, and government for the 2025 National Competitiveness Forum and Annual Gala Dinner, December 15–16 at Salamander DC in Washington, D.C. ([NCF registration is open; Council Members receive a significant discount.](#))

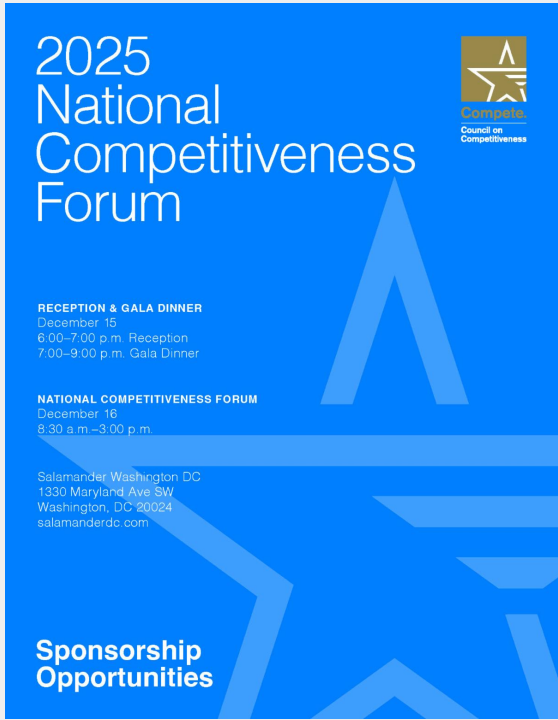
This premier gathering will explore and shape the critical trends shaping the United States’ innovation and economic leadership, from the Bio+ economy and energy transitions to breakthroughs in AI, quantum, and supercomputing.

Dive into dynamic, cross-sector panel discussions, tech talks, and keynotes with the nation’s top leaders — all focused on strengthening the United States’ innovation capacity, workforce, and global competitiveness. Secure your spot today to connect with peers, celebrate breakthrough achievements, and help define the United States innovation agenda for the Council's 40th Anniversary and beyond.

If you have questions about attending the NCF, or to receive the Council membership discount code, please contact Council Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer [Chad Evans](#).

Click to Register

NCF 2025 Sponsorships are Available — Secure Your Spot



Generous benefits are available to 2025 NCF sponsors, including distinctive visibility and engagement with leaders shaping the future of U.S. competitiveness. Find more details in the [sponsorship brochure](#), and please email [Chad Evans](#) if you would like to join your peers in supporting the NCF.

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And a big thank you to our current sponsors:

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- We are also grateful for the sponsorship of:
- **Chair:** Lockheed Martin, Snap-on Incorporated
 - **Patron:** American National Standards Institute (ANSI), Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL)

Competitiveness Conversations Across America: Pittsburgh

Last week, the Council on Competitiveness convened in Pittsburgh the 8th and latest edition of its highly successful series of “Competitiveness Conversations Across America”: *Forging the Future: The Intersection of Health, AI, and Technology*. The event also engaged leaders from 20+ nations participating in the annual meeting and summit of the Council’s sister organization, the Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils (GFCC). This joint summit focused on exploring how AI and emerging technologies are reshaping health and economic growth.

Chancellor Joan Gabel, University of Pittsburgh, Academic Vice-Chair of the Council on Competitiveness, hosted this edition of the Competitiveness Conversations series on her campus, along with President Farnam Jahanian, Carnegie Mellon University, member of the Council’s Executive Committee; Mr. Charles O. Holliday Jr., Chair of the GFCC and Chair Emeritus of the Council on Competitiveness; and the Hon. Deborah L. Wince-Smith, President and CEO of the Council on Competitiveness, and Founder and President of the GFCC.

The event opened with the GFCC’s annual meeting, hosted at The Assembly — a life science and research center at the University of Pittsburgh, located in the former Ford Motor Plant in Pittsburgh — featuring the launch of the GFCC’s *2025 Call to Action* and the creation of two new global working groups focused on the impact of AI on the workforce.



