Compete Connect

April 2026 Edition

From the CEO's Desk

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

Dear Council on Competitiveness Community,

The 2026 sprint continues! Coming off an incredibly successful Maryland edition of the "**Competitiveness Conversations Across America**" at the end of March, we pivoted fast to an early 2026 Board Meeting – combined with a special, virtual meeting of our Executive Committee and National Commission on Innovation and Competitiveness Frontiers.

The exciting news to emerge from our Board session: the election of the Council's next, great Business Vice Chair. I am very honored to announce and welcome to the Council on Competitiveness Mr. Sundar G. Raman, CEO of Fabric & Home Care and P&G Ventures at Procter & Gamble.

Sundar is renowned as a transformational leader who drives growth by reinventing business models and pioneering new approaches to R&D, supply chain, and brand-building at global scale. His forward-looking mindset and sustained track record of results — including leading P&G's largest business sector through a decade of growth — make him exactly the kind of leader our 40th anniversary agenda demands. The Council team looks forward to the energy and insight he will bring to our collective endeavors, alongside our other dynamic Board Members, Erik Fyrwald, Joan Gabel, Kenny Cooper, and Chad Holliday.

And Sundar's election could not have come at a more auspicious moment. Immediately following his election, he joined the rest of the Board, our Executive Committee, and the National Commissioners in a special session to begin building the draft a "40th anniversary report": the first half comprising a review of the U.S. and global competitiveness landscape; and the second half responding to the assessment with a focused, strategic and powerful call-to-action for policymakers.

Our goal is to create a distinctive and powerful report outlining the most important competitiveness priorities for the nation – and the actions we must undertake to optimize our society for a future ever more dependent on innovation-based growth. Much more to come on this in the summer months – as our Board, Executive Committee, and National Commission plan to meet in person in early May to iterate a next draft. We are excited soon to share a concrete piece for our Members' reviews and input.

As I mentioned, at the end of March we convened the 11th edition of the "Competitiveness Conversations Across America" series in Maryland — two extraordinary days at Morgan State University and the University of Maryland, College Park, focused on unlocking American innovation in the AI and quantum era. My co-hosts — Dr. David K. Wilson, President of Morgan State University, and Dr. Darryll J. Pines, President of the University of Maryland, College Park — helped bring together a remarkable gathering of nearly 200 leaders, who heard from more than 60 leaders focused on turbocharging the State's place-making innovation ambitions — from Governor Wes Moore to leaders from Congress, MITRE, Lockheed Martin, the U.S. Department of Energy, NIST, NSF, IonQ, and more. Each voice offering a vivid and inspiring window into how one region is translating extraordinary institutional assets into a coherent development strategy. We will publish a summary report from the Maryland Conversation soon.

And as you read this, we will have just completed our 12th Conversation — two days in Omaha with our co-host Dr. Jeffrey Gold, President of the University of Nebraska System, and nearly four dozen speakers exploring Nebraska's place-making innovation efforts around the future of the bioeconomy. With a kick off from Nebraska Lieutenant Governor Joe Kelly, the Conversation will feature a range of leaders, including: U.S. Department of Agriculture Under Secretary Scott Hutchins; Gen. (Ret.) Anthony J. Cotton, former Commander of U.S. Strategic Command; Omaha Mayor John Ewing; and a strong array of private sector leaders, across the bioeonomy's value chain and many at the heart of the Council's larger "future of bioeconomy" initiative, like Jim Stutelberg, CEO, Primient; Gustavo Sergi, CEO, Sustainea; and more.

And looking ahead, our Technology Leadership and Strategy Initiative members head to Fort Worth on June 9 for their Spring/Summer Dialogue. Lockheed Martin leadership will host the group of CTOs across industry, academia, and the national labs at the LM F-35 production facilities — for a vivid deep dive into the connection between deep science and research, engineering, development, and scale-up manufacturing. If interested to learn more, touch base with Chad Evans (**cevans@compete.org**).

Then in July, after celebrating our nation's special birthday, we continue our westward trajectory for 2026, heading to San Diego. Dr. Pradeep K. Khosla, Chancellor and Joan and Irwin Jacobs Chancellor's Endowed Chair, UC San Diego, will host the 13th edition of the Competitiveness Conversations, taking place July 21. On the beautiful UCSD campus, we will explore the full "San Diego innovation

stack" – from transformative computing (AI and HPC), to the future of the bioeconomy, to the applications of sensor tech to adjacent industries, to autonomous systems for terrestrial and off-world uses, to the future of next generation energy. Registration is complimentary and will be open soon – so, definitely plan to join us. In the meantime, feel free to contact Chad Evans (**cevans@compete.org**) for more information.

