Compete Connect

October 2026 Edition

From the CEO's Desk

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

Across the country and around the world, the emergence and convergence of AI, quantum, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, and new forms of energy are reshaping how nations compete, raising the stakes for how quickly the United States can turn discovery into production, deployment, and impact. As the Council approaches the close of its 40th anniversary year, our work is focused on what it will take for America and Americans to prosper in this new era.

In December, we will bring this work together at the capstone of our year: the **40th Anniversary Gala Dinner on December 16 and the 2026 National Competitiveness Forum (NCF) on December 17**, at the Willard InterContinental in Washington, D.C. We will have a robust agenda, built around key ongoing Council initiatives — and this year's event is tracking to be our best yet in terms of early interest and registrations.

At the NCF, we will release an illuminating perspective on how America and Americans are doing 40 years after John Young founded the Council – tapping back into our historical roots of benchmarking U.S. economic performance. The report will shine a light on the nation's position across the capabilities, technologies, and industries shaping the next economy. We will also present recommendations for advancing smart regulations, standards, and intellectual property protections; our industrial bioeconomy; as well as strategies to grow the next generation of place-making innovation and manufacturing prowess in communities across the country.

You will receive more details about the agenda and an impressive lineup of speakers in the coming weeks – including a major fireside chat between our distinguished Chair, Erik Fyrwald (Chair and CEO, IFF), and one of the world's most dynamic industry leaders, helming one of the most innovative firms – Dave Ricks (Chair and CEO, Eli Lilly and Company).

You will not want to miss that conversation – and all the other surprises to come. Space at the NCF is limited, so I encourage you to **register now**. Council members receive a significant discount; please contact Council EVP and COO **Chad Evans** for your registration code.

I am also deeply grateful to the 2026 NCF sponsors who have already committed their support, including:

- The University of Pittsburgh
- Bank of America
- Lockheed Martin
- The University of Colorado Boulder
- The University of Texas at Dallas
- Fragrance Creators Association
- IFF
- Procter & Gamble
- Resource Resolutions, Ltd.
- The University of Maryland
- The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
- HNTB
- Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory
- Notre Dame Research
- Triad National Security
- Battelle
- Carnegie Mellon University
- George Mason University
- MITRE
- Oak Ridge National Laboratory
- The University of California, Davis,
- The University of California, Merced
- The University of California, Riverside
- The University of Georgia
- The University of Texas at San Antonio

I hope all of our members consider joining them, as NCF sponsorship is an important funding source for the Council's ongoing work. Please review the **sponsorship brochure** and contact me or Chad Evans to discuss opportunities.

Looking ahead to November, I am very excited to welcome TLSI members to our new DC headquarters at 801 18th Street NW for Dialogue 33. During the meeting, members will weigh in on the Council's proposal for Advanced Innovation and Manufacturing (AIM) Zones and hear from two distinguished presenters: Dr. Vijay Swarup, retired Chief Technology Officer of ExxonMobil, on AI, energy, and the global technology race; and Dr. Micah Stoutimore, Managing Director of the Quantum Benchmarking Initiative at the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), on the future of quantum computing. Please email **Chad** if you are interested in learning more.

I look forward to welcoming you to the Willard in December to celebrate four decades of the Council's work and to chart the next 40 together. Thank you for your partnership and your commitment to advancing U.S. competitiveness.

Sincerely,

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

Council News

The Council Has Moved!

On October 1, the Council opened the doors to its new Washington, D.C., headquarters, just steps from the White House. Please update your records with our new address, including accounts payable, payment systems, and mailing lists:

Council on Competitiveness
801 18th Street NW
Suite 800
Washington, DC 20006

We look forward to welcoming you to our new home!

Celebrate 40 Years of Impact. Help Us Chart the Next 40.

What will it take for America and Americans to prosper in the next 40 years?

Join the Council on Competitiveness for its 40th Anniversary Gala Dinner on December 16, followed by the 2026 National Competitiveness Forum (NCF) on December 17 at the Willard InterContinental Hotel in Washington, D.C.

