



Compete Connect

October 1, 2025 Edition

From the CEO's Desk



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

Dear Council on Competitiveness Community,

We are in the homestretch for 2025. As past newsletters have demonstrated, 2025 has been incredibly productive. And with just three months ahead of us this year, much more is still to come. In particular, the team and I are excited to deliver the 2025 gala dinner and National Competitiveness Forum (NCF), December 15-16, at the Salamander Hotel in Washington, DC. Make sure to join us. Register online as soon as possible for our most impactful gathering yet ([registration is open here](#); **Council Members receive a special, significant discount**).

The NCF will convene CEOs, university presidents, national laboratory directors, labor leaders, and policymakers to tackle the critical issues at the heart of U.S. productivity, security, and prosperity—from the rise of the “bio+ economy” and the continuing transformation of manufacturing, to breakthroughs in AI, quantum computing, supercomputing, to the exploding demand for energy to meet the competitiveness moment.

[NCF sponsorship opportunities remain available](#), offering excellent visibility and engagement for Council Members. We are grateful for the generous support of our current sponsors:

- **Premier:** Bank of America
- **Founder:** University of Pittsburgh
- **Chair:** Snap-on Incorporated
- **President:** Arizona State University
- **Benefactor:** HNTB, University of Notre Dame
- **Patron:** Carnegie Mellon University, Gallup, Hofstra University, MITRE, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, University of Georgia, University of Texas at San Antonio

For questions about attending and/or sponsoring the NCF, contact [Chad Evans](#), Executive Vice President and COO.

In addition to the NCF, there are several opportunities in the next few months to engage:

- The first chance is the final 2025 edition of the “Competitiveness Conversations Across America.” Taking place in Pittsburgh October 19-21, [“Forging the Future: The Intersection of Health, AI & Tech”](#)—cohosted by University of Pittsburgh Chancellor and Council Academic Vice-chair Joan Gabel, Carnegie Mellon University President and Council Executive Committee Member Farnam Jahanian, Council Chair Emeritus Chad Holliday, and me—will explore the innovation and productivity-enhancing interactions between AI and healthcare, while highlighting the city’s intentional place-making strategies.
- A few weeks later on November 4, the Council’s CTO-led “Technology Leadership & Strategy Initiative” will meet in Fort Worth to assess the impact of their latest report, a *Compact for America*; discuss and set a new agenda for the effort’s 16th year of continuous dialogue; and explore the manufacturing journey for one of the most advanced systems ever built: the Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning. I am grateful to our new TLSI industry Co-chair, Dr. Tahllee Baynard, Vice President, of Lockheed Martin for his generosity in hosting us in Texas, along with key colleagues across the LM enterprise.

In other important news, the Council’s “future of the bioeconomy” initiative hit an important milestone this month, as leaders convened in Indiana to review, debate, and shape the initiative’s “concept paper.” Primient CEO and National Commissioner Jim Stutelberg hosted a formative and insightful meeting of the Council’s Executive Committee and National Commission on Innovation and Competitiveness Frontiers to explore ways to accelerate U.S. leadership in a broad sector of global industries set to reach \$30 trillion in value. This gathering also marked the first official meeting of our new Chair, Erik Fyrwald, CEO, IFF, led for the Council. We are pulling together the major findings from the discussion and developing of a formal project plan. More to come!

And in early September we convened in Washington, DC, the Council’s University Leadership Forum – Council Executive Committee Member Josh Parker, CEO, Ancora hosted a gracious opening dinner; and Gallup Chairman Jim Clifton hosted the leaders during a daylong meeting at Gallup HQ. University presidents, chancellors, and higher education leaders worked to address pressing challenges,

including declining public trust, shifting demographics, and workforce alignment. Discussions explored potential tools to monitor and optimize higher education's role in U.S. competitiveness.

As always, I am inspired by the energy, commitment, and creativity of our Members. Together, through the policy work of our initiatives and the convenings to express and share that work, we are shaping the policies, partnerships, and strategies to define the next era of American competitiveness.

Sincerely,

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

Council News

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



Join us for the Council's premier annual gathering—the 2025 Gala Dinner and National Competitiveness Forum (NCF). ([NCF registration is open; Council Members receive a significant discount.](#))

On the evening of December 15, we will bring together our community of members and competitiveness colleagues across Washington, DC, the United States, and the world for a celebratory dinner, recounting the milestones of 2025, charting the path for 2026, and honoring some of America's most significant leaders who have made seminal contributions to U.S. competitiveness.