Photo Credit: University of Pittsburgh
 Pictured: Attendees of the GFCC Annual meeting, representing more than 20 countries



Photo Credit: Council on Competitiveness
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Following the GFCC annual meeting, Chancellor Gabel hosted a convivial dinner at Pittsburgh’s iconic Cathedral of Learning — a magnificent Gothic Revival skyscraper opened in the 1930s and home to more than 30 classrooms representing cultures from around the world. The Cathedral’s setting reflected the summit’s global spirit, and leaders from industry, academia, and government gathered to celebrate innovation, collaboration, and the promise of technology to advance greater productivity, prosperity, and health. Ms. Wince-Smith, Dr. Jahanian, and Ms. Gabel all provided welcome remarks and, following dinner, guests enjoyed an informative fireside chat between Ms. Gabel and Ms. Sandra Colner, General Manager, Global Healthcare & Life Sciences, Dell Technologies.



Photo Credit: University of Pittsburgh
 Pictured: Ms. Joan Gabel, Chancellor, University of Pittsburgh (left), and Ms. Sandra Colner, GM Global Healthcare & Life Sciences, Dell Technologies, during their fireside chat at the University of Pittsburgh’s Cathedral of Learning dinner.



Photo Credit: University of Pittsburgh
 Pictured: Dr. Farnam Jahanian, President, Carnegie Mellon University, providing welcome remarks to help kick off *Forging the Future*.

The core two days of the Competitiveness Conversation featured a dynamic program of keynotes, panel discussions, and tours across Pittsburgh’s innovation ecosystem focused on the nexus of AI, health, and technology. Participants heard from an exceptional lineup of leaders spanning sectors and disciplines, including political and government leaders — including the Hon. Josh Shapiro, Governor of Pennsylvania, and Mr. Rick Siger, Pennsylvania Secretary of Community and Economic Development — as well as leaders from across the Pittsburgh innovation ecosystem, and the Council on Competitiveness' and GFCC's membership.



Photo Credit: University of Pittsburgh
 Left to right: Dr. Farnam Jahanian, President, Carnegie Mellon University, and Executive Committee Member, Council on Competitiveness; Dr. Harris Pastides, President Emeritus, University of South Carolina; Hon. Deborah L. Wince-Smith, President and CEO, Council on Competitiveness; Mr. Charles “Chad” O. Holliday Jr., Chair, GFCC and Chair Emeritus, Council on Competitiveness; Ms. Joan Gabel, Chancellor, University of Pittsburgh, and Academic Vice-Chair, Council on Competitiveness; Dr. Jeffrey P. Gold, President, University of Nebraska System, and Executive Committee Member, Council on Competitiveness; Mr. Chad Evans, Executive Vice President and COO, and Secretary and Treasurer to the Board, Council on Competitiveness; Dr. Roberto Alvarez, Executive Director, GFCC, before the opening panel at the Pittsburgh Competitiveness Conversation. (Missing opening panelist from the photo: Admiral Walter “Ted” Carter Jr., President, Ohio State University)



Photo Credit: University of Pittsburgh
 Left to right: Charles “Chad” O. Holliday Jr., Chairman, GFCC, USA, and Chair Emeritus, Council on

Competitiveness; Chris DeCardy, President, The Heinz Endowments; Sir Ian Greer, President and Vice-Chancellor, Queen’s University Belfast; Theresa Mayer, Vice President for Research, Carnegie Mellon University; Aleks Subic, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, Aston University. The leaders provided examples of place-making innovation happening around the world during the “Transforming Realities: Pittsburgh, Birmingham and Belfast Shape a Sustainable and Prosperous Future” panel.



Photo Credit: University of Pittsburgh
Pictured: Dr. Mehmood Khan, CEO, Hevolution, who, in his keynote, explained that aging research is focused on extending healthy, functional life for all — not just longevity for the few — and that tackling aging’s global challenges demands coordinated innovation across science, policy, and investment. Even modest gains in healthy lifespan could yield immense economic and societal benefits worldwide, he said.