Of course, thanks to all of our Members and Friends, for your support and engagement. In this defining moment — the Council's 40th year alongside the nation's approaching 250th birthday — we remain more committed than ever to the conviction that what we choose to build, scale and lead together today will determine the next quarter century of American prosperity.
And I want to close this month's newsletter with a special thanks to and recognition of our outgoing Business Vice Chair, Mr. Dan Helfrich, who continues his own competitiveness journey with U.S. Soccer.

Sincerely,

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

Council News

Council on Competitiveness Welcomes Procter & Gamble's Sundar Raman as New Business Vice Chair

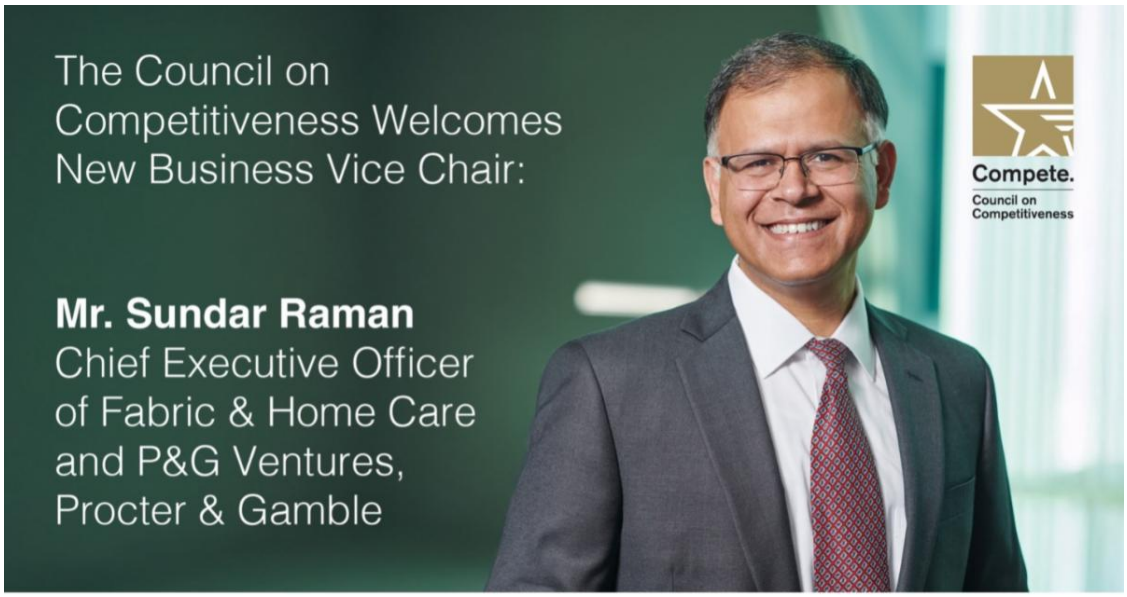


Photo credit: P&G

The Council on Competitiveness is pleased to announce Sundar Raman, Chief Executive Officer of Fabric & Home Care and P&G Ventures at Procter & Gamble, has joined its Board as Business Vice Chair. In this dual capacity, Mr. Raman leads P&G's largest business sector—home to iconic brands like Tide, Downy, and Swiffer—while also heading P&G Ventures, the internal startup studio charged with

