



January 26, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leaders Schumer, McConnell, and McCarthy:

As you consider the next pandemic rescue and recovery package, we urge you to include \$26 billion in supplemental funding for federal science agencies to provide critical support for the nation's scientists and engineers and the research operations that underpin the U.S. scientific enterprise that are critical to beating the pandemic, supporting communities, and revitalizing the economy. It is this research enterprise that conducted the fundamental science that led to the development of today's mRNA vaccines for COVID-19. We appreciate that Congress has provided limited emergency relief funding to college students and our universities through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund and continued Congressional efforts to provide additional funds for them in the next COVID-19 bill. Please note, however, *none of the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund dollars can be used to address the harmful impacts to federally supported researchers and research.*

The pandemic has caused substantial disruptions to federally supported researchers and research funded by: the National Science Foundation (NSF); the Departments of Defense (DOD), Energy (DOE), and Agriculture (USDA); the National Institutes of Health (NIH); NASA; NOAA; NIST; EPA; and other federal research agencies. These disruptions are to the detriment of our nation's research enterprise, and they are taking an especially significant toll on early-career researchers and researchers raising children or with other caretaker responsibilities.¹ While most federally supported research has resumed since the initial shutdowns, research output has been significantly decreased² due to: laboratory closures; new COVID-19 related health restrictions and laboratory protocols; canceled scientific conferences; the continued inability to conduct some types of research; curtailed travel to research sites; and strains on researchers. Consequently, many researchers are unable to complete their research projects as originally proposed in their federal grants and contracts.

Without immediate relief to ameliorate the pandemic's harmful impacts, the contributions of research universities and hospitals to America's health, economy and national security will be impaired for years

¹ [The Impacts of COVID-19 on the Research Enterprise, A Landscape Review](#), ITHAKA S+R

² [Research Impact Under COVID-19](#), Council on Governmental Relations

to come. Relief is needed to allow federal agencies to provide research grant and contract supplements (i.e., cost extensions) for expenses arising from COVID-19 related impacts; emergency relief to sustain research support personnel and some base operating costs for core research facilities and user-funded research services; and support for additional graduate student and postdoc fellowships, traineeships, and research assistantships to allow early career scientists to complete degrees and enter the workforce rather than leaving science and engineering altogether.

Specifically, we renew our recommendation for \$26 billion in research relief funds.³ This is consistent with the bipartisan, bicameral Research Investment to Spark the Economy (RISE) Act ([H.R. 7308](#) and [S. 4286](#)) from the last Congress that was: cosponsored by over 150 Members of Congress; approved by the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee; and [endorsed by our associations and over 320 universities, science, engineering, and business organizations](#). In addition to the previously stated purposes, this level of relief is needed to preserve the research investments already made by taxpayers and help ensure that extramural research funded by federal agencies can be completed.

Relief for federal science agencies will help avoid long-term and devastating consequences to federal research, which drives American innovation, economic competitiveness, and security. Failure to provide this relief now will force federal research agencies to make difficult decisions between funding the completion of existing research projects or funding new projects. Rescuing the nation’s scientific research enterprise and supporting new research should not be an “either-or” choice – both are vital to our nation’s health, security, and economic competitiveness and recovery.

We urge you to negotiate bipartisan comprehensive COVID-19 relief legislation that includes rescue funding for all federal research agencies to address critical research and research workforce needs. Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,



Barbara R. Snyder
President
Association of American Universities



Peter McPherson
President
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities



David J. Skorton, MD
President and CEO
Association of American Medical Colleges



Ted Mitchell
President
American Council on Education

cc: Members of the 117th United States Congress
Rob Fairweather, Acting Director, White House Office of Management and Budget
Kei Koizumi, Acting Director, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy

³ [AAU-APLU-AAMC-ACE letter - August 3, 2020](#)