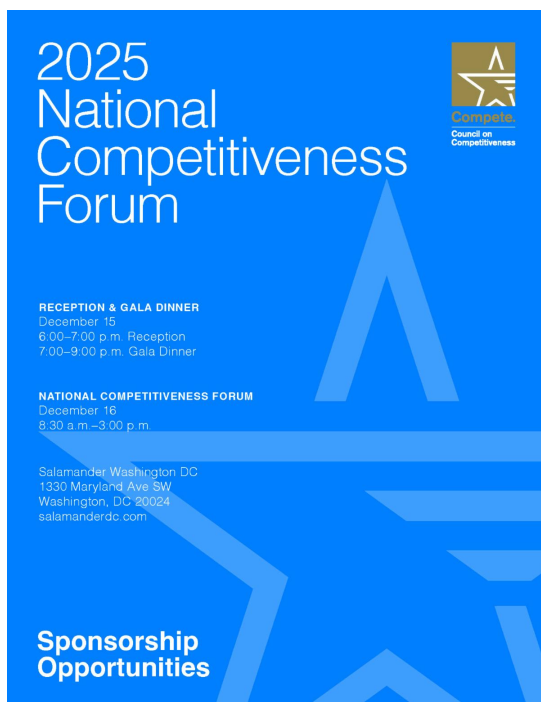
On December 16, the NCF will feature a full day of forward-looking dialogue on the forces shaping the U.S. economy: exploring the rise of the bio+ economy; discussing the transformation of U.S. manufacturing; understanding the disruptions cascading across higher education; highlighting critical advances in AI, quantum, and supercomputing; dealing with the emergence of unprecedented energy demand; and sharing best and “next” practices from the 2025 editions of the Council’s “Competitiveness Conversations Across America.”

Join us in Washington, DC, as we shape the path to the Council’s 40th Anniversary in 2026 and define the next era of American competitiveness.

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

NCF Registration Is Open

NCF 2025 Sponsorships are Available — Secure Your Spot



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

And a big thank you to our current sponsors:

- **Premier:** Bank of America
- **Founder:** University of Pittsburgh
- **Chair:** Snap-on Incorporated
- **President:** Arizona State University
- **Benefactor:** HNTB, University of Notre Dame
- **Patron:** Carnegie Mellon University, Gallup, Hofstra University, MITRE, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, University of Georgia, University of Texas at San Antonio

**Sponsorship Opportunities
are Available**

Forbes.com Feature: Building Out America's Innovation Economy

In her September Forbes.com article, Council President and CEO Deborah Wince-Smith highlights how regions across the country—from Tennessee and South Carolina to Indiana, Texas, Colorado, and Pennsylvania—are laying the foundations for America's innovation economy. Drawing on insights from the nearly 10 editions of Competitiveness Conversations hosted across the country, as well as from findings in the work of the National Commission, Ms. Wince-Smith identifies six high-priority strategies to strengthen place-making innovation and to drive U.S. competitiveness, including:

1. Building innovation capacity in regions where it is weak while leveraging areas of high entrepreneurial potential to drive national competitiveness.
2. Developing new financing models to support innovation ecosystems, particularly in underserved rural and urban communities.
3. Expanding access to facilities and infrastructure that accelerate technology development and deployment.
4. Preparing regions to withstand and recover from technological, economic, and labor market disruptions.
5. Sharing knowledge on fostering place-based innovation and effective ecosystem building.
6. Accelerating the scaling of critical technologies.

By combining strategic investment, collaboration, and targeted support, Ms. Wince-Smith argues the United States can strengthen regional ecosystems and ensure innovation drives broad-based economic growth. Read her full article in [Forbes.com here.](#)

Take Part in the 5th and Final 2025 Edition of the Competitiveness Conversations Across America: Pittsburgh

The final 2025 edition of the "Competitiveness Conversations Across America" is around the corner, taking place October 19-21 in Pittsburgh.

Council Vice-chair and University of Pittsburgh Chancellor Joan Gabel – click image below to hear her special message – will co-host with Council President and CEO Deborah Wince-Smith, Carnegie Mellon University President and Council Executive Committee Member Farnam Jahanian, and Council Chair Emeritus Chad Holliday.