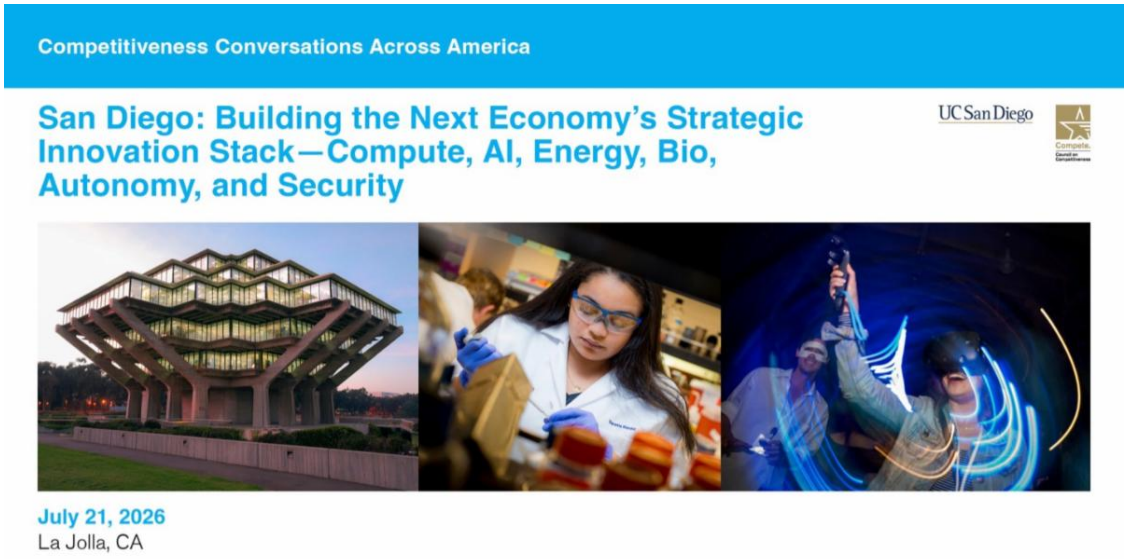
creating new, billion-dollar brands. This unique position gives him unparalleled insight into both optimizing world-class operations and fostering startup agility at scale, a core focus of the Council's mission.

Council President & CEO Deborah L. Wince-Smith welcomed the appointment: "Sundar's appointment is a landmark event for the Council. He uniquely understands both sides of the competitiveness coin: how to lead a global enterprise that represents a third of P&G's business, and how to build the disruptive companies of tomorrow through P&G Ventures. This is precisely the perspective we need to drive our national innovation agenda forward. We are thrilled to have his vision and expertise in our leadership."

Mr. Raman's leadership, which has delivered a decade of balanced growth and groundbreaking innovations like Tide Pods and the new Tide Evo, exemplifies the end-to-end competitiveness the Council champions—from R&D and a synchronized supply chain to brand-building and sales. His passion for "building the future" will be a tremendous asset as the Council works to fortify U.S. leadership in the next wave of economic transformation.

On joining the Board, Mr. Raman said: "It is a profound honor to serve as Business Vice Chair for the Council on Competitiveness. At P&G, our growth is driven by a deep commitment to innovation that improves the lives of consumers. I am passionate about applying that same spirit of 'building the future' to the national level. I look forward to collaborating with my peers in academia, labor, and industry to ensure the U.S. continues to be the best place in the world to invent, manufacture, and win."

Join Us in San Diego for Our Third Competitiveness Conversation of 2026



Join us on July 21 in San Diego for the third 2026 edition of “Competitiveness Conversations Across America.” Dr. Pradeep K. Khosla, Chancellor, UC San Diego; Joan and Irwin Jacobs Chancellor’s Endowed Chair will lead this Conversation – along with leaders across the broad spectrum of the city and region’s innovation ecosystem – exploring a range of technologies, sectors, strategies, and ambitions in

the bioeconomy, transformative computing, healthcare, autonomous systems, space, next generation energy, and more. Registration is complimentary – please plan to join us. Contact Chad Evans (cevans@compete.org) for more information.

Council CEO Leads Globally Distinguished Panel at 2026 Delphi Economic Forum XI

Council on Competitiveness President and CEO, Deborah L. Wince-Smith, continues an annual tradition of connecting leaders across the United States and Europe at the Delphi Economic Forum (DEF). This year, Wince-Smith curated a lively debate at the foot of the Oracle's mountain, grappling with a defining challenge of our era: how nations, institutions, and societies navigate — and flourish — in a world of relentless disruption and discontinuity.

In framing the conversation, Wince-Smith referenced the works of both the Council on Competitiveness andthe Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils – which have each examined three forces, in particular, reshaping everything:

1. The rapid emergence and convergence of a host of game-changing, dual-use technologies, like AI.
2. Energy transitions that are encountering a range of head winds just as the need for new sources of electricity has unexpectedly and rapidly grown.
3. And facing the most formidable, strategic competitor to the United States and Europe in a generation: China.