Following a day of insightful discussion at the University of Pittsburgh’s beautiful Alumni Hall, attendees enjoyed dinner on Mt. Washington, featuring an extraordinary backdrop of downtown Pittsburgh and overlooking the meeting of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers to form the mighty Ohio. Following dinner, the Hon. Wince-Smith, Mr. Chad Holliday, and Mr. Charles Kiefel, AM, bestowed the GFCC Global Competitiveness Award to Ms. Joan Gabel, Dr. Mehmood Khan, Dr. Harris Pastides, and Dr. Farnam Jahanian for making a significant difference in the competitiveness of towns, cities, states, regions, and nations around the world. These builders and agents of change have demonstrated a long-standing, strong commitment and tireless dedication to shaping a more productive and prosperous future.



Photo Credit: University of Pittsburgh
Pictured: Attendees enjoyed views of downtown Pittsburgh and the “Point of the Beginning,” where Allegheny and Monongahela join to form the Ohio River.



Photo Credit: University of Pittsburgh
 Pictured: Mr. Charles Kiefel AM, Vice-Chair, Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils, Australia; Hon. Deborah L. Wince-Smith, President and CEO, Council on Competitiveness, and Founder and President, GFCC; and Mr. Charles Holliday, Chair Emeritus, Council on Competitiveness, and Chair, GFCC, present the Global Competitiveness Award to Ms. Joan Gabel, Chancellor, University of Pittsburgh



Photo Credit: University of Pittsburgh
 Left to right: Mr. John J. Verbanac, President and CEO, Summa Development, and Chairperson, Board of Trustees, University of Pittsburgh; Ms. Stefani Pashman, CEO, Allegheny Conference on Community Development; Ms. Leslie C. Davis, President and CEO, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC), and Ms. Wince-Smith, during the day's concluding panel: "Forging the Future: Local and Regional Alliances to Build and Advance Health Innovation Hubs."



Photo Credit: University of Pittsburgh
 Pictured: Dan Sheeran, Vice President and General Manager, Health Care and Life Sciences, Amazon Web Services, and Ms. Joan Gabel, Chancellor, University of Pittsburgh, during the dinner's "Partner Spotlight."

Pannels continued on Tuesday, showcasing Pittsburgh’s transformation from an

industrial hub to a global center for health and technology leadership. Topics included AI in medicine and diagnostics, investing in health tech, advanced manufacturing, and transformative place-making strategies, providing participants with a clearer vision of how innovation is shaping the future of health and society. Keynotes from Governor Josh Shapiro and Carnegie Mellon University President Farnam Jahanian also underscored the importance of public-private collaboration in driving regional and global competitiveness.



Photo Credit: University of Pittsburgh

Pictured: Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro in his keynote, where he highlighted Pennsylvania’s emergence as a national hub for AI, life sciences, and advanced manufacturing, with Pittsburgh at the forefront of healthcare innovation. The Governor highlighted the state’s strategic investments in workforce development, energy infrastructure, and R&D, noting programs that have trained over 35,000 Pennsylvanians and accelerated business operations through permitting reforms. Shapiro also called on business, universities, and the workforce to collaborate boldly to drive economic growth and capitalize on emerging technologies.



Photo Credit: University of Pittsburgh

Left to right: Mr. Chad Evans, Executive Vice President and COO, and Secretary and Treasurer to the Board, Council on Competitiveness; Dr. Steven Ashby, Senior Vice President for Strategic Partnerships, Battelle; Dr. Willie E. May, Vice President for Research and Economic Development, Morgan State University; Mr. Josh M. Parker, Chairman and CEO, Ancora; Dr. Miguel Marques, Vice Rector, Catholic University of Portugal; Dr. Mark I. Rosenblatt, G. Stephen Irwin Executive Dean, College of Medicine, and Chief Executive Officer, University of Illinois Hospital & Clinics, and Distinguished Professor of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, University of Illinois Chicago; Dr. Damon Salesa, Vice-Chancellor, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand in the penultimate panel of the day: “From Ideas to Impact: Innovation Ecosystems Driving Transformative Place-Making.”

In the penultimate session of the day, Council Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Chad Evans moderated “From Ideas to Impact: Innovation Ecosystems Driving Transformative Place-Making,” during which leaders from across the country and domains explored the transformative power of place-making innovation — the intentional design of ecosystems that move ideas from conception to impact — to drive regional growth and competitiveness. During the session, Pittsburgh’s reinvention from industrial center to innovation powerhouse — a theme we heard throughout the meeting — set the stage for a global discussion on how anchor institutions, partnerships, and community vision can make places “stick” for innovators.