Co-created with our partners at the University of Pittsburgh and the Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils (GFCC), this edition of the Competitiveness Conversations will bring together C-suite leaders and experts from around the world focused on: **“Forging the Future – The Intersection of Health, AI & Tech.”**



YOU'RE INVITED

FORGING THE FUTURE

THE INTERSECTION OF HEALTH, AI & TECH

Join top minds from Pittsburgh and globally that are driving the future of health, AI, and tech.

OCT. 19-21, 2025 | UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA



REGISTER FOR THE SUMMIT
GFCC-COC-25.PITT.EDU/REGISTRATION

More information, including a schedule of events and where to stay, is available online:
GFCC-COC-25.PITT.EDU

SUMMIT PARTNERS



Through keynotes, panels, fireside chats, site visits, and rich networking opportunities, we will explore the transformative potential of AI-powered healthcare, the place-making strategies that have positioned Pittsburgh as a global innovation hub, and actionable approaches to strengthening competitiveness across communities, regions, and nations.

If you have any questions, please contact [Chad Evans](#).

TLSI Dialogue

November 4, 2025
Fort Worth, Texas



On November 4, the Council's CTO-led Technology Leadership & Strategy Initiative (TLSI) will convene in Fort Worth. Members will assess the impact of their latest report, [***Compact for America: A Call to Action for a New Tech-Driven Industrial Base and National Innovation Ecosystem***](#); set the agenda for TLSI's next priorities; and gain an inside look at the manufacturing journey of one of the most advanced systems ever built—the Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning. We are grateful to our new TLSI Industry Co-chair, Dr. Tahllee Baynard, Vice President at Lockheed Martin, for generously hosting the event, along with colleagues across the Lockheed Martin enterprise. If interested to learn more, please contact [**Chad Evans**](#).

The Council Heads to the Heartland and Launches Future of the Bioeconomy Initiative



Photo Credit: Primient

Attendees of the Council on Competitiveness Fall meeting of the Executive Committee and National Commission on Innovation and Competitiveness Frontiers, focused on the future of the bioeconomy. Participants are gathered in front of Primient's Lafayette facility—one of the world's most advanced corn processing facilities.



Photo Credit: Council on Competitiveness

Left to right: Deborah Wince-Smith, President and CEO, Council on Competitiveness; Jim Stutelberg, CEO, Primient; Chad Evans, EVP and COO, Council on Competitiveness.

On September 17–18, the Council on Competitiveness convened leaders from industry, academia, the national laboratories, and government in Indiana to launch its *future of the bioeconomy* initiative. The two-day program featured a dinner discussion at Purdue University, and a full-day meeting on the grounds of Primient's Lafayette facility – the world's most energy efficient corn processing plant. Over a day-and-a-half, participants began charting a course for U.S. leadership in the evolving, multi-sectoral, global bioeconomy.

The findings from this launch discussion will underpin the development of a formal project plan to guide the Council's work in this area over the coming years—translating ideas into action and policy to strengthen U.S. competitiveness in this vital domain. The Council will circulate a summary report of the session in the weeks ahead.

Special recognition goes to Jim Stutelberg and the Primient team for their generous hospitality and for offering participants a tour of their world-class facility. The meeting also marked the first official Council engagement for newly elected Chair, Erik Fyrwald, CEO of International Flavors and Fragrances.

University Leadership Forum Convenes Higher Education Leaders



Photo Credit: Council on Competitiveness

The Council convened on September 8 its University Leadership Forum to address the pressing challenges facing U.S. higher education, including declining public trust, shifting demographics, and workforce alignment. Participants who joined the session at Gallup World Headquarters in Washington, DC, reviewed key federal policy changes, received data-driven insights from Gallup and Deloitte, and discussed the implications for student affordability, readiness, and workforce outcomes. A central focus of the meeting was on the future of higher education and its role in driving U.S. competitiveness.

Council Community News

Eli Lilly Opens New Gateway Labs in San Diego



Photo Credit: Eli Lilly and Company

Eli Lilly, led by its CEO and Council Member David A. Ricks, has launched its fourth and newest Lilly Gateway Labs site. Based in San Diego, this 82,514-square-foot facility aims support up to 15 early-stage biotech companies. The flexible lab and office space provides startups with wet lab facilities, strategic guidance, and access

to Lilly scientists – all connected to accelerate the development of next-generation medicines. Learn more [here](#).