Together, leaders across industry, academia, labor, government, and the U.S. Department of Energy national laboratory enterprise will map out the next economy —focusing on advanced manufacturing, energy resilience, technology & trade rules, and workforce innovation. We will also highlight AIM Zones (American Innovation and Manufacturing Zones) and our broader work to strengthen U.S. productivity, security, and inclusive prosperity.

Registration is open — click **here** to join us to celebrate 40 years of impact…and help shape the next 40.

(Council members: contact **Chad Evans** for your discount code.)

Become a 2026 NCF Sponsor

Position your brand at the center of innovation. Sponsors enjoy tremendous visibility at the 40th Anniversary Gala Dinner, the 2026 NCF, and across our digital channels—all while fueling the Council's mission to drive U.S. competitiveness forward. **Explore the 2026 sponsorship brochure** and contact **Chad Evans** with sponsorship inquiries.

40TH ANNIVERSARY GALA DINNER & 2026 NCF

Thank You to Our Confirmed Sponsors

As of October 30, 2026

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University of Georgia
University of Texas at San Antonio

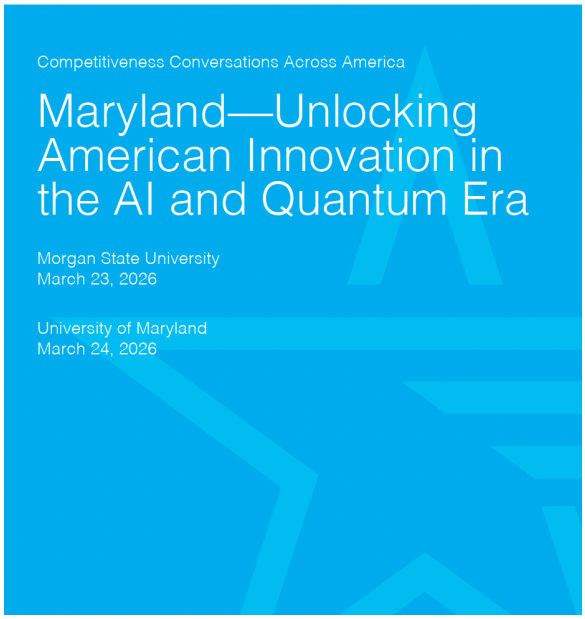
Competitiveness Conversations Across America: New Insights from Maryland and Nebraska

Maryland

What does it take to build a global hub for AI and quantum innovation? A decade of strategic vision, sustained cross-sector collaboration, and disciplined execution.

That is a central takeaway from the Council on Competitiveness' new summary report, *Maryland: Unlocking American Innovation in the AI and Quantum Era*, that captures insights and lessons from the 2026 Maryland edition of the Council's Competitiveness Conversations Across America series.

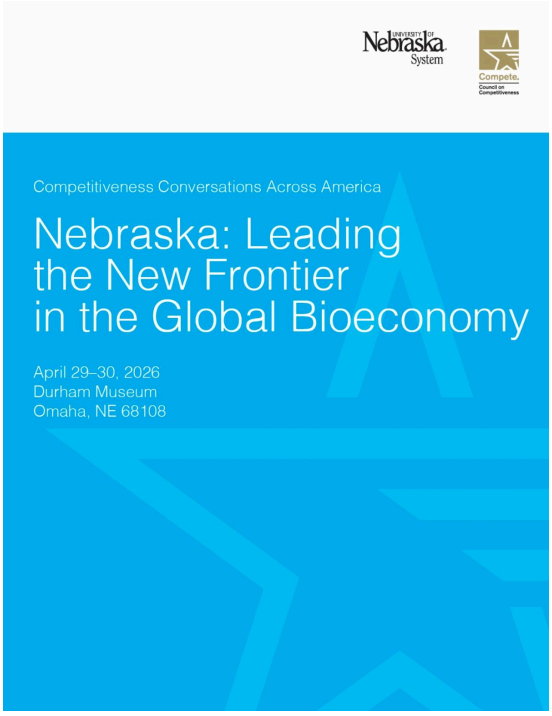
Read the Maryland Competitiveness Conversation summary report here.