Throughout the Competitiveness Conversation, we were pleased to welcome many leaders not mentioned above from across the Council’s distinguished membership and community, including: Dr. Padma Raghavan, Chancellor’s Executive Director for Science and Technology Strategy and Distinguished Professor of Computer Science, Vanderbilt University (and TLSI Member); Dr. Mark I. Rosenblatt, G. Stephen Irwin Executive Dean, College of Medicine, and Chief Executive Officer, University of Illinois Hospital & Clinics, and Distinguished Professor of

Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, University of Illinois Chicago, Dr. Michael Wolf, Senior Fellow, Council on Competitiveness, and many others. We are grateful to all who participated and look forward to seeing even more leaders from the Council community at our three 2026 Competitiveness Conversations.

The 2026 Competitiveness Conversations Are Coming

2026 Competitiveness
Conversations Across America



Baltimore & College Park, MD
March 23–24

HOSTS
Dr. Darryll Pines
President, University of Maryland
Dr. David Wilson
President, Morgan State University

Omaha, NE
April 29–30

HOST
Dr. Jeffrey P. Gold
President, University of Nebraska System

San Diego, CA
July 20–22

HOST
Dr. Pradeep K. Khosla
Chancellor, University of California San Diego

Mark your calendars! The Competitiveness Conversations Across America series is going east to west in 2026, as we dive into the innovation ecosystems shaping the next decade of U.S. competitiveness. The series kicks off March 23–24 in Baltimore and College Park, MD, with “Unlocking American Innovation in the AI & Quantum Era,” hosted by University of Maryland President Darryll Pines and Morgan State University President David Wilson. Then we head to Omaha, NE, on April 29–30 where University of Nebraska System President Jeff Gold will host “Leading the New Frontier in the Global Bioeconomy.” Finally, we head to the Pacific Coast July 20–21, where UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla will welcome participants to one of the nation’s — and world’s — most important innovation hubs connecting communications, national security, bio, transformational computing, and more. Learn more about the [2026 Competitiveness Conversations here](#).

Deborah L. Wince-Smith Chairs Plenary Session at the 22nd STS *forum* in Kyoto

At the 22nd Annual Meeting of the Science and Technology in Society (STS) *forum*, held October 5–7, 2025, in Kyoto, Japan, the Hon. Deborah L. Wince-Smith, chaired the opening plenary session titled “Path to Sustainability toward a Zero-Carbon Society.” The STS *forum*, founded in 2004, is one of the world’s leading gatherings on the future of science, technology, and innovation — bringing together more than 1,500 leaders from over 80 countries, including heads of government, CEOs, university presidents, and Nobel Laureates.

In addition to a range of meetings to support the Council’s strategic bilateral and multilateral partnerships — for example, a session with senior leaders from Malaysia’s Ministry of Science and Technology and Innovation (MOSTI), and the Malaysia Industry-Governemnt Group for High Technology (MIGHT) — Ms. Wince-Smith led an engaging discussion on defining pathways to greater sustainability, and energy efficiency and productivity. The distinguished panel included the President and Chair, Asian Development Bank; the President of King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST); the Chair of Orano; the Executive Vice President of Technology & Innovation, Saudi Aramco; the Vice Minister for International Affairs in Japan’s Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry; the Permanent Secretary in Thailand’s Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation; the President and CEO of Japan’s Atomic Energy Association.



Photo Credit: MIGHT; left to right: Rushdi Rahim, President and CEO, Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology (MIGHT); MIGHT Chairman Tan Sri Ahmad Tajuddin Ali; and, the Secretary-General of MOSTI.

