



## From the CEO's Desk



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

Dear Council on Competitiveness  
Community,

One quarter through our 40th anniversary year, and the imperative to focus and act on the future of U.S. competitiveness has never been greater. This time next month, we will have a major update on our Board's first meeting in 2026 – during which they, along with our Executive Committee and National Commissioners, will begin shaping a bold, national “call to action” for 10X recommendations that could shape the country's next 40 years.

But between now and then, we are firing all cylinders to ensure the United States is the world's pre-eminent platform to develop and deploy a converging set of

revolutionary, platform technologies — from AI to quantum, fusion and advanced nuclear, next-generation bio and commercial space. If we do this, the opportunities for our country will be remarkable. Ensuring policies are in place to guide effectively the United States into the future has never been more critical.

This past month, the Council launched the first edition of its 2026 “Competitiveness Conversations Across America.” This Maryland edition, “[Unlocking American Innovation in the AI and Quantum Era](#),” took place March 23–24 across Morgan State University in Baltimore and the University of Maryland, College Park. 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 convene

more than 200 regional and national leaders to hear from 60+ speakers, spanning industry, academia, government, and the national laboratories. From Governor Wes Moore, who spoke passionately about how Maryland is aligning its extraordinary assets with strategy and policy, to leaders from U.S. Congress, MITRE, Lockheed Martin, the U.S. Department of Energy, NIST, NSF, IonQ, the Capital of Quantum, not to mention the presidents of many of the region's world-class universities — the Conversation offered a fascinating step inside Maryland's approach to place-making innovation, which has seeded the growth of one of the nation's premier hubs for AI and quantum research and deployment to the global marketplace.

[Our next stop is Omaha, Nebraska, April 29–30](#), where Dr. Jeffrey Gold, President of the University of Nebraska System, and I will bring together leaders from across Nebraska, the Midwest, and the country to share best and next practices in growing one of the world's most significant bio ecosystems. In Nebraska, we will explore how research universities, industry, and policymakers are collaborating to scale biomanufacturing, strengthen supply chains, drive economic growth, and bolster national security. If you have not yet registered, please consider doing so. You will not want to miss this. [Register here.](#)

Looking further ahead, July 20-21 we surface in San Diego for our third 2026 edition of the Competitiveness Conversations. Dr. Pradeep Khosla, Chancellor of the University of California, San Diego, and his team will shine a light on the full San Diego innovation stack – helping leaders from around the country understand how this community is elevating place-making innovation across transformative computing, biomanufacturing, agile space and autonomous systems, and more. Save the dates. More details to come.

Thank you for your leadership and partnership in advancing U.S. competitiveness. We share below a small snapshot of the work you are leading. At this defining moment — the Council's 40th year alongside the nation's 250th — we are doubling down on a shared conviction: that the next 250 years of American prosperity will be determined by what we choose to build, scale, and lead together.

Sincerely,

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

## Council News

[Join the Council in Nebraska for the Upcoming Competitiveness Conversation](#)

## Competitiveness Conversations Across America

## Nebraska: Leading the New Frontier in the Global Bioeconomy



April 29–30, 2026  
Omaha, NE

Join us April 29–30, 2026, at the Durham Museum in Omaha for “[Competitiveness Conversations Across America: Nebraska — Leading the New Frontier in the Global Bioeconomy](#).” Dr. Jeffrey P. Gold, President, University of Nebraska System, and the Hon. Deborah L. Wince-Smith will co-host this two-day summit, bringing together national leaders shaping the future of U.S. innovation, security, and economic growth, with a focus on advancing the nation’s bioeconomy.

Join us – and an exciting set of leaders from government, industry, academia, and the national security community, including:

- The Hon. Jim Pillen, Governor of Nebraska
- Dr. Scott Hutchins, Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics, U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Gen. (Ret.) Anthony J. Cotton, Former Commander, U.S. Strategic Command
- Mr. Jim Stutelberg, CEO, Primient
- Mr. Gustavo Sergi, CEO, Sustainea
- Mr. Edward Shenderovich, CEO, Roebling
- Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Paul Friedrichs, Former White House Office of Pandemic Preparedness
- Dr. Peter Dorhout, Vice President for Research, Iowa State University
- Mr. Jim Clifton, Chairman, Gallup
- Mr. Mark Warner, Co-Founder and Chief Technology Officer, Liberation Bioindustries
- Mr. Derek Leathers, CEO, Werner Enterprises
- Hon. John Bode, President and CEO, Corn Refiners Association
- Mr. Ben Rhodes, Executive Director, Nebraska Ethanol Board
- Mr. Steve Marshall, Vice President, Cargill
- Dr. Todd Pray, Chief Strategic Partnerships Officer, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory
- And many more distinguished CEOs, university leaders, and innovators from across the bioeconomy value chain.

