

Compete Connect

February 2024 Edition

From the CEO's Desk



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

Dear Council Members and Friends,

I am excited about how the Council's agenda is taking shape for 2024, an election year in which our work is more salient than ever. And while the Council will remain engaged in the regular work of Washington, DC, that relates so closely to our mission, we also are looking beyond the Beltway in 2024 for leadership, ideas, and action impacting U.S. competitiveness.

As I write this, our team just returned from Arizona State University (ASU), where we participated in the 29th Technology Leadership & Strategy Initiative dialogue, hosted by National Commissioner and TLSI Co-chair Sally Morton, Executive Vice President at ASU, and alongside fellow Co-chairs, Patricia Falcone, Deputy Director at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, and Steve Walker,

Chief Technology Officer of Lockheed Martin. We were honored to gather our CTO community in the heart of one of the world's most innovative campuses and innovation ecosystems to refine a highly anticipated Tech & Innovation Call to Action that will underpin many of our 2024 priorities.

Following quickly on the heels of the ASU event, in the first week of March, all four of the National Commission on Innovation and Competitiveness Frontiers "Phase 2" Working Groups will reconvene, extending an initial set of virtual meetings in 2023 and building toward the development of our flagship initiative's next major innovation agenda for the nation. Explore more on our [Working Group landing page](#): this is a treasure trove of policy ideation and creativity amongst our Council network, where

you can read our summary work to date and much more. If you or a colleague would like to participate in any of the Working Groups, which will continue to meet virtually in June and September, contact our EVP, Chad Evans (cevens@compete.org). We will focus on four critical pillars: developing and deploying technology at speed and scale, advancing the nation's sustainability agenda, defining the future of work and the workforce, and creating the next-gen regional and national playbook for place-making innovation.

And just under two months from now, many of you will be joining me, Daniel Diermeier, Chancellor of Vanderbilt University, and Donde Plowman, Chancellor of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, as well as a truly distinguished Steering Committee, to launch the first of the Council's "Competitiveness Conversations Across America," a new, in-person engagement platform under the auspices of the National Commission. Plan to join us if you can on April 25-26 in Nashville. We will explore the local and statewide best practices underway to accelerate Tennessee's emergent, global leadership in advanced mobility, supported by one of the world's most sophisticated energy and manufacturing ecosystems. [Registration is open now!](#)

We also are firming up plans with Council Members in Idaho, Indiana and Illinois for two additional Competitiveness Conversations in 2024: mark your calendars to be with us at Boise State August 6-8 and at Purdue University September 9-10. And the 2025 calendar is already shaping up with expected Competitiveness Conversations taking place in Texas (March), New Mexico (May), New England (June), and Utah (September). More information and registration links to come online. [Stay tuned in to our Competitiveness Conversations landing page](#) for the latest information.

And a final note: our higher education leaders will be receiving invitations soon for upcoming University Leadership Forum virtual meetings in March, June, and November. The Forum will engage with policy leaders from both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue on issues ranging from research investments to open access and security. The group also will focus attention on the critical role higher education plays in driving U.S. competitiveness.

Thank you for joining us in our pursuit of increased productivity and innovation as we strive to build a sustainable and competitive future for all. Together, we will continue to lead the charge in shaping a dynamic and prosperous innovation ecosystem that benefits all Americans.

Sincerely,
The Hon. Deborah L. Wince-Smith
President & CEO
Council on Competitiveness

Council News

Announcement:

Registration is Open for the Tennessee Competitiveness Conversation



The Council's first Competitiveness Conversation, themed "Tennessee – Re-Defining Place and Building the Future Innovation Ecosystem for Mobility, Energy & Manufacturing," is taking place on April 25-26 at Vanderbilt University. Daniel Diermeier, Chancellor of Vanderbilt University, and Donde Plowman, Chancellor of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville will co-host the Conversation. This inaugural event will convene members of the Council's Board, general membership, and National Commission — alongside an array of high-level regional leaders and innovation stakeholders to delve into Tennessee's emergence as a significant hub for collaboration, investments, and innovation, with an agenda crafted by a distinguished Steering Committee. If you have not already, [please register here](#).

Contact Council EVP Chad Evans (cevans@compete.org) for details on the Tennessee Competitiveness Conversation, as well as other [Conversations being scheduled](#).