Council Community News

U.S. National Lab Supercomputers Advance “Sovereign AI”

The U.S. Department of Energy and its national laboratory enterprise has embarked on a new journey — to partner with firms like NVIDIA to build seven next-generation AI supercomputers at Argonne National Laboratory, led by Director Paul Kearns

(also a Council National Commissioner), and Los Alamos National Laboratory, led by Director Thom Mason (Co-Chair of the National Commission). These new systems — with up to 10,000 GPUs capable of running trillion-parameter AI models — will drive breakthroughs in science, energy, and national security. Together, these initiatives mark a major leap in building U.S. “sovereign AI” infrastructure — ensuring the nation’s most advanced AI capabilities remain under U.S. control, bolstering competitiveness, security, and scientific leadership for decades to come. [Learn more about this important announcement here.](#)

ORNL Unveils Discovery and Lux AI Supercomputers



Photo credit: HPE

Oak Ridge National Laboratory, led by Director Stehpen Streiffer (National Commissioner), in partnership with AMD and HPE, will deploy two next-generation AI supercomputers — Lux in 2026 and Discovery in 2028 — to strengthen U.S. leadership in artificial intelligence and high-performance computing. Lux will accelerate research in fusion, materials, quantum technologies, advanced manufacturing, and the energy grid; Discovery, building on ORNL’s Frontier legacy, will enable AI-driven breakthroughs in energy, medicine, aerospace, and more. [Here is a great overview about these advanced systems from ORNL.](#)

Council Member David Ricks, President, Eli Lilly & Company, Announces New Supercomputer That Could Change Medicine

Eli Lilly and Company announced the development of a groundbreaking supercomputer and AI “factory” in partnership with NVIDIA — set to become the most powerful in the pharmaceutical industry. Designed to accelerate drug discovery and development, the system will leverage Lilly’s vast internal data and NVIDIA’s AI computing expertise to create purpose-built scientific models, enhance biological understanding, and drive more personalized medicine. [Read the exciting announcement here.](#)

UC Davis Chancellor Gary May Reaffirms the Value of a Higher Education in New Op-ed

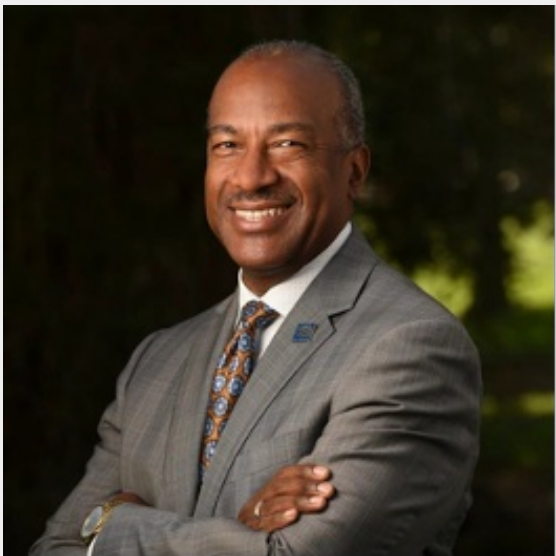


Photo Credit: UC Davis

Published in *Higher Ed Drive*, Dr. Gary May, Chancellor of the University of California, Davis (and Council Executive Committee member) argues U.S. colleges must rise above polarization to further elevate their vital role in individual and national productivity and prosperity. He highlights the importance of transparent admissions, meaningful career preparation, and manageable student debt, while arguing a college degree remains a critical pathway to opportunity — especially in an era of AI and technological disruption. [Read Dr. May’s call to action here.](#)

Digitally Farming the Future: NSF ASCEND Engine Leads the Way



Photo Credit: NSF ASCEND Engine in Colorado and Wyoming

The NSF ASCEND Engine in Colorado and Wyoming, led by Council Member Mike Freeman, is bringing together local agricultural producers to explore new solutions for the Mountain West region. One project the ASCEND Engine funds is the National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) to create a first-of-its-kind ecosystem-scale digital twin, giving growers powerful new tools to manage water and other resources more effectively. Check out the full release [here.](#)

University of Colorado Boulder Named an Ignition School for Second Consecutive Year