For more information, please contact Chad Evans, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, at [cevens@compete.org](mailto:cevens@compete.org).

Register [HERE](#) for Nebraska Competitiveness Conversation

## Forging the Future: New Joint Report Charts the Path for AI, Tech, and Health Innovation



The Council on Competitiveness and its sister organization, the Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils (GFCC), have jointly published *Forging the Future: The Intersection of Health, AI & Tech*, a new report emerging from our landmark October 2025 edition of the “Competitiveness Conversations Across America” in Pittsburgh. Led by Council on Competitiveness CEO Deborah L. Wince-Smith, Council Chair Emeritus and GFCC Chair Chad Holliday, Council Academic Vice Chair and University of Pittsburgh Chancellor Joan Gabel, and Council Executive Committee Member and President of Carnegie Mellon University Dr. Farnam Jahanian, the Conversation focused on the region’s place-making innovation efforts across “eds and meds” and included engagement from across the GFCC’s membership. Read the report and call to action [here](#).

## Council Community News

### LexisNexis Recognizes IFF for Innovation



LexisNexis Intellectual Property Solutions has named IFF, under the leadership of CEO Erik Fyrwald, to the *Innovation Momentum Global Top 100*, a distinction that highlights companies building high-quality patent portfolios relative to their peers across technology fields. This recognition stems from objective, industry-proven metrics spotlighting organizations driving measurable innovation. Learn more about this recognition [here](#).

Photo credit: IFF

## APLU Recognizes Chancellor Joan Gabel and President Joan Ferrini-Mundy



Photo credit: APLU

For the first time in its 138-year history, the president, board chair, and chair-elect of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) were all women. Council Academic Vice-Chair and University of Pittsburgh Chancellor Joan Gabel served as Chair-Elect alongside APLU President Waded Cruzado, while Council member and University of Maine President Joan Ferrini-Mundy contributed her expertise as part of the leadership team. The annual meeting featured a special session, *2026: Women in Leadership: Pathway to the Presidency*, reflecting on professional journeys and strategies to cultivate the next generation of leaders in public higher education.

Chancellor Gabel also received the 2026 American Council on Education (ACE) Council of Fellows Mentor Award, recognizing her outstanding mentorship of emerging higher education leaders, which you can read about [here](#).

## UCLA Recognizes the Transformative Leadership of University of Wisconsin Chancellor Jennifer Mnookin



Photo credit: UCLA Law

Dr. Jennifer Mnookin, University of Wisconsin-Madison Chancellor and Co-Chair of the Council's University Leadership Forum, receives honor for her tenure as Dean of the UCLA School of Law, 2015-2022. The school has established the Jennifer Mnookin Chair in Law at UCLA School of Law. The chair celebrates Mnookin's impact on faculty and student excellence, record fundraising, and national prestige. More than 100 faculty, staff, alumni, and donors gathered to unveil her official portrait and celebrate her contributions. Mnookin, a leading evidence scholar, will assume the presidency of Columbia

University in July. See this [UCLA Law article](#) for details.

### Donde Plowman Receives James A. Haslam II Leadership Award



*Photo credit: University of Tennessee, Knoxville*

Donde Plowman, Chancellor of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and a member of the Council on Competitiveness Executive Committee, received the James A. Haslam II Leadership Award at the Knoxville Chamber's Pinnacle Business Awards. Named for longtime Tennessee business leader James A. Haslam II, the award recognizes exceptional leadership and service to the East Tennessee community. The award cites Chancellor Plowman's commitment to leading by example and for strengthening the university's land-grant mission through deep partnerships with the Knoxville community.

### HNTB Reimagines the Modern College Experience through the University of Kansas Gateway District



*Photo credit: HNTB*

HNTB is leading the effort to help transform the campus of The University of Kansas. The \$750 million Gateway District will function as a year-round hub for athletics, events, and community life, anchored by a modernized David Booth Kansas Memorial Stadium. The project reflects a growing trend in collegiate design that blends sports, hospitality, and civic space. Paul Yarossi, Executive Vice President at HNTB and a member of the Council on Competitiveness Executive Committee, is part of the leadership shaping the firm's work on next-generation infrastructure and campus design.