Quantinuum Hits Quantum Milestones, Valuation Reaches \$10B



Quantinuum and its CEO Rajeeb Hazra, Ph.D.—an Executive Committee Member of the Council on Competitiveness—announced major milestones this September. The company achieved record advances in quantum volume and fidelity, and it secured a \$10 billion valuation following a \$600 million funding round. These developments underscore the rapid progress and growing impact of quantum technologies on U.S. innovation and competitiveness.

Photo Credit: Quantinuum

UVM Launches BioLabs Innovation Center to Accelerate Life Science Startups

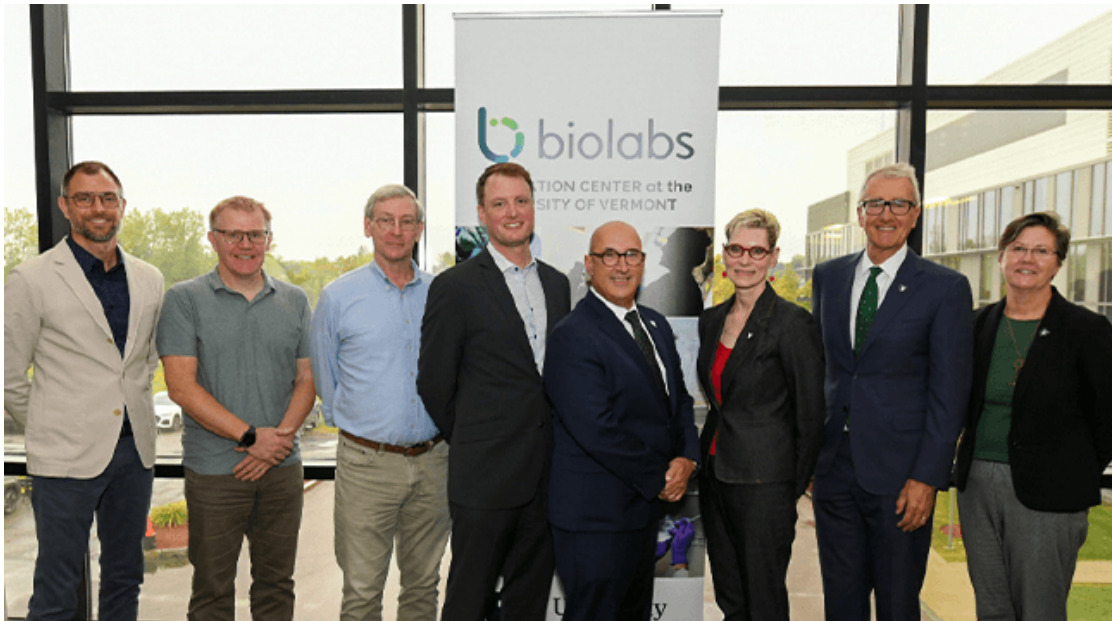


Photo Credit: University of Vermont

The University of Vermont, under the leadership of its President and Council Member Marlene Tromp, celebrated the grand opening of its BioLabs Innovation Center on September 23 at the Robert Larner, M.D. College of Medicine in Colchester. The state-of-the-art, 7,000 sq. ft. facility, offers shared and private lab spaces, flexible offices, and cutting-edge equipment to support early-stage life science startups. The center already hosts several resident companies and aims to

grow, positioning UVM alongside top biotech hubs like Boston, New York, and San Diego. Learn more about the [BioLabs Innovation Center here](#).

Gallup Honors UT Chancellor Donde Plowman with Gallup Strengths Award



Photo Credit: Jim Clifton and Gallup

Gallup honored University of Tennessee, Knoxville Chancellor and Council on Competitiveness Executive Committee Member Donde Plowman with the Don Clifton Strengths Award, and inducted her into the Gallup Hall of Fame for her work creating the Clifton Center at the University of Nebraska and now building a strengths-based campus at the University of Tennessee. According to Gallup Chairman Jim Clifton, also a Council Executive Committee Member, “This extraordinary example of strengths engineering includes all 40,000 UT students and a remarkable coaching program—all aimed at student success.”