Under the leadership of Chancellor Justin Schwartz—a member of the Council on

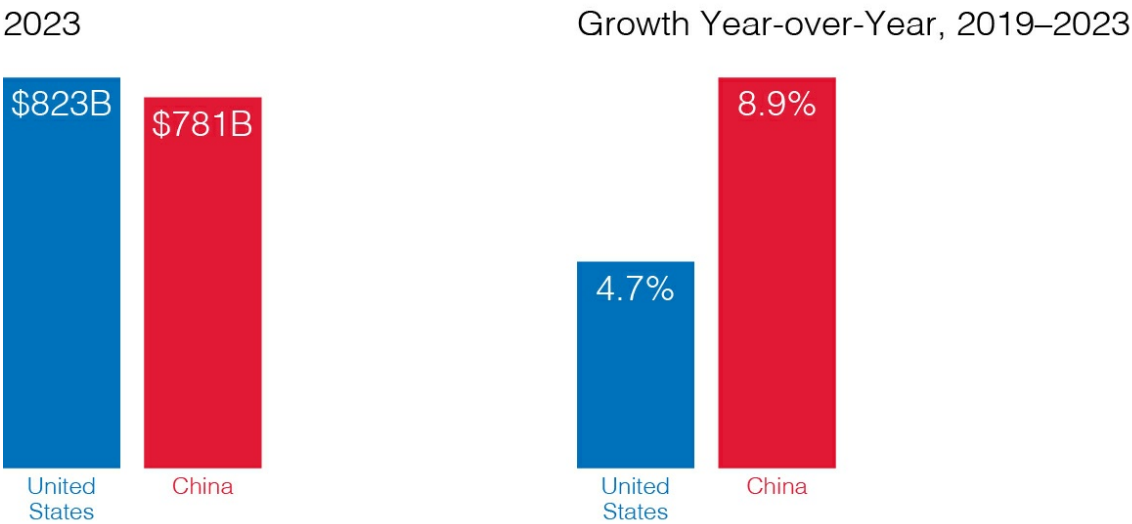
Competitiveness Executive Committee—CU Boulder has been named to *Inc.* and *Fast Company's* Ignition Schools list, recognizing its excellence in innovation and entrepreneurship. Through the Leeds School of Business and the Deming Center for Entrepreneurship, the university is equipping students with entrepreneurial mind-sets, supporting ventures in fields such as quantum technology and sustainable housing, and reinforcing its national leadership in innovation-driven economic competitiveness. Learn more about CU Boulder's impact [here](#).

Council Insight

R&D Spending Will Shape the Next Frontier of Competitiveness

Gross Domestic Expenditures on R&D

Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development



Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) data underscore a pivotal trend in the global race for innovation leadership. In 2023, the United States invested \$823 billion in research and development (R&D) — the largest total globally — but China is rapidly closing the gap, reaching \$781 billion and growing nearly twice as fast (8.9 percent annual growth since 2019, compared with 4.7 percent for the United States).

This acceleration highlights a fundamental competitiveness challenge: Sustained and strategic investment in R&D underpins national productivity, innovation capacity, and technological leadership — the drivers of economic security and prosperity in the next economy.

As converging technologies — from AI to advanced manufacturing and biotechnology — reshape global markets and supply chains, the pace and focus of R&D investment will determine which nations lead in defining standards, setting norms, and capturing the value of innovation.

For U.S. economic leaders and policymakers, these trends are a clear call to action: ensuring a robust, well-coordinated national innovation ecosystem that couples world-leading research with agile commercialization and workforce strategies is vital to maintaining the United States’ global standing.

New to Our Community



[Dr. Rajeeb Hazra](#)
President and CEO
Quantinuum

Dr. Hazra has joined the Council’s Executive Committee

Photo Credit: Quantinuum

[Mr. Richard A. Bierschbach](#)
Interim President
Wayne State University

Mr. Bierschbach has joined the Council



Photo Credit: Wayne State University

as a General Member



Photo Credit: University of Texas at Dallas

[Dr. Prabhas V. Moghe](#)

President
University of Texas at Dallas
General Membership

Dr. Moghe has joined the Council as a General Member



Photo Credit: Manus

[Dr. Ajikumar "Aji" Parayil](#)

Founder & CEO
Manus

Dr. Parayil has joined the Council as a General Member



Photo Credit: Argonne National Laboratory

[Dr. Sean Jones](#)

Deputy Laboratory Director for Science and Technology
Argonne National Laboratory

Dr. Jones has joined the Council's Technology Leadership and Strategy Initiative (TLSI)



Photo Credit: Purdue University

[Dr. Luna Lu](#)

Vice President, Office of Industry Partnerships
Purdue University
Dr. Lu has joined the Council's Technology Leadership and Strategy Initiative (TLSI)

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