Photo credits: DEF

Joining Wince-Smith on the panel: Simos Ananastopoulos, CEO of Compete Greece, and GFCC Member of the GFCC; Christos Megalou, Chief Executive Officer, Piraeus Bank, and a GFCC Distinguished Fellow; Fadlo Khuri, President, American University of Beirut, and GFCC Member; Bettany Hughes, Visiting Research Fellow, King's College London, Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London, and Officer of the Order of the British Empire; and Chad Evans, Executive Vice President & COO, Council on Competitiveness. **Read more about DEF.**

Recap: The Maryland Edition of the "Competitiveness Conversations Across America" -- A Capital of AI and Quantum

On March 23–24. Dr. David K. Wilson, President of Morgan State University; Dr. Darryll J. Pines, President of the University of Maryland, College Park; and Council President and CEO Deborah L. Wince-Smith co-hosted the 11th edition in the Council's series of "**Competitiveness Conversations Across America.**" The gathering, in Baltimore and College Park, brought together more than 200 senior leaders — including Governor Wes Moore, Rep. Glenn Ivey, Department of Energy Under Secretary Darío Gil, IonQ Chairman and CEO Niccolo de Masi, MITRE President and CEO Mark Peters, and Lockheed Martin CTO Craig Martell — for two days of conversation on AI, quantum, and the future of American innovation.

Photo credit: Exquisitely Composed Images, LLC, for Morgan State University
Pictured: Hon. Deborah Wince-Smith, President and CEO, Council on Competitiveness; Dr. Darryll J. Pines, President, University of Maryland, College Park; Dr. David K. Wilson, President, Morgan State University

Photo credit: Exquisitely Composed Images, LLC, for Morgan State University
Pictured: Hon. Wes Moore, Governor of Maryland

The Conversation illuminated how Maryland has fostered, through extraordinary federal and state research investments, world-class universities, and a growing industrial base focused on frontier technologies, one of the nation's most consequential platforms for the development of a range of interconnected innovation ecosystems – from bio, to AI, to quantum, and more.

Photo credit: Exquisitely Composed Images, LLC, for Morgan State University
Pictured: Hon. Dr. Darío Gil, Under Secretary for Science, Director, Genesis Mission, U.S. Department of Energy; Dr. Sudip Parikh, CEO, American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)

Day One at Morgan State centered on artificial intelligence, workforce development, and the imperative of inclusion. Participants heard how Morgan State is actively shaping the AI economy — from creating a partnership with Google and a consortium of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to benchmark AI across diverse populations, to launching the nation's first Ph.D. program in advanced ethical computing. The through line was clear. As Morgan State's Vice President for Research Dr. Willie May put it, "We cannot win this race if we leave talent on the sidelines."

Photo credit: Exquisitely Composed Images, LLC, for Morgan State University
Pictured: Dr. Patrick G. O'Shea, Vice President and Chief Research Officer, University of Maryland, College Park and University of Maryland, Baltimore; Mr. Troy A. LeMaile-Stovall, CEO, TEDCO; Mr. Wayne E. Swann, Director, Office of Technology Transfer, Morgan State University

Photo credit: Exquisitely Composed Images, LLC, for Morgan State University
Pictured: Hon. Deborah L. Wince-Smith, President and CEO, Council on Competitiveness; Hon. Dr. Willie E. May, Vice President, Research and Economic Development, Morgan State University; Dr. Anupam Joshi, Oros Family Professor, Vice Provost and Chief AI Officer; Director, UMBC Cybersecurity Institute and The Cyberscholars Program; Dr. Bruce E. Jarrell, President, University of Maryland, Baltimore

Photo credit: Photo credit: Exquisitely Composed Images, LLC, for Morgan State University
Pictured: Dr. Gregory Washington, President, George Mason University; Dr. Wayne A. I. Frederick, President, Howard University; Dr. David K. Wilson, President, Morgan State University; Mr. Jonathan R. Alger, President, American University; Hon. Deborah L. Wince-Smith, President and CEO, Council on Competitiveness

Day Two at the University of Maryland, College Park shifted to quantum — and to the physical, financial, and institutional infrastructure required to move quantum from the frontiers of research to the industrial playing fields. Participants witnessed firsthand the College Park Discovery District, a growing innovation corridor more than a decade in the making, where companies like IonQ and Microsoft and a vibrant startup base, benefited by proximity to federal agencies, are coming together to collapse the distance between idea and application.