ASU Launches Rob Walton School of Conservation Futures



Photo Credit: Samantha Chow/Arizona State University

The Rob Walton Foundation has awarded Arizona State University with a \$115 million gift. As the largest gift in ASU's history, it will support establishing the Rob Walton School of Conservation Futures. The new school will train the next generation of conservation leaders through hands-on research, fieldwork, and global partnerships, combining cutting-edge science with workforce development. Read more [here](#).

Council Insight

US vs. China Investments in Higher education and Scientific Research.

Annual Graduation of Engineers and Computer Scientists

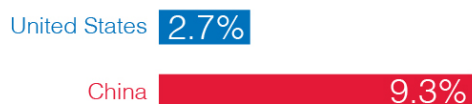
Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development



In China, the numbers of **bachelor's degrees increased tenfold**, **master's increased degrees by a factor of 15**, and **doctoral degrees increased by a factor of 20** from 1990 to 2010.

Year-over-Year Growth in Higher Education Expenditures on R&D, 2019–2023

Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development



The numbers tell a stark story: China now graduates roughly 1.25 million engineers and computer scientists annually—five times the U.S. total of 250,000. Over just two decades, China’s output of bachelor’s degrees in these fields increased tenfold, master’s degrees by 15 times, and doctorates by 20 times. Meanwhile, U.S. growth has been comparatively modest, widening the domestic gap in the talent needed to fuel the innovation economy.

The trend is echoed in research investment. From 2019 to 2023, China’s higher education R&D spending grew by 9.3 percent annually, more than three times the pace of the U.S.’s 2.7 percent growth. These figures reflect a deliberate, long-term strategy: China is not just producing talent; it is equipping universities and research institutions to scale technology development faster and more efficiently.

What are the implications for the United States? The data reflect key findings from our report, [*Competing in the Next Economy: Innovating in the Age of Disruption and Discontinuity*](#): our global leadership in emerging technologies—from AI and advanced manufacturing to biotechnology—depends on both skilled talent and robust (largely higher education-based) research infrastructure. Without stronger investment in STEM education, infrastructure, and technology deployment, the United States risks ceding critical ground in fields that will define economic and national security competitiveness for decades to come.

There are actionable paths forward. While it may be difficult to win purely on numbers of graduates, strengthening regional innovation ecosystems, reversing the structural decline of federally funded research, expanding access to cutting-edge facilities, and accelerating the scaling of critical technologies — all recommendations and many more articulated in the Council’s *Competing in the Next Economy* roadmap report — can help ensure the United States retains its competitive position. But with China’s surge in graduates, R&D investment, and industrial deployment, *how will the United States respond?*

Fellows Insight

Public Utility Regulation and Innovation: Growing AI Demand Requires a New Look at Innovation Incentives

**SEPTEMBER
FELLOW INSIGHT**

Public Utility
Regulation
and Innovation



“To meet unprecedented energy need, America’s public utility regulators will need to factor in innovation incentives in their regulatory policies and look for ways to stimulate and not stifle innovation.”

The Honorable Branko Terzic

Former Commissioner on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the State of Wisconsin Public Service Commission

Former Chairman, President, and CEO of Yankee Energy Systems, Inc.

Photo Credit: Brank Terzic, updated by Council on Competitiveness

America’s growing electricity demand—driven by AI, data centers, and the broader electrification of the economy—requires regulators to incentivize rather than hinder innovation in generation, transmission, storage, and efficiency technologies.

In our September Fellows Insight, the Honorable [Branko D. Terzic](#), former Commissioner on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and Distinguished Fellow of the Council on Competitiveness, examines how U.S. public utility regulation can support (or inadvertently stifle) innovation. Focusing on electricity, he explains that regulators’ control over rate bases, depreciation policies, and returns on investment can delay or block adoption of new technologies. Read Terzic’s piece [here](#).

New to Our Community



Photo Credit: University of Texas at Arlington

Dr. Jennifer Crowley
President
The University of Texas at Arlington

Dr. Crowley has joined as a General Member



Photo Credit: University of Oklahoma

Dr. Matthew W. Hulver
Vice President for Research & Partnerships

University of Oklahoma

Dr. Hulver has joined the Council's Technology Leadership & Strategy Initiative

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