Forbes.com: "The Future of Technology: Navigating Uncertainty and Planning for Prosperity"

In her recent article, Deborah Wince-Smith grapples with the challenge of developing a more adaptive and agile innovation ecosystem in the United States to respond effectively to the ever-changing waves of technology. She emphasizes the importance of preparing the country's top technology, talent, and infrastructure to ride these waves rather than succumb to them. Wince-Smith outlines seven crucial policy enhancements aimed at enabling the United States to seize competitive advantage. Read her Forbes.com article [here](#).

29th TLSI Dialogue Launches at Arizona State University

As we enter the 15th year of the Council's "Technology Leadership & Strategy Initiative" (TLSI) progressive dialogue series, TLSI co-chairs (Sally Morton, EVP Knowledge Enterprise, ASU; Patricia Falcone, Deputy Director for S&T, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory; Steve Walker, VP & CTO, Lockheed Martin) and members gathered at Arizona State University to map the year's policy agenda — focusing on refining a major "tech & innovation call to action" that will deliver a set of concrete recommendations to optimize the nation's industrial base and partnership models for more agile and adaptive innovation. A dialogue summary report to come

soon — with the next dialogue set for June 20th at Lockheed Martin offices in Washington, D.C.



Council EVP Keynotes Innovation Lunch



H.E. Jean Arthur Régibeau, the Ambassador of Belgium, and GFCC Fellow Prof. Mark Vlasic, Georgetown University, invited Council EVP Chad Evans to keynote a lunch with the Deputy Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, the Assistant Director of the National Science Foundation, and other key leaders from the White House and NSF — sharing the Council’s competitiveness priorities and activities for 2024. Leaders shared a common agenda around place-based innovation, sustained investments in long-term research and development — as well as opportunities for strategic transatlantic partnerships to advance innovation.

U.S. – Greece: An Economic Strategic Alliance for a Complex World



On February 13th, Deborah Wince-Smith participated in the [5th Southeast Europe & East Mediterranean Conference](#) where she spoke about the significant strategic alliance between the United States and Greece. In her remarks, she discussed the pivotal role of this alliance in creating stability and security in the Mediterranean region and beyond. [Delphi Economic Forum](#) Founder and President Symeon Tsomokos, a member of the Council's sister organization, the [Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils \(GFCC\)](#), chaired a gathering of distinguished leaders from the United States and Greece who delved into the ways in which this enduring diplomatic relationship has helped address regional tensions and navigate the intricate geopolitical landscape surrounding the Mediterranean.

Council Hosts Danish Minister for Higher Education and Science

In her first visit to the United States as Minister, Her Excellency Christina Egelund joined Council EVP Chad Evans in a discussion with more than a dozen of Denmark's leading public and private sector innovation agencies and foundations. Evans and Minister Egelund explored common interests around the emerging and evolving roles of higher education leaders and institutions in economic development — as well as the power of rural-based innovation centers. Evans also shared the agenda of sister organization, the GFCC, with the Minister and the heads of Innovationsfonden (the Innovation Fund Denmark), Danmarks Frie Forskningsrad (the Independent Research Council of Denmark), The Novo Nordisk Foundation, and the Villum Fonden (The Villum Fund).



Council Community News

University of Tennessee, Knoxville Awards Inaugural Chancellor's Innovation Fund to Pioneering Researcher

Donde Plowman, Chancellor, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, recently celebrated the inaugural winners of the Chancellor's Innovation Fund. Each winner

received \$50,000 for the development of their respective technologies. These faculty members are at the forefront of groundbreaking research, from improving athletic field safety and reducing waste through bioplastics, to advancing data engines and quantum computing. Their dedication to bringing real-world solutions to fruition underscores the university's commitment to translating discoveries into tangible benefits for society, reflecting a growing culture of entrepreneurship and innovation.

The Department of State and ASU Announce an Initiative to Build Resilient International Microelectronics Supply Chain

The CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, aimed at re-establishing semiconductor manufacturing, research, and development in the United States, also focuses on establishing a resilient supply chain in allied countries, a strategy known as "near-shoring" or "friend-shoring." Under this act, a \$13.8 million cooperative agreement was awarded to Arizona State University (ASU) by the U.S. Department of State's International Technology Security and Innovation (ITSI) Fund to enhance assembly, testing, and packaging capabilities in partner countries in the Americas and Indo-Pacific, contributing to a resilient supply chain for U.S. semiconductor manufacturers. "We are honored to be selected by the U.S. Department of State to be its partner in this new initiative, and Arizona State University will put every ounce of its creativity and dedication to work to be of service in this role," said ASU President Michael Crow. [Read more here.](#)

The University of Texas San Antonio Creates a College for AI and Cybersecurity

In response to a 31 percent surge in student interest in AI, cybersecurity, and related computer topics since 2019, the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) is taking steps to establish a dedicated college that consolidates these disciplines. This initiative not only impacts the students at the institution but also signals that future hires at your company could possess significantly more knowledge about advanced AI technology than current employees in the coming years. [Read details of the new program in Inc. here.](#)

Worth noting that the National Commission will partner with UTSA in March 2025 for a Competitiveness Conversation focusing on issues related to secure AI and cyber.