University of Maryland President Darryll J. Pines and Morgan State University President David K. Wilson, alongside Council on Competitiveness President and CEO Deborah L. Wince-Smith, co-hosted the two-day Conversation, bringing together more than 60 speakers across two campuses and two cities. Participants included Maryland Governor Wes Moore; U.S. Representative Glenn Ivey; Dr. Darío Gil, Under Secretary for Science and Director of the Genesis Mission at the U.S. Department of Energy; Nobel Laureate William Phillips; and leaders from IonQ, Lockheed Martin, MITRE, Google, Microsoft, universities, federal laboratories, startups, investment firms, labor, and civic organizations.

Nebraska

The global bioeconomy could grow from $4 trillion today to more than 10 times that by 2050. But from where will that growth emerge - and who will benefit?



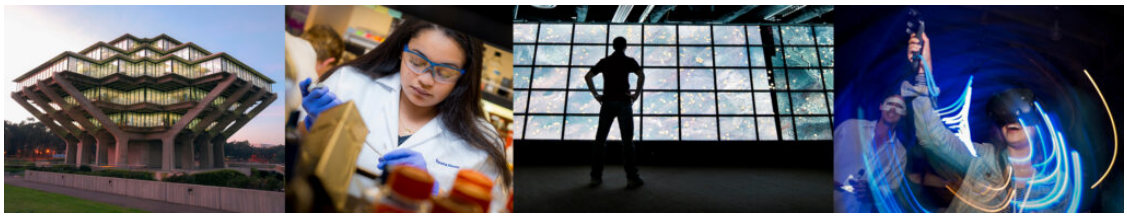
On April 29–30, University of Nebraska System President Jeffrey P. Gold, M.D., and Council on Competitiveness President and CEO Deborah L. Wince-Smith co-hosted the 12th edition of the Council's Competitiveness Conversations Across America in Omaha, Nebraska. The convening brought together more than 200 leaders from industry, academia, government, agriculture, and research to explore how Nebraska and the American Heartland can translate their considerable assets into leadership in the global bioeconomy.

The conversation focused on identifying the regional strengths and emerging opportunities that can position Nebraska at the forefront of this growing industry, while surfacing the partnerships, practices, and priorities that can strengthen U.S. competitiveness.

Our new report, **Nebraska: Leading the New Frontier in the Bioeconomy**, captures these insights and examines the opportunities ahead for Nebraska and the nation, including how the convergence of AI, biology, and advanced manufacturing is reshaping the competitive landscape.

Deborah Wince-Smith in Forbes.com:

"Lessons For The Country: San Diego's Model For Place-Making Innovation"



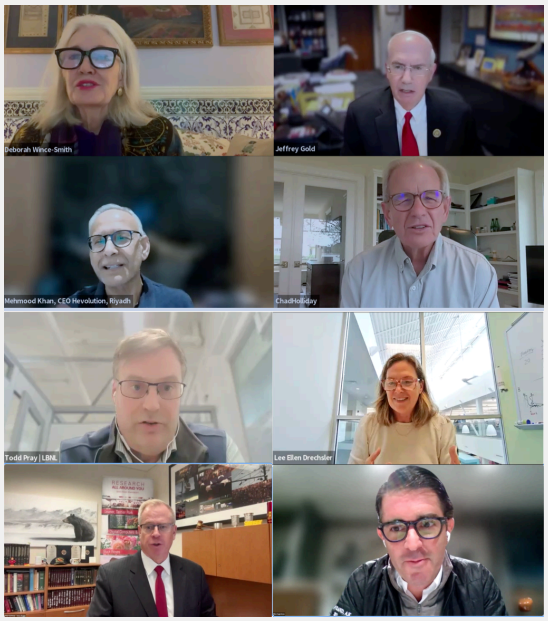
What can San Diego teach the rest of the country about turning scientific breakthroughs into economic strength?

In her latest Forbes.com article, Council on Competitiveness President and CEO Deborah L. Wince-Smith shares five lessons from the Council's most recent edition of the *Competitiveness Conversations Across America*, "San Diego: Building the Next Economy's Strategic Innovation Stack." The article also features commentary from the Conversation's co-host, UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla.