## Deloitte's 2026 Global Human Capital Trends Report Highlights the New Imperative for Human-AI Work Design

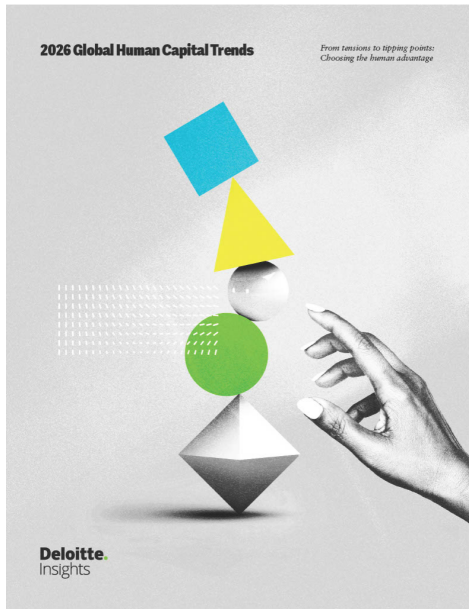


Photo credit: Deloitte

Deloitte's *2026 Global Human Capital Trends* report underscores a pivotal moment for leaders navigating rapid technological change. While 70 percent of polled executives cite speed and agility as their top priority, the findings reveal significant gaps in readiness — only a small fraction of these same leaders report effectively managing AI or leading in adaptability. The report points to a deeper challenge: organizations must move beyond AI adoption to an intentional redesign of how humans and machines work together to unlock human potential, build trust, and drive long-term value creation. Check out Deloitte's *2026 Global Human Capital Trends* report [here](#).

## AI Boosts Eli Lilly's Drug Manufacturing



Photo credit: Eli Lilly

AI is already transforming pharmaceutical manufacturing. At Eli Lilly and Company, digital twins — virtual models of factory operations — have significantly increased production of high-demand GLP-1 drugs Zepbound and Mounjaro, improving efficiency and quality control while helping address supply shortages. While AI-driven drug discovery remains a longer-term goal, these manufacturing gains are critical to meeting demand and driving growth. Eli Lilly CEO David Ricks, a Council National Commissioner, continues to lead the company in applying AI across the pharmaceutical value chain. Read the full article: [How Lilly Used AI To Crank Up Production of Its Popular GLP-1s \(Forbes\)](#).

## Executive Committee Member Josh Parker Warns New Foreign Government Income Rules Could Blur Key Line



Photo credit: Ancora

In a March 11 commentary for *Bloomberg Tax*, Council Executive Committee member and National Commissioner Josh Parker highlights potential risks in the Treasury and IRS's effort to modernize how section 892 of the U.S. tax code treats foreign government-related income. While updating these rules is essential given changes in global capital markets, Parker cautions overly broad definitions could blur the line between legitimate minority investor stewardship and effective control of U.S. businesses by sovereign entities—creating uncertainty that might deter long-term foreign investment crucial for housing, infrastructure, and innovation. Clearer guidance that distinguishes routine investor protections from actual control, he argues, would attract capital without undermining enforcement. Read more in the full article: [Changing Foreign Government Income Rules Risks Blurring a Line \(Bloomberg Tax\)](#).

## Competitiveness News

### **President Trump Announces First Appointments to President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology**

On March 25, President Trump appointed the inaugural members of his President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST). David Sacks and the President's Science and Technology Advisor Michael Kratsios will co-chair the newly appointed council that includes leaders like: Jensen Huang, Marc Andreessen, Larry Ellison, Michael Dell, Lisa Su, Mark Zuckerberg, Sergey Brin, and Safra Catz, among others.

### **Bipartisan Legislation Aims to Prepare American Workers for AI Economy**

U.S. Sens. Mark Warner (D-VA) and Mike Rounds (R-SD) introduced the Economy of the Future Commission Act, bipartisan legislation to help American workers adapt to AI-driven economic and workforce changes. The commission will bring together policymakers, experts, and industry leaders—like Eli Lilly CEO and Council National Commissioner David Ricks—to develop recommendations on workforce training, reskilling, unemployment supports, and policies to maintain U.S. competitiveness while shaping strategies to ensure AI benefits are widely shared.

"American dominance in AI is a matter of both economic and national security," said Sen. Rounds. "America's workforce must be equipped to lead the transformation of the economy happening due to AI. This commission would help keep America ahead of our global competitors and keep America prosperous and innovative."

Learn more about the legislation [here](#).

## DOE Opens Genesis Mission Funding Opportunity for AI-Driven Science and Energy Innovation



The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has opened applications for its Genesis Mission initiative, inviting interdisciplinary teams to tackle national science and technology challenges using advanced AI models to accelerate discovery and R&D workflows. With approximately \$293.8 million in total funding available, DOE expects to make multiple awards supporting efforts that strengthen U.S. leadership in energy, environmental, and nuclear innovation. To support team formation, the Genesis Mission Consortium, led by Under Secretary of Energy, Dario Gil, who joined us at the Maryland Competitiveness Conversation, launched a Partnership Exchange on March 19, connecting industry, academia, and national labs; participation is optional and does not require consortium membership. [Learn more](#).