Photo credit: University of Maryland, College Park
Pictured: Dr. Darryll J. Pines, President, University of Maryland, College Park; Hon. Deborah L. Wince-Smith, President and CEO, Council on Competitiveness; Hon. Dr. Willie E. May, Vice President, Research and Economic Development, Morgan State University

Photo credit: University of Maryland, College Park
Pictured: Hon. Glenn F. Ivey, Member of Congress, U.S. House of Representatives

Photo credit: University of Maryland, College Park
Pictured: Dr. William D. Phillips, Nobel Laureate and Professor, Joint Quantum Institute (JQI), University of Maryland, College Park; Distinguished Visiting Professor, Morgan State University

Across both days, a consistent set of themes emerged: research strength must translate into market impact; patient capital is necessary but insufficient without

robust physical infrastructure; diverse perspectives are a source of technical strength; and governance and standards, done well, enable rather than impede innovation.

Photo credit: University of Maryland, College Park
Pictured: Mr. Ken Ulman, President, Terrapin Development Company and UMD Chief Strategy Officer for Economic Development; Mr. Niccolo de Masi, President and CEO, IonQ

Photo credit: University of Maryland, College Park
Pictured: Dr. Tahllee Baynard, Vice President of Ignite Space Research and Development, Lockheed Martin; Dr. Shirley Malcom, Member Board of Trustees, Morgan State University; Hon. Dr. Willie May, Vice President,

Research and Economic Development, Morgan State University

Photo credit: University of Maryland, College Park
Pictured: Dr. Darryll J. Pines, President, University of Maryland, College Park; Dr. Craig Martell, Vice President and Chief Technology Officer, Lockheed Martin; Dr. Mark Peters, President and CEO, MITRE; Mr. Chad Evans, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Council on Competitiveness

Maryland, as Wince-Smith observed, "shows how a region — through the alignment of strategy, policy, and resources — can turn world-class research from anchor institutions into real-world impact."

The full report from the Maryland Competitiveness Conversation is forthcoming. **Read more about the event.**

Council Community News

Primient Launches Biosolutions Unit to Accelerate Bioeconomy Growth

Photo credit: Primient

Primient is accelerating its push into the bioeconomy with the launch of a new Biosolutions business unit focused on scaling high-value, bio-based products and helping innovators move from proof-of-concept to commercialization. Jim Stutelberg, a National Commissioner with the Council on Competitiveness and a key leader in its "future of bioeconomy" initiative, emphasized the company's momentum: "The creation of our new Biosolutions business will enable us to accelerate our progress in high-growth biomanufacturing markets." Read more about the announcement on Primient's website **here**.

MITRE CEO Mark Peters Leverages Deep Expertise in Nuclear to Advance the Industry

Photo credit: MITRE

Oklo, Inc. has appointed MITRE CEO Dr. Mark Peters to its Board of Directors. Peters brings worldclass, deep expertise in nuclear energy and R&D leadership, with prior roles including having served as the Director of the Idaho National Laboratory, Executive Vice President at Battelle Memorial Institute, and Associate Laboratory Director, Energy and Global Security at Argonne National Laboratory. He joins Oklo as the advanced nuclear technology company expands its board to support ambitious growth across its power, fuel, recycling, and isotopes businesses. **Read more**.

The Foundation for Energy Security & Innovation (FESI) Names a New Chair

Photo credit: Purdue

FESI has elected Purdue University President Mung Chiang Chairman of its Board of Directors. FESI is the official nonprofit partner of the U.S. Department of Energy. Chiang has served on FESI's inaugural board since May 2024 and brings a blend of academic, government, and industry experience to this role — including having earned 26 U.S. patents, attained membership in the National Academy of Engineering, and having previously served as a science and technology adviser to the U.S. Secretary of State. **Read more**.

A Change in Name and Renewed Focus on Mission: from NREL to NLR - the National Laboratory of the Rockies

National Laboratory of the Rockies

This month, the National Laboratory of the Rockies (NLR) - in alignment with a December 2025 name change from NREL - unveiled a new logo, continuing its journey to reflect NLR's location in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, with its South Table Mountain Campus also near a prominent mesa. And a golden sun represents NLR's location in Golden, Colorado.