From designing for commercialization from the start to connecting regional innovation strengths into a stronger national innovation system, the conversation surfaced valuable insights and best practices for bringing the innovation economy to more places and more people.

Read Deborah's Forbes.com article **here**.

Bioeconomy Initiative Moves to Next Phase



The Council's Bioeconomy Initiative, under the auspices of the National Commission on Innovation and Competitiveness Frontiers, is concluding its input-gathering phase and turning to developing a call to action for advancing the U.S. bioeconomy. This fall's virtual working sessions brought together leaders from industry, academia, national laboratories, and government, building on the Council's September 2025 Future of the Bioeconomy meeting in Lafayette, Indiana, the April 2026 Nebraska Competitiveness Conversation in Omaha, and ongoing consultations with domain experts. The Council will translate these insights into recommendations for policymakers and leaders across the bioeconomy value chain in advance of the 2026 National Competitiveness Forum. Learn more at **compete.org/bioeconomy**. Questions? Contact Mike Nelson at **mnelson@compete.org**.

Council Community News

Lilly Breaks Ground on $5 Billion Virginia Plant for Cancer Medicines

Lilly CEO and Chair David Ricks joined Gov. Abigail Spanberger and other officials for a ceremonial groundbreaking at Lilly's $5 billion manufacturing site in Goochland County, VA. Photo by Jay Paul.

Eli Lilly and Company, led by National Commissioner and Lilly CEO David Ricks, broke ground on October 22 on a $5 billion manufacturing facility outside Richmond, Virginia. The plant will make antibody-drug conjugates for targeted cancer treatments and will be Lilly's first site to produce both active ingredients and finished medicines. Lilly expects to create 650 permanent jobs and committed $40 million to a statewide pharmaceutical manufacturing training center. **Read more.**

ASU, UT Knoxville Launch Consortium to Close the Nuclear Workforce Gap

Arizona State University, led by Council Executive Committee member and President Michael M. Crow, and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, led by Executive Committee member and Chancellor Donde Plowman, have teamed up with Purdue University to form the New Nuclear Academic Consortium (NNAC). The consortium aims to train the engineers, managers, and policymakers for a revitalized and new nuclear economy. Additional universities will join the consortium within the next six to 12 months. **Read more**.

WSU and USDA Open New Agricultural Research Facility

Photo credit: WSU Photo Services

Council Member and Washington State University President Betsy Cantwell celebrated the opening of the USDA Agricultural Research Service Plant Bioscience Research Building, marking a milestone in WSU's nearly century-long partnership with USDA. "At WSU, we believe our role as a land-grant institution is not simply to respond to change, but to help lead it," Cantwell said. "…We are working with USDA to advance discoveries that support growers, strengthen our economy, enhance food security, and improve lives across Washington State and beyond." **Read more**.

AAU Elects UC Davis Chancellor Gary May as Vice Chairman

Photo credit: University of California, Davis

Congratulations to Dr. Gary S. May, Chancellor of the University of California, Davis, and a member of the Council's Executive Committee, on his election in October as Vice Chair and Chair-Elect of the Association of American Universities (AAU). The AAU represents 71 leading research universities across the United States. This appointment recognizes Chancellor May's leadership and contributions to advancing research and higher education. **LinkedIn**.

Council on Competitiveness Leadership & Members Take Part in the 2026 Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils (GFCC) Annual Meeting & Global Innovation Summit

GFCC annual meeting participants. Photo credit: GFCC

Council President and CEO and GFCC President Deborah L. Wince-Smith and Council Chairman Emeritus and GFCC Chair Charles O. “Chad” Holliday, Jr. joined leaders from government, industry, and academia in more than 20 countries in Sofia, Bulgaria, October 19–22 for the annual meeting and Global Innovation Summit for the Council’s sister organization, the GFCC. Organized under the theme “Powering Competitiveness,” Summit speakers and panelists examined energy security, future grids, AI and digital innovation, and infrastructure as a competitive advantage.