## McKinsey Global Institute Report Explores How the United States Can Sustain Its Competitive Edge

A new report from the McKinsey Global Institute highlights the nation's enduring strengths — innovation, talent, and dynamic markets — while underscoring the need for renewed investment in productivity, infrastructure, and inclusive growth. What's the key takeaway? As global competition intensifies, sustaining U.S. leadership will require bold strategies to harness emerging technologies, strengthen institutions, and drive long-term economic resilience. Read McKinsey's take [here](#).

## The Unmaking of the American University: A New Yorker Perspective



Photo credit: Derek Brahney for The New Yorker

A recent *New Yorker* feature by Nicholas Lemann examines the history and current challenges of U.S. higher education, highlighting why universities now face mounting pressures and difficult choices. Former Council member Holden Thorp provides insight for the story, describing how administrators often try to satisfy every constituency — alumni, donors, and campus groups — while avoiding public controversy. Thorp’s candid reflection underscores the tension between maintaining broad support and pursuing bold institutional priorities, a dynamic shaping the direction of higher education. [Read the full article in \*The New Yorker\*.](#)

### The United States Advances toward Fusion Energy Commercialization

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has published its proposed rule and guidance for a fusion-specific regulatory framework, marking a major milestone for the industry. By regulating fusion under 10 CFR Part 30 — the same framework used for particle accelerators — and adopting a technology-inclusive, performance-based approach, the NRC is providing the certainty needed to safely commercialize fusion energy. Learn more about the NRC’s proposed draft regulatory framework for fusion machines [here](#).

## Council Insight

### One Technology, Two Datasets, and Many Implications for U.S. Competitiveness

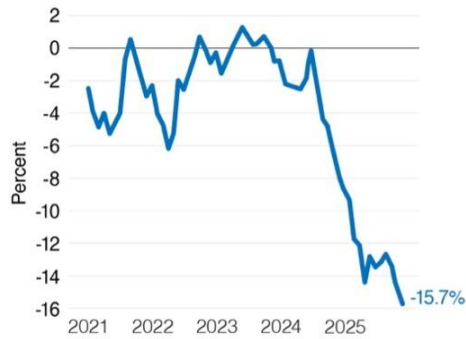
#### Recent U.S. Business Applications Growth Likely Driven By AI

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Macrobond, Apollo Chief Economist



## Young Workers See a Decrease of Nearly 16 Percent in Employment Due to AI

Source: Stanford Digital Economy Lab



Employment change for the top 20 percent of occupations most exposed to artificial intelligence, monthly estimates for workers aged 22 to 25.

As AI technology rapidly advances, the United States faces increasingly complex competitiveness challenges, as demonstrated by these graphs.

The first picture is optimistic. Weekly U.S. business applications have surged to historic highs, approaching 130,000 applications per week in early 2026, according to data compiled by Apollo Global Management. For context, that figure is nearly double the pre-pandemic baseline and more than three times the lows recorded during the 2008 financial crisis. Apollo and others

attribute this entrepreneurial explosion directly to AI and large language models, which are slashing the cost and complexity of starting a company to levels that would have been unimaginable a decade ago.

The second picture is far more sobering. Among workers aged 22 to 25 in occupations most exposed to AI, employment has fallen by nearly 16 percent in 2025. The Stanford Digital Economy Lab data, surfaced by researchers tracking AI's earliest labor market signals, suggests that the technology is not simply changing how young workers do their jobs. In many cases, it is eliminating the jobs — before those workers have had the chance to build the experience, skills, and networks that would allow them to adapt.

Taken together, these two charts illuminate a key competitiveness tension of the AI era: the same technology that is enabling a record wave of productivity gains and new business creation is simultaneously hollowing out the entry points through which the next generation of U.S. workers would traditionally build their skills to become tomorrow's innovators, entrepreneurs, and business leaders.

A key question to wrestle with is whether the productivity gains unlocked by AI are being matched by investments in the people they will affect. Are our educational pathways and policy frameworks prepared to address what these two charts suggest—a structural discontinuity at a scale not seen in recent innovation cycles?

The Maryland edition of the Competitiveness Conversations Across America, "Unlocking American Innovation in the AI and Quantum Era," co-hosted this month with Morgan State University and University of Maryland, College Park, focused on advancing ideas to tackle these challenges. Look for the summary report of the event to be published soon.

## New to Our Community



**Dr. Deborah Gracio**  
Laboratory Director  
Pacific Northwest National Laboratory

Dr. Gracio joins the Council as a  
National Commissioner.

*Photo credit: Pacific Northwest National Laboratory*



**Dr. Ellen M. Granberg**  
President  
George Washington University

President Granberg joins the Council as  
a Member.

*Photo credit: George Washington University*



**Ms. Ann McMahon**  
Senior Director  
Council on Competitiveness

Ms. McMahon joins the Council as the  
Senior Director of Programs and Digital  
Operations.

*Photo credit: MITRE*

## CONTACT US

CONNECT WITH COMPETE



[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!