Council on Competitiveness National Commissioner and NLR Laboratory Director Jud Virden notes, "This new logo, inspired by our staff, reflects who we are today, an institution grounded in scientific excellence that is focused on addressing our country's most complex energy challenges. It connects our history to where we're headed and the impact we aim to deliver."

Note: as part of the transition, the laboratory's former URL, nrel.gov, will no longer be available as of May 2026. Links associated with nrel.gov will no longer redirect after that time. The lab's new domain, nlr.gov, is available now.

Council on Competitiveness Bioeconomy Leader Testifies, Calling on the Small Business Administration (SBA) to Bridge Biotech's Commercialization Gap

Photo credit: Liberation Bioindustries
Pictured: Mr. Mark Warner, Sen. Todd Young (R-IN)

Liberation Bioindustries co-founder and Chief Technology Officer - and Council Member - Mark Warner testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship, making the case for a stronger SBA role in domestic biotech commercialization. His argument: the United States leads in biotech innovation but consistently loses manufacturing to overseas competitors due to a structural funding gap — companies too large for venture capital but too risky for traditional project finance. Warner has called for expanded SBA loan guarantees and a dedicated biotech commercialization track to keep American innovation on American soil. **Watch the proceedings.**

Dr. Victor Dzau Receives 2026 George M. Kober Medal

Photo credit: National Academy of Medicine

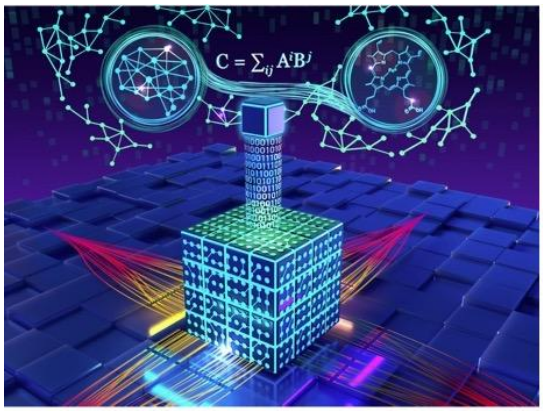
The Association of American Physicians awarded National Academy of Medicine President – and Council on Competitiveness National Commissioner – Victor Dzau the 2026 George M. Kober Medal. The honor recognizes Dr. Dzau's lifetime contributions to cardiology, including lifesaving advancements in ACE inhibitors. In his acceptance remarks, Dr. Dzau reflected on the importance of preserving scientific discovery for the next generation: "That sense of excitement — of discovery translating into real human impact — has stayed with me ever since." **Read more (LinkedIn)**.

Universities Drive Place-Making Innovation in the Quantum Race

The Colorado Quantum Incubator (COQI), in which the University of Colorado Boulder is a partner, is launching the nation's first open-access, third-party validation testbed for quantum timing technologies at Boulder's Flatiron Park. The facility — developed in partnership with Xairos Systems, Stout Street Capital, and BioMed Realty — will give research institutions the ability to test and validate precision quantum timing innovations against real-world infrastructure demands, accelerating the journey from lab bench to field-ready technology. **Read more**.

Meanwhile, Arizona State University is taking a lead role in the newly announced Phoenix Quantum Strategy, an initiative aimed at positioning the city as a U.S. quantum hub. The effort draws on ASU's deep bench in semiconductors, supply chain, and biosciences to attract investment and build a skilled quantum workforce. Read more at **ASU News**.

PNNL Researchers Harness AI Chips to Crack Quantum Chemistry's Hardest Problems



Graphics Processing Unit (GPU)-based artificial intelligence accelerators have cleared a longstanding barrier in computational science. A new study from an international team led by researchers at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) shows that AI-oriented hardware can deliver not just speed, but the accuracy needed to solve quantum chemistry problems previously considered too complex to tackle. The breakthrough has near-term implications

Image by Nathan Johnson for Pacific Northwest National Laboratory

for designing new catalysts, energy materials, and drugs. Read more at **PNNL**.

Lockheed Martin Ventures Scales to $1Billion

Lockheed Martin has announced a major expansion of its corporate venture arm, growing Lockheed Martin Ventures from $400M to a $1 billion fund. The move signals an accelerated push to identify and mature cutting-edge technologies critical to national security — spanning AI, quantum computing, and advanced materials. With more than $500M already deployed across 120 companies, LM Ventures is building on a proven track record and scaling its impact as the competition for dual-use innovation heats up. **Read more**.