The Hon. Deborah Wince-Smith, President and CEO, Council on Competitiveness, and Founder and President, GFCC. Photo credit: GFCC

Mr. Charles O. (Chad) Holliday, Chair Emeritus, Council on Competitiveness, Chair, GFCC, Chief Advisor, Resource Resolutions. Photo credit: GFCC

Mr. Holliday; Ms. Wince-Smith; Mr. Kalin Peshov, Chairman of the Management Board, Glavbolgarstroy (GBS) Bulgaria; Dr. Roberto Alvarez, Executive Director, GFCC. Photo credit: GFCC

Mr. Symeon G. Tsomokos, President, Delphi Economic Forum, Greece; Mr. Ivan Mihaylov, Chief Executive Director, American Chamber of Commerce in Bulgaria; Ms. Wince-Smith; Mr. Peshov; Mr. Holliday. Photo credit: GFCC

Council Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President Chad Evans moderated a panel on investment in innovation-enhancing infrastructure. At the Annual Meeting, the GFCC also launched its **2026 Call to Action**, a roadmap for building the talent pipelines nations need as AI transforms industries and labor markets. Site visits took participants to EnduroSat, INSAIT, Sofia Tech Park, and Schneider Electric. GBS (Glavbolgarstroy) hosted the gathering.

Mr. Chad Evans, Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer, Council on Competitiveness and Board Treasurer, GFCC; The Hon. Jerry Hultin, Distinguished Fellow, GFCC; Dr. Nkem Khumbah, Director, STI Policy, Strategy and Partnerships, African Academy of Science; Prof. Götz Veser, Professor & Director of the Covestro Circular Economy Program, University of Pittsburgh; Prof. Edward C. Wingenbach, President, The American College of Greece. Photo credit: GFCC

Mr. Dimitar Tsotsorkov, Chairman of the Supervisory Board, Asarel-Medet JSC; Ms. Wince-Smith; Prof. Sir Ian Greer, President and Vice-Chancellor, Queen's University Belfast; Mr. Holliday; Mr. Mihaylov, Chief Executive Director, American Chamber of Commerce in Bulgaria; Dr. Mmboneni Muofhe, Deputy Director-General for Socio-Economic Innovation Partnerships, Department of Science, Technology & Innovation, South Africa. Photo credit: GFCC

Photo credit: GFCC

Competitiveness News

Bipartisan Senate Agreement Aims to Overhaul Federal Permitting

On September 30, bipartisan Senate negotiators announced an agreement to accelerate energy and infrastructure projects while retaining environmental reviews. The proposed legislation would revise federal laws governing project approvals, including NEPA, the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act. Senate consideration is expected after the November midterm elections; the agreement has not yet become law. **Read more**.

Administration Advances More than $6 Billion in Science Initiatives, Including Funding for Basic Research

The White House announced more than $6 billion in science initiatives on October 8, spanning government, industry, academia, and philanthropy. The package includes computing resources for the Genesis Mission, regional scientific computing collaborations, more than $100 million for AI-enabled scientific instruments and autonomous laboratories, and new research and STEM training opportunities. Separately, the Department of Energy has opened up to $400 million in FY2027 funding for basic research across advanced scientific computing, materials and biological sciences, fusion energy, and other fields. **Read the White House fact sheet** and **DOE's basic research funding announcement**.