Council Member Mike Freeman, CEO of Innosphere Ventures, to become new CEO for the CO-WY Climate Resilience Engine

[The new National Science Foundation \(NSF\) Engines program](#) represents one of the largest investments in place-based economic development in the nation's history — uniquely placing science and technology leadership as the central driver for regional economic competitiveness and job creation. The CO-WY Engine received one of 10 inaugural NSF Engine awards, and Mike Freeman expects the engine to lead to \$1.5 billion in regional GDP impact. [Read the full release here.](#)

Mike Freeman was also recently recognized as one of the top 5 most influential

business leaders in the technology sector by BizWest.

Additionally, other Council members will lead [inaugural NSF Engines](#), including:

- The Great Lakes Water Innovation Engine, shepherded by an innovation nonprofit, co-led by Argonne National Lab
 - North Carolina Textile Innovation and Sustainability Engine, led by North Carolina State University
 - Piedmont Triad Regenerative Medicine Engine, led by North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
 - Southwest Sustainability Innovation Engine, led by Arizona State University and the University of Utah
-

Council Member and National Commissioner Robert Johnson to Guide New Applied AI Hub in Massachusetts

Dr. Robert Johnson, President, Western New England University, has joined the Massachusetts Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategic Task Force — to guide investments from a proposed \$100 million economic development bill to create an Applied AI Hub in Massachusetts. The Task Force will have subject-specific working groups to create recommendations to leverage AI in leading sectors, such as education, healthcare, life sciences, robotics, and financial services. [Read the full announcement here.](#)

Innovation News

NSF Launches Pilot Public-Private AI Research Program to Democratize Future of AI R&D

The National Science Foundation, in collaboration with 10 federal agencies and 25 private sector, nonprofit, and philanthropic organizations, has launched the National Artificial Intelligence Research Resource (NAIRR) pilot. This pilot aims to provide U.S.-based researchers and educators access to advanced computing, datasets, models, software, training, and user support, supporting innovative AI research to inform the design of the full NAIRR ecosystem. The pilot will focus on advancing safe, secure, and trustworthy AI, as well as applying AI to healthcare and environmental and infrastructure sustainability challenges. The program intends to promote cross-sector partnerships and is a significant step toward realizing the vision of a shared research infrastructure to strengthen and democratize access to critical AI resources. [See the details here.](#)

The Biden Administration Announces \$5 Billion Commitment for R&D of Computer Chips

On February 9th, the Biden administration announced a commitment of \$5 billion in a public-private consortium for chip R&D, aiming to reduce the time and cost of commercializing new technologies. The administration's commitment dovetails with its goal of fostering diversity in the semiconductor industry, as demonstrated through a new partnership with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). This

initiative seeks to leverage America's strength in diversity and support R&D in advanced computer chips, with an emphasis on ensuring that the industry's workforce reflects the diversity of the nation. [Read more about the initiative here.](#)

Council Insights

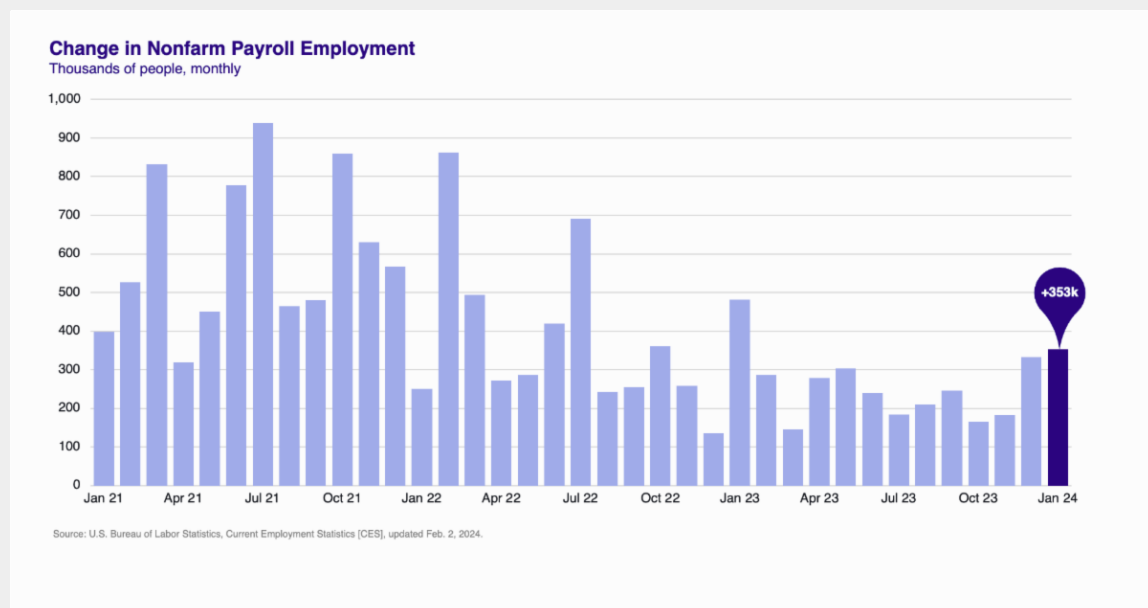
Tech industry fails to keep pace with soaring jobs numbers

Presented in Partnership with Keybridge Research

January's jobs report boasted approximately 353,000 new jobs, virtually doubling economists' expectations. But while the broader picture was positive, the U.S. tech industry is shedding workers. In 2023, tech companies laid off more than 260,000 employees. These layoffs continued, though at a slightly slower pace, in the first month of 2024—despite stabilizing interest rates and a generally healthy economy.

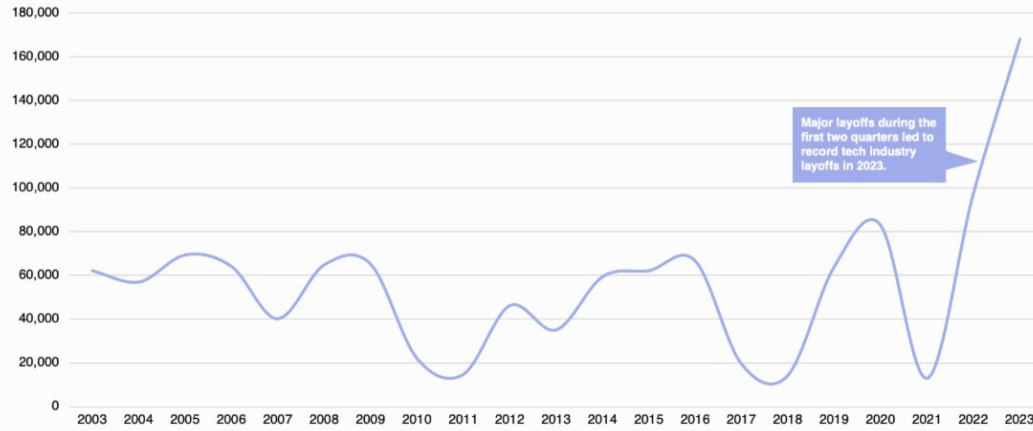
Two significant factors driving these layoffs are decreased demand for tech industry services and prioritization of generative AI. First, the tech industry experienced an explosion of consumer demand during the pandemic and is still adjusting its operations and staffing levels since the boom leveled off. Second, prioritization of generative AI in the tech sector is starting to be reflected in a reduction in other job categories. For example, some companies are choosing to invest more in AI development than in more labor-intensive business lines, while others are using AI to replace or augment jobs typically done by humans.

Despite this general downsizing, many tech companies are also facing a shortage of high-skilled labor, particularly in specialties like AI and cybersecurity. Making sense of this duality—a lack of technical talent and lower demand for tech sector labor—will be important to ensuring the tech sector's long-term competitiveness and enabling innovation across all sectors of the U.S. economy.



Job Cuts in the Technology Industry

Number of people, annually



Major layoffs during the first two quarters led to record tech industry layoffs in 2023.

Source: United States, Labor Turnover, Layoffs & Discharges, Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc., Job Cuts by Industry, Technology updated Feb 1, 2024.



New to the Community



Dr. La Jerne Terry Cornish
President
Ithaca College



Mr. Jeff Ettinger, J.D.
Interim President
University of Minnesota



Marc B. Parlange, Ph.D., P.Eng
President
University of Rhode Island



Dr. Susan Poser
President
Hofstra University

International



CO-HOSTS



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