Purdue and ARCS Reach Agreement to Support Domestic Doctoral Scholars

Purdue University and the Achievement Rewards for College Scientists (ARCS®) Foundation have signed a memorandum of understanding establishing Purdue as a member of the ARCS National Scholar Award Program, which provides support to domestic doctoral scholars in high-impact scientific fields vital to U.S. innovation, competitiveness and national security - as outlined as critical by the Council on Competitiveness's "National Commission on Innovation and Competitiveness Frontiers" report series, *Competing in the Next Economy*. **Learn more here**.

Competitiveness News

Bipartisan Bill Aims to Boost Domestic Biomanufacturing

Congresswomen Nikki Budzinski (D-IL) and Michelle Fischbach (R-MN) introduced this past month the Biobased Materials Investment and Production Act. The Act offers tax incentives to companies that use American-grown biomass to produce renewable materials. The legislation addresses a gap left by the U.S.'s focus on biofuels — many everyday products like plastics and industrial chemicals still rely on foreign petroleum. Companies can choose between a production tax credit of $0.10 per pound or a 30 percent investment tax credit for constructing or retrofitting manufacturing facilities. **Read more**.

Transformer Shortage Threatens AI Data Center Buildout

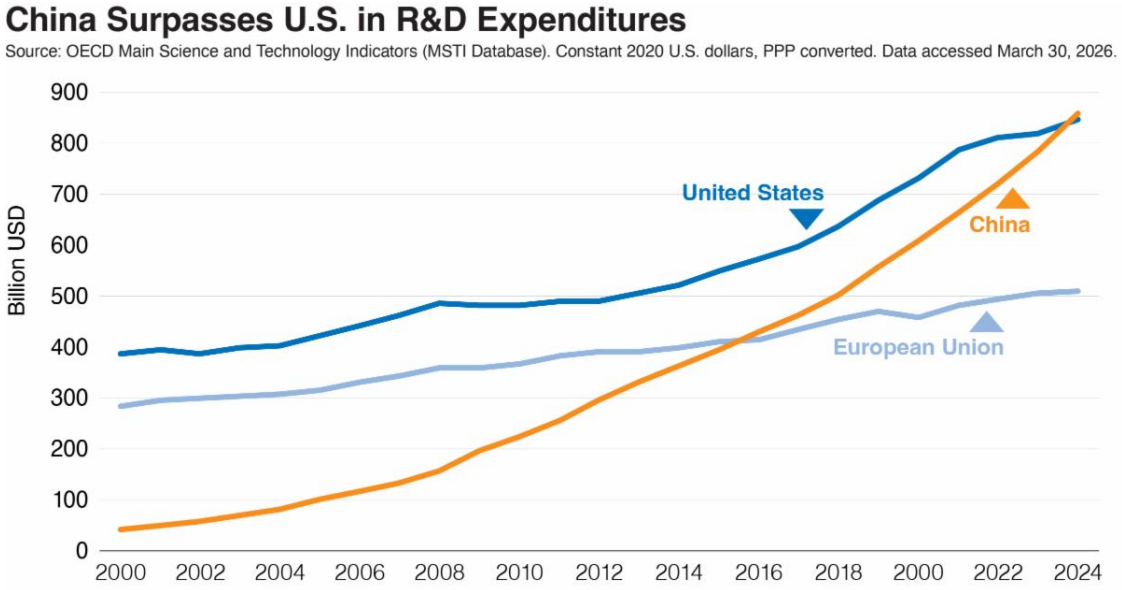
Some analysts are predicting nearly half of this year's planned U.S. data centers will face delays or outright cancellations — not for lack of funding, but for lack of electrical equipment. Transformers, switchgear, and batteries are in critically short supply, with transformer delivery times stretching to as long as five years. The supply crunch is compounded by an aging infrastructure problem: according to CSIS and McKinsey, 55 percent of in-service distribution transformers are over 33 years old, meaning much of the grid underpinning AI's expansion is already operating on borrowed time. Domestic manufacturing cannot keep pace — CSIS and McKinsey report that 80 percent of power transformers and 50 percent of distribution transformers are imported — leaving developers exposed despite a decade of efforts to build U.S. production capacity. The bottleneck underscores a growing vulnerability in America's AI infrastructure race. ***Read more about this concern in Power Bottleneck Slows AI Data Centres*** **(Transformers-Magazine.com)**