NSF Expands X-Labs Initiative to Advance Bioengineering

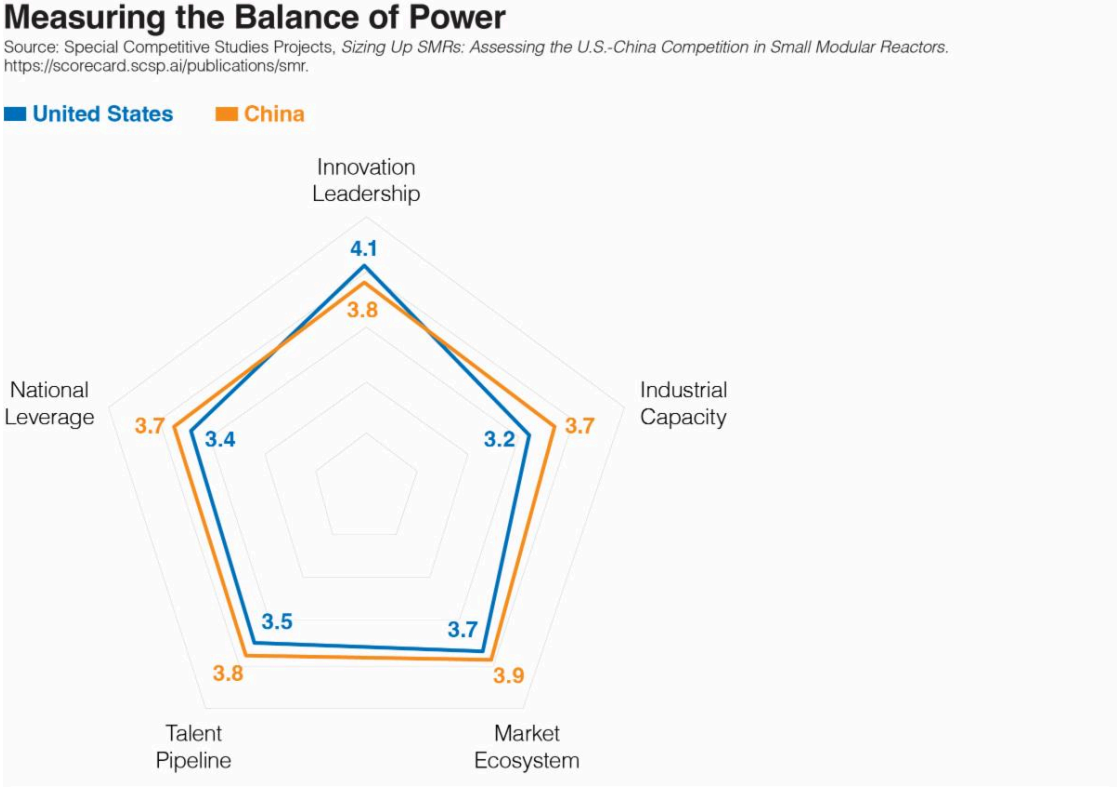
The National Science Foundation has launched a new X-Labs research topic, "From Sequence to Function," supporting multi-institutional teams developing technologies to predict and control biological functions from protein sequences and structures. The initiative targets high-impact breakthroughs that could accelerate biomanufacturing and strengthen U.S. biotechnology leadership. Proposals are due February 8, 2027. **Explore NSF X-Labs**.

Commerce Targets $389 Million for Power Semiconductors and Critical Materials

The Department of Commerce has issued letters of intent for up to $389 million in R&D awards to strengthen U.S. capabilities in advanced power semiconductors, power electronics, and critical materials such as ultra-high-purity quartz. The initiative aims to address supply-chain bottlenecks and expand domestic capabilities supporting AI infrastructure, defense systems, and electricity grids. **Read the NIST CHIPS R&D announcement**.

Council Insight

The United States Can Invent the Future. Can It Build It?



The U.S.-China competition in small modular reactors reveals a broader challenge for U.S. competitiveness: turning technological leadership into industrial capacity and deployment at scale.

A study from the Special Competitive Studies Project (SCSP), **Sizing Up SMRs: Assessing the U.S.-China Competition in Small Modular Reactors**, illustrates the challenge. The United States has more than 10,000 SMR-related patents, compared with 106 in China. Yet China leads in four other dimensions critical for competitiveness: industrial capacity, market ecosystem, talent pipeline, and national leverage. And most important, China has brought an SMR into commercial operation, while no U.S. commercial SMR is nearing completion.

This innovation-to-commercialization challenge extends well beyond nuclear energy in the United Sates. Too often, technological leadership outpaces the manufacturing capacity, skilled workforce, supply chains, and investment needed to bring innovations to market at scale. The United States retains formidable advantages in entrepreneurial innovation, research, private-sector demand, and global talent. The imperative is to align these strengths with the industrial capabilities and investment needed to translate technological advances into productive capacity.

New to Our Community

Mr. Billy Hagstrom
Cofounder and CEO
Bluestem

Mr. Hagstrom joins the Council as a Member.

Photo credit: Bluestem

CONTACT US

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