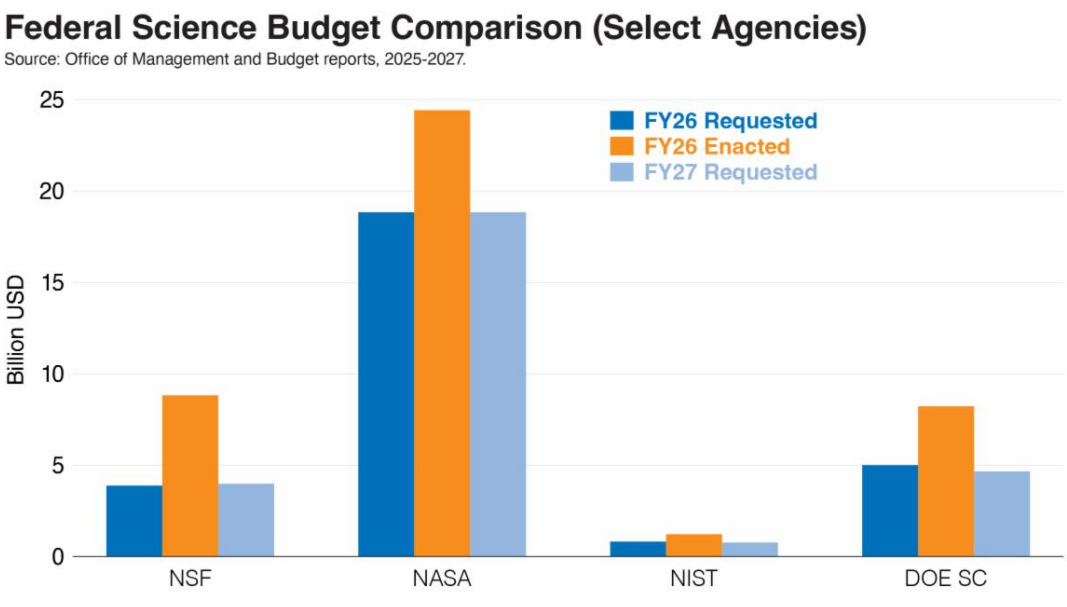
China's AURORA Platform Points to the Future of Personalized Medicine

Researchers in China have developed an end-to-end AI platform, AURORA, that integrates genetic data, metabolism, gut health, and physiology into a unified biological profile — effectively a digital twin of an individual patient. The system is designed to simulate how a drug, diet, or lifestyle change might affect a person before they ever try it, representing a significant step toward truly personalized medicine. **Read more.**

Council Insight

Two Charts, One Wake-Up Call





Consider these two data sets side by side.

The first, drawn from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) data, shows China's R&D investment crossing above that of the United States as early as 2024 — several years before previous predictions, and the result of more than two decades of relentless acceleration. In 2000, China spent roughly $35 billion on R&D. By 2024, it had surpassed the United States entirely, an outcome of a deliberate, sustained national strategy, across multiple five-year plans.

The second chart shows the U.S. federal science budget across select agencies — NSF, NASA, NIST, and DOE Science — comparing what the Trump Administration requested in FY26, what Congress enacted, and what the White House has now proposed for FY27.

Read together, these charts tell a story that demands attention. At the precise moment China has crossed a threshold that was unthinkable a generation ago, the United States is debating whether to pull back from the federal investments that underpin the basic research in its overall innovation ecosystem.

New to Our Community

Mr. Sundar Raman
CEO
Fabric & Home Care and P&G Ventures
The Procter & Gamble Company

Mr. Raman joins the Council as the Business Vice Chair.

Photo credit: P&G

Dr. Ahmad Itani
Vice President for Research
Professor of Civil Engineering
University of Texas at El Paso

Dr. Itani joins the Council's Technology Leadership & Strategy Initiative.

Photo credit: UTEP

Dr. Patrick O'Shea
Vice President and Chief Research Officer
University of Maryland, College Park and University of Maryland, Baltimore

Dr. O'Shea joins the Council's Technology Leadership & Strategy Initiative.

Photo credit: University of